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Soldiers Performing/Performing Soldiers: Spectacular Catharsis, Perpetual Rehearsal, and Theatricality in the US Infantry

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Drama and Theatre

By

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2009
The Dissertation of Zachary Whitman Gill is approved, and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication on microfilm and electronically:

Chair

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2009
DEDICATION

To Catie, my love and my support, without whom I would never have made it
and to whom I devote my life
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VITA

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Soldiers Performing/Performing Soldiers:
Spectacular Catharsis, Perpetual Rehearsal, and Theatricality in the US Infantry

By

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Doctor of Philosophy in Drama and Theatre
University of California, San Diego, 2009
University of California, Irvine, 2009
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The United States at the infancy of the twenty first century is in the midst of an era of unprecedented military performance seeming to intentionally blur and collapse the boundaries between training and actual combat by means of an increasing spectactularity in the theorization and execution of military strategy. Combining the lenses of theater and performance with theories of military history and warfare, trauma, and the workings of power, this dissertation seeks to lay bare the ways in which performance, as both a system of power and knowledge and an expressive twice-behaved behavior, structures and drives warfare and weaves throughout contemporary US infantry theory. Infantry training, in an effort to contextualize the experience of warfare beforehand in training, attempts to identify, define, and prepare for the traumatic. But the extremity of warfare remains trauma, which by its very definition lies beyond the limits of existential reality,
leaving training a doomed and fruitless attempt to voice the unspeakable that collapses the real into the virtual.

Locating the roots of the government’s use of “Shock and Awe” via a genealogical approach, I situate current infantry practices within a history of military theory aimed at preventing cathartic responses to the spectacle of combat in soldiers. I then examine how the Army and Marine Corps uses training to craft flexible and adaptive warriors in training through a process of mimetically theatrical simulations and perpetual rehearsal driven by a systematic dedication to performative power. The remaining chapters approach the effect of military training from the perspective of theories of trauma, arguing that infantry training-as-combat—rehearsal staged as performance—forecloses the possibilities of grasping the full impact of what is seen and done; such a process leaves an experiential gap that magnifies the probability of repeated impossible confrontation with the originary missed event. I conclude by offering theater as a possibility for testimony, for fully recounting the victim-witness’s narrative and thereby overcoming trauma. This project thus levels a critical indictment of theatre, performance theory, and the military as structurally akin, experientially unimaginable, and existentially terrifying.
Introduction

I began this dissertation in the midst of escalating violence in Iraq. As the war spiraled into cruel and gory sectarian violence, the US military seemed helpless to stop the rash of improvised explosive devises targeting civilians and soldiers alike. The grisly news reports, constantly spun and respun by the pundits and talking heads and obfuscated by the Bush Administration, continued to dominate the airwaves and print media of the United States for much of the initial stages of my research. My intention at the time was to tap into the cultural cache afforded to the US serviceman and investigate the ways in which soldiers have appeared onstage—whether as characters, actors, playwrights, or mere references. By framing the historical in the present, I hoped to determine if the rash of plays and performances concerning war was particularly extraordinary or merely another manifestation of a history of complicity and antagonism between the theatrical and martial institutions. But as I pursued my line of inquiry, the more I noticed what seemed to be a martial attention to, even obsession with, identifying and controlling what could only be deemed the role of performance in directly affecting the outcome of battles. As I dug deeper, I uncovered more and more evidence that suggested that what at first appeared to be a recent phenomenon was, in fact, merely the most recent manifestation of a much longer history. Just as the tenor of the Iraq War shifted and the infantry hailed a new training and doctrine approach directly in line with this trend, my focus also evolved, haunted by two nagging questions which have come to dominate the dissertation. How has the US infantry incorporated theatre and performance in its fundamental approach to warfare? And even more so, in trying to manipulate and control that which is
fundamentally unimaginable and beyond the limits of representation—terror and trauma—is the military doomed to failure?

As such, my dissertation seeks to lay bare the ways in which performance, as both a system of power and knowledge and an expressive twice-behaved behavior, structures and drives warfare and weaves throughout contemporary US infantry theory in a systematic effort to contextualize the real experience of warfare beforehand in training in order to better deal with it on the actual battlefield. By situating current training and doctrine within a history of the role of cathartic spectating and performative power as they work on the individual soldier in battle, I investigate how the infantry crafts flexible and adaptive warriors through a process of perpetual rehearsal. The work combines the lenses of theatre and performance with theories of military history and warfare, trauma, and the workings of power to expose the latest and most realized manifestation of the art of war as performance. I refer to the art of war as performance not only as a convenient catch-all for the interactions between military theory and performance studies that define my dissertation, but also as a commentary on a fundamental shift in the most basic approach to warfare underway for two hundred years that accepts that warfare is performance and responds with strategy that can be seen to function as performance.

When General David Howell Petraeus assumed the title of Commanding General of the Multi-National Force in Iraq in January 2007, he radically altered the military’s approach to the destructively stagnate and hugely unpopular war. Until that point, the US forces employed a primarily force and fortress-based strategy, where a relatively smaller troop presence based in physically removed and highly fortified bases execute patrols, convoy support, and other tasks aimed at providing firepower before returning to their
base; the localized Iraqi police forces handled the majority of the daily security and civilian interaction within the population centers, and the goal was that they would assume the full defense role relatively soon. Petraeus shifted the infantry’s focus to establishing security as the preeminent concern even before political stability, acknowledging the need for long-term involvement, and instituting a significant “surge” in overall force numbers. US soldiers and Marines began to spread throughout the populace, now stationed not in sealed away bases but in “Joint Security Stations” and “Combat Outposts” located within the most troubled areas of Baghdad. Instead of emerging periodically to lead convoys, provide firepower, and otherwise conduct combat operations, the new strategy required soldiers to interact with the civilian population on terms other than asserting martial dominance.

Much of this strategy leaned heavily on the theory of insurgency and counterinsurgency Petraeus himself distilled in his December 2006 Army Field Manuel 3-24, Counterinsurgency. FM 3-24 specifically calls for a “Mission Command” approach which, “[i]s the conduct of military operations through decentralized execution based upon mission orders for effective mission accomplishment. Successful mission command results from subordinate leaders at all echelons exercising disciplined initiative within the commander’s intent to accomplish missions” (1-26, emphasis mine). Mission Command “is the Army’s and Marine Corps’ preferred method for commanding and controlling forces during all types of operations. […] Higher commanders empower subordinates to make decisions within the commander’s intent. They leave details of execution to their subordinates and expect them to use initiative and judgment to accomplish the mission” (1-26, emphasis mine). In the process of “empower[ing] the lowest levels,” troops must
“make observations, draw and apply lessons, and assess results” and commanders must develop “an effective system to circulate best practices throughout their command” (1-26). Such techniques aim to counter insurgents who seek “to attract high-profile media coverage or local publicity and inflate perceptions of insurgent capabilities. Resulting stories often include insurgent fabrications designed to undermine the government’s legitimacy” (1-2, 1-3). The result is that “effective COIN [counterinsurgency] operations are decentralized, and higher commanders owe it to their subordinates to push as many capabilities as possible down to their level. [...] It is a major characteristic of a COIN force that can adapt and react at least as quickly as the insurgents” (1-26, emphasis mine). Petraeus’ strategy thus seeks to counter the elastic theatre of insurgency with a military branded individual flexibility capable of out performing the enemy.

General Petraeus’ counterinsurgency plan in action in Iraq crystallizes several elements that highlight the interrelations between violence, spectacularity, power, and performance that I will return to repeatedly in this work—that warfare is inherently cathartic, that the individual enlisted soldier is now the primary focus of military theory and practice, that training should seek to empower him to be flexible and adaptive, and that this should be accomplished in training-as-rehearsal. But the failure of this shift to alter the existential terror that marks the ontology of war or even stem the flow of traumatized veterans returning stateside lays bare the ultimate futility of this process. Using Petraeus’ strategy as a leaping off point, I intend to problematize the fact that contemporary US infantry training, rooted in a long line of theorists, attempts to meticulously identify and define what is traumatic, prepare for it in training, and eventually neutralize it on the battlefield. But the extremity of warfare remains trauma,
which by its very definition and location beyond the limits of existential reality blatantly
resists any such attempts, leaving training a doomed and fruitless attempt to voice the
unspeakable that further distorts the real and the virtual.

Petraeus highlights the uncertainty, chance, and confusion involved in insurgent
warfare, pointing out how the enemy seeks to “create fear and uncertainty within the
populace and government institutions” (1-2). Insurgents actively seek to shape the
“information environment” by focusing their actions on confusing their enemies and
dominating the local populations through terror; in addition, they “strive to disguise their
intentions. When these insurgents are successful at such deception, potential
counterinsurgents are at a disadvantage” (1-2). All of this is done in the name of
“overthrow[ing] the existing social order and reallocate[ing] power within a single state, or
to break away from state control and form an autonomous entity or ungoverned space that
they can control” (1-2). By touching upon insurgency’s use of seemings, trickery,
uncertainty, and chaos to play off the emotions and fears of the audience—in this case
both the civilian population and soldiers—Petraeus continues a trend in military theory
that recognizes terror’s potential to destabilize the battlefield and lay waste to even the
best laid plans for war.

In response to insurgency’s exploitation of disguise and mimicry in the name of
terror, Petraeus concentrates the art of war—military strategy and tactics (the rehearsing
for, directing, recording, interpreting, and theorizing of battles)—around empowering the
lowest ranked soldiers to take the initiative and relying on their flexibility as the key
component of tactical action. Counterinsurgency therefore hinges on training as the
fundamental building block for achieving and maintaining any military victory. Rather
than counting on overwhelming firepower to simply wipe out all resistance, soldiers must actively engage the Iraqi citizens on their own terms in their own spaces—thus the amount of so called Operations Other Than War (OOTW) have exponentially increased under counterinsurgency, forcing soldiers to do much more than fight. FM 3-24 calls for soldiers who not only are trained to fight, but who also “speak the language, move easily within the society, and are more likely to understand the population’s interests. Thus, effective COIN operations require a greater emphasis on certain skills, such as language and cultural understanding, than does conventional warfare” (1-23). In addition, each soldier should possess “[a] clear appreciation of the essential nature and nuances of the conflict, […] [a]n understanding of the motivation, strengths, and weaknesses of the insurgents” and “[k]nowledge of the roles of other actors in the AO [Area of Operations]” (1-23). In order to effectively carry out the primary objective of counterinsurgency, namely to “foster development of effective governance by a legitimate government” via “establishing security for the civilian populace” by winning “the battle [for] people’s minds,” strategy necessarily must work from the ground up, focusing on equipping each and every soldier—that is, each actor, to borrow the general’s own terminology—with the necessary tools to interact, communicate, understand, and control Iraq, its civilians, and its insurgents (1-23, 1-27). The enlisted soldier thus serves as the primary element of strategy, the factor that plays the largest role in potentially gaining the upper hand.

Counterinsurgency also relies on a decentralized approach to the battlefield, necessitating that soldiers function outside the panoptic control of central command; such a strategy promotes flexibility of thought and action over rigid discipline. In working under Mission Command, soldiers must “adapt at least as fast as insurgents, […]"
shift[ing] between military and political phases and tactics” in order to “make observations, draw and apply lessons, and assess results.” (1-26). Soldiers need to instantaneously shift from killer to politician and back again, all the while operating wholly independently of the hierarchy of command and, often times, on their own orders. Gone are the days of soldiers being trained simply to respond to command and fire, charge and stab. Instead, each soldier should assess the situation calmly and quickly and take the correct action when needed. Thus, counterinsurgency seeks to “empower the lowest levels” to “learn and adapt,” invoking the main tenets of performative power as outlined by Jon McKenzie in *Perform or Else: From Discipline to Performance*. In so doing, Petraeus attempts to solve the age-old problem of how to best maintain control over soldiers in the heat of battle by actually allowing them more freedom, counting on skills built up through training to dictate immediately the proper course of action. Which is to say, counterinsurgency aims to negate a fundamentally theatrical aspect of warfare—that soldiers inherently resist control because of their emotionally cathartic response to battle—through performance, using training to prevent the evisceration of subjectivity that greets individuals entering combat.

Since assuming command of the Multi-National Force in Iraq, General Petraeus has received the lion’s share of the credit for what is perceived to be a marked decrease in violence and hostility and an increase in stability in Iraq. The General’s counterinsurgency tactics—put to use on the ground throughout the country, as well as serving as the driving force for a generalized overhaul of infantry training back home—combined with the famously contested “troop surge,” have not just been credited with turning the tide of the Iraq War, but are being hailed as the model for all future infantry
training and operations. The discourse surrounding counterinsurgency, the progress of the Iraq War, and the direction of training converge around preparing soldiers ahead of time not just for combat situations but a full range of potential Operations Other Than War through hyper-realistic training techniques offering a mimetic simulation of a myriad of possible warfare situations. With training designed to introduce soldiers and Marines to the stress, confusion, and a near limitless range of scenarios, combined with greater emphasis on ethics, language and interpersonal skills and increasing knowledge of cultural traditions, individuals are better prepared to face the demands of modern warfare and counterinsurgency. Such training and theory carries a double benefit, helping to improve life abroad by preventing violence and generating stability, while at the same time aiding soldiers themselves by increasing their likelihood of survival and staving off traumatic reactions to combat.

Or at least, that is the theory. But the discourse does not synch with the intent or the results. Indeed, one of my primary goals in the study is to interrogate the disconnect between what the military states and what they actually do and its subsequent outcome. There is far more at stake here than simply engaging with the structural similarities between theatre, performance, and military training, or even exposing what I have come to call performative training and the art of war as performance serves the sole purpose of expanding and ensuring the power and reach of the military institution and the nation which it supports. The very mixing and blurring of the real and virtual and the attempts to define and predict the limits of what the mind can experience and process at work in military training goes beyond mere martial theory and cuts to the heart of the ontological dilemmas between the real and artificial presented in theatre and endemic to society. In a
world where war is often confused, as will be shown, with merely playing at death and killing, and the act of rehearsing eclipses any final performance, human consciousness threatens to collapse into something else, the terror of nonbeing that erupts in the moment of traumatic realization.

In what follows, I situate my work within a clear void in scholarship in both the fields of performance studies and military theory and history. Each chapter of this dissertation investigates the ways in which performance is a fundamental aspect of war and the military’s own awareness of the role that performance plays both in fighting and training and the effect it has on those who perform. Likewise, all four chapters and the conclusion problematize the military’s discourse and draw attention to the ontological stakes involved in performative training. Within the context of the violence and terror of war, theatre and performance, acting and spectating, and spectacle and catharsis are all recast by the military—terrible and dangerous in their power to dominate, subjugate, and kill, yet simultaneously positive and seductive in their ultimate potential to reconfigure the very nature of warfare and push towards a bloodless war. But the military remains blind to the impossibility of its own project, unable or unwilling to confront the fallout of a fundamentally traumatic system of warfare.

The first chapter, “‘Awe and Pity,’ ‘Shock and Awe:’ Spectacular Catharsis in the Art of War,” situates the government’s use of “Shock and Awe” in the Iraq war into a genealogy of military theory focused on treating the art of war as performance. The chapter specifically focuses on the influence that the theories of 19th-century Prussian general Carl von Clausewitz played on the original creators of the theory behind “Shock and Awe,” and how his On War marks a paradigm shift away from discipline and
towards performance. By means of a genealogical study proceeding through Clausewitz, French Colonel Charles-Jean-Jacques-Joseph Ardant du Picq, American SLA Marshall, and concluding with Canadian Defense Analyst Anthony Kellett, British officer Richard Holmes, military historian Paddy Griffith, and Army Ranger Colonel David Grossman, I seek to unearth the roots of contemporary US infantry training and practice. Military theory has consistently placed catharsis, the emotional response of theatrical spectators, at the center of the soldier’s experience in battle, seeking a means to prevent its seemingly inevitable, debilitating, and paralyzing upsurge of passions. Clausewitz and those who followed derided the disciplinary approach to war that advocated strict drill and absolute obedience to even the minutest of orders as the best means of maintaining battlefield order and achieving victory. Instead, they offered up a model of training and strategy upon which Petraeus would base much of his own theories; advocating for adaptive warriors capable of calm and collected steady fire, these theorists held that battlefield experience was paramount for avoiding catharsis, so training should ensure that no soldier entered war unprepared and unfamiliar. At the same time, by enabling troops to maintain constant offensive action, the goal was to force the enemy into the passive role as spectator that such training prevented. Thus, “Shock and Awe,” counterinsurgency, and current training practices are not so much revolutionary new approaches to combating insurgency, but merely the military’s latest and most visible obsession with the power of performance as a means to prepare for and defuse the eradication of self that marks the locus of trauma on the battlefield.

Having grounded the present moment in its historical foundation, the second and third chapters outline contemporary infantry training in the United States from a recruit’s
first moments in the service to directly before deploying to war. Chapter Two, “Virtual and Actual Combats: Theatricality in Contemporary US Infantry Training,” focuses on the Army’s Basic Combat Training and the Marine Corps’ Basic Training, the first of many phases of training a soldier or Marine undergoes. Each of these initial entry programs share a structure corresponding to Victor Turner’s social drama theory of “breech, crisis, redressive action, reintegration” that examines change by means of conflict. The very first moments of boot camp fix the new recruit as the target of martial disciplinary power, personified in the figure of the drill sergeant; the first half of basic training serves to establish the civilian—the emotionally irrational element within every individual judged responsible for inconsistent and unreliable battlefield performance—as the enemy, that which must be killed off before recruits can begin to become warriors. This period is thus spent breaking recruits down through the physical and mental pain of exhaustive drill and ceremony. The rest of basic training begins to rebuild individuals into effective and efficient killing machines. Training in both the Army and Marines transitions to dynamic, interactive systems of exercises designed to mimic actual combat situations in order to build specific skills and increase desired traits, such as aggressive response, quick thinking, effective and quick strike ability, and efficient multitasking. I suggest that the implicit intent behind this system of training is to instill a process akin to theatricality, the withholding of sympathy when spectating that enables critical thought and decisive action, for participants so that they can resist the cathartic pull of battle and perform at a high level. Such training thus seeks to train away the emotions that cause soldiers to fail to perform and suffer traumatic encounters.
Chapter Three examines the period after basic training until soldiers deploy for actual combat, focusing on exposing the true aim behind such practices and the crux of my argument. This phase is dominated by Advanced Individual Training in the Army, School of Infantry in the Marines, and postmobilization training, conducted subsequent to being called up for active duty but prior to actual front line service as a means to prepare soldiers and Marines specifically for the combat that awaits them and ensure they are all in proper battle condition. Responding to incidents of troops failing to perform according to their training with disastrous and highly publicized results, both the Army and Marine Corps targeted perceived failures within post boot camp training by instituting dueling versions of the “warrior ethos” (Soldier’s Creed). Focusing on increasing every soldier and Marine’s basic combat skills and instilling within them a basic set of “warrior” values and instincts, the warrior ethos performatively attempts to ensure that all members of the infantry, no matter their specialties, enter combat with the proper mindset. At the same time, both branches of the service instituted immersion training, which incorporates professional actors, scripts, sets, props, and an audience to mimetically simulate war in advance with the goal of guaranteeing that no warrior enters live combat unprepared and unfamiliar with its spectacular scene. However, examining the discourse surrounding these changes under the critical lens of performance uncovers a series of fault lines that reveal an imperfect simulacrum and the intent behind the military’s privileging of performance, a selective deployment of mimesis aimed at turning training into a perpetual rehearsal without a culminating performance. Returning to Jon McKenzie’s notions of performative power and an understanding of theories of rehearsal and performance, particularly those of Tracy Davis and Richard Schechner, as well as a
reading of Michel Foucault’s notion of the heterotopia in the context of theatrical space, this chapter opens up the idea of the infantry as a (non)place of performance wherein individuals are eternally practicing for a premiere that never arrives. Performative training, functioning as perpetual rehearsal, cannot but fail in its attempts to predict war and prevent catharsis, leaving soldiers just as susceptible to trauma if not more so.

Up to this point, the majority of the dissertation focuses on the implicit intent within the institutional discourse of the infantry in the form of official documents, interviews, quotes, and other sources; that is to say, the first three chapters of this work concern what the military intends to achieve through its training and doctrine and what it hopes for in terms of actual effects and results. My fourth chapter takes a somewhat more direct approach to the actual implications of such practices, reading into these sources a more sinister narrative. Approaching military training from the perspective of its potential effect on those who participate, I argue that infantry training-as-combat—rehearsal staged as performance—by its very structure forecloses the possibilities of grasping the full impact of what is seen and done, causing soldiers to fail to process fully the violence they are committing and that is being enacted on and around them. Building on Cathy Caruth’s theories of trauma in *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* and *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, Ruth Leys’ *Trauma: A Genealogy*, and military studies on Combat Stress Reaction and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, along with a return to General David Petraeus’ *Counterinsurgency*, I suggest that while theatricality and perpetual rehearsal can stave off the immediate cathartic and paralyzing reaction to the spectacle of war by overexposing and even inducing it beforehand through the power of dark play, it merely shifts the location of trauma from live to virtual combat.
Theatricality asks soldiers to constantly remove themselves from the present, maintaining an eye at once on the past and future, and in so doing, seemingly increases the potential for PTSD by opening up an experiential gap that denies the possibility of claiming the impact of their actions and the force of what they have witnessed; this magnifies the probability of repeated impossible confrontation with the originary event, in this case the spectacular catharsis of immersive rehearsal. Society is thus subject to the failure of performative training and the history of the art of war as performance, left to carry the human burden of a system unable to create a bloodless war or the ultimate warrior and instead doomed to craft soldiers already traumatized from the collapse of the virtual and actual.

In the spirit of the interconnections of theatre, performance, and military theory pervasive throughout this dissertation, I conclude with a question: can theatre serve as a means of undoing, through testimony, the long-term damage done to these warriors, themselves created through performance? Taking as my starting point the rash of veterans turning to theatre to give voice to their wartime experiences in straightforward and direct retellings, specifically Sean Huze’s *Sandstorm: Stories From the Front* and *The Wolf*, I put forward the potential within theatrical performance as a means of bearing witness to trauma. Through embodied practice and storytelling, theatre opens up a space between actor and audience wherein veterans can address the truth of their forgotten past and, through such testimony, reassert control over their life and memory. But just as the promise of performative training succumbs to the weight of its danger, theatre as testimony is counterbalanced by the risk of rejection, the threat of merely extending the cycle of perpetual rehearsal anew. Theatre, an institution itself so concerned with the
ontology of appearances and existential questions of consciousness, violence, and terror, brings to the fore the problematics of smearing the real and artificial and rehearsing the unfathomable and unpredictable.

In proposing that the basic structure of contemporary US infantry training promotes the possibilities of trauma and that theatre might serve as a means of testimony, it is not my intention to speak to any notion of an absolute correlation between training and PTSD or offer the kind of clinical analysis normally reserved for psychological studies. My aim is instead to interrogate the stated and implicit practice of the Army and Marines, investigating the positive potential put forth by the military as well as a possible downside to current practice. Each chapter introduces new locations of overlap between theatre and war, performance and training, trauma and theatricality, offers new possibilities for both understanding theatre as a hegemonic mechanism as it works beyond the physical stage, and begins to come to terms with the fact that the military recognizes, understands, and exploits the power within theatre and performance far more than ever realized as well as revealing the tragedy of such an endeavor. This project is only the necessary first step towards a critique of theatre, performance theory, and the military as structurally akin, experientially unimaginable, and existentially terrifying.
Chapter 1

“Awe and Pity,” “Shock and Awe”:

Spectacular Catharsis in the Art of War

The United States at the infancy of the twenty-first century is in the midst of an era of unprecedented military performance seeming to intentionally blur and collapse the boundaries between training and actual combat by means of an increasing spectacularity in the theorization and execution of military strategy. The implications of this seismic shift within the relationship between the military and theatre are far reaching, affecting not only the ways in which the US plans for and carries out its wars, but profoundly impacting the lives of those who do the actual fighting. Within the past decade the Army and Marines have systematically instituted a series of performance-based changes including: video game recruitment; simulated combat scenarios in basic combat training; combat conducted through computer interfaces that mix gaming with reality; full-scale theatrical productions; and, perhaps most explicitly, the so-called “Shock and Awe” campaign that kicked off the Iraq War on 21 March, 2003, in which the US military aimed a massive barrage of bombs and missiles at hundreds of Iraqi Army, governmental, and infrastructural targets. These institutional spectacles revolve around a systematic use of performance, power, and technology in the name of terror, violence, and—perhaps paradoxically—survival, whose roots lie within a very specific genealogy of the art of war.

In what follows, I will situate the roots of contemporary infantry training in the United States within a genealogy of warfare first distilled into theory in the West by 19th-
century Prussian General Carl von Clausewitz that moves through French Colonel Charles-Jean-Jacques-Joseph Ardant du Picq, American SLA Marshall, and concluding in the post-Vietnam era with Canadian Defense Analyst Anthony Kellett, British officer Richard Holmes, military historian Paddy Griffith, and Army Ranger Colonel David Grossman. My concern here is to elucidate a history of ideas that leads directly to the ontological impasse between the desire to fully prepare for battle and the inherent unrepresentability of trauma, one that focuses on an approach to warfare that poses the enlisted soldier as the foremost martial problem because of his emotional response to the spectacle of combat. This line of thinking holds that while technologies change, the one constant remains the role of those doing the actual fighting. Inevitably, absorption in the spectacle surrounding the soldier in battle causes emotions to overcome him, thereby stripping away any sense of discipline or ability to take positive, offensive action. In response, the focus of infantry theory has become affecting the will of the enemy while ensuring that the resolve of allied troops remains steeled, exposing soldiers ahead of time to what the military deems potentially traumatic in the hopes of it losing its impact on the battlefield. And to actualize this, military theory has turned to a deployment of performative power—what Jon McKenzie defines as a paradigm opposed to discipline that focuses on the “efficiency,” “effectiveness,” and “efficacy” of performance to allow each individual to be flexible and self-sufficient—in order to empower a more flexible approach to fighting by exposing soldiers to battle beforehand through theatrical training (60). The art of war has thus become performance, with military strategy and tactics turning to a system that seeks to rehearse, direct, record, interpret, and theorize battles in advance to allow US soldiers to move freely and unencumbered in warfare abroad, which
the US military confidently asserts will mimic the training already undertaken here at home. But as will be shown in subsequent chapters, it is precisely this act of mimicry that, in troubling the border between the real and virtual, only creates a greater burden for both the military and society.

**Catharsis**

Certainly the most publicized and controversial moment of the utilization of performance in US war policy was the actualization of the theories set down in the influential 1996 paper “Shock and Awe: Achieving Rapid Dominance,” by Harlan K. Ullman and James P. Wade, which focuses on “destroying the adversary’s will to resist before, during, and after battle,” by “affecting the will, understanding, and perception of an adversary” (x, xi). A main tenet of Shock and Awe is to achieve “near total or absolute knowledge and understanding of self, adversary, and environment” (xii).

Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld applied this concept nearly verbatim when he rationalized that the US initiation of the Iraq War would create a scenario in which “Iraqi soldiers and officers must ask themselves whether they want to die fighting for a doomed regime or do they want to survive, help the Iraqi people in the liberation of their country and play a role in a new, free Iraq” (Rumsfeld Press Conference 20 March 2003).

Rumsfeld framed the ensuing bombing campaign within the psychological impact of the performance of overwhelming US power, peddling the destruction of Iraq as a mental rather than physical strategy of conquest. Using explosives as a means to force surrender is not an unprecedented strategy, as the air campaigns of World War II and centuries of siege warfare make clear, but with “Shock and Awe,” the emphasis shifts from causing destruction with the intent to destroy the means of production to destruction with the
intent to “paralyze, shock, unnerve, deny, [and] destroy”; such a concern with affect, spectacle, psychology, and terror rests on positioning the enemy, both combatants and civilians, as spectators, “shocking” them into passivity through the “awe”-inspiring violence presented for consumption (xxix). This emphasis on affecting the will throughout “Shock and Awe” has taken hold within contemporary US military theory, as evidenced in the bombing campaign and the transition to General Petraeus’s “counterinsurgency” theories discussed in the Introduction. Within both the Army and Marines there is also an increasingly performance-based focus on how “we train, organize, and educate our combat officers and key enlisted personnel” so that they are able to “[a]ssimilat[e] in real time […] vast amount[s] of information” (Ullman and Wade 18).

Ullman and Wade’s use of “Shock and Awe” to “frighten, scare, intimidate, and disarm” marks only the most contemporary contribution to a discourse centering on the role of human emotions within warfare that dates back at least two hundred years to Prussian General Carl von Clausewitz’s highly influential treatise on strategy in the aftermath of the Napoleonic wars, On War (Ullman and Wade, 34). While “Shock and Awe” focuses on the effects of the spectacle of warfare on the enemy soldiers, Clausewitz does so from the point of view of his own troops. In a remarkable passage that begins Chapter Four of the first book, the Prussian general reenacts for his readers the experience of stepping into combat for the first time and the subsequent destruction of any romantic vision of warfare. Clausewitz writes: “[l]et us accompany a novice to the battlefield. As we approach the rumble of guns grows louder and alternates with the whir of cannon balls, which begin to attract his attention” (113). Clausewitz addresses the
reader directly and describes the noises, sights, and sensations of entering battle. As he attempts to subject the reader to an emotional experience similar to that of the novice soldier, Clausewitz finds himself turning to theatrical reproduction. In his quest to demonstrate the chaotic and unnerving effect of actual battle, Clausewitz must reenact it, offering a mimetic facsimile for his audience to describe the horrors of warfare. The theatrical invades the narrative, betraying the general’s understanding of both the nature of war and those who do the fighting—indeed Clausewitz tellingly describes how war appears to the first-time fighter “almost as if a spectacle” and thus becomes overwhelming, as “[f]or a final shock, the sight of men being killed and mutilated moves our pounding hearts to awe and pity” (113, emphasis mine). The experience of the first-time soldier in war as described by Clausewitz is that of an intense and arresting moment of witnessing that produces catharsis, the much-debated upsurge of emotions offered by Aristotle as the heart of theatrical spectating.

In answer to Plato’s critique of the irrationally damaging power of emotions, Aristotle posits catharsis as the positive, and perhaps even cleansing, emotional response of pity and fear aroused in an audience who witnesses terrifying events performed well in tragedy. As the audience watches those “better” than them, but similar enough as to allow for identification with their faults and plights, the audience suffers with the character, experiencing a sympathetic emotional response from imagining themselves in such a situation and a concomitant terror at such a prospect. The audience thus experiences a surge of emotion—pity and fear—but one that is not overwhelming because experienced in the safety of the theatre and allows these otherwise dangerous feelings harmless expression, thereby developing proper emotional response and building character.” Thus,
according to Stephen Halliwell, catharsis is “a powerful emotional experience which not only gives our natural feelings of pity and fear full play, but does so in a way which conduces to their rightful functioning as part of our understanding of, and response to, events in the human world” (90).

However, Aristotle’s theory of catharsis relies on an understanding of spectatorship confined to the amphitheatre, a notion that, at its core, was designed to counteract Plato’s attack on theatre as dangerous precisely because of its play with emotions. Aristotle’s theory of catharsis relies on a conception of theatre as separate and distinct from the real world in order to guarantee its positive impact. If people watch terrible and pitiable actions outside the safe space of the theatre, allowing the corresponding emotional reaction “full play” would lack the relief and pleasure afforded by its harmless expression. Rather than controlling emotional response, such witnessing would instead have the opposite effect. When theatrical spectating occurs outside the theatre on the streets and we find ourselves audience to pitiable and terrifying instances where mimesis asserts itself as the all-too-real, in our case, the spectacle of war, the associated upsurge of emotions normally controlled and productive can become powerfully dangerous. At the intersections of “the human world” and the world of theatre, cathartic terror is, as Anthony Kubiak writes in *Stages of Terror*:

> The manifestation of a fundamental and violent expulsion or disappearance of the subject and his pain into another locus. [...] The intensity of this disappearance produces a loss of identity: the collapse of the subject/object into a third term, an Unnamable. *Katharsis* then, is an expulsion inaugurated within the field of terror. Generated by the terror born of fragmented consciousness, *katharsis* is what it produces—a perpetual unlocatability, a continuous *apanisis*, an infinite series of displacements, disgorgements, emeses that serve in the end to eradicate all sense of a vulnerable, locatable self. (19)
At the limits of human consciousness, catharsis threatens to explode into trauma, destroying the subject and leaving only horror and terror. The very unpredictability of the cathartic response lies in its extremity, its place beyond comprehension or representation. And indeed for Clausewitz, the “awe and pity” of witnessing others being killed and mutilated combines with the fear generated by the spectacle fully surrounding each soldier to push them from “act[ing] a little oddly” and thus “not as steady and collected” as before, into full-blown terror (Clausewitz 113). The experience of a soldier-turned-audience outside the confines of the theatre rouses such overwhelming sentiments as to have the opposite, adverse effect on the battlefield. “Awe and pity” quickly becomes “shock and awe,” terror and irrationality. Much like stage fright, where the overwhelming sense of terror and anxiety causes a complete inability to act, a failure of the mind to process, the detrimental response that Clausewitz locates primarily in novice soldiers but to a degree in each and every infantryman is a seeming instance of catharsis taken outside its safe confines and does more than simply arouse emotions, it actively unsettles the mind.

The normally disciplined soldier, faced with the danger of death and the spectacle of the sights, sounds, smells, and sensations of warfare, inevitably succumbs to overwhelming terror. The shock and awe of battle forces the soldier out of an active role and resituates him as absorbed spectator, passively observing and consuming the action, victim to both emotions and, most likely, gunfire. Such lack of discipline and self-control causes a breakdown in order: soldiers cease to obey commands and instead react according to their emotional, impulsive, and therefore unpredictable response. The unnamable terror manifests itself as catharsis and causes each soldier to lose “normal
flexibility,” making “action in this debilitating element [...] fall short of achievements”; this usually causes them to run, to surrender, to simply not fight, or countless other actions in defiance of their orders (Clausewitz 114). Rather than helping, what I term “spectacular catharsis” leaves the soldier incapable of taking action, a passive audience to the scene of battle. Spectacular catharsis, experienced away from the stage as violently self-effacing emotions, thus aligns with the Platonic attack on theatre, precisely what Aristotle aimed to foreclose by using the term. For Plato, theatre—inseparable from witnessing, catharsis, and emotions—“awakens and nourishes and strengthens the feelings and impairs the reason” (Plato). Because of an actor’s ability to mimetically perform and play on the emotions, the theatre was for Plato the most dangerous of arts; the theatrical artist manipulates the emotional responses of an audience in order to trick them into believing the false, superficial reality presented before them. Such a process is dangerous, as the emotions are irrational and base, and the audience can easily fall under their sway, believing attractive what might be ethically questionable characters or actions.

The term antitheatrical most often refers to a specific prejudice against the theatre that focuses on problems of presentation, artifice, exaggeration, instability, femininity, and falsity, among others, all tied into the Platonic attack on mimesis. Jonas Barish, in The Antitheatrical Prejudice, examines how Western culture has consistently degraded theatre for its association with outward expression, mimesis and imitation, deception, spectacle, and all of its negative affect on the audience. Attempts to reform and remove from the theatre all traces of the problems of mimesis and exhibitionism, and an attendant crusade to mend society of the predicament of theatrical performance and the vice,
wantonness, and deceit with which it is accompanied, all form significant and influential strains of theatrical theory and cultural critique. Western theatrical performance has consistently been placed at the bottom of the artistic barrel throughout its history, the bastard stepchild of the “higher” and “purer” art forms such as music, painting, and sculpture. Thus, what is theatrical is often considered to be a negative. But even more so, what is theatrical is not just false but dangerously absorptive. This coincides with the Platonic mimetic attack on the theatre wherein “imitation is formative—those who imitate will tend to become what they imitate” (Barish 21). It is not just that acting on the stage means pretending to be what one is not—a character—but that such imitation has power over the mind and body. Mimesis invades the soul, both of actor and audience, by playing on sympathies and emotions, overriding cognitive faculties of reason and thought with passions. Theatre, being the most mimetic of arts, has particularly negative powers, as the audience can easily succumb to the emotions involved and begin to sympathize, to imagine themselves in similar situations, thus becoming totally absorbed in the spectacle and collapsing the distance between actor and audience. This lack of distance is dangerous, as it is capable of producing the very thing imitated. As Barish writes of Plato’s thinking, “it is nearly as terrible to imagine one has married one’s mother as it would be to do so in earnest. The first can lead to the second and must be prohibited” (29). The theatrical is thus powerfully, dangerously, passionate and unstable; the theatrical becomes what it plays at, shifting between roles instead of remaining fixed. Being absorbed in the drama means succumbing to the power of theatrical passion and losing the distance between actor and audience, reason and emotion.

In a related vein, Martin Puchner in *Stage Fright: Modernism, Antitheatricality,*
and Drama, demonstrates how theatre has sought to rid itself of the presence of the actor and his or her passions on stage; theatre thus turns against itself, attempting to eliminate its own inherent “theatricalism,” that is, its liveness, its ephemerality, its gestures, its emotional and emphatic sway on an audience—the very elements which make performance what it is. Stemming from an outgrowth of modernism, the driving force of modern theatre, rehearsal, and actor training lies in the desire to minimize the play of catharsis in the theatre by reducing the function of the actor in performing a role through passionate and inspired mimesis. Antitheatricalism is thus diametrically opposed to catharsis and its effect—following Plato, theatre is dangerous precisely because of the live pull of catharsis, because the audience becomes subject to the play of passions, both the actor’s and their own, and can be infected by what they watch.

The role of spectacular catharsis in the experience of the enlisted infantryman and its influence on the overall effectiveness of an army as laid out by Clausewitz is the central theme of a highly influential series of military theorists who follow him and whose influence is directly felt within contemporary US infantry doctrine. The negative role of irrational emotions as a result of passive witnessing remains to this day the primary problem to be solved in order to successfully wage war. While On War was for Clausewitz a response centered on institutionalizing performance to what he saw as a new direction of warfare in the wake of the Napoleonic wars, Battle Studies, published posthumously after the Franco-Prussian Wars, was a reaction to Clausewitzean-influenced Prussian military improvements for French Colonel Charles-Jean-Jacques Joseph Ardant du Picq. A utilization of mass conscription over shorter durations combined with an understanding and implementation of flexible and speed-based
technology such as railroads, breach-loading rifles, and telegraphs allowed the Prussian army to implement a theoretical flexibility and strategic precision in the spirit of Clausewitz. And it was the overwhelming success and impending threat of this army that reinforced for Ardant du Picq the need for a similar but further reaching overhaul of Franco military theory at the close of the nineteenth century. In terms evocative of Clausewitz’s description of an inexperienced soldier’s surrender to spectacular catharsis, Ardant du Picq describes how “on the field of battle death is in the air, blind and invisible, making his presence known by fearful whistlings that make heads duck” (133). The novice soldier inevitably “hunches up, closes in, seeking aid by an instinctive unformulated reasoning.” But the carnage surrounding him offers little comfort, searing into his brain the sights and sounds of agony, destruction, and death, so unlike anything witnessed before. Reaching a state of irrationality and passivity, the soldier can only dwell on his own very real peril, becoming “possessed by terror” and “inevitably […] retreating before the fire” (133). “Awe and pity” once again triumphs, eviscerating the soldier’s self and leaving only terror and panic—theatre left to its own devices as dangerous as Plato once warned. The soldier succumbs to irrational emotional passivity precisely because of his sympathetic witnessing. Despite over fifty years between their publication and serious technological advancements aimed at providing a greater number of troops with deadlier firepower, Clausewitz and Ardant du Picq focus their treatises on the same basic, fundamental notion: war is inherently theatrical and will infect audience and actor alike and collapse their differentiation—success in such a venture rests on the ability of soldiers to resist the pull of their debilitating terror and act rather than watch and react.
Battle Studies calls for a vast reconception of training, warfare, and strategy based on the tenet that spectacular catharsis inevitably triumphs over discipline in the heat of battle. Because the “basic factor” of all war is always “the human heart in the supreme moment of battle,” from the very start Ardant du Picq rejected the importance often placed on technology and strategy, instead claiming that since “man is the fundamental instrument in battle,” “[n]othing can wisely be prescribed in an army […] without exact knowledge of the fundamental instrument, man, and his state of mind, his morale, at the instant of combat” (58, 28). Based on historical study as well as knowledge derived from direct combat experience, Ardant du Picq confidently asserted the absolute fallibility of the human heart; “strong as the soul often is,” the Colonel writes, “it can not dominate the body to the point where there will not be a revolt of the flesh and mental perturbation in the face of destruction” (28). Always subject to the power of terror, pity, and panic, warfare at its core consists of a basic emotional contest that hinges on which side can best “reduce the element of chance,” delaying “as long as possible […] the instant when the soldier gets from under the control of the commander” and inevitably succumbs to the “instinct of self-preservation and the sense of fear that goes with it” (57, 56, 32). This moment where “man loses his reasoning power and becomes instinctive,” Clausewitz’s spectacular catharsis, eviscerates all logical function and must be delayed (33).

Fifty years later, terror on the battlefield once again dominates Men Against Fire: The Problem of Battle Command, written by SLA Marshall in the wake of working as a frontline journalist throughout WWII. Drawing upon his own experiences in the trenches of WWI and having interviewed countless enlisted men and officers immediately after combat across the Pacific, Marshall concluded that the fundamental focus of military
theory and practice should be “more and better fire,” carried out by using training to “seek […] any and all means by which we can increase the ratio of effective fire when we have to go to war” (22). Marshall advocated for “the decisive importance of fire,” that effective, efficient fire brought to bear directly on the enemy and steady advancement on the field is the fastest and most assured means of victory; therefore, “it must follow that at all levels of command the intensifying and directing of fire becomes the foremost problem” (70). Indeed, the technological advancements through the two World Wars only steeled his belief that “the prime effect of the increase in the killing power of weapons is to increase the need for man power in the national defense (20, 21).” Despite tanks, long range accurate artillery, and powerful air forces, the basic method for achieving firepower remained the human being; whether the bombardier, gunner, or the enlisted rifle soldier, individuals must ultimately make the decision to actually pull the trigger and carry out their orders, and it is their aim that determines its effectiveness. Because of the singular role of terror, that great cathartic force that ranges freely over the entire battlefield blind to loyalties or ranks, Marshall’s “problem of battle command” is the same as Clausewitz’s and Ardant du Picq’s, that of overcoming emotions in order to maximize the effective rate of fire from as many soldiers as possible.

Much of Men Against Fire concerns the controversial assertion that “75 percent [of soldiers] will not fire or will not persist in firing against the enemy and his works. These men may face the danger but they will not fight” (50). Utilizing extensive field surveys and personal experience, Marshall defiantly insisted that a near “fixed ceiling” exists in terms of the percentage of soldiers who will ever actively engage the enemy, no matter the terrain, the tactical situation, and even the nature of the enemy and the accuracy of his
fire” (57). The fire ratio, whether numerically accurate or not, speaks to the human element of war, the undeniable role of cathartic emotions in destroying strategy and reeking havoc on the battlefield; indeed, Marshall is absolute in his conviction that “the most serious and repeated breakdowns on the field of combat are caused by failure of the controls over human nature” (38). Fear is omnipresent in war, affecting everyone who dons the uniform, but fear does not always give way to terror. Emotions are inevitable, and, according to Marshall, it is only “uncontrolled fear that is the enemy of successful operation” (37). Fear gives way to terror as a result of spectacular catharsis, when “the events of contact and collision move men in battle, playing upon their fears and hopes, tricking their imaginations, inviting and then repelling their initiative,” “confronting them quite suddenly with unexpected prospects of success,” only to dash “those prospects through some queer prank of fate, reminding them that they are mortal and at the same time stimulating their brute instincts” (182). Marshall details the effect of the spectacle of war, the unique position of the soldier-qua-audience forced to confront the massive split-second upsurge of his emotions, and does so in terms that evoke the performative language of Clausewitz and Ardant du Picq. Soldiers, “moved” by the sights before them, go through a litany of emotional responses centering on their role in the drama; warfare specifically “plays” on the emotions of soldiers, using trickery and false visions and promises, the very qualities Plato attacks in the theatre and at the heart of antitheatricalism and the antitheatrical prejudice.

The fact that “the battlefield is cold” and “the lonesomest place which men may share together” only heightens the emotional experience for the soldier; this “emptiness” is “the harshest thing about the field” and “chills a man’s blood, “makes the apple harden
in his throat,” and “grips him as with a paralysis” (44). The “mixture of mystification and fear” leads to “the feeling of helplessness which in turn produces greater fear”—the individual spirals into irrational terror and panic resulting from his sympathetic bond from witnessing other soldier’s destruction and allowing the corresponding emotional upsurge “full play” (45). Marshall thus warns of the realization of Plato’s dire vision of catharsis unleashed from the theatre and Clausewitz’s spectacular catharsis, as “when the infantryman’s mind is gripped by fear, his body is captured by inertia, which is fear’s Siamese twin. […] The failure of the average soldier to fire is […] a result of a paralysis which comes of varying fears. The man afraid wants to do nothing; indeed, he does not care even to think of taking action” (71). Terror, the consequence of fear gaining supremacy over a person’s emotions, causes individuals to “fail” as soldiers—that is to say, if the primary job of the soldier is to obey orders and apply direct and effective fire on the enemy, terror, caused most often by a “mental block” against killing, brings about the general “shrinkage of fire” manifested in Marshall’s “fire ratio” (39).

The unpredictable response characteristic of spectacular catharsis stemming from the collapse of rational thought fundamental to terror outlined above are counterproductive to offensive action and thereby decrease the effectiveness of the entire army. This is the foundational theory behind “Shock and Awe”: that it is possible to affect the will to fight so powerfully simply though a spectacular display of overwhelming force—aimed specifically at the mind—that soldiers become “debilitated” and simply cease fighting. Absorbed in the drama of war and its affecting pull, soldiers are at the mercy of their cathartic response, victims of fear and pity; or, translated into martial terms, “awe and pity” and “shock and awe.” Thus, the goal becomes to literally
promote trauma, to actively attempt to traumatize the enemy through *appearing* as imposing as possible, all the while framing such displays for your own soldiers ahead of time. Thus, to combat the play of emotions in war, Clausewitz and his successors, including the current US military institution, turned to discovering methods to train soldiers to fight and fight well by preventing such absorption and instead keeping them detached from their emotions.\(^5\)

**Theatricality**

The processes that these theorists recommend to combat spectacular catharsis is training individual soldiers to act rather than react and to resist the power of irrationality. Each system rests on ensuring that individuals do not become absorbed in the spectacle before them and thus implements within the martial institution what we might call theatricality. Theatricality, as Tracy C. Davis and Thomas Postlewait point out in their introduction to their book of the same name, has come to have many different, often almost contradictory meanings, ranging from “an act to an attitude, a style to a semiotic system, a medium to a message,” as well as “a mode of representation or a style of behavior characterized by histrionic actions, manners, and devices, and hence a practice”; at the same time, theatricality has meant “an interpretative model for describing psychological identity, social ceremonies, communal festivities, and public spectacles, and hence a theoretical concept” (1). Postlewait and Davis demonstrate how theatricality has stood in for Platonic mimesis and a notion of *theatrum mundi*, as well as residing in the theatrical event itself and the positive “stagedness” utilized to counter realism’s false mimesis, within the semiotic signs of performance, and within the spectator’s act of recognition of the actor’s body and craft.\(^6\) Despite the myriad definitions and historically
specific case studies that Davis and Postlewait’s contributors go on to offer, theatricality inevitably returns to a specific relationship between audience and actor/object/work that hinges on reflection, perspective, absorption, framing, and sympathetic bonds. Where there is theatricality, there is a foregrounded frame and a spatial relationship that pushes the spectator away in order to provide a space for critical reflection rather than unabashed emotional absorption.

Drawing most explicitly on notions of the term put forth by Davis herself, I use “theatricality” to signal a specific relationship between character and audience. Davis argues that theatricality is a process of spectatorship involving the refusal of sympathy towards the character on the part of the audience. Unpacking the originary usage of the term, Davis argues that theatricality is not, as often claimed, a matter of excessive spectacle or aesthetic in-authenticity per se, but “enabling effects of active disassociation, or alienation, or self-reflexivity in standing aside from the suffering of the righteous to name and thus bring into being the self-possession of a critical stance” (153). Whereas theatre practitioners such as Bertolt Brecht and Augusto Boal attempted to use the theatre itself to force theatricality onto the audience, Davis argues that outside the theatre, “the onus for instigating this theatrical moment is on the spectator, who by failing to sympathize and instead commencing to think, becomes the actor” (154). For theatricality to exist in any situation, the spectator must not be fully engrossed in the moment and thereby passively in sync with the actor and his or her emotions; instead, the spectator must be able to take advantage of the distance between character and audience and their respective emotions and reflect on that gap’s implications. In short, theatricality refers to a process wherein the spectator becomes an actor—dissociating the self from the
spectacle, choosing action and thought over absorption and emotion, acting rather than
being acted on by the sympathetic connection between one’s own emotions as audience
and those involved in the drama. When the action engrosses the audience so much that it
“forgets that it is spectating,” theatricality obviously cannot be present (128).

When Davis theorizes that “only if sympathy is withheld can we cease to be
spectators to ourselves and others,” she reinforces the use of theatricality articulated by
art historian Michael Fried, who also focuses on a critique of the relationship between
object and audience (141). Fried argues in *Art and Objecthood* that theatre upsets the
concept of art, which ideally functions autonomously and allows for absorption, thereby
permitting spectators to forget their roles as audience. As Fried goes on to write in
*Absorption and Theatricality*, absorptive art serves to “establish the fiction that no one is
standing before the canvas”; in so doing, the beholder can escape self-consciousness and
become intensely engrossed in the world of the art before him or her (*Absorption and
Theatricality* 108). Theatricality is thus diametrically opposed to absorption—catharsis,
necessarily absorptive, is impossible when theatricality is at work, since theatricality
prevents the audience from sympathizing emotionally. When Clausewitz advised that
training should build up each soldier’s knowledge and habituation to the chaotic spectacle
of warfare in order to limit their cathartic response when actually observing it live, or
when Ardant du Picq called for training to secure camaraderie ahead of time to ensure
soldiers fight, they attempted to implement a system of theatricality able to craft soldiers
capable of flexible and productive action, as the spectator returns to his empowered,
rightful position as actor. It follows then, that if soldiers can remain detached and
disinterested, can resist absorption, then an army’s will would not so easily be affected.
Discipline

The ideas distilled into Clausewitz’s *On War* mark an intellectual shift within military theory around the approach to the art of war. Frederick II of Prussia and other military thinkers of the eighteenth century treated the art of war as they did the natural world, with a firm belief in the power of rules, laws, and mathematics. As Azar Gat summarizes, for Enlightenment-era military thinkers, onto “the accumulated strata of the doctrine of natural law, the neoclassical search for rules and principles in the arts, and Cartesianism […] stressing that reality was subject to universal order and to the mastery of reason, the gospel of Newtonian science was added” (28). Battles throughout the War of Austrian Succession (1740–48) and Seven Years War (1756–63), for example, often featured a series of opposing complex maneuvers in an effort to flank the enemy or mass troops for frontal assaults, all of which was a result of the dependence on linear tactics—extending the line of troops to cover the entire battlefield—and strategy based on maintaining strict battlefield order. Soldiers properly trained into complete obedience allowed for the full implementation, and theoretically the guaranteed success of whatever orders a general might issue. Frederick the Great, the major military figure in Prussia prior to Clausewitz, perfected this approach to warfare, in what Michel Foucault saw as the embodiment of disciplinary power in action. For Frederick, the desire to impose order on nature found in Enlightenment thinking extended into the art of war as he believed that “the art of war, like all arts, required a professional education and considerable knowledge, and could be treated theoretically on the basis of rules and principles that relied on historical evidence, could be used as a partial substitute for direct experience, and should be applied to particular cases through critical judgment” (Gat 59). For
Frederick, the art of war required obedience to limit the elements that sought to bring it low—the soldiers.

In attempting to master warfare through principles and laws, complex mathematical maneuvers reliant on perfect execution, and an emphasis on officer schools focused on historical study as the primary means of knowledge and as an adequate surrogate for direct experience, Frederick approached warfare as he would a painting or any other work of art fixed in one unchanging state. Frederick’s art of war, much like Fried’s absorptive paintings, strove to make the battlefield a bounded and controlled space, a “closed system which in effect seals off [its] space or world of the painting from that of the beholder,” which would in turn enable the general-as-audience to observe and reflect “in a perfect trance of involvement” (Fried 64, 103). The general would thus be able to fully and easily issue orders while watching the static tableau spread out before him, while the soldiers executed the battle plan perfectly. If a war, like a painting, could be studied and crafted in advance, admired from a distance, and remain according to the plan of the general, it could easily be won; Frederick himself remarked that “[t]he art of war owns certain elements and fixed principles. We must acquire that theory, and lodge it in our heads—otherwise we will never get very far” (Duffy 300).

Frederick II’s military theory relied on drill and maneuvers to fix each soldier in battle, as for the king, “the principal aim [of discipline] was to turn the army into an instrument of a single mind and will. Officers and men must understand that every act ‘is the work of a single man.’ Or again: ‘No one reasons, everyone executes’ […] All that can be done with soldiers, he said, is to give them Korpsgeist (esprit de corps), to fuse their personalities into their regiments” (Paret 99). Frederick, as king and locus of power,
attempted to turn the individual into machine and subjugate the many to the one in order to ensure maximum functionality, the very embodiment of Foucault’s disciplined docile bodies. The problem, at least for Clausewitz, was that reliance on rules and discipline in warfare would always fail because “the art of war deals with living and with moral forces.” As a result, the art of war “cannot attain the absolute, or certainty; it must always leave a margin for uncertainty, in the greatest things as much as in the smallest” (Clausewitz 86).

When Clausewitz set about trying to capture the nature of combat in *On War*, he boldly embraced the notion that warfare is largely a “play of chance” due to unpredictable and uncontrollable elements that he subsumed under the term *friction* (89). Friction could complicate even the most seemingly foolproof strategy, as “everything in war is very simple, but the simplest thing is difficult. The difficulties accumulate and end by producing a kind of friction that is inconceivable unless one has experienced war. […] Countless minor incidents—the kind you can never really foresee—combine to lower the general level of performance, so that one always falls far short of the intended goal” (119). For Clausewitz, reflecting on the outdated Prussian army with whom he fought and decisively lost the twin battles of Jena and Auerstedt during the Napoleonic Wars, it became clear that “absolute, so-called mathematical, factors never find a firm basis in military calculations. From the very start there is an interplay of possibilities, probabilities, good luck and bad that weaves its way throughout the length and breadth of the tapestry” (86). Clausewitz condemned Draconian discipline in formulating strategy, as no individual, no matter how well disciplined, can be counted on 100 percent of the time to execute 100 percent of his orders, never mind the countless actions undertaken in
battle independent of the chain of command. Furthermore, because “every war is rich in unique episodes” and different from any other, the rigid and unchanging model of subsuming military theory to obedience advocated by his predecessors could not but fail in the face of the dynamic nature of warfare (120).

Likewise, Ardant du Picq assailed the fear-based draconian discipline and linear tactics still in use during the Franco-Prussian War, writing that while “discipline is for the purpose of dominating that horror [of death] by a still greater horror, that of punishment or disgrace,” “there always comes an instant when natural horror gets an upper hand over discipline and the fighter flees” because of the “human weakness of the soldier” (33, 32). Because “man’s heart is as changeable as fortune,” his reactions to danger are unpredictable and manifest themselves in various instances that all erode the disciplinary drive. Whether a soldier “shrinks back,” “flees before a greater force of destruction,” “falls, and disappears” from “the fear of advancing further,” or “fires fast from instinct—stronger than […] discipline” thereby “fir[ing] madly,” the result is an imperfect and undisciplined mockery of their training (63, 32, 62, 128). Ardant du Picq critiqued the enduring descendants of Enlightenment military theory and their disciplinary drive, who in “taking the weapon for the starting point” and treating the soldier as “an impassive pawn, an abstract unit in the combinations of battle,” attempted to control soldiers by reducing them to automata capable of exact repetition of minute actions. “Absolute rules” such as the “mania […] for completely covering a battle front” or attacking in “closed columns” massed together, or the dedication to “fire by command”—where soldiers, “controlled by discipline” but “full of anxiety and suppressed emotion,” wait for the order to shoot, an “impossible coolness”—are, in the words of the French Colonel, “foolish”
Where Clausewitz grouped all elements of chance in warfare under friction, Colonel Ardant du Picq focused solely on aspects of human frailty and courage, what he coined “the moral elements” of war. Battles consist of two interrelated forces, material and moral. The prior represents an army’s “power to destroy,” its physical effect levied through weapons and sheer mass; the former is “the fear that it [the army] inspires,” its mental effect carried out by means of factors such as esprit de corps, morale, courage, and, on the opposite end, fear, terror, and panic—the very elements at work within the strategy of “Shock and Awe” (66). Superiority in numbers or firepower does not guarantee victory, nor does it assure a greater moral effect on the enemy; rather, holding “moral ascendancy” is the key to winning battles. An army’s morale in the face of a frontal assault or a drawn out engagement rather than its ability to wait to fire or close ranks more often determines the victor, rendering the efficacy of discipline in the other faction far less effective. Fear is omnipresent, but it is when fear turns to terror that the moral effect dominates and victory soon follows, riding the wings of panic. The utmost importance of the moral factor therefore leads to the “impossibility […] of […] Draconian discipline which put the fear of death behind the solider”; forcing soldiers to fight by repressing them through fear into obedience inevitably falls in the face of uncontrolled and unmediated terror (115).

The drive to apply principles and rules to combat and craft each soldier into a marionette capable of executing precise orders at the whim of the officer as if controlled by strings has been difficult to supplant in infantry training and command. Through the Second World War, US military theory had generally focused on the desire to literally
replace man with machine, looking towards technical advancements as the final solution for conquest. As technology rapidly advanced, allowing for more portable yet more potent weapons and warfare conducted with precision from the air, from long range, and from tanks, US Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) increasingly sought what SLA Marshall termed a “push button war”—the ultimate goal was a battlefield totally controlled from afar with machines capable of endless and exact execution at the push of a button. This wish still exists to this day, with unmanned drones, long range ballistic missiles, and laser guided “smart” bombs offering newer and more accurate means to remove the fallibility (that is to say, the humanity) from the fighting. This represents the Foucauldian disciplinary dream of Frederick II and the other Enlightenment military thinkers, where actions on the battlefield happen with such accuracy, precision, and predictability, that an officer could fully be absorbed in the action as it unfolds exactly as ordered from afar, taking in the bounded and controlled space in one frame. Theatricality becomes irrelevant in such a vision, as the entire battle could be drawn up in advance with absolute certainty that the “soldiers,” literally turned into machines, would execute correctly and have no need for any thought.

Of course, what Clausewitz, Ardant du Picq, Marshall, and most recently Ullman and Wade, warn is that the disciplinary approach to war is nigh impossible, as the fundamental aspect of warfare remains its unpredictability, whether in the general form of friction (after all, even those automated weapons must be fired, from somewhere, by someone at someone), or in the more specific case of the ever-fallible foot soldiers. As SLA Marshall noted, “until the arrival of the hour when there is a weapon of such lethal capacity as to make it evident beyond doubt that the whole race of man can be blotted out
by the turning of a switch,” the reality is that “war must always start with imperfect instruments. Equally, these instruments can never be fully perfected in the course of war” (21, 20). Even nuclear weapons require a human agent to launch them, and as no such weapons have been used in combat since the end of WWII, the fact remains that war is still the affair of those who do the actual fighting, the soldiers. To this end, Marshall again raised the call for an overhaul of training and strategy to move beyond the mechanical drill and abstract, unchanging battle plans still favored by US Army officers. Since “improvisation is the natural order of warfare,” “perfect formulas” of battle tactics should remain “on charts” (20). Instead, the focus must be on “human nature” and “morale,” Marshall’s direct response to Ardant du Picq’s “moral element” of war. Morale represents “the thinking of an army. It is the whole complex body of an army’s thought,” and it is not that “morale comes from discipline,” but the opposite, that “true discipline is the product of morale” (158). The morale of a force stems, according to Marshall, from its esprit de corps, which in turn “depends upon comradeship” (150). Because “man is a gregarious animal” soldiers tend to fall victim to the “herd instinct” when facing fire; it is naive to trust in Draconian discipline to trump the spectacular effects of catharsis, which force soldiers from their rank and file and push them together. Instead, an understanding of morale teaches that “[w]hile an army is a collection of individuals, it is also a crowd and under pressure it tends ever to revert to crowd form. The seeds of panic are always present in troops so long as they are in the midst of physical danger, the form of which changes from moment to moment” (150). When actually on the field of battle, terror of death and killing quickly cedes to all-out panic, and mob mentality can quickly result in a complete breakdown of order and disastrous retreat, as “[w]hen other men flee, the social
pressure is lifted and the average soldier will respond as if he had been given a release from duty, for he knows that his personal failure is made inconspicuous by the general dissolution” (150).

For Marshall, the only way to stave off the effects of spectacular catharsis is to forgo the notion of an army made up of obedient automata and instead exert a “strong control” to keep the pack of terrified, impulsive individuals from “acting like a mob” (148). However, instead of the panoptic authoritarian voice of Frederick II, Marshall advocates “a man-to-man force on the battlefield,” as “social pressure, more than military training, is the base of battle discipline, and […] when social pressure is lifted, battle discipline disintegrates.” Translated into Marshall’s perhaps more idealistic and certainly more straightforward terminology, “personal honor is the one thing valued more than life itself by the majority of men” (149). With the soldiers themselves serving as their own system of observation and control, the officer need not worry about motivating or controlling his troops. Thus, “when men become fearful in combat, the moral incentive can restore them and stimulate them to action,” as “to the man who is in terror and verging on panic, no influence can be more steadying than that he see some other man near him who is retaining self-control and doing his duty” (171, 148). The solution to the “problem of battle command” is thus raising the ratio of fire by specifically building up morale in troops before the war ever starts.

**Performance**

Such uncertainty, chance, chaos, and grinding of the martial gears allow the commanding officer no alternative but to account for, even rely on, the presence of friction in any strategy; by defining and preparing for exactly what breaks down, the
military can carefully manage the effects of catharsis. The best way to do so, according to
Clausewitz, Ardant du Picq, and Marshall, involves an implementation of performance
rather than discipline as a system of power and control. Ullman and Wade’s reliance on
spectacle as a decisive and terrorizing mode of warfare in “Shock and Awe” radically
reinvents the term “theatre of war,” turning theatre against itself by considering the attack
itself as a performance meant to render would-be actors into a passive audience through
its sheer display of power. But Ullman and Wade’s is hardly the first materialization of
performance within martial strategy. The use of performance as an offensive tactic in
warfare can be traced back centuries, centering around forcing the enemy into a position
as passive witness, absorbing soldiers into the drama played out before them. The
audience has thus always been the fulcrum of performance within war.

The discourse around the art of war—the military strategies and tactics used to
plan for and undertake warfare and the philosophies dedicated to understanding the basic
nature of war—has always returned to the same basic problem: the art of war is fully
dependant on live bodies, making it inherently unpredictable and impossible to master,
and all attempts to do so cannot but fail. Rather than being fully automated and thus
capable of exact and infinite repetition or inanimate and thus locked permanently in one
state, the art of war is ever changing, shifting, and defying predictions. While historical
realities have shaped the tactical approach of those doing the fighting, determining the
weapons and armor with which they fought, the enemy against whom they waged war,
and various other historically specific elements of a campaign, the overall focus of the art
of war has always returned to mastering the imperfect human element. Both Sun Tzu and
Clausewitz, separated by nearly 2000 years, based their philosophy of war not on abstract
maneuvers or precise techniques, but on the minds of those fighting. Sun Tzu highlighted the absolute necessity of exposing the fallibility of the enemy through trickery and seemings, claiming that “all warfare is based on deception.” In turn, Clausewitz defined war as “an act of force to compel our enemy to do our will,” whose object is to “render the enemy powerless,” emphasizing the importance of destroying the enemy’s resolve in order to achieve true victory (Sun Tzu I.18, Clausewitz 75).

So while the force of change within military history would seem to be the relentless evolution of killing machines and strategic adaptations to their limitations, what is far more influential is the relationship between the art of war and its subject, the soldier. Thus, the rise of gunpowder and the dominance of the handheld firearm did not change the discourse around the art of war, but rather shifted its overall focus and marked the enlisted soldier as the primary target of military power and knowledge. As Colonel Ardant du Picq remarked, “[t]he art of war is subjected to many modifications by industrial and scientific progress. But one thing does not change, the heart of man. […] [S]uccess in battle is a matter of morale” (58). The musket and rifle granted each individual infantryman an unprecedented ability to kill from a distance and placed an even greater burden on soldiers to perform according to their training. But as will be shown, it was not so much the weapon as the approach to those wielding it that mattered—the foot soldier’s psychology and response and not the omniscient general or the cavalry-gentry became the focus of military thought, as the goal became maximizing their efficiency and effectiveness.

The targeting of individual enlisted soldiers and their emotions marks a paradigm shift within the field of military theory, one focused on transferring the mechanisms of
power away from discipline to performance. Jon McKenzie, in *Perform Or Else*, has outlined a similar shift in the era since World War II in the realms of bureaucratic and organizational performance, technological performance, and cultural performance. However, it is clear in the case of the art of war that performance, as a “formation of power and knowledge” that “entails a displacement of being that challenges our notion of history” but is “nonetheless historical in that this displacement is materially inscribed,” existed long before the point marked by McKenzie (18). As with discipline, performance “produces a new subject of knowledge” constructed through the mechanizations of power whose effects exist in discourses, on bodies, and in practices across the socio-technical spectrum. Unlike Foucauldian discipline’s subject, the performative subject “is constructed as fragmented rather than unified, decentered rather than centered, virtual as well as actual. Similarly, performative objects are unstable rather than fixed, simulated rather than real. They do not occupy a single, ‘proper’ place in knowledge […] instead, objects are produced and maintained through a variety of sociotechnical systems, overcoded by many discourses, and situated in numerous sites of practice” (18). While discipline is “repressive,” performance is “excessive,” in that it is “intermittently modulated and pushed across the thresholds of various limits by overlapping and sometimes competing systems.” Performance thus displaces discipline’s panoptic control and vision of man-the-machine with flexibility and personal empowerment in the challenge of efficiency, effectiveness, and efficacy. As opposed to discipline, which functions as systems of rigid fixation, “the mechanisms of performative power are nomadic and flexible more than sedentary and rigid. On the performance stratum, one shuttles quickly between different evaluative grids, switching back and forth between
divergent challenges to perform—or else” (19).

Clausewitz emphasized the performative nature of war in his theoretical argument on the merits of the art of war versus the science of war, rejecting science for its focus on “pure knowledge” as opposed to art’s object, “creative ability” (148). He maintained that “all thought is art,” but “the mechanical arts” are only “directed at inanimate matter” whereas the “fine arts” at “animate but passive and yielding” matter—however, “in war, the will is directed at an animate object that reacts” (148). The problem as Clausewitz sees it is that that up until then, “it was precisely the mechanical arts that the art of war was supposed to imitate,” despite the fact that “continual striving after laws analogous to those appropriate to the realm of inanimate matter was bound to lead to one mistake after another” (149). In response, Clausewitz tantalizingly suggests that war is “part of man’s social existence,” “an act of human intercourse” (149). The distinction marked by both Diana Taylor and Richard Schechner between “is” and “as” performance is the difference between Clausewitz’s dissection of the nature of war and his approach to it. In discussing performance as medium, Diana Taylor writes, “performances function as vital acts of transfer, transmitting social knowledge, memory, and a sense of identity through reiterated […] behavior.” She adds, “on another level, performance also constitutes the methodological lens that enables scholars to analyze events as performance. […] Embodied practice, along with and bound up with other cultural practices, offers a way of knowing” (3). As Schechner theorizes, “to treat any object, work, or product ‘as’ performance—a painting, a novel, a shoe, or anything at all—means to investigate what the object does, how it interacts with other objects or being, and how it relates to other objects or beings. Performances exist only as actions, interactions, and relationships” (30,
Clausewitz invoked “friction” as a way of speaking to the uncertainty of warfare and used his analysis of war here as an expression of the art of war as performance. As Clausewitz implicitly pointed out, warfare is so wholly caught up in an endless series of actions, reactions, interactions, and relationships—and delves so deeply into the live presence of the body and the interplay between human emotions, actions, and terror—that it does not fit within science or the mechanical arts, and is instead performance.

In an early embrace of the spirit of performative power, Clausewitz and his successors Ardant du Picq and Marshall emphasized empowered flexibility among the troops—rather than strict obedience to orders, allowing a certain amount of freedom of movement and choice in the heat of the moment as long as it remained within a larger framework of supervision. These theorists advocated a regiment that would eliminate the hierarchical and striated disciplinary system of power breaking down each body into individualized, mechanized parts that execute a specific task and function en masse. Instead, they sought to refocus infantry training on overcoming friction not by eliminating it, but by negating its effect through fully rehearsed soldiers particularly adapted to confront the terrorizing destabilization of self via theatricality. Such performative training would authorize soldiers to use their experience to dictate their actions built up through simulated maneuvers and virtual combats—a process similar to twentieth century performance management which, according to McKenzie, empowers its workers to use “their own intuition, creativity, and diversity” (63). The military thus determines the situations, elements, and reactions that are particularly devastating or debilitating and rehearses them away. Performative training would allow soldiers free movement within the space of the battlefield while actually utilizing a greater level of
control. These flexible and adaptive warriors could adjust to changing circumstances and would be able to resist the absorptive pull of the spectacle; so what would seem to be a decrease in regulation actually produces a greater level of obedience and control. The more the soldier can practice for war, the more the soldier can be “disciplined” on the battlefield, which is to say, obedient; the more the soldier can be created through performance, the less chance there is that the soldier will react in unanticipated or detrimental ways.

This approach to warfare and the soldier doing the fighting differed fundamentally from Frederick II by allowing for and even counting on a certain amount of elasticity within the ranks, emphasizing the need to create more flexible and adaptive armies capable of quickly and successfully adjusting to varying situations. Such troops would be resistant to their own emotions, not because they were disciplined into obedience but because they were rehearsed into self-control. Rather than fixed and repressed soldiers easily controlled, observed, and trained to simply obey orders, the call was for institutionalizing a system of power and training that produced subjects who were flexible and motivated, yet easily controlled. These flexible soldiers would not be repressed into singular execution but would be empowered to act as they saw fit and could therefore respond to the diversity of situations faced. They would also be driven and able to be controlled by being prepared to face the horrors awaiting them and therefore less likely to respond impulsively.

**Experience**

In order to counteract friction’s debilitating effect of impeding an army’s smooth functioning, Clausewitz turned to an element that he termed “combat experience” (122).
The more you play the game of war, the more hardened to its tricks and turns and the more adept at exploiting it you will be. According to Clausewitz, every general must “know friction in order to overcome it whenever possible, and in order not to expect a standard of achievement in his operations which this very friction makes impossible”—no general should ever expect, as Frederick II did, for his army to function with machine-like automation (120). Since friction “is a force that theory can never quite define,” the general must be fully flexible in his training and planning, and at the same time must be so experienced in warfare that “instinct becomes almost habit so that he always acts, speaks, and moves appropriately” (120). Therefore, Clausewitz called for experience to dictate battlefield actions—only those who have already experienced combat should be allowed to fight.

The importance of prior exposure to war’s emotional effects appears in Battle Studies as well. The French Colonel argues that the advantage of veteran soldiers is that not only are they more prepared for the variances of war, but their service time will have built up within them what he terms “discipline,” but more often dubs esprit de corps. Ardant du Picq views esprit de corps as the singularly most effective method of controlling and motivating soldiers. Rejecting the tendency for “army organizations and tactical formations on paper” to be “always determined from the mechanical point of view, neglecting the essential coefficient, that of morale,” Ardant du Picq goes further than Clausewitz, arguing for esprit de corps—more accurately perhaps termed group cohesion for its focus on soldier to soldier rapport—built up through experience to determine action. Discipline-qua-esprit de corps works on the minds of the soldiers to motivate their will to fight, as “[w]hat makes the soldier capable of obedience and
direction in action, is the sense of discipline. This includes: respect for and confidence in his chiefs; confidence in his comrades and fear of their reproaches and retaliation if he abandons them in danger; his desire to go where others do without trembling more than they; in a word, the whole of esprit de corps” (65). Echoing Clausewitz’s performative sense of war as “human intercourse,” Ardant du Picq views discipline as “a state of mind, a social institution,” which stands in contradistinction to the soldier’s “natural” tendencies; instead of Frederickean Draconian discipline, which Ardant du Picq criticizes for its “barbaric punishments” that were “not enough on the field of battle,” leaving soldiers “unable to follow the methods taught and ordered,” he emphasizes moral motivation where the soldier, aware of his own performance for an audience of fellows, continuously chooses to take action over passive spectatorship (122, 123). Esprit de corps thus actualizes theatricality and infinitely delays the cathartic response. But since esprit de corps is best “secured in war,” and is something that “cannot be […] created in a day,” Ardant du Picq, like Clausewitz, recognizes that it must be “secured in advance” (65). And since, as Clausewitz noted, “a commander and his army will not always have [war] readily available” as training modules, training must attempt to reflect and reproduce battlefield experiences, using theatrical rehearsal to mimic battlefield performance (122).

Although more cautious in stressing the advantage of “seasoning” in troops, SLA Marshall echoes Ardant du Picq’s theory of the importance of veteran troops vis-à-vis esprit de corps (124). Soldiers who have experienced the horrors of battle are not, as commonly thought, subject to “a kind of mental toughening which comes from experience under fire.” Indeed, while “the shock of engagement” certainly “shakes the weakest flies out of the organization,” the remaining soldiers “do not grow more callous
to danger as they meet it increasingly nor do they ever become more eager for the contest” (123). In the end, the terror of killing and being killed does not simply vanish after a few engagements, leaving the individual free to perform valiantly or, at the least, finally fire his weapon. But what experience does dictate is some semblances of obedience—the man-to-man control that only comes from a high morale. As Marshall writes, “[combat obedience] is simply the reflection of the growth of unit confidence which comes of increased awareness and utilization of one’s own resources under conditions which at first seem extraordinary but gradually become familiar” (124). As units enter combat together and spend more and more time fighting together, their reality becomes flipped, as the “normal” becomes live action, and downtime merely a strange and uncomfortable interruption. At the same time, their willingness to protect each other at all costs increases, as does their ability to communicate and act. Marshall hails these as the two essential elements of “tactical cohesion”—what “enables a group of individuals to make the most of their united strength and stand steady in the face of sudden emergency” (124). It is only from the confidence born from combat that such “effective action” springs. In line with Clausewitz and Ardant du Picq, Marshall advocates for training to step to the fore to fill in for direct combat experience. Marshall calls for an even greater comprehensive overhaul of the system of infantry training that deliberately targets the minds of each individual soldier in order to make them more efficient and effective in their thinking, and thus their firing.

Rehearsal

All three theorists hold that the art of war should specifically aim to rehearse combat, ensuring that actions on the battlefield are, to borrow from Richard Schechner,
“twice-behaved behaviors.” Schechner defines strips of “restored behavior” as “physical or verbal actions that are not-for-the-first time, prepared, or rehearsed” and combine to constitute performance (22). Rehearsal specifically aims to build up restored behaviors to allow actors to “behav[e] as if I were someone else,” or ‘as I am told to do,’ or ‘as I have learned,”’ as “during rehearsals, actions are separated into what can be used and what must be discarded or put aside for another project. […] Rehearsals are always tailored to the specific needs of the performance-at-hand […] Rehearsals reduce the ‘noise’ in the system, creating a graceful ‘finished product’” (23, 28, 202). With training operating as rehearsal, experience and habit substitute for raw emotions and instinctual passion. In the heat of the battle, the seasoned soldier and officer fall back on training; it is not disciplinary drill but, in the words of Clausewitz, “practice and experience” that “dictate the answer: ‘this is possible, this is not,’” granting the flexibility to “make the right decision in major and minor matters” and therefore so “rarely mak[ing] a serious mistake, such as can, in war, shatter confidence and become extremely dangerous if it occurs often” (Clausewitz 120).

Specifically, training should function as rehearsal to promote a process akin to theatricality. By exposing soldiers to the experiences of war in advance, the hope was that when fighting a real, live enemy, the experience would not be so emotional as to overwhelm the soldiers. Even the smallest amount of familiarity can diminish the impact of catharsis in combat, so according to Clausewitz “[i]t is immensely important that no solider, whatever his rank, should wait for war to expose him to those aspects of active service that amaze and confuse him when he first comes across them. If he has met them even once before, they will begin to be familiar to him” (122). Clausewitz knew that “no
general can accustom an army to war” and that “peacetime maneuvers are a feeble substitutes for the real thing” but he also recognized that even peacetime maneuvers “can give an army an advantage over others whose training is confined to routine, mechanical drill.” Thus, the best plan of action for a general seeking to win at war was “to plan maneuvers so that some of the elements of friction are involved, which will train officers’ judgment, common sense, and resolution” (122). Instead of forcing soldiers to spend their non-fighting hours being reduced to exact and meticulous execution of mindless drill training should instead prepare for as many different potential scenarios as possible. A range of training exercises substitute for a small but detailed focus on disciplining the body; an attention to anticipating how soldiers will react to actual combat takes over for the confidence that intense discipline can override any potential unanticipated response; and simulations of war informed by combat experience trump reliance on abstract and historical study. Thus each soldier, when confronted with the scene before him on the battlefield, will not find it so foreign, so spectacular as to totally fall under its seductive sway, and will instead have learned habit onto which he can fall back. For Clausewitz, to train an army is to rehearse for war, to prepare the soldier as an individual for what lies ahead by instilling in him an idea of the drama to come and the character he must play. Clausewitz thus advocates using performance to combat the spectacularly cathartic soldier with theatricality.

For Ardant du Picq, if esprit de corps could singularly negate the cathartic effects of the human heart, then all steps should be taken to assure that every soldier entering a battle has more than simple “mental acquaintanceship” with his fellow warriors, and instead feels the bonds of camaraderie and truly understands the importance of morale
and the moral effect. In order to do so, “a wise organization ensures that the personnel of combat groups changes as little as possible, so that comrades in peace time maneuvers shall be comrades in war” (53). Instead of the panoptic drive to have “every moment, every attitude under a not too intelligent surveillance,” training should build up *esprit de corps* through allowing soldiers to live as if in battle: “[f]rom living together, and obeying the same chiefs, from commanding the same men, from sharing fatigue and rest, from cooperation among men who quickly understand each other in the execution of warlike movements, may be bred brotherhood, professional knowledge, sentiment, above all unity. The duty of obedience, the right of imposing discipline and the impossibility of escaping from it, would naturally follow” (53). It is not enough to drill soldiers in basic techniques and force them into blind obedience, allowing individuals to “merely live, quietly going through with drills without understanding their application” (65). Indeed, “[t]he technical training of the soldier is not the most difficult […] but this does not make the soldier.” Instead, “[o]nce a man knows how to use his weapon and obey all commands there is needed only occasional drill to brush up those who have forgotten. Marches and battle maneuvers are what is needed” (65). Just as Clausewitz called for increased maneuvers to simulate friction, Ardant du Picq called for a vast overhaul of training “to reduce it to the necessary minimum” and thereby “prepare for actual battle” (84).

Ardant du Picq’s performative re-imagining of infantry training to focus on rehearsing maneuvers allowed for the battle itself to exist as a performance, a series of actions on a vast stage for a specifically targeted audience, the enemy. Moral and material effects combine to shape an inherently spectacular experience, where the effect on the
mind plays as great a role as that on the body. The key is to successfully shape the spectacle to your whim, to direct the experience of everyone involved so that the emotional experience is uplifting for an officer’s own soldiers and debilitating for his opponent’s. The basic tenet of Ardant du Picq’s theory of war, that “[m]oral effect inspires fear” and that “[f]ear must be changed to terror in order to vanquish” by means of performance, remains the common thread to the Iraq War as the basic premise of “Shock and Awe.” If a commander can effectively play upon the irrational emotions of the enemy—waiting and watching—by presenting an overwhelming show of strength, firepower, and numbers, not to mention unity and resolve, and thereby “dominate him” and “inspire fear of the unknown,” then victory can easily be secured; with the will to fight drowned under mind-consuming terror, panic quickly sets in. The “fear of the unknown” that Ardant du Picq cites is the manifestation of spectacular catharsis, the moment when a soldier succumbs to his terror and imagines himself in the countless horrific situations he may soon be confronted with, leaving him in poor condition to fire and fight and likely to accede to the instinct for self-preservation. At the same time, such spectacles only serve to boost the morale of allied troops. Watching the demoralization of the enemy only “adds to your resolution” and forestalls any thought of defeat or death.

Crafting the battle to best align the moral effect with the material and maximize troop effectiveness and efficiency is the primary concern of Ardant du Picq’s strategy. In addition to fashioning training to build up esprit de corps by reflecting the conditions and experiences of war, actions in an actual battle should ensure that soldiers have little time or ability to wallow in self-pity or surrender to their own shock and awe. To this end, the Colonel calls for a greater emphasis on the role of skirmishers and localized control, so
that the initiative is in the hands of each individual and his respective unit and officer, keeping him occupied with the process of firing and advancing. Instead of relying on “the amount of human flesh” by massing troops together under large battalions and sending them full force at the enemy, counting on Draconian discipline to maintain order and drive everyone forward and the concomitant effect of such a display on the enemy, infantry strategy must focus on getting “all possible efficiency from the arm” by utilizing the “destructive effect” of the skirmisher (76, 88). Inevitably, a mass body of troops advancing devolves into chaos, as “one-half the men drop out on the way,” and for the rest “the instinct of preservation controls [him] absolutely” (79, 76). The result is “a flock of sheep” where “no one has control” and “the disorder is so great that if it is counter-attacked by four men, it is lost” (79). Instead, because “the soldier wants to be occupied, to return shot for shot,” officers must “place him in a position to act immediately, individually. Then, whatever he does, you have not wholly lost your authority over him” (82). Ardant du Picq argues for skirmishers for both their “most deadly” material effect, allowing soldiers to “perform better” and “remain cool enough to aim,” and their moral effect on the skirmishers themselves, as focusing on firing quickly works to “occupy and soothe them” and thereby “deliver the […] effective fire”(130, 82). Ardant du Picq’s reforms bear all the hallmarks of performative power as outlined by McKenzie. The goal, as always, is to craft an army that is efficacious in defeating the enemy, but does so through its efficiency and effectiveness in firing, brought about by increasing the initiative of the lowest ranks and promoting greater worker drive and motivation through mutual respect, camaraderie, and surveillance. All of this combines to actually increase the amount of control over individuals who no longer react impulsively and without heed
for their orders. The end result is an army of soldiers who individually and collectively perform better and more constantly.

The shift from a disciplinary system of power and control to a more performative focus on individual agency receives its most comprehensive outline in Marshall’s *Men Against Fire*. Marshall outlines how military theory came to “grapple with the problem of how to free the mind of man” and in so doing, “the quality of the initiative in the individual has become the most praised of the military virtues” (22, 23). However, US Army doctrine still failed to address its most critical issue, finding “any and all means by which we can increase the ratio of effective fire when we have to go to war” (23). Since “in battle there is very little order” and “many times the course of events is shaped by purest accident,” all soldiers must overcome the physical and emotional obstacles presented by war and maintain their offensive initiative or an army has almost no chance of success (180). Training must therefore reflect battlefield conditions rather than offering individuals a false picture of what they will face. Case in point, Marshall describes how training allowed soldiers to grow “accustomed to the presence of great numbers of men and of massive and mechanical strength around him” and therefore “he never feels lonely in the field [of training]” (45-46). In addition, “[e]ven the forces of the enemy are virtually materialized for him[the soldier]” yet when actually on the front lines, “he sees nothing. There is nothing to be seen. The fire comes out of nowhere” (47). Having built up his confidence based on a false impression of combat, when actually in the field the soldier becomes “shocked by the mystery of [his] situation. Here is a surprise of a kind which no one had taught [him] to guard against” (47). Such training actually increases the likelihood of spectacular catharsis taking root among the ranks and remains
counterproductive to maintaining order and positive action. And since “the proper aim of
training is to overcome the inhibiting effect of fire and of danger upon the individual and
by so doing bring out the unity of action,” infantry training therefore must ensure that all
its soldiers “have been well forewarned of the kind of disorder they may expect [on the
battlefield]” (181).

Marshall recommends a method of training that consists of a broad focus on
controlling human nature in war through promoting “thinking,” “concentric initiative,”
and building tactical cohesion through unit cohesion (132, 135). And because these
positive qualities—all of which serve specifically to motivate soldiers to fire accurately—
are best brought out in live combat, training must become a system of rehearsal that
mimics what soldiers can realistically expect to face on the battlefield as opposed to its
current state, which does quite the opposite. In order to build up the social pressure
needed to motivate men to fight, training should empower each individual to not only
overcome and control his own fears, but to provide the visual and aural stanchion upon
which other soldiers can brace their own fears—maintaining effective fire and moving
forward in the face of incoming fire, all the while communicating with fellow soldiers,
not only provides positive action but offers a very real source of social pressure that
motivates other soldiers to do the same and builds up morale. Marshall touches upon into
the hallmarks of “performance management”—what Jon McKenzie cites as the
“paradigm of organizational theory and practice that has come to dominate the
management of US organizations since the Second World War” (60)—in his assessment
of the need for “unit efficiency,” “effective fire,” “man-to-man control,” and “men who
can think through their situation and steel themselves for action according to the
situation” (Marshall 37, 23, 39, 40). Perhaps reflecting the early stages of the paradigm shift McKenzie identifies in the corporate world, Marshall calls for a performative restructuring of training consistent with performance management’s “attempts to displace the rational control of workers by empowering them to improve efficiency using their own intuition, creativity, and diversity” (McKenzie 63). Instead of reducing workers to the “one best method” system of exact and prescribed practices approved through vigorous tests and enforcing said practices with panoptic observation through reports and manager observations, the hallmark principles of performance management’s predecessor Scientific Management, performance management approaches the entire system, accepting that they are “decentralized, flexible, dynamic, open, and ‘naturalistic’ systems” which in turn demand an equally adaptable and creative approach in order to make the organization efficacious in its operation (McKenzie 73). The “enforced cooperation” system of Scientific Management instituted standardized models of worker productivity and “rational” practices based on the scientific method in order to “reinforce the division between worker and manager” through a “centralized, rigid, static, closed, and ‘machine-like’” approach to the lower echelons. Performance management, however, encourages innovation, proactivity, collaboration, communication, assertiveness, and skilled, motivated workmanship from everyone (63, 64).

Marshall’s soldiers would demonstrate these positive qualities of subjects under the sway of performative power, having been trained and stimulated to take aggressive, effective action by means of efficient fire and constant interpersonal communication. “The fundamental purpose of training” Marshall writes, “should be to develop the natural faculties and to stimulate the brain of the soldier rather than to treat him as a cog which
has to be fitted into a great machine”; training should allow for a “greater freedom of professional thought by all ranks” (114, 115). In order to train soldiers to “think and act”—that is, in order to produce soldiers with “concentric initiative”—taking quick decisive action for the betterment of the unit—infantry doctrine must focus on ensuring that soldiers maintain their cohesion and continue to communicate and fire no matter the situation. Such a focus should start from the first moments of training, as “an army in which all ranks are indoctrinated from the beginning with the knowledge that fire and person-to-person communication are the twin essentials of successful minor tactics will generate spontaneity of action and reuniting of effort in the face of any battlefield emergency” (135). Establishing successful lines of communication depends on ensuring that soldiers are in a capable state and properly motivated to risk their lives. Both of these depend on building up camaraderie in advance, as “the tactical unity of men working together in combat will be in the ratio of their knowledge and sympathetic understanding of each other” (150). *Esprit de corps* helps to ensure that soldiers do not succumb to the seeds of panic always present in the ranks and brought to the fore by the flurry of emotions suddenly allowed free reign; it is the “‘known soldier’ who wins battles” since “when a soldier is unknown to the men who are around him he has relatively little reason to fear losing the one thing that he is likely to value more highly than life—his reputation as a man among other men” (153). Echoing performance management’s embrace of the “human relations model” in focusing on the “social factors which help determine an individual worker’s output,” specifically on the need for “working groups rather than individuals” that utilize “teamwork [and] effective communications,” infantry training and doctrine must recognize that “it is the man whose identity is well known to his
fellows who has the main chance as a battle effective” (McKenzie 65, Marshall 153). Training should focus on building camaraderie among the troops by rehearsing them for battlefield conditions, by “condition[ing] him to human nature as he will learn to depend on it when the ground offers him no comfort and weapons fail”—if soldiers can learn to “relate […] to his fellow soldier as he will find him on the field of combat” when actually in battle, they will be able to communicate effectively (38).

Instead of training that prepares soldiers for something entirely other than actual combat, each individual should enter the battlefield made fully aware of what he will encounter thanks to a carefully constructed system of preparation aimed at rehearsing soldiers for actual combat experiences. Countering “Clausewitz’s gloomy warning” that “[i]n war the novice is only met by pitch black night,” Marshall offers the Prussian’s subsequent words that “[i]t is of first importance that the soldier, high or low, should not have to encounter in war things which, seen for the first time, set him in terror or perplexity”; thus, “the desired goal” of all infantry instruction should be “to shed such a strong light in training that it will dispel much of the darkness of battle’s night” (49). As with Clausewiz and Ardant du Picq before him, Marshall acknowledges that “field maneuvers” are poor substitutes for simulating the “fears of varying sort” that “afflict the soldier in battle” and therefore cannot offer a deadening of the cathartic experience. After all, “in training, there being no real bullet danger even on the courses which employ live ammunition, every advance under a supposed enemy fire is unrealistic. Too, in training, the soldier does not have a man as his target. He is not shooting with the idea of killing” (71). Training fundamentally fails to offer an absolute means of exposing soldier’s fears of killing or dying and their subsequent cure. However, even with the fundamental
difference of stakes between combat and instruction, training can condition soldiers to anticipate what they will experience: “[i]t is possible that the infantry soldier can be trained to anticipate fully the true conditions of the battlefield; it is possible that units can be schooled to take full and prompt action against the disunifying effect of these conditions. […] Only when the human, rather than the material, aspects of operation are put uppermost can tactical bodies be conditioned to make the most of their potential unity” (37, 38). Training must focus on “the substitution of reality for romance in all discussion of the battlefield, and the introduction into training in the maximum measure possible of the same element which steadies a command during its trial by fire” (41). Instead of being repeatedly assaulted with a disciplinary approach of “‘I command: you obey,’” “during training, the soldier […] can be given enough knowledge about human nature under the stresses of the battlefield that when it comes his time to go foreword, he can make tactical use of what he knows in the same way that he applies what he has learned about his equipment” (41). Thus, instead of individuals trained to execute basic orders with an almost complete lack of knowledge of what to expect or why, infantry instruction should focus on expanding their knowledge and initiative by making sure that “every line would be underscored.” By rehearsing for combat and allowing soldiers to really understand what to expect and to anticipate both their own reactions and those of their fellow soldiers and enemies, the infantry could count on soldiers capable of immediate, effective tactical action.

**Beyond Vietnam**

In the period between Marshall’s *Men Against Fire* and the presentation and eventual indoctrination of Ullman and Wade’s *Shock and Awe: Achieving Rapid*
Dominance—a span of nearly fifty years that encompasses the Korean War, the conflict in Vietnam, the Gulf War, and smaller operations throughout the Southern Hemisphere—a significant change has come to US Infantry training and doctrine and in turn, to the performance of its soldiers. When Donald Rumsfeld announced the implementation of “Shock and Awe,” his focus was on the military’s “ability to deter and overpower an adversary through the adversary’s perception and fear of his vulnerability and our own invincibility” (Ullman and Wade 30). A watershed moment within the history of approaching the art of war performatively, the inauguration of the Shock and Awe campaign represented the most comprehensive and aggressive application of the theories behind the effects of spectacular catharsis. But instead of focusing on combating its influence on their own troops, US Central Command (CENTCOM) specifically sought to harness the spectcularity of warfare to plant the seeds of terror and panic within the hearts of the enemy soldiers. So confident was the Secretary of Defense in his own troops ability to resist the pull of absorption that he focused the overall strategy of the war on generating spectacle, on crafting such an awe inspiring performance that the Iraqi soldiers would not be able to resist falling victim to the attendant cathartic pull. Perhaps this confidence was justified; as SLA Marshall himself noted, by the Korean War the ratio of fire among infantry troops had increased to upwards of 55 percent, escalating to nearly 95 percent during Vietnam. So what changed between World War II and the Second Gulf War to cause such a drastic shift in the approach to the roles of terror and emotion in battle?

Korea and Vietnam did very little to change the Clausewitzean line of thinking: that war is inherently unpredictable; that the hearts and minds of soldiers should be the major
focus of training and tactics in order to eliminate the negative effects of fear; that infantrymen must perform flexibly, thoughtfully, and adaptively, while at the same time pursuing a course of aggressive, offensive action revolving around effective, efficient fire brought directly upon the enemy; and that training must rehearse individuals for the actualities of war in order to allow such actions to happen consistently. In fact, the past fifty years of warfare have only strengthened the call for combating the role of fear on the battlefield. In *Acts of War: The Behavior of Men in Battle*, Richard Holmes, British military historian and a Colonel in the Territorial Army, Great Britain’s reserve force, uses data collected from interviews and surveys from the Falklands War as well as extensive historical analysis to thoroughly examine the role of the individual in warfare. His conclusions ultimately reinforce the important role of fear, what he terms “the real enemy” (204). Holmes notes how fear is present in almost all soldiers “to a greater or lesser degree, and may be experienced as anything from mild apprehension to paralyzing terror” (205). Despite having a “tendency toward illogicality” and being “irrational,” fear is as constant an element of battle as the need for soldiers to fight. Whether caused by anticipation of combat, fear of death, maiming, disgrace, or countless other sources, human emotions are the main source of “breakdown in battle” and generalized decreases in effectiveness and leadership ability (210, 139, 209, 206, 215).

Likewise, Lieutenant Colonel Dave Grossman, a retired Army Ranger, outlines in *On Killing* what he terms “the reign of fear” by taking a comprehensive survey of military and sociological scholarship on individuals in battle and combining it with his own experience. Grossman’s thesis at first seems startling, that “fear of death and injury is not the only, or even the major, cause of psychiatric casualties in combat” (54);
however, he goes on to state that “it is not to suggest that the carnage of death of battle are not horrible and that the fear of violent death and injury is not a traumatic thing,” but that “these factors by themselves […] are not sufficient” (54). Instead, Grossman lists “resistance to over aggressive confrontation, in addition to the fear of death and injury” as constitutive of the true “reign of fear,” expanded to include “fear, combined with exhaustion, hate, horror, and the irreconcilable task of balancing these with the need to kill” (54). In the end, “the two-edged responsibility of being expected to kill (the irreconcilable balancing of to kill and not to kill) and the stress of looking their potential killers in the face” lead to the all too familiar breakdown of action and thought that marks the cathartic state. Both authors—Holmes reflecting on Vietnam and the Falklands War in 1985, and Grossman on the Gulf War in 1995—carry the mantle of Clauswitz, du Picq, and Marshall. Despite myriad technological advances and a rapidly evolving style of warfare that seemingly relies less and less on human beings, it is still the fickle and fallible heart of individual soldiers that commands their attention as the most pressing problem to be solved to increase unit effectiveness and efficiency.

When Colonel Ardant du Picq outlined the importance of skirmishers and decentralization in rifle-based warfare in order to both maximize the rate of fire and occupy the minds of his soldiers, he was, to a degree, prophetic. The lessons of twentieth-century warfare, particularly those from Vietnam and after, have taught that the direction of warfare is towards smaller and smaller battlefields occupied by small units undertaking limited actions. In a sense, the Iraq War has both magnified and shrunk the scale of battle, as the occupation has done away with any traditional battlefield or enemy; at the same time the entire country is considered an ongoing, evolving, and incendiary
battlefield with no frontlines, inhabited by a potentially hostile and dangerous population. Yet infantry soldiers operate on a squad based, small-scale basis throughout the country, manning checkpoints, searching buildings and vehicles, combating small weapons fire, and identifying roadside or suicide bombs. As evidenced by the failures in Vietnam, this trend has only magnified the need for commanding officers to recognize the unpredictability of war and to rely on adaptive soldiers capable of immediate offensive action.

Paddy Griffith, in Forward Into Battle—the author’s case study on the importance of the “moral principle,” the willingness of the soldier to fight, specifically in close combat—criticizes the deficiencies of US firepower during the mobile warfare that dominated Vietnam as ineffective in overcoming the theatre-heavy tactics of the enemy. Mobile warfare was the US response to the North Vietnamese Army (NVA) and Vietcong’s use of guerilla tactics; “fighting a war without fronts, moving in small groups and using all the vegetal and human camouflage they could” was therefore the most common and “the most important type of action” in the conflict (115, 107). The North Vietnamese tactical plan relied profoundly on “the advantages of surprise, camouflage, and entrenchment,” echoing Sun Tzu’s insistence on injecting warfare with a shot of the theatrical, using costume, scenery, and the unexpected to turn the minds of the opposition against themselves; by using ambushes, mines, and ensuring that they only “appeared at unexpected times and places” and vanished just as quickly, the NVA actively sought to control the information environment and “shock and awe” the US forces into ineffective responses. Thereby, the NVA was not only able to control the tempo and initiative in the war, but made it impossible to rely on any fixed strategy or even successfully target
enemy locations. Manifested in the “Search and Destroy” strategy, the US response of mobile warfare used rapid helicopter insertions and extractions of small numbers of infantry to target enemies in order to achieve offensive action and ensure that “the enemy should be deprived of the initiative by a war of movement” (116).

However, the reality was that “the enemy was hard to locate before he sprang an ambush,” and the roles were therefore reversed, leaving it “the fate of the Americans in Vietnam to be ambushed” no matter their method of attack. US ground forces had to be constantly on the alert, ready at all times to react immediately to whatever situation they faced—without a clear plan of attack or a firm sense of what to expect, initiative and flexibility were key to not just tactical success but basic survival. But despite this obvious need, Griffith notes how “training doctrine” shifted, and the offensive “fire and manoeuvre” approach was replaced by one that advocated building up “a base of fire […] with sufficient power to physically destroy the enemy, rather than merely to pin him down” (128). The infantry’s role thus became “a purely passive or defensive role […] in the firefight,” as “[they] would be limited to finding the enemy in the first place, and then helping to bring down fire upon him” (129, 128). Such a strategy ceded the initiative to the NVA and reduced the responsibility of US infantry soldiers to that of a more traditional and straightforward firing line, trading decisive, direct, and aggressively offensive action for an “indecisive nature” that was “unable or unwilling to overrun enemy positions while they were still manned,” leaving the enemy free to operate flexibly, to “manoeuvre, disengage, and fight another day” (131). Infantry doctrine once again attempted to rely on disciplinary power’s dream of technology to trump the role of the infantry soldier, and once again, it “repeatedly failed to prevent close combat” and
“relieve the front-line soldier of his heavy burden of personal risk” (143), only highlighting the need to follow the call of the Clausewitzian performative theorists. The inflexible and defensive soldiers, made passive by the deliberate attacks on their mind by the enemy, could never adapt and morale as a result plummeted.

Building on Griffith’s analysis of the need for direct firepower brought by soldiers trained to be flexible in their ability to respond, Richard Holmes puts forth the argument that it is the moral element—found in factors such as group cohesion (esprit de corps), courage, personal honor, and action—which remains the best method for increasing troop effectiveness, fire efficiency, and maintaining initiative by combating the ability of fear to turn to paralyzing terror. Holmes remarks that “what makes men fight” is most often not “the white heat of ideology or the burning zeal of religion” but “the bonds that link the men within [military groups]” (291). And it is specifically the “smallest of military groups” where the “roots” of group cohesion lie, a concept that would matrix easily into contemporary infantry practice (293). Whether the informal two person “buddy organization” among US soldiers in Korea or the more traditional rifle-squad, small units serve to prevent individuals from succumbing to the passive, cathartic role of spectator by staving of “that loneliness in battle which so easily overwhelms the individual rifleman” (299). Morale stems directly from group cohesion, whose “effectiveness as a motivator” should not be ignored, particularly with small group action more and more common in contemporary combat (299). Holmes also cites “individual soldierly honour” in “the formulation of group morale” (300). Such a trait applies to a soldier’s sense of “personal guilt and shame” and his “moral courage,” which is to say it serves to “control […] the sort of behaviour to which fear might give rise,” making “the social consequences of
flight more unpleasant than the physical consequences of battle” (301). Honor and
courage thus directly relate to group cohesion, as the later creates the former and in so
doing, combats the spectacular nature of catharsis, standing in to block the panicked and
terrified reactions of flight, non-firing, playing dead, and countless others. But honor and
courage are both built up rather than inborn, traits that come with a growing sense of
cohesion and confidence and can therefore be trained into all soldiers.

The violent wars and conflicts in the second half of the twentieth century in Korea,
Vietnam, and the Persian Gulf reinforced for military theorists that the fundamental
aspect of war was those who fight it and their ever-changing, easily overwhelmed hearts
and minds. The connection between Clausewitz’s magnum opus to Ullman and Wade’s
now infamous doctrine only strengthened from reflection on tactics and experiences
during those conflicts: war is not abstract and cannot be prepared for in absolutes; war
continues to be driven by the infantry and remains dependant on its ability to function
effectively and efficiently in battle; pity and fear hold sway in combat and engulfs
soldiers in passivity or panic; maintaining steady and direct fire is the best option for both
controlling soldier’s minds and winning battles; and in order to achieve a high ratio of
fire, soldiers should be flexible and adaptive, capable of thought-inspired initiative.

Ullman and Wade’s “Shock and Awe” doctrine was primarily a response to what the
authors viewed as a “wind of change” within warfare, one “driven by a radically altered
geopolitical situation, an evolving information-oriented society, advancing technology,
and budgetary constraints,” with the major issue being the “degree” to which US military
theory would willingly change (v). Like their predecessors, they criticized what they
viewed as a flawed system of training and practice based on “the collective professional,
policy, and operational experience of the study group covering the last four decades” (91). Instead, they sought “to exploit the unique juncture of strategy, technology, and innovation created by the end of the Cold War and to establish an alternative foundation for military doctrine and force structure” by advocating a renewed emphasis on the hearts and minds of soldiers, actively attempting to shape and direct the spectactularity of warfare (91).

The goal of “Shock and Awe” is impacting the enemy on “psychological, perceptual, and physical levels” (92). While one extreme possibility would be “destroying an adversary’s military force leaving the enemy impotent and vulnerable” which “may provide the necessary Shock and Awe,” another extreme could be “the certainty of this outcome” causing “an adversary to accept our terms well short of conflict” (92). In between these two idealized scenarios, the goal is striking “the appropriate balance of Shock and Awe” in order to “cause the perception and anticipation of certain defeat and the threat and fear of action that may shut down all or part of the adversary’s society or render his ability to fight useless short of complete physical destruction” (92). By specifically seeking to “affect the adversary’s will” through mechanisms of “Shock and Awe,” Ullman and Wade distinguish their theory from those of “attrition, maneuver, and other military doctrines including overwhelming force” (92). The difference lies in the performance; rather than focusing directly on death and destruction, the aim of this strategy is to rapidly display enough force and power while controlling the information environment to turn the enemy into passive witnesses to their own imagined annihilation—the force of imagination and emotion carries here far more weight than the actual weaponry, utilized to create what Aristotle viewed as a “sense of
the monstrous.” “Shock and Awe” here blends with “the strategic uses of force as envisaged by Sun Tzu and Clausewitz to overpower or affect the will, perception, and understanding of the adversary for strategic aims and military objectives,” but does so in a way that turns war itself into rehearsal (92). Rather than using training to reduce the Clauswitzean elements of “fog, friction, and fear,” “Rapid Dominance through Shock and Awe” inverts the relationship, using warfare itself to instill these selfsame reactions (19). Performance thus works as a double-edged sword, sharpening its effectiveness both in and out of combat by seeking in battle to undo what in training it builds up, with only the targeted audience changing. Just as in training, “Shock and Awe” uses spectacle—sights, sounds, smells, sensations—to expose soldiers to overwhelming feelings of terror and panic; but while in training the point is to exterminate these emotions before the fact and leave soldiers ready and willing to fire and advance, the objective in combat is to prevent such actions. Intending to inspire stage fright, “Shock and Awe” represents a natural cap to what has become one of the primary initiatives in both the US Army and Marines and constitutes the focus of the next two chapters, the call for training to mimetically simulate combat and expose soldiers to battle beforehand to indoctrinate them to the effects of fear, to build up group cohesion, and to make them more adaptive, effective, and efficient in their actions and willingness to kill. But the ultimate failure of Shock and Awe in the Iraq War to either prevent combat with the enemy or trauma in US troops reveals far more about the extent to which the military’s attempt to situate catharsis and trauma in the virtual is doomed to return in the real of combat.
Chapter 2

Virtual and Actual Combats:

Theatricality in Contemporary US Infantry Training

The nature of warfare in the post-Vietnam era has been that of delineated, urban, platoon-based small-scale operational combat with rapid insertions and extractions via mobile cavalry. Rather than increased technologies and advanced theory bringing combat under greater control, warfare has veered radically away from frontal combat and toward the direction of generalized destabilization and anarchy. As a result, the foot soldier—still the backbone of the armies of the world—must be far more flexible than ever before, often functioning wholly autonomously from any system of command. The notion of a battlefield, of a singular and decisive battle, of a clearly defined and distinguished enemy, of a front, and of downtime no longer apply, as soldiers can spend every day of their active duty in constant danger of an unknown, unseen adversary. Pure martial force is no longer the centerpiece, as the infantry often finds itself in the position of police force, peacekeeper, or other roles that the US military subsumes under the term Operations Other Than War (OOTW). In the previous chapter we have seen that the disciplinary power that marked Frederick II’s efforts to literally construct obedient soldiers eventually ceded to the demands of performative power, marked by flexibility, efficiency, and empowerment. In contemporary infantry training in both the US Army and the Marine Corps, discipline and performance have come to work hand in hand to tear down new recruits and rebuild them into reliable and effective soldiers, simultaneously overcoming any opposition to killing the enemy and fashioning them into aggressive automata. Every effort is made to ensure that the constructed soldier who leaves basic training stands in
opposition to and eventually supplants the civilian who enters. Specifically framed to recruits as unreliable, weak, and dangerous, the civilian now stands for everything that causes panic, fear, and confusion within soldiers on the battlefield and which therefore must be thoroughly eliminated from within each and every new soldier in order to win at war. In this line of thinking, absorbed in the spectacle before them and subject to the powerful sway of emotions that override any sense of discipline, the civilian’s live presence on the battlefield infects even the most steeled soldiers and corrupts carefully laid plans, the literal embodiment of spectacular catharsis. By seeking to eliminate the cathartic civilian in determining the outcome of combat, and by actively utilizing theatricality in training to create soldiers capable of productive action, contemporary infantry thinking thus builds upon the preceding genealogy and offers an actualization of its vision of performative training, striving to eliminate trauma from the battlefield by overexposing soldiers to it in advance.8

By claiming that contemporary infantry training actively seeks to eliminate catharsis from war, my intention is twofold: I wish to extend the preceding genealogy into the present moment and apply the lens of performance to a field dominated by a performative locus of power that, to this point, lacks any critical analysis on the matter; and I seek to begin to lay bare a troubling aspect of the military’s utilization of theatre and performance which, as will be shown in the subsequent chapter, aims to extend the reach of military power infinitely with little regard to or understanding of the societal toll and existential stakes. What I intend to demonstrate is that underlying and driving the ritual of infantry boot camp is an interplay between a disciplinary and a performative locus of power that involves literally breaking down new recruits and stripping them of
any civilian identity through discipline and rebuilding them into the image of an idealized soldier theoretically capable of overcoming fear and emotion through performance. Although Jon McKenzie argues that “performance will be to the twentieth and twenty-first centuries what discipline was to the eighteenth and nineteenth,” an examination of today’s US military training belies the notion that these strata occur back to back (the From Discipline to Performance of McKenzie’s subtitle) (18). Instead, discipline and performance occur simultaneously, always intertwined with each other. In the case of the military, performance combines with discipline to meet the challenges of contemporary warfare—discipline takes raw, civilian recruits and, through a specific application of pain, of modified torture, reduces them to a state anterior to learned and cultivated civic identities. Performance, meanwhile, through theatrical and mimetic exercises and rehearsals of which Clausewitz et al. could only dream, rebuilds the recruit into the image of a perfect soldier who responds flexibly on the battlefield but exactly as anticipated, a role to step into and act. Thus, the Army and Marines now produce subjects through performance who are uniquely equipped to confront the decentered, fragmented, and destabilizing nature of war but who do so by mimicking an impossible ideal.

The official discourse of the military itself—field manuals, training guidelines and methodologies, recruitment and Defense Department propaganda, analysis of military theory and protocol in Army and Marine Corps war colleges, and other sanctioned communications—serves as the foundation of my argument. Such documents provide evidence for the institutionalization of performative power, revealing how deeply the military understands the role of performance in crafting a successful army and the reasons for and desired effect of specific practices. First-hand accounts of basic training,
its structure, intricacies and effects, written by the men and women who either directly observed or experienced the process of becoming a soldier, complement this top-down, organizational discourse of power. Not only do such narratives lay bare the success or failure of basic training’s role in psychologically and physically preparing recruits for the actualities of modern warfare, but they also provide corroboration that such training works disciplinarily to tear down recruits and performatively to condition them into seemingly automatic responses. Scholarly approaches to basic combat training, the psychology of the soldier, the historical role of friction and theories put forth to combat its power, and other academic analyses of military training, theory, and practice all serve to complement and expand the previous accounts and discourses and theorize the causes and impact of training, killing, and surviving. Finally, the lens of performance serves as a frame to contextualize the process of basic training as theatrical rehearsal. Performance and acting theory, specifically that of Richard Schechner, provides the basis for considering basic training as a practice akin to theatrical rehearsal.

**Basic Training—An Overview**

Before continuing any further, it seems prudent to offer a brief overview of both US Army and US Marine Corps basic combat training. Of the two, Marine Corps (USMC) training is the more intensive and demanding, covering a longer period and aimed at a selective base of recruitment. The basic structure consists of twelve weeks of physical training (PT), combat focused drills and exercises, and academic classes concentrating on strategy, history, values, and general combat techniques. Recruits are sent to one of two depots, Camp Pendleton, California, or Paris Island, South Carolina. Once at the assigned location, recruits spend their first days in “Receiving,” where the
basic acclimation to military life takes place including haircuts, distribution of uniforms, and initial physical fitness tests. After Receiving comes “Forming,” a two day transition into training companies where, under the supervision of drill instructors (DIs) for the first time, trainees learn the basics of military life, such as marching and basic deportment. Drill and ceremony (D&C) dominate the rest of training, which according to Warfighting, the Marine Corps’ doctrine on war theory, is a “form of small-unit training which stress proficiency by progressive repetition of tasks” and works on “developing standardized techniques and procedures that must be performed repeatedly without variation to ensure speed and coordination, such as gun drill or immediate actions” (62). D&C consists mostly of physical training in varying forms and lengthy company marches. Along with drill and ceremony comes training specifically designed to increase aggression, such as hand to hand combat drills and pugil stick training, and an exercise called the “Confidence Course,” which “consists of eleven obstacles, designed so that each obstacle is more physically challenging then the last. […] [T]he course is designed so the average platoon can run it in 45 minutes. Like pugil sticks, the Confidence Course is a great morale builder, as most of the recruits find out they can negotiate the obstacles with ease” (Surviving Basic).

After week four of basic, training switches over to marksmanship, where recruits first shoot their rifles and receive instruction on its proper maintenance; ensuring proficiency and accuracy with firearms through varied target practices dominates weeks five and six. Starting with week seven, the focus shifts to larger scale “exercises,” which “are designed to train units and individuals in tactics under simulated combat conditions” (Warfighting 62). Trainees go through live-fire field exercises, and in week eight tackle
“the Crucible,” a three day, full-scale simulation that combines realistic battle scenarios with problem-solving exercises, long marches, and sleep deprivation. The remaining four weeks of basic Marine training consist of continued D&C, martial arts instruction, focused skill and technique building such as water and repelling training, troop inspections, and final examinations, both academic and physical. The final week of training consists of preparation for graduation, at which point recruits complete their basic training and move on to additional training in the School of Infantry.

Basic Combat Training (BCT) in the US Army is, in theory, less strenuous and shorter than that of the Marine Corps, but nonetheless follows a markedly similar structure. Recruits are sent to one of the five forts dedicated to BCT: Fort Benning, Georgia; Fort Jackson, South Carolina; Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri; Fort Sill, Oklahoma; and Fort Knox, Kentucky. Once at the assigned destination, “basic training begins with in processing. […] For most Soldiers, in processing is brief, from 4 to 10 days. Here Soldiers receive a general orientation, get fitted and issued Army uniforms, establish personnel records, obtain an identification card, receive visual, dental physical examinations, test for physical fitness, and receive immunizations. Soldiers also begin learning the Army core values and basic military skills during this phase. From the Reception Battalion soldiers are “shipped to a basic training unit” (Fort Jackson). From the moment they enter Basic Combat Training, soldiers undergo a 5-phased “soldierization” program dubbed “Initial Entry Training” (IET). In the words of the Army, “the mission of enlisted IET is to transform volunteers into technically and tactically competent soldiers that live by the Army Values, understand the importance of teamwork, and are prepared to contribute on day one in their first unit of assignment. The
transformation of volunteers into soldiers is accomplished during a 5-phased soldierization program that begins with a soldier's arrival at the reception battalion (RECBN), and ends with the awarding of a MOS [Military Occupational Specialty] upon completion of IET” (TRADOC Regulation 350-6). IET consists of five distinct phases, the first three of which occur in BCT, dubbed “Red, White, Blue,” and the final two, “Black” and “Gold,” take place in Advanced Individual Training covered in the next chapter. The first phase, Red, comprises the first two weeks and consists mostly of physical training, D&C, and an exercise called “Victory Tower,” a seventy-foot tall obstacle structure which, like the Confidence Course, tests the recruit’s physical and mental fortitude. Recruits also spend a significant amount of Red phase in classes learning about the Army core values and basic soldierly skills.

The next phase is White, which, as in Marine basic, focuses almost totally on marksmanship; here soldiers receive instruction on the intricacies of operating and maintaining their M16s, as well as other weapons. Drill sergeants also begin to increase and focus recruits’ aggression, teaching them to use their bayonets, supervising pugil stick and close combat training, and drilling chemical and biological weapons response. Weeks six through nine are spent in the Blue phase, which, like the Marine “exercises,” acclimates trainees to the realities of warfare through squad maneuvers. Recruits work on functioning as a unit under the stress and confusion of live fire, during nighttime, and in other frictional elements, all the while being tutored and guided by their drill sergeants. Just as Marine Corps basic reaches its peak with the Crucible, BCT culminates in “Victory Forge,” a week-long combat training exercise that forces recruits to put their new skills to the test through various realistic scenarios. Many basic trainings finish with
graduation during week ten, at which point recruits officially become soldiers and are assigned to their respective career paths and units, while recruits specifically entering front-line specialties stay on at BCT for additional combat training.

Training and the Civilian

Today more than ever soldiers need training that prepares them ahead of time for the actualities of the battlefield so that when confronted with its myriad horrors and near total mayhem, they remain calm, collected, and know exactly the right course of action to take and do so immediately and successfully. The goal of infantry training has always been to create a smoothly functioning force, a killing machine capable of maximum effectiveness at minimal cost. The Marine Corps puts it succinctly by stating that “[t]he purpose of all training is to develop forces that can win in combat. Training is the key to combat effectiveness and therefore is the focus of effort of a peacetime military. However, training should not stop with the commencement of war; training must continue during war to adapt to the lessons of combat” (US Marine Corps Staff 60). Or, in the words of the Army, “[t]he US Army […] is made up of the best-trained, most dedicated, most respected Soldiers in the world. […] A Soldier [sic] in the US Army is the embodiment of physical strength, emotional strength and strength of purpose. As a Soldier, you will be prepared to serve our country whenever and wherever you are needed, combat-ready at all times, trained to counter any threat, anywhere” (goarmy.com). With the goal of both branches of the infantry centering on maintaining effective, combat ready troops, and if Clausewitz et al. are correct in arguing that a new recruit is predisposed by nature and/or nurture to abhor killing and if left alone would as soon cower, posture, or take flight as fight in actual combat, then it falls to the military to
use training to overcome this horror of death and guarantee that soldiers kill. To do so
modern training emphasizes a dichotomy between soldier and civilian, the prior being the
finely crafted fighter impervious to catharsis and the latter being the hysterical, absorbed
spectator incapable of fighting. The military carefully frames all aspects of warfare and
the human reaction to it that could potentially cause traumatic spectacular catharsis and
defines them as civilian tendencies. Training therefore must break down the layers of
civilian resistances within each individual and replace them with martial instincts so that
trauma never erupts in the heat of battle. The civilian—useless to the Army and
Marines—must die in training so that the new recruit can be reborn as a soldier,
conditioned to serve and to kill.

The military deliberately situates the civilian as the antithesis of the ideal soldier
in order to guarantee the efficacy of its training. While an Army soldier demonstrates the
loyalty, duty, respect, selfless-service, honor, integrity, and personal courage that
comprise their seven “core values,” and a Marine similarly displays “honor, courage, and
commitment,” civilians embody the selfsame traits that the Clausewitzean-performative
theorists attributed to fear and inexperience: lazy, terrified, panicked, reluctant,
unreliable, and passive (goarmy.com, marines.com). The very first moments of
contemporary US infantry training, “Receiving” and “in processing” in the Army,
immediately discard all semblances of a civilian lifestyle, replacing them via a series of
ritualized performances that revolve around rewiring the basic thought pattern of new
recruits. Soldiers must come to associate their former life negatively and aspire to the
martial values repeatedly hammered into their consciousness. As The Real Insiders Guide
to Military Basic Training—one of the countless manuals that offer detailed “important
secrets and hints to successfully complete boot camp” often gleaned through personal experiences—advises, “during basic training, you substantially give up your civilian freedoms to undergo very intense military training. You do not watch TV, use the phone, drink sodas, have free time, drive off base, read newspapers, or play games. You cannot have family visits, or even speak to your family unless given permission. […] Your life will be under the total control of your drill sergeants” (87-88).

Within the first few days, military documents replace all forms of civilian identification, visually overcoding their previous identities with the physical, material, and sartorial symbols of their enlistment. After much paperwork, initiates can elect to use the “amnesty room,” a separate closed door area into which they bring all of their bags and can declare any civilian contraband without punishment in “the moment of truth”; anything handed over is lost forever, but recruits who are later caught with civilian material goods face far stiffer punishment, including potential arrest. Uniforms and fatigue, neatly folded and presented to the recruits onto which they must sew their last names, take the place of quotidian clothing, imprinting each recruit with their rank and surname, their new identifying characteristics. In addition, dog tags and identification cards replace drivers licenses or any other civilian form of identification, markers that soldiers will carry with them for the rest of their lives. Recruits line up to receive a standardized haircut, the “high and tight” that both performatively shears away the last traces of their civilian individuality and marks their conformity; as The Real Insiders Guide to Military Basic Training states, “[h]aving a clean-shaven head is the first prominent visible sign of being in the military. […] [T]he military is making everyone equal by taking away individuality. The military shaves your head to vividly demonstrate
its authority over you and to make all recruits the same. Everyone starts training as a ‘new’ person” (94). In addition, individuals must also obey at all times the strict dress code, either combat fatigues or Army or USMC branded sweatpants and shirts, that further ensures the visual eradication of any sense of civic independence or freedom of expression. Drill sergeants constantly instruct trainees on the proper and exact method of organizing and caring for their personal items and space, down to how to fold and press uniforms, make a hospital corner, and polish their boots, spending copious amounts of time on the most meticulous of details and making sure to mark any infractions, while at the same time giving new recruits less and less time to complete their tasks. Military health care also demands a far more extensive inoculation process than called for in civil society, as recruits “take another medical and dental examination, get X-rays, and immunization shots” (Thompson 94).

All of these rituals involve new recruits learning the “ways” of being a soldier, being forced to line up and ritually pass through thresholds into a ceremony that removes symbols of their civilian identities. At the same time, these transformations perform order, cleanliness, and hygiene, while simultaneously eliminating individuality, independence, and non-conformity. In addition, recruits are given their first physical fitness test, which, along with the health standards, serves to reinforce that the military holds itself to a higher, that is, a stricter, more exclusive standard than that of civil society. Of course, as The Real Insiders Guide makes clear, “reception” also serves to indoctrinate recruits to both the performances of their drill sergeants and the ways in which they, in turn, must perform their obedience: “[t]he term ‘reception’ can be misleading. In that the civilian form of the word implies something positive. From the
moment you are escorted from your point of arrival to the base, you will know you are not a civilian anymore. You will notice that no one is smiling, laughing, or acting casual. [...] Immediately, upon entering the base, the reception sergeants assert control over you and take away your freedom. From this point onward, you are told what to do and when to do it” (88, emphasis mine). The focus is clearly making absolute the difference between the previous lax and disorganized civilian lifestyle, marked by “freedom” and being “casual” and exchanging it for service marked by “control” and obedience. Recruits must obey all orders, and to reinforce their new status, must verbally confirm their compliance, responding to the DI promptly, loudly, and only as expected. Or, to put it more bluntly, as Sergeant Michael Volkin states in The Ultimate Basic Training Guidebook, his version of the basic training primer, “for the first time in your life you will need to ask permission to go to the bathroom, to talk, to eat, etc. Your personality, as you know it, will be lost and you will be expected to think and act like everyone else,” a forceful acknowledgment that recruits are no longer ordinary civilians nor are they soldiers as of yet (2).

Beginning in this initial phase of basic training, the primary task of the drill sergeant is to spearhead the process of stripping each individual of his or her civilian tendencies. The sergeant makes sure that recruits accept that whoever they have been, they are completely inadequate and despised by the military until they shed everything from their past lives—their values and morals, their attitudes, their physical tendencies, their basic psychology, in short, every single aspect of who they are—and only then can they actually begin to become soldiers. For example, since the Vietnam era, Marine Corps instructors have made sure that the first few moments of training have followed a
basic script designed to assert their complete dominance over the entering recruits. Drill instructors first establish the recruit as a civilian, and therefore of the lowest possible worth: “[t]he DI screams in the boy’s ear: ‘You no good fucking civilian maggot […] You’re worthless, do you understand? And I’m gonna kill you.’” (Appy 33, emphasis mine). The DI’s threats are designed mostly to frighten subordinates into absolute subservience, but the words are also carefully selected to focus on the process that will come, the killing off of that “maggot” inside. At first, the DI focuses on a few select individuals as the target of his wrath, but eventually goes after the entire group and affirms his total control: “there are eighty of you, eighty young warm bodies, eighty sweet little ladies, eighty sweetpeas, and I want you maggots to know today that you belong to me and you will belong to me until I have made you into Marines’” (Appy 33-34). Though obviously the actual verbal and physical techniques used by the DI may vary depending on what is officially sanctioned at any particular moment, the goal remains the same—to establish the civilian as the enemy, to kill that civilian, and to rebirth the recruit as a Marine.

In the Army, abusive techniques have in theory been forbidden, but the basic structure remains the same, “to convert you from a civilian to a soldier. It is [the drill sergeant’s] job to break you down and build you up. […] Your transition from civilian to soldier will be taught in a disciplined and rigorous manner” (Volkin 3, 53). The focus is always on what recruits must attain and just how far away they are from being useful soldiers or Marines. The first week of basic training, before a recruit even advances to his or her actual training site or finishes the paperwork, immediately and firmly establishes that life in the military is completely apart from the rest of society. The subsequent weeks
serve to continue the process wherein the civilian stands in for the destructively cathartic tendencies—what Colonel Dave Grossman cites as the “reign of fear”—that civil society has spent years building up. The purpose of such a positioning is straightforward in that the military requires the complete submission of its subjects in order to completely break down its recruits and then rebuild them in their own image. As Christian Appy writes of Marine Basic, “[t]he most ominous threats (‘I’m gonna kill you’) are meant to inspire terror, but they also express a quite literal intention to destroy everything civilian in the recruits. Nothing in their former lives is deemed worthy of preservation. Every civilian identity is worthless. New recruits are the lowest form of life. They do not deserve to live. If they are ever to become Marines, they must acknowledge their total inadequacy. They must be torn down in order to be rebuilt, killed in order to be reborn” (34). And by increasingly incorporating techniques from the performance stratum into training, the military attempts to ensure that when individuals leave basic training as soldiers, they have been so overexposed to the effects of spectacular catharsis that their emotions will not carry the same destructive weight as before. In order to accomplish this, infantry training, both in the Marines and the Army, takes a very specific form rooted in the interplay of discipline and performance that intentionally muddies imitation and actuality.

A Liminal Space

The first weeks of Army and Marine boot camp effectively sever all connections to the “normal” world, the civic lifestyle and ideals by which recruits recently lived. At the same time, the very structure of basic training reinforces for its participants that they have a long journey to undertake before they can be considered soldiers or Marines. The result is that individuals go through basic training betwixt and between two different identities,
neither one nor the other. Sent to a training base set apart from the rest of society and then spending almost their entire nine to twelve weeks there, recruits enter as civilians and exit as enlisted soldiers. But during the actual training, they exist outside and in contradiction to the rest of society; a new recruit is thus an initiate, no longer a member of civilian society, but not yet gaining membership into the select heterotopia of the military.¹¹ This purposefully blurry status, straddling two disparate worlds, marks infantry combat training as a liminal process—a ritualized transition between two states; boot camp serves as a rite of passage between the old, deemed inferior, and the new, trumpeted as superior.

In writing about rituals as liminal performance, Richard Schechner theorizes that “[d]uring the liminal phase […] in specially marked spaces, transitions and transformations occur” (58) which carry out a twofold process. The first stage of liminal performance works to “reduce those undergoing the ritual to a state of vulnerability so that they are open to change. Persons are stripped of their former identities and assigned places in the social world; they enter a time-place where they are not-this-not-that, neither here nor there, in the midst of a journey from one social self to another. For the time being, they are literally powerless and often identityless” (58). Once stripped of their former selves, initiates’ “personas are inscribed with their new identities” and they are “initiated into their new powers” (58). This process corresponds to the theory of social drama set down by Victor Turner on which Richard Schechner’s performance theory elaborates. Boot camp corresponds to Turner’s “breech, crisis, redressive action, reintegration” model of change and/or growth via conflict. New recruits, removed from society, enter boot camp, a breech of “norm-governed social relations” where, as already
noted, every effort is made to distinguish a recruit's new military existence from that of their old, civilian life.

The positioning of training as liminal is significant for a number of reasons. In addition to its ritualistic function, a performance in and of itself, training’s liminality enables the military to actualize the tearing-down of the civilian. At no other point during military life is the dichotomy between civilian and soldier more highlighted, announced, and fixated upon than during the first four weeks of training, the Red phase. This first step of basic training is spent in intensive physical training with extensive verbal punishment, a generalized crisis where the breech between civilian and military “widens” and anyone attempting to challenge the split is dealt with in public. The objective of this phase is to extend the breech and complete the work started in Receiving/In Processing so that recruits accept the civilian and all that it represents as the enemy. This first phase, the breech and crisis, also resemble Richard Schechner’s vision of training and workshop as part of the tripartite liminal process completed by rehearsal. Training consists of “the acquisition of particular skills,” while workshops represent “the active research phase” where “new ways of doing things are explored and resistances to new knowledge are identified and dealt with,” and rehearsals “organize the materials found in workshops […] build on, and fill in, the foundations laid down in training and explored in workshops” (193, 201, 202). Whereas workshops “are a way of breaking down, digging deep, and opening up,” rehearsals build up “specific blocks of proto-performance materials into larger and larger sequences of actions that are assembled into a whole, finished performance” (202). Schechner notes that workshops are “similar to initiation rites” (201). Just as in a liminal ritual, “[w]orkshop participants [isolate] themselves from
their ordinary lives, putting aside old habits, delving into themselves, and learning new ways of doing things. […] If a workshop is successful, participants re-emerge as changed beings” (201). The focus in workshops is on expunging old ways of thinking and doing things and opening the self up to newer ones, specifically through intensive action that is “not undertaken alone,” as “a group sustains individual efforts just as individual contributions strengthen the group” (201). Likewise, during the Red Phase, the first weeks of actual boot camp, instructors work to break down new recruits through intense study, demanding physical training and corrective mental conditioning so that they subsequently can be rebuilt.

The primary emphasis of this phase of basic training is on discipline, on so-called “drill and ceremony” and physical training (D&C and PT). The goal is to physically and mentally exhaust the recruits, to make them “worn out.” From the moment officers divide them into their platoons and transfer them from Receiving/In Processing to boot camp, drill sergeants assault, abuse, and control initiates with disciplinary power. Although recruits today are generally shielded from the direct physical and mental abuse characteristic of popular narratives, even to the point of having banned offensive language in the Army, disciplinary power still works on and through the minds and bodies of recruits, making them docile and malleable. Consider the account of the first moments of Marine In Processing described above, or the following generalized description of Army drill sergeants:

The first day of basic training is not fun, and it is not meant to be. […] Every recruit’s first day is a bit different, but generally speaking the same experiences will occur. You will board a bus from the Reception Center. The Drill Sergeants will be yelling at you and banging on windows. […] As you get off the bus you will be given an impossible task that you will fail several times. Even if your company
accomplishes the task perfectly, your Drill Sergeants will still say you have failed. By failing, you will be forced to do physical training, and on your first day, you can be sure you will get plenty of it. (Volkin 3, 53)

The point of such a performance of discipline remains the same with or without the cursing—to terrify and discipline recruits immediately. Remove the foul language and the intent and effect remain the same; drill sergeants, in full uniform and exploding with anger and violent rage, perform a vision of an idealized soldier and the gap that exists between such a being and the civilian recruit.

The goal of the sergeant is to “assert his absolute control of their [the recruits’] lives,” and the most immediate means to do so is performatively, by literally “proclaim[ing] his ownership of the recruits, his civilian maggots” (Appy 33). The drill instructor undergoes specific training in school to be the literal embodiment of the core values of the Army or Marines and to utilize discipline to ensure that every recruit accepts that they fall far short. The DI’s performance is Foucauldian disciplinary power at work—in boot camp, drill instructors make sure to perform punishment in front of an audience of peers, so that the effect arises as much from the show as the actual punishment. As Richard Schechner writes of social drama, “participants not only do things, they show themselves and others what they are doing or have done; actions take on a reflexive and performed-for-an-audience aspect” (*PT* 186). Sergeants punish recruits for each other’s mistakes—whenever one part of the machine breaks down, the rest must suffer until no part works autonomously. The aim is to build group cohesion and ensure that the recruits begin to police from within, that they take matters into their own hands and dole out lesser punishments for fear of even larger punishments. Just as Foucault’s spectators at public executions and torture serve as the necessary target of power,
watching the punishment and internalizing and perpetuating the hierarchical power, so too do the recruits affirm the power of the drill sergeant—and by extension the military institution—by taking part in the spectacle and serving as target of military power, as audience to the spectacle of punishment, and as agents of martial power.

**Pain, Torture, and the Death of the Civilian**

The physical training that is perhaps the most publicly emphasized aspect of boot camp serves the obvious function of ensuring that recruits are in top physical shape, allowing them to carry heavy equipment long distances and training their bodies and minds to stand up to the often grueling physical demands of modern combat. The import given to disciplining the body also serves to weed out those recruits who lack the commitment or stamina to meet the high standards of the infantry. For the entire length of camp, each company conducts physical training (PT) every morning save Sundays, and multiple PT exams ensure all troops are at a baseline standard. Christian Appy describes how ‘[e]ven well-trained athletes were taxed to the limit by the physical demands of Marine Corps boot camp. The day began between 4:00 and 5:00 in the morning, and between then and lights-out at 9:00 PM the recruits were continually subjected to torturous exercise. Aside from the regularly scheduled hours of physical training, sergeants called for additional rounds of PT at any hour, for any reason” (37). Army Field Manual 21-20 (FM 21-20) describes the rationale for such extreme workouts as follows: “[t]he benefits to be derived from a good physical fitness program are many. It can reduce the number of soldiers on profile and sick call, invigorate training, and enhance productivity and mental alertness. A good physical fitness program also promotes team cohesion and combat survivability. It will improve soldiers’ combat readiness” (6). The
FM approaches physical training from two angles. The first concentrates on the tangible, physical benefits arising from intense workouts, ensuring that individuals are at the peak of their conditioning and will not succumb to fatigue; PT also targets the mind, as exhaustion would not affect the mental functioning of physically sound soldiers as quickly or as dramatically. Secondly, according to FM 21-20, physical training increases the very elements highlighted by Clausewitz et al. that increase soldier performance in battle—morale, efficiency, and mental preparation. Fitness leads to “team cohesion,” “productivity,” and “combat readiness,” all of which both motivate soldiers to fight and increase their effectiveness in doing so. The more training exposes individuals to D&C, the more they begin to resemble warriors. Thus the first four weeks of basic training are so consumed with PT in order to achieve a rapid level of fitness, but even more so to ensure the negation of the civilian through pain. By subjecting recruits to grueling and draining regimes of fitness at all hours, drill sergeants effectively hack away at recruits’ defenses, exhausting them to the point of collapse and denying them time to recover.

At the same time that basic training physically and mentally drains its recruits, drill sergeants constantly attempt to deindividualize each recruit, to deny any sense of agency or subjectivity and instead build up a sense of group identity and cohesion; this is accomplished through a complete lack of privacy, free time, ability to speak at ease, and all other basic civic liberties. In the Marines, drill instructors seek, “in several intense weeks, to replace seventeen or eighteen years of psychological and physical development with wholly reconditioned minds and bodies. Every detail of life [is] prescribed, regulated, and enforced” (Appy 35). Likewise, in the Army, “a soldier lives a very, very low life. […] His personal identity is put on ice. […] [H]e forgets totally about himself,
he becomes a sacrificial human being, a person who is totally acquiesced to a system, to a body-regiment” (Appy 44). As recruits go through the increasingly intensive PT exercises, they lose any sense of self. The combination of no personal freedoms, being addressed only by rank, group punishment and reward, strict and constant panoptic surveillance, and performing every action in synch with fellow recruits quickly goes to work on any mental defenses. Indeed, “[m]uch of boot camp [is] truly basic training. Recruits [are] told how to […] perform the most elemental routine according to a rigid and standardized set of regulations,” and it is the drill instructors that rule “with an iron hand” (Appy 37). As recruits begin to rely on the group for support, to identify weak links and attempt to correct them, and commit the drill and ceremony to muscle memory, basic training kills the civilian.

The use of physical training, verbal abuse, and deindividualization causes boot camp to take on a structure similar to that of torture. Elaine Scarry’s theorization of the trauma of torture, pain and war, *The Body In Pain*, describes how physical and mental suffering—specifically in the form of torture—literally “unmakes” the world of the victim: “[p]hysical pain does not simply resist language but actively destroys it, bringing about an immediate reversion to a state anterior to language, to the sounds and cries a human being makes before language is learned. […] For physical pain—unlike any other state of consciousness—has no referential content. It is not of or for anything. It is precisely because it takes no object that it, more than any other phenomenon, resists objectification in language” (5). When the drill instructor forces recruits to do intensive physical training at any moment, depriving them of sleep and pushing them to the limits of physical endurance, all the while screaming, flinging insults, and questioning their
desire, abilities, and soldierly nature, the pain experienced takes on a different level, that of torture. Torture, as defined by Scarry, features “the invariable and simultaneous occurrence of three phenomena. [...] First, pain is inflicted on a person in ever-intensifying ways. Second, the pain, continually amplified within the person’s body, is also amplified in the sense that it is objectified, made visible to those outside the person’s body. Third, the objectified pain is denied as pain and read as power, a translation made possible by the obsessive mediation of agency” (28). Furthermore, the combination of the physical pain of torture and its concomitant interrogation utterly destroys language and the capacity to speak and make sense of the world, deconstructing the prisoner and his or her voice. Scarry specifically uses the word “deconstruct” because “[t]he prolonged interrogation [...] graphically objectifies the step-by-step backward movement along the path by which language comes into being and which is here being reversed or uncreated or deconstructed” (20). What makes basic training mimic the structure of torture as opposed to simply being a painful experience is that the military, as torturer, targets the minds and bodies of recruits and inflicts increasing amounts of pain on them with the specific goal of not only breaking recruits down to a primary state so that they can be rebuilt, but also empowering military authority. Additionally, this pain is directed inwards at an internal enemy (the civilian) as opposed to war, which is towards the external. While torture’s goal is not to kill, it seeks to deconstruct the victim, to literally unmake him and destroy his consciousness, substituting for actual death, as “physical pain always mimes death and the infliction of physical pain is always a mock execution” (Scarry 31). In boot camp, the unmaking is that of the civilian, and the simulated execution of the recruit is the actual death of the civilian within, leaving a blank slate
with which drill sergeants can begin to work. The end goal being to traumatize the
civilian away, to target and overwhelm the emotions in basic training so that the being
that emerges at the end simply cannot access them, exists beyond catharsis.

As recruits are torn down, the torture affirms the drill instructor and all he
performs—the core values, disciplined rage and aggression, masculinity, the primacy of
the group, and perfect execution. The torture of recruits visually displays and reinforces
the disciplinary and performative power of the military. As the sergeant physically wears
out the recruits, he makes sure to bring with it “the primary verbal act, the interrogation”
which “consists of two parts, ‘the question’ and ‘the answer (36).’” The verbal aspect
“objectif[ies] the fact that while the prisoner has almost no voice—his confession is a
halfway point in the disintegration of language, an audible objectification of the
proximity of silence—the torturer and the regime have doubled their voice since the
prisoner is now speaking their words” (36). The drill instructor uses his words to make
absolute the difference between civilian and soldier, crushing the civilian within via the
individual’s acceptance and unconditional submission to the Army or Marines; it is not
enough to exhaust the recruit, they must have their pain be “hugely objectified,
everywhere visible, as incontestably present in the external as in the internal world” (56).
But at the same time, the recruit must deny the pain, willingly submitting to the
sergeant’s physical demands and answering in the affirmative to whatever insult or
interrogation offered, upholding the power of the military and its stand-in, the drill
sergeant. As Scarry writes, “the goal of the torturer is to make the one, the body,
emphatically and crushingly present by destroying it, and to make the other, the voice,
absent by destroying it”; as the physical training and complete subservience breaks the
recruit down to a state of nothingness, the verbal abuse and interrogations make that
civilian within absent, ready to be replaced (49). And so the initial stages of boot camp
become torture—not in its most extreme form as enacted on prisoners, nor even torture
involving direct physical assault by an agent, but torture nonetheless. While drill
sergeants are not allowed to physically harm a recruit by striking or otherwise assaulting
him, they torture recruits through physical training, mental exhaustion, and verbal abuse
and interrogation, thereby stripping them of every remaining bit of independence.
Christian Appy theorizes that in the Marine Corps, “[t]hough obedience was exacted by
sheer intimidation, the physical stress of basic training also induced compliance. […]
Simple exhaustion was a key factor in explaining the willingness of recruits to follow
orders. They soon learned that disobedience of any kind only brought more pain—more
harassment, more cleaning, and more fatigue. (37). Likewise, he writes that in the Army,
“even while […] training was not usually as brutal or imprisoning as Marine boot camp,
it was certainly capable of tearing down many of its trainees, stripping them of a personal
identity, and making them feel like unquestioning members of a body-regiment” (38, 45).

Infantry disciplinary power thus works to a very specific end in training, breaking
down recruits and assuring their total obedience and peak physical functioning while
eradicating the first layers of emotional response through torture to prevent trauma. But
battlefield obedience, the ability of soldiers to act in the proper and planned for manner in
actual combat, to remain collected and cohesive under the most extreme of situations,
does not simply or immediately arise from such Draconian techniques; as Clausewitz and
his successors knew all too well, discipline is only half of the equation, necessarily
complimented by performance. This initial disciplinary phase— which continues to a
lesser degree throughout military life in order to guarantee that soldiers maintain their physical fitness and acquiescence—enables what is to come, the rebuilding of recruits into soldiers by means of performative power. Heeding the calls of their predecessors, the Army and Marine Corps, in order for soldiers to act as expected during battle, have resorted to rehearsal, to continuously practicing for war and building up a soldierly character through “realistic” and theatrical simulations. The theoretical endgame is a force of soldiers already steeled to the mental and physical effects of war so that when the first “real” encounter with actual combat arrives, soldiers can be counted on to respond properly; so steeped in the horrors of war already yet also simultaneously aware of a sense of artificiality to it all, these warriors would be so removed from the moment as to inhibit catharsis, never mind the damage already done or about to occur.

**Conditioning**

US infantry training now handles recruits as if they were actors in a play, using extensive rehearsal time to build within them a specifically soldierly character to be perfected over the course of the rest of their service; the hope is that the character becomes so well practiced, so taken to heart, that in combat it is the character of the soldier upon whom the individual falls back. With the process of stripping the recruit of his or her civilian identity well underway, the concomitant goal becomes rebuilding each recruit into a soldier capable of taking decisive forward action under any battlefield condition while remaining impervious to the debilitating mental and physical affects of sustained combat environments. Starting with the operant conditioning of rifle marksmanship and continuing through the theatre of combat simulations, the Army’s White Phase—the period after the first four weeks in the Marines—marks a shift in basic
training away from discipline and onto performatively training the recruit via theatricality for the emotional realities of warfare. Building on the notion of combat as twice-behaved-behaviors as argued in the preceding chapter, this system of training can be clarified by examining it alongside a similar process at work in the theatre itself as outlined by Joseph Roach in *The Player’s Passion*, wherein rehearsal strives to make actors capable of repetitive reproduction not by drilling them into obedience, but by preparing them for the countless experiences of the stage with the ultimate goal of eliminating the dangerous play of emotions and mimesis to which the theatre and its audience are subjected. By tracing “a history of the theatricalization of the human body,” Roach argues that actor training since the time of Denis Diderot has constantly returned to the French philosopher’s famous paradox: in order for the actor to achieve the appearance of spontaneity, s/he must perfect that image beforehand in rehearsals. Roach writes, “In Diderot’s scheme the actor rehearses his [sic] actions until his emotions appear to be spontaneous. […] The audience finally sees an illusion of reflexive vitality, responding to outer stimuli as if for the first time; but the actor’s real experience is of a sequence of reflexive mechanisms, responding to an inner plan that has been carefully worked out in advance” (152). Rehearsal, not discipline, thus trains the actor’s body and mind into repetition.

As the ideas surrounding Diderotian actor training and modernism converged, the process of rehearsal as a means of preparation increased. This style of rehearsal, institutionalized by Russian director Constantin Stanislavski, works under a director to prepare flexible actors for all possibilities of performance rather than attempting to reach fixed perfection. While Stanislavski’s early work focused on emotional memory as a
source of realistic acting, using actor’s previous emotional experiences to replicate those of the character’s onstage and thus seemingly at odds with the history outlined by Roach, Stanislavski subsequently focused the rest of his system on what he dubbed the “method of physical actions,” which specifically rejects such a use of spontaneous emotions in actual performance. Using deliberate and detailed research and preparation, Stanislavski’s actors eventually created their role from the ground up, building each character into a fully realized personality whose actions, thoughts, and emotions come to dominate the actor’s own in performance.

Stanislavski’s method of physical actions involved a series of steps all aimed at the “magic if,” the constant iteration of asking “what if I were this character”; using such a system, the character’s objectives drive the actor’s choices and actions. Stanislavski came to believe that physical actions were the only route to truthful and convincing emotions on stage. If affective actions could be strung together in rehearsal, uncovering the unconscious emotions of the character being built, the actor could offer an appearance of reality and impulsivity for an audience once onstage. As Roach notes, Stanislavski believed that “every thought and feeling is connected to a physical action, that mind is merely the subjective aspect of an objective process called body. […] As he [the actor] builds his character by accretion, he consciously constructs a chain of stimulating actions. This is his inner model—a conscious artistic construction automatized into his muscles and nerves. When he has fixed the sequence or score through many repetitions, spontaneity returns” (Roach 213). For Stanislavski, “time and frequent repetition, in rehearsal and performance” turns the score “habitual,” which in turn “creates second nature, which is a second reality” (229). In this system of rehearsal, then, endlessly
repeated actions stand in for “real” emotions and impulsivity, leaving the actor
“spontaneously” acting in accordance with the role; while emotions will always be
present, the more rehearsed and fixed they can be, the more reliable the performance.
“The advantage” of such a system, according to Stanislavski and Roach, is that “it
liberates his [the actor’s] critical faculties to observe, assess, and correct his performance
in accordance with the pre-established score” (Roach 214). Or, parsed differently, the
advantage of such rehearsal lies in its theatricality, its ability to leave the actor capable of
reflection and action rather than a passive vessel at the whim of unpredictable emotions
capable of overwhelming actor and audience alike.

An essential part of acting therefore occurs in rehearsal, through thorough physical
training and intensive introspection. Rather than working off the actor’s own emotions, a
dangerous and inconsistent practice incapable of exact reproduction, within this system
each performer would create the character’s emotions and then act as if that character. All
emotional work, whether recall or otherwise, takes place during rehearsal to build the
color, ensuring that nothing in performance is spontaneous or impulsive, exposing the
actor ahead of time to the range of emotions involved in the drama. Once on stage, the
actor acts as the character, recalls the extensive rehearsal, and thereby removes from the
moment. Actors in performance thus always are maintaining the Diderodian duality,
making the self not present in the moment and referring to their experience, recalling
emotions and actions ingrained in rehearsal. Indeed, Clausewitz, Ardent du Picq,
Marshall, and Holmes all argued for a similar process wherein soldiers would be able to
recall their extensive training once in battle and jettison the range of spontaneous
emotions they would otherwise experience. This exorcism ensures that little in combat is
spontaneous or impulsive and removes the soldier’s emotions from the equation. Infantry training-as-rehearsal thus serves as the chief method to limit the role catharsis plays in the actual performance of war, relying on training’s ability to demarcate the terrifying from the simply horrible—the traumatic from the merely painful—and rehearse it all into something familiar.

The essential part of preparing for war now too occurs in training—just as in Stanislavski’s method of physical actions, it is rehearsal that has become the focus. The process of infantry training in the US is remarkably similar to that of such actor training—the recruit, qua actor, enters the liminal space of boot camp and gets stripped of his quotidian existence through intensive physical and mental techniques. He subsequently spends the rest of his military life building up and maintaining a specific role—the ideal soldier—that allows the individual, in theory, to function effectively in combat. A focus on creating an inner model and practicing it to the point of automation accomplishes this task, using conditioning and physical actions to perfect the “inner score.” The Army’s White Phase begins the progression of rehearsal and consists generally of marksmanship and initial simulations of various types of combat situations, along with continued physical training. Basic training here transitions into a rebuilding phase that corresponds to the redressive action stage of social drama—“what’s done to overcome the crisis,” where “certain adjustive and redressive mechanisms […] are brought into operation by leading or structurally representative members of the disturbed social system” (Schechner *PT* 211, Turner, 39). This “moment of great significance” begins the process wherein recruits are reborn into soldiers, marked by a transition of violence and aggression highlighted by “when the trainees began weapons training”
Indeed, the Marine Corps chooses to term this new stage “Basic Warrior Training,” a symbol of the birth of the fighter inside. Having successfully turned the civilian into the enemy and fixated the drill instructor as the hated but respected figure of disciplinary power, basic training transitions to turning the adversary from within to without, increasing aggression while decreasing unpredictability. Starting at the end of week three, instead of constantly railing against the recruits themselves, hammering in their insignificance as civilians, drill sergeants begin to focus on a generalized enemy and fixate group aggression against it (Appy 55).

In this stage, drill sergeants teach recruits how to properly handle, maintain, and shoot their rifles, while at the same time molding training to progressively increase aggression through exercises such as the “bayonet assault course” and “pugil stick training.” In the prior, recruits practice first on fixed dummies, parrying and thrusting their blades into targets over and over again, all the while being instructed on the instances where it is necessary to stab an enemy with a bayonet (when you are in “a bad way”—that is, with no ammunition or with overwhelming enemies overrunning a position and preventing effective fire). Drill sergeants instruct recruits to not be timid and to instead “let it go, be aggressive. The objective in bayonet fighting is to close within your enemy and terminate him with extreme prejudice” (goarmy.com); the focus, of course, is on aggressive, self-initiated offensive action that works directly to override any resistance to killing. To heighten the effect, recruits wear full combat gear with their bayonet attached to the end of their M16s, and in a long line aggressively attack targets in synch, thrusting over and over again into the “body” of the “enemy”—in this case a full-scale body-shaped target. Trainees then move to the actual assault course, a three hundred
meter-long challenge spread out over differing types of terrain with varying obstacles and mixed targets, many of which are three-dimensional and human shaped. The recruits rush in wearing “battle dress uniform with load-carrying equipment,” and crawling under barbed wire, traversing bridges, and jumping over obstacles, must negotiate the course in an allotted time period and “obtain kills” on a certain percentage of the targets (FM 21-150).

In pugil stick training, recruits face off against each other wearing improvised armor (usually adapted football pads) and attack each other with large, padded bludgeons. The pugil stick is made to mimic the size and weight of an M-16 with an attached bayonet, and recruits progress from instructional warm ups, through graded bouts, and into “pugil courses.” Drill sergeants instruct recruits that if they won’t fight, “we’ll pair you up with someone twice your size who wants to murder you” (goarmy.com). In graded bouts, two opponents face off in the middle of a circle of screaming and encouraging comrades; in order “to score a point or win a round, a soldier must score a solid blow with either end of the pugil stick to a vulnerable point—the head, throat, chest, stomach, or groin region (FM 21-150).” The drill instructor referees the match, “encourage[ing] soldiers to move in aggressively and to attack violently, using any of the attack movements learned during rifle-bayonet training. […] The soldier who hesitates to strike his opponent realizes that defeat can be quick; therefore, he tries to be aggressive and overcome his opponent in the shortest possible time” (FM 21-150). With no choice but to enter the ring—wherein recruits can either attack or get pummeled repeatedly—pugil bouts forward the cause of the Clausewitzean theorists, teaching individuals that they have but two choices in combat: fight and advance, or die.
There are two types of pugil courses, the “Human Thrusting Target Course,” and the “Human Thrusting Assault Course,” both of which continue the techniques from pugil bouts and the bayonet assault course. The latter “approximate[s] an obstacle course in length, obstacles, and terrain. The course layout should take advantage of natural obstacles. […] Soldiers in pugil equipment can be placed among the obstacles to act as human targets. The rest of the unit, in pugil equipment, can negotiate all obstacles and human targets, using instinctive rifle-bayonet fighting movements” (FM-21-150). The purpose of pugil techniques, according to Army Field Manual 21-150 *Combatives*, is to prepare recruits “to confidently and aggressively use the rifle-bayonet.” But it also provides an experience that basic drill and ceremony could never offer, “furnish[ing] the rifle-bayonet fighter with an opponent who can think, move, evade, fight back, and (most important) make corrections. It provides realism.” Dispensing with training that provides a static picture of combat, which instills a false vision of unchanging and unresponsive enemies, the emphasis is on theatrical techniques designed to realistically mimic elements of combat. Celebrating the fidelity of these methods, the infantry self-reflexively acknowledges the performance at work, as pugil techniques force soldiers to “remain alert” and “act and react from instinct,” which in turn “afford[s] an opportunity to develop […] individual rifle-bayonet fighting skills (FM 21-150).” The recruit learns to use his rifle-bayonet in many different situations, and must do so instantaneously or they suffer the consequences; while not as dire as actual combat, the punishment received from a pugil stick combines with successful techniques to become instinct which, in battle, should immediately override fear. Additionally, consistent with the transition away from Draconian discipline, “[l]ittle effort is required by the instructor to motivate the
soldiers—the pugil stick is the motivating force,” allowing drill sergeants to let recruits take the initiative. The result is that while “[s]oldiers derive much physical benefit from pugil training,” more importantly, they “develop an aggressive mental spirit that is so essential if the rifle-bayonet fighter is to be successful in combat (FM 21-150).

Building on these goals, in the “Human Thrusting Target Course,” a “rifle-bayonet fighter” moves through a formation of up to ten soldiers, all in pugil gear, and “moving with the pugil stick at the attack position […] [a]s the rifle-bayonet fighter approaches an opponent, the opponent shouts the movement that the rifle-bayonet fighter is to execute— —for example, thrust, slash, butt stroke (FM-21-150).” Each participant goes through a series of “walk-throughs” where “[a]fter executing the movement, the rifle-bayonet fighter pauses long enough for the instructor to make corrections, then he moves to the next target.” Once able to execute all of the actions quickly and correctly, the fighter “runs through the course at full speed, growling and executing the called movements with maximum force against his opponents. The duties are rotated so that all soldiers get to act as fighters and as human targets” (FM-21-150). Echoing their focus on rebuilding their initiatives, the Army describes this training method as “crawl, walk, run” phases, meaning that, in the words of a drill sergeant, “before you go out on your lane, you actually crawl it by having them practice what they would do on the lane, what are your actions on contact, what do we do when we move back into our perimeter? […] You would walk it by going through reversals inside your perimeter. And then of course when it’s time to run obviously you’re out on the lane, actually executing the lane” (goarmy.com). Such training targets the very core of human development, seeking to overcode the most basic actions and instincts. Just as in the performance training-workshop-rehearsal tripartite,
where the process begins with basic questions and actions and moves up to walk-throughs and full runs, Army training allows soldiers to build up to a simulated final performance through increased repetition and increasingly more “realistic” exercises to ensure they have enough time to craft their model of proper actions.

Bayonet exercises, combined with similar hand-to-hand combat training undertaken concomitantly, ensure that recruits simultaneously understand that there is no option except to fight, fixate an increasingly violent hostility outwards against targets that are consistently made to be the enemy, and undergo the range of emotions they are likely to face on the actual battlefield when attacking or being attacked. At the same time, recruits also undertake marksmanship training. Marksmanship consists almost entirely of theatricalized classical and operant conditioning, that is, fixing the soldiers’ reactions to a specific impulse and thereby training them to shoot seemingly impulsively only at correct targets. In *On Killing*, Army Ranger Colonel Dave Grossman describes contemporary rifle training and its affect on soldiers by arguing that “the method used to train today’s—and the Vietnam era’s—US Army and USMC soldiers is nothing more than an application of conditioning techniques to develop a reflexive ‘quick shoot’ ability” (253). He goes on to describe specifically how marksmanship today takes on a theatrical nature and thereby works on the minds of trainees. In comparison to previous rifle drills, where participants would be “lying prone on a grassy field calmly shooting at a bull’s-eye target,” contemporary infantry marksmanship training has recruits spending “many hours standing in a foxhole, with full combat equipment draped about his body, looking over an area of lightly wooded rolling terrain (253).” Continuing the emphasis on live, interactive targets that offer feedback and a glimpse into the conditions of combat, “[a]t periodic
intervals one or two olive-drab, man-shaped targets at varying ranges will pop up in front of [the trainee] for a brief time, and the soldier must instantly aim and shoot at the target(s). When he hits a target it provides immediate feedback by instantly and very satisfyingly dropping backward—just as a living target would (253).” Instructors place the stress on accuracy, speed, and efficiency, as “[s]oldiers are highly rewarded and recognized for success […] and suffer mild punishment […] for failure to quickly and accurately ‘engage’ the targets—a standard euphemism for ‘kill’” (253). In building the modern warrior, the efficiency, effectiveness, and efficacy of workers in performance management becomes the ability to identify targets, the speed of engagement, and the accuracy of fire.

Grossman also recounts even more realistic target practice, involving “balloon-filled uniforms moving across the kill zone, red-paint-filled milk jugs, and many other ingenious devices” that attempt to override the resistance to killing and replace it with an aggressive willingness to engage the enemy; focusing on “[t]he ability to shoot reflexively and instantly and a precise mimicry of the act of killing on the modern battlefield,” marksmanship uses spectacle to defeat spectacle, seeking to process all emotional reactions during training, leaving nothing but the soldier-character’s will to kill (254). Colonel Grossman illustrates how such training, whether within an understanding of its effects or not, is clearly operant conditioning, as “[i]n behavioral terms, the man shape popping up in the soldier’s field of fire is the ‘conditioned stimulus,’ the immediate engaging of the target is the ‘target behavior.’ Positive reinforcement is given in the form of immediate feedback when the target drops if it is hit. (254). The use of conditioning to train recruits to instinctively and immediately shoot at targets combined
with the simultaneous focusing of aggression on said targets, serves to override the fear and hesitancy to fight that has historically plagued armies. Marksmanship also attempts to assure that once on the battlefield and confronted with incoming live fire, soldiers do not revert back to a flight or posture mechanism, but instinctively open fire and effectively dispatch the threat—instead of reacting as civilians and succumbing to their cathartic impulse, individuals react as soldiers, steeled to the force of terror. This recalls Stanislavski’s Method of Physical Actions outlined above, as such rehearsal works by “creating stimuli that would reliably excite the appropriate reflexive response” (Roach 209). By conditioning the soldier to react to various stimuli in specific manners and training that reaction over and over and over again all the while employing realistic targets, marksmanship works on the mind by reflexively linking the “inner motivations and outer world”; by overriding the individual’s instincts with those of a soldier, when actually fighting, the soldier should respond “impulsively” as needed. However, such “impulsive” actions are not those of the civilian but of the soldier-character, the result of this prolonged and targeted conditioning. Stanislavski actors condition their muscle memory to coincide with the motivations of their character, so that they react seemingly impulsively as if the character—not as the actor—just as the recruit eventually acts as if the soldier and not as the civilian.

**Combat Simulation**

The remainder of basic training, its immediate aftermath in Advanced Individual Training (Army) or School of Infantry (Marines), and the rest of military service time are dedicated to preparing troops for potential combat situations through realistic and often large-scale exercises aimed at simulating the actualities of war. Evident during
marksmanship and subsequently becoming the primary focus of training, simulations, live fire training, and group oriented exercise rehearse recruits into “combat readiness” by mimetically reproducing the spectacle of battle and its associated stress, fatigue, and fear. The Marine Corps subsumes this style of training under the term “exercises.” According to official doctrine, exercises “should approximate the conditions of battle as much as possible; that is, they should introduce friction in the form of uncertainty, stress, disorder, and opposing wills. This last characteristic is most important; only in opposed, free-lay exercises can we practice the art of war. Dictated or ‘canned’ scenarios eliminate the element of independent, opposing wills that is the essence of combat” (Warfighting 62-63, emphasis mine). Channeling the spirit of Clausewitz, and indeed his very terminology, Marine Corps recruit training emphasizes live, unscripted, and realistic exercises that, as opposed to the recorded, dictated, or otherwise static maneuvers of disciplinary drills, allow the recruit to experience the unpredictable, chaotic, and constantly changing nature of combat. The art of war, according to the Marine Corps, can only exist through performance, in the “decentralized, flexible, dynamic, open, and ‘naturalistic’ systems” of performance management that resist any attempts at recording, predicting, or otherwise changing its intrinsic nature (McKenzie 73). Training must, as Clausewitz warned, seek to reproduce friction in order for soldiers to truly overcome its cathartic pull, and the only way to create friction is through performance; only by simulating a living, reacting opponent who can kill and be killed can training ever hope to succeed. Therefore, no recorded video, lecture, or other attempt to reproduce combat without its essential elements, that is, actors (soldiers), directors (officers), scenery (terrain, obstacles etc), costume (full combat gear), props (weapons and assorted military
technology), and, of course, catharsis (friction), can successfully turn recruits into warriors. So Basic Warrior Training focuses not on the discipline of drill, but on the excess of performance. Field exercises, which “introduce recruits to field living and conditions” by allowing recruits to “learn basic field skills from setting up a tent to field sanitation and camouflage,” allow recruits to practice maneuvers and tactical techniques outside of the comfort zone of their base and the direct panoptic supervision of the drill instructor; but they also revolve around other bodies, the simulated, acted enemy whose actions and the recruit’s subsequent response guarantee a distinct, unique drama with varying lessons every time it is acted out (Recruit Training). Because such instruction could never be exactly repeated and leaves no record save for its memory, it must be repeated again and again until, no matter the improvisations, recruits act according to their role. In other words, training must attempt to mimic the unpredictable and ephemeral and in so doing delimit the possibilities of combat reactions, a project that seemingly cannot hope to succeed.

The same holds true in the Army, where week six begins a general focus on “tactics,” the “things you need to do to survive on the battlefield” (goarmy.com). The “Squad Defensive Live-Fire Exercise” allows recruits to simulate a real combat situation, wherein they are “given a scenario explaining to them that they have a sector that they have to defend within their unit’s perimeter, and their mission as a quick reaction force is to go out and get in their selected positions and defend […] and not allow the enemy to come in and take over your position” (goarmy.com). The drill sergeants stress the importance of working cohesively as a group rather than individually. Recruits once again wear full battle dress—including face paint—and leaving the immediate
campgrounds, maneuver across terrain while under live fire and engage an enemy, returning fire and working as a team. A similar exercise is also conducted at night. The mimesis, while selectively deployed to guarantee recruit safety as much as possible, is chillingly effective. In the words of a recruit interviewed by the Army, “It was like so realistic. Just for a moment you think, like, oh my God, I’m really fighting, I’m really a soldier; […] Before I went into the woods, I was like, I’m in Fort Jackson, but after that its like, there’s no more Fort Jackson in my mind, its like, this is the real thing, the real battlefield” (goarmy.com). Such training allows recruits, absorbed in the drama, to run the gamut of emotional reactions in the relatively safe environs of combat simulations, allowing for any potentially unpredictable or otherwise detrimental response before the “real thing.” This emotional work done before any real combat attempts to guarantee a steady, collected performance dedicated solely to fighting. Once on the battlefield, soldiers should be able to think and take action, the moment of theatricality essential to staving off catharsis.

Not only do these exercises help the solder experience war, but they also begin to build up self-discipline, esprit de corps, and squad morale—the specifically martial social pressures that help ensure soldiers will attempt to fight so as not to disappoint or endanger their comrades. Building on the points made by Colonel Ardant du Picq, SLA Marshall, and Richard Holmes, Anthony Kellett, a Canadian defense analyst, in Combat Motivation—an investigation of the factors that cause soldiers to kill—stresses the importance of group cohesion, that is, “the interrelationship of the group and the individual […] in determining the soldier’s willingness to fight for the group, his resistance to psychiatric breakdown, and his relationship with the formal structure of the
army” (41). Kellet goes on to stress that assimilation into the group before combat is essential in motivating soldiers to fight (67), and that the best place to do so is in basic training. Likewise, Colonel Grossman argues a similar point, citing “volume[s] of research” which indicate that “the primary factor that motivates a soldier to do the things that no sane man wants to do in combat (that is, killing and dying) is not the force of self-preservation but a powerful sense of accountability to his comrades on the battlefield” (149). Grossman also argues that group cohesion offers “a sense of anonymity that contributes further” to enabling soldiers to kill, reducing the sense of “personal responsibility” that often overwhelms individuals (151). Without both factors, without soldiers who “identify with” and “are bonded” to a group “that has a legitimate demand for killing,” riflemen, no matter how disciplined or skilled, rarely overcome their fear and resistances to killing and being killed. For Grossman and Kellett, group cohesion is a major factor that differentiates soldiers from civilians, providing the motivation to overcome any vestiges of civilian resistance to killing. As Kellett succinctly states, “any attempt to foster motivation needs to differentiate between the qualities inherent in a soldier that can be traced to his civilian social environment and the qualities inculcated by the training, discipline, and organizational mores of the army” (67). The opposition between civilian and martial qualities set up in basic training serves the deeper purpose of inoculating initiates with specific qualities that lend themselves to fostering a generalized esprit de corps and a specific cohesion among small groups, and at the same time encourage those groups to value the ability to kill. With such group cohesion motivating soldiers to fight and the knowledge and experience built up from numerous simulations, the likelihood that soldiers will perform according to the Army and Marine Corps’ script
greatly increases.

The Crucible

Both Marine Corps and Army basic training culminate in extended field exercises that represent the first of what will be many multi-day, immersive theatrical productions throughout a soldier’s military life—the martial equivalent of a dress rehearsal. When recruits successfully complete “Victory Forge,” as it is called in the Army, or “the Crucible,” in the Marine Corps, they symbolically are for the first time referred to as soldiers or Marines. This ritual marks the beginning of their entrance into military society and the end of the redressive action stage of the ritual; with the crisis having been sealed off and solved, the completion of these exercises seemingly marks the end of the liminal phase of basic training and the full realization of the soldier-character. The Crucible stresses the importance of group cohesion and the diversity of problem solving needed in the field. According to James B. Woulfe, former assistant director of Marine Corps Drill Instructor School, the Crucible originated when, “[i]n 1996, Gen. Charles C. Krulak strengthened the transformation from civilian to Marine by directing the creation of a culminating training exercise. […] He made it more realistic and challenging by using a defining moment that put the recruit-training experience into focus. […] The Crucible is intended to continue the tradition of Marines being better warriors through shared hardship and teamwork” (Woulfe 7). The Crucible combines long marches, live fire exercises, obstacle courses and problem solving, and simulation of field conditions such as rationed food and sleep; recruits in the Crucible get approximately eight hours of sleep over the course of the two and a half days and, according to a drill instructor, “get two-and-a-half MREs [Meals ready to Eat] and […] are responsible for rationing out the food
to themselves. Then we put them through tough physical activities like road marches and
night infiltration courses. They march about 40 miles in those 54 hours” (Rite of
Passage). The grueling and intentionally Spartan conditions force the recruits to work as a
unit to overcome their individual physical and mental exhaustion, fear, stress, and
confusion. In the words of the Marine Corps’ recruitment website, Marines.com, recruits
in the Crucible “will experience sleep deprivation, food rationing, and a series of intense
mental and physical tests that will put an exclamation point on their time in recruit
training. By the time recruits take on the Crucible, they normally have around 11 weeks
of solid training behind them, and it will all be needed.” Once again, teamwork and
initiative are the catchwords, as “[t]ired and hungry, they [recruits] must work together to
overcome extreme challenges or experience the bitterness of failure as a platoon”
(marines.com).

In between marches, distinct training exercises begin at stations named for famous
Marines where drill instructors briefly lecture each squad on the relevance of the
Marine’s actions to Corps values. All of the stations attempt to simulate potential combat
situations while at the same time ensuring recruit safety and clearly outlining the lessons
to take away. For example, an article written for the American Forces Press Service, a
branch of the Department of Defense aimed at servicemen and their families, describes
one of the stations: “built around an enemy-mined rope bridge that the recruits must cross
with their gear and ammunition boxes. They have only a couple of short ropes and their
personal gear to solve the problem.” At a different location, “recruits run into firing
positions and engage pop-up targets with 10 rounds in two magazines,” and in another,
[r]ecruit teams battle each other with pugil sticks” (Rite of Passage). On the third day,
once the recruits have successfully finished all of the events, the recruits go through one final ritual to finally become Marines. After marching back to camp singing “Jody calls”—the cadences named for the namesake civilian character whose lazy, cowardly behavior and wife-stealing actions contrast to the upstanding, brave behaviors of the soldier in the call and responses—recruits “form up around a half-size replica of the Marine Corps Memorial—also known as the Iwo Jima Memorial” where “a significant transformation takes place” in the form of a ritualized ceremony (Rite of Passage). As the sun sets over the parade grounds, “[a] color guard raises the flag on the memorial. The chaplain reads a prayer specifically written for the finish of the Crucible, and the company first sergeant addresses the recruits.” Finally, the sergeant accepts the recruits into the closed society of the Corps, “shak[ing] their hands and calls them "Marine" for the first time (Rite of Passage). All that remains in USMC boot camp are tests and more drill, the final culmination of which is graduation, when each individual officially becomes a Marine.

**Victory Forge**

Victory Forge, a seven day, six night outing that combines all previous Army training originated as an adaptation of the Marine’s Crucible, but “while the Crucible and Victory Forge rely on team-building exercises, the big differences are that Army men and women train together and their exercise is totally tactical—conducted as if in a combat zone. Marine men and women train separately, and the Crucible is a training environment” (Victory Forge). Victory Forge is a theatrical exercise on a far grander scale than that of the Crucible, focusing much more on simulating combat than testing the physical and mental conditioning of recruits. Over the course of the seven days, units
undertake a “10 Kilometer foot march,” at the end of which they “occupy a position and establish a defensive perimeter,” creating a field camp to serve as their tactical base of operations. Recruits also “conduct tactical feeding,” “undergo Nuclear, Biological and Chemical training,” “defensive operations,” “conduct squad-sized tactical exercises and a night tactical exercise,” “move to and conduct the Night Infiltration Course, execute the Live Fire Night Infiltration,” and finish with a “15 Kilometer foot march” back to the base (“What to Expect”). As in the Crucible, Victory Forge combines realistic combat simulation and tasks with exaggerated obstacles and specific restrictions, all the while under the supervision of a drill sergeant who debriefs the squads afterwards. For example, as described in another American Forces Press Service article, a company receives an operations order to “conduct Victory Forge Operations in vic[inity] of [Defensive Position] Dog House. This will consist of the company breaking down into three mega squads per platoon. Each mega squad will be sent to recover a downed pilot and encounter a series of tactical obstacles and teamwork building challenges, to include a squad-on-squad ambush” (Victory Forge). For example, on the way they encounter a “15-foot cement wall” that all members of the company must scale, “get all their gear up it and continue their mission (Victory Forge).

Also, as in the Crucible, upon completion of Victory Forge, recruits “become” soldiers in a ritualized process undertaken at night. As “soldiers gather around a forge,” “[f]lames spew from the top as the battalion commander puts the soldiers’ experiences into perspective” (Rite of Passage). In a performative gesture, the commander “holds up a rod of iron and likens it to them when they arrived at Fort Jackson—metal with a lot of potential but unshaped. But then, he says, they went through the fires of Victory Forge.”
Building on the theatrical metaphor, the commander then “reaches into the forge and pulls out a sword,” visually affirming the transformation undergone by each recruit, from useless civilian to deadly soldier. Next, in an act mirroring the end of the Crucible, “the drill sergeants go down the line and congratulate the soldiers,” calling recruits “soldier” for the first time and telling them that “they’ve ‘done good,’” symbolizing the end of the process where the drill sergeant moves from enemy to respected colleague (Rite of Passage).

Both the Crucible and Victory Forge are specific rituals within the larger liminal phase that is basic combat training. They serve as the ritual conclusion to boot camp and conclude with recruits finally becoming soldiers. This is done symbolically in liminal performances—Schechner notes that “at the conclusion of the liminal phase of a ritual, actions and objects take on, and radiate, significances in excess of their practical use or value. These actions and objects are symbolic of the changes taking place” (58). For the Marines, this is in the form of the presentation of the symbol of the Corps, the “Eagle, Globe and Anchor,” during the final flag raising ceremony. In the Army, it is the symbolic rod and sword pulled from the forge. The transition from civilian to soldier is visually symbolized for all present in ritualized performances of becoming a warrior; no longer blunt and useless, recruits are now sharpened physically and mentally, capable of killing swiftly and effectively, and freed of the civilian weaknesses that would previously have reduced them to passive states of spectatorship in battle.

The conclusion of basic training with the graduation of successful recruits would appear to draw the liminal phase to its logical conclusion—recruits, no longer civilians, have become killers and are forever changed. Graduation seemingly marks the final stage
of the ritual, wherein individuals reintegrate into the society from whence they came. However, an aspect of ritual and a larger reality of military life and the effect of contemporary training is that once initiated, solders can never go back from whence they came. As Chapter Three will demonstrate, the remainder of active service is spent either in combat or rehearsing for combat, ensuring that soldiers are constantly maintaining their “combat readiness” at all times and always unsure of what is “real” and what is but “practice.” As the Army itself states, “[t]he reality is…that infantry training never really stops. Whether taking part in squad maneuvers, target practice or war games, Infantrymen are constantly working to keep their skills sharp and are in a constant state of preparedness” (goarmy.com). Because a soldier never stops training, never ceases being in character, they are stuck in a continual process of becoming soldier, never actually reaching a point wherein the rehearsals stop; soldiers are always betwixt and between, no longer civilians, but never able to stop perfecting their character. Therefore, the final stage of ritual, reintegration, needs to be considered as coming at the end of a soldier’s enlistment rather than at graduation, meaning that all of military existence is, in fact, liminal. Recruits go through the first phase, separation, when they enlist and go to basic training, and the final phase when they retire or die, leaving all of a soldier’s enlisted life as liminal. The problem is, of course, that if soldiers are maintaining constant combat readiness, they have no chance to actually step out of character, to return to being just an actor or clearly demarcate between the levels of mimicry that structures their martial existence. What in theatre is the mental image of a character that the actor can drop offstage becomes in the infantry actual, as the individual becomes the soldier he plays.
Chapter 3

Rehearsing the War Away:

Perpetual Warrior Training in Contemporary Infantry Policy

If only the soldiers had been properly rehearsed to fight against their enemies, the events of 23 March 2003 in the city of An Nasiriyah, Iraq might not have spun out of control, at least according to the Army’s diagnosis. Assigned to protect a battalion of Patriot Missiles at the extreme rear of a 600-vehicle convoy during the rapid march from Kuwait to Baghdad, a small group of vehicles from the 507th Maintenance Company took a wrong turn into the city and became separated from the main column. Iraqi forces first attacked the soldiers, specialized to provide mechanical support rather than to fight in live combat, with small arms fire, causing confusion and further wrong turns, and subsequently ambushed them with heavier weapons. According to the Army, it was specifically “[f]atigue, stress, the asymmetric nature of the threat, and the environment” that “contributed to the events leading up to and during this attack”; not only did the convoy became increasingly lost and splintered under heavier fire, but most of their guns malfunctioned due to lack of maintenance (Attack on the 507th Maintenance Company 15). The attacks resulted in the deaths of eleven soldiers and the capture of seven—including the now (in)famous Private Jessica Lynch. Alarmingly similar to the incident in An Nasiriyah are the controversial civilian deaths of 19 November 2005 in the city of Haditha, Iraq; according to two conflicting and heavily disputed accounts, Marines from Kilo Company, 3rd Battalion, 1st Marine Regiment either “deliberately shot civilians, including unarmed women and children” or it was insurgents who “placed noncombatants in the line of fire as the Marines” who, in reacting to attacks, “responded
to defend themselves” and unintentionally and regretfully caused such “collateral
damage” (AP, McGirk). No matter the actual chain of events in either case, what was
clear was that the Marines in Haditha and soldiers in An Nasiriyah were unprepared for
the highly stressful combat situations into which they were placed and reacted to
unanticipated circumstances based on their visceral, spontaneous, and emotional response
with uncontrolled and counterproductive results. While the majority of the mainstream
media attention would focus on the efforts to rescue Private Lynch and the criminal
charges against the Marines, the Battle of An Nasiriyah and the Haditha incident would
set off a series of investigations, accusations, and revelations about the nature of the Iraq
War, the mentality of people fighting it on both sides, the training undertaken to prepare
US troops for deployment, and its ultimate failures. Indeed, these two events and their
subsequent fallouts distill the problematics inherent to the US ground strategy during the
initial three-and-a-half years of the Iraq War and the motivation for the subsequent shift
to the counterinsurgency model advocated by General David H. Petraeus.

The disasters in An Nasiriyah and Haditha mark a transitional point within both
the US military’s fundamental approach to infantry fighting and the history of the art of
war. The most significant conclusion to emerge from these two incidents was the
generalized failure of the basic structure of specialization to properly prepare soldiers to
carry out an effective campaign, leading to the degradation of the Marine Corps’ combat
and ethics training and the inability of Army personnel to respond to combat. Both
branches of the infantry chose to overhaul their training and doctrine around specific
changes in the spirit of their respective creeds; more than simply a problem of amount or
quality of training, both the Army and Marine Corps recognized that they needed to
fundamentally shift their most basic approach to the soldiers themselves. And so the Army and Marines have since instituted a profound shift in their approach to warfare, an institutionalization of performative power in training to craft warriors specifically suited to respond to the challenges of insurgent warfare by mimetically simulating the situation in Iraq and Afghanistan through their training beforehand, specifically in the period right before deployment.

In the chapter that follows, I argue that the Army and Marine Corps utilizes performative training to intentionally smear levels of mimesis and extend exponentially their reach over their subject’s lives at any cost by applying theories of rehearsal, performance, and heterotopia of Tracy C. Davis, Richard Schechner, Jon McKenzie, and Michel Foucault. Building on the work begun in basic training and outlined in the previous chapter and guided by a new four-line section of the Soldier’s Creed that it labels the “Warrior Ethos,” the Army now trains soldiers first and foremost as riflemen—“disciplined, physically and mentally tough, trained and proficient in […] warrior tasks and drills”—regardless of their anticipated proximity to combat (Soldier’s Creed).

Likewise, the Marine Corps, always a combat-focused institution, has revisited its longstanding “Riflemen’s Creed” in order to return to the ethos of “every Marine a rifleman.” Such “warrior training” works in the spirit of the Clausewitzean performative approach to warfare and the hallmarks of the performance paradigm, focusing on fashioning soldiers to be far more efficient and flexible than ever before, able to function independently from any system of command and empowered to take effective, immediate action. To turn soldiers into “warriors,” the Army and Marine Corps, having already killed the civilian in boot camp, use advanced training to overcode all vestiges of
quotidian life with their martial equivalents, rewiring individuals to live life as soldiers. In so doing, they construct an other space—a martial heterotopia—that stands apart from civil society and in opposition to it, a space wherein these warriors can perform without the limitations of societal norms and restrictions. In conjunction, they have established “immersion training” (theater immersion in the Army), a system of training that utilizes professional actors, scripts, sets, props, and an audience in a painstaking effort to mimaetically simulate war. But when unpacked under a performance lens, the simulacrum breaks down as the claims to mimetic realism fall short, revealing an approach to training aimed at perpetuating rehearsal and postponing any final performance indefinitely by posing combat as a copy of training, such that performance becomes a debased mimicry of rehearsal that neither successfully predicts future scenarios nor prevents traumatic catharsis. This performative strategy stabilizes and extends the control of the military but does so at an extreme cost, subsuming the actual in Iraq to the already rehearsed at home.

The Warrior Ethos and Rifleman’s Creed

In the guide given to soldiers to assist in training, Army Field Manual 3-21.75, entitled The Warrior Ethos and Soldier Combat Skills, the opening lines warn first-time soldiers of Clausewitz’s 200 year old vision of combat, that “[m]odern combat is chaotic, intense, and shockingly destructive. In your first battle, you will experience the confusing and often terrifying sights, sounds, smells, and dangers of the battlefield—but you must learn to survive and win despite them” (xiv). It then lists a series of potentially spectacular elements that often incite “confusion and fear,” thereby lowering morale and preventing individuals from “doing their duty.” The tribulations of the amorphous “War
on Terror” and more localized wars in Afghanistan and Iraq combined to stretch the infantry towards a breaking point and forced a reevaluation of the very nature of war. Instead of traditional battlefields and clearly demarcated enemies, soldiers were confronted with, in the words of Army Field Manual 3-21.75, a “combat environment [with] little distinction between the forward and rear areas. Battlefields of the Global War on Terrorism, and battles to be fought in the US Army’s future, are and will be asymmetrical, violent, unpredictable, and multidimensional. Today’s conflicts are fought throughout the whole spectrum of the battlespace by all Soldiers, regardless of military occupational specialty (MOS)” (1-1). To counteract spectacular catharsis, the Army lays out what it terms “The Warrior Ethos” to complement basic soldiering skills. The Warrior Ethos reminds individuals to “keep faith with your fellow Soldiers, remember your training, and do your duty to the best of your ability” as well as teach “the Soldier how to perform the combat skills needed to survive on the battlefield.” Indeed, the Army flatly and confidently states that as long as soldiers “uphold [their] Warrior Ethos,” and “remember that [they] are not alone” but “are “part of a well-trained team, backed by the most powerful combined arms force, and the most modern technology in the world” they “can win and return home” (xiv). Of course, they neglect to note in what condition, exactly, soldiers would “return home.”

At the start of 2004 and the very beginnings of the Iraq insurgency, the Army began a process of overhauling its organization and focus, headed by new Chief of Staff Peter Schoomaker. The main change was an emphasis on combat skills over doctrine, specialization, and routine, ensuring that “everyone in the US Army must be a Soldier first” (Neal). Part of this process was refashioning the “soldier’s creed,” the set of
principles meant to guide soldiers and represent the “Seven Core Values.” Whereas the older version (in use since the post-Vietnam era) stressed quotidian moral guidelines and pride in the uniform and flag, the revamped creed focuses specifically on combat-oriented values. Previously, the soldier’s creed started with the three adages: “I am an American Soldier. I am a member of the United States Army—a protector of the greatest nation on earth. Because I am proud of the uniform I wear, I will always act in ways creditable to the military service and the nation it is sworn to guard” (TRADOC Pamphlet 600-4). The new dogma, fitting its focus on basic fighting skills, begins “I am an American Soldier. I am a Warrior and a member of a team. I serve the people of the United States, and live the Army Values” (US Army Soldier’s Creed). It then turns to the Warrior Ethos, four seemingly simple, straightforward lines: “I will always place the mission first. I will never accept defeat. I will never quit. I will never leave a fallen comrade” US Army Soldier’s Creed). But according to the Army, the Warrior Ethos carries a greater power, as “[t]hese lines go beyond mere survival. They speak to forging victory from chaos; to overcoming fear, hunger, deprivation, and fatigue; and to accomplishing the mission” (FM 3-21.75).14

And indeed, the difference between the old and new creed embodies the argument of the previous chapter. Gone is the stress on tradition, honor, comradeship, and service to the nation, and in its stead are calls for battlefield tenacity, expert and exact execution, and constant combat readiness even when not deployed. Professionalism in fighting and performance become the flash points of the new Army, where each and every soldier stands armed and ready to take on any challengers. The emphasis is on an individual, personal drive to take initiative on the battlefield and off, to do whatever it takes to
succeed, for “[a]s a Soldier, you must motivate yourself to rise above the worst battle conditions—no matter what it takes, or how long it takes” (FM 3-21.75 19). At the same time, the new creed links the individual with an elite collective, a professional warrior class distinct from civil society. Whereas the previous creed stressed the virtue of the citizen-soldier as representative of all Americans, a true everyman “proud of the uniform [he] wear[s]” and of his “country and its flag” and therefore “always act[ing] in ways creditable to the military service and the nation [he] is sworn to guard” while striving to “make the people of this nation proud of the service [he] represent[s],” the modern soldier is “a Warrior and a member of a team.” In fitting in with the emphasis in training on eliminating the negatively framed civilian tendencies and replacing them with the always virtuous and positive martial qualities, the soldier’s creed and Warrior Ethos performatively mark the death of the citizen-soldier and the ascendance of the professional killing machine, more indentured knight than Minuteman. Indeed, the very basis of the Warrior Ethos is the exceptional status of the American warrior and his absolute dedication to his fellow select few warriors, as the lines ensure that soldiers verbally assert what their training has already made manifest—no longer civilians, the infantryman must live as a warrior among his brethren, estranged from his previous life in “combat readiness.”

Unlike the Army, the US Marine Corps has always approached its training and strategy from a combat-first mentality, preparing all recruits for front line action no matter their eventual specialties. As the Corps’ recruitment website boasts, no matter the situation, “[w]e will be first on the scene, first to help and first to fight. For this, we have earned the reputation as ‘America’s 911 Force’—our nation’s first line of defense. The
Marine Corps is ready to respond on the ground, in the air and by sea. This integrated approach distinguishes the Marine Corps as the United States’ premier expeditionary force” (marines.com First to Fight). Thus, perhaps no other manual is more important than their doctrine on war theory, MCDP1: Warfighting, which in its own words “describes the philosophy which distinguishes the US Marine Corps. The thoughts contained [within] are not merely guidance for action in combat but a way of thinking. This publication provides the authoritative basis for how we fight and how we prepare to fight. This book contains no specific techniques or procedures for conduct. Rather, it provides broad guidance in the form of concepts and values” (3). In a similar vein to FM-21.75 and as suggested in the previous chapter, Warfighting takes a very Clausewitzean approach to the nature of war, outlining how war is “fundamentally an interactive social process” subject to elements such as “friction, uncertainty, fluidity, disorder, complexity, the human dimension, violence and danger, and physical, moral, and mental forces” that leave it “fundamentally unpredictable (71).” To combat these effects, Warfighting offers a doctrine of combat taken directly out of On War, “based on rapid, flexible, and opportunistic maneuver,” the latter meaning “taking action to generate and exploit some kind of advantage over the enemy as a means of accomplishing […] objectives as effectively as possible” (71).15 Under such a unifying approach to fighting, all Marines must be able to achieve the rapid dominance over the enemy through calculated deployment called for at the commencement of the Iraq invasion. Warfighting places a special onus on preparation, as in order to maintain a force capable of carrying out the maneuver doctrine, training must prepare Marines properly. If the Marines are truly the “nation’s expeditionary force-in-readiness,” then it must “maintain itself for immediate
employment in ‘any climate and place’ and in any type of conflict.” Thus, “all peacetime activities should focus on achieving combat readiness,” with particular attention paid to achieving “a high level of training, flexibility in organization and equipment, professional leadership, and a cohesive doctrine” (53).

But the incident at Haditha, as well as a number of other similar and highly publicized episodes, demonstrated just the opposite. Rather than adaptive and opportunistic warriors impervious to the disruptive elements of warfare, Kilo Company betrayed a confused, disorganized, and generally emotionally overwhelmed group of Marines. In response, the Marine Corps, like the Army before them, returned to its most basic tenet. In 2007, newly promoted Commandant General James Conway endorsed an initiative that instituted broad changes throughout Marine Corps training focused specifically on battlefield ethics and weapons skills. The core of these revolved around refocusing recruits on the Marine Corps’ “Rifleman’s Creed.” The doctrine begins with the well-known lines, “This is my rifle. There are many like it, but this one is mine. It is my life. I must master it as I must master my life. Without me my rifle is useless. Without my rifle, I am useless” (Rifleman’s Creed). From there, the creed insists on the importance of aggressive, violent action, demanding that the recruit “fire [his] rifle true,” “shoot straighter than the enemy,” and “shoot him before he shoots me”; the essence of warfare, according to the mantra, is “not the rounds we fire, the noise of our burst, or the smoke we make,” but rather “it is the hits that count.” The Rifleman’s Creed also insists on the absolute necessity of maintaining and caring for the rifle, as it “is human, even as I am human, because it is my life.” The rifle and the Marine become “part of each other,” a unified killing machine that only together can be “the defenders of [the] country,” “the
masters of [the] enemy,” and “the saviors of my life.” The creed demands a combat readiness from every Marine, guaranteeing that they are not only fully prepared for the material aspects of warfare, but the moral ones as well—the warrior who is one with his rifle and focused only on “the hits” would by necessity close out any emotional response and remain capable of action. At the same time that it calls for a melding of man and machine, the creed also highlights individual agency in the aggressive and instantaneous personal decision-making required in order to “shoot him before he shoots me” and championed within Warfighting. Perhaps more importantly, the creed leaves no room for ethical quagmires, as it is only at the enemy that the warrior fires, since in “learn[ing] its weaknesses, its strengths,” and shooting “true” only at “the enemy who is trying to kill me,” the mecha-Marine simply does not err.

Both of these overhauls focused on the fighters themselves, using dueling “warrior training” inspired by their respective creeds to steel the minds and hearts of their troops. In conjunction with the aggressive mentality of the Rifleman’s Creed, Gen. Conway called for reemphasizing the “essence of the Marine Corps warrior ethos,” with an increased focus on “the rules of engagement and battlefield ethics,” insisting individuals “identify the enemy before an attack to limit civilian deaths or injuries” before “responding with appropriate force when under attack or threat” (Walker). The Army demanded that “[e]very Soldier […] think as a Warrior first; a professional Soldier, trained, ready, and able to enter combat; ready to fight—and win—against any enemy, any time, any place” (FM 3-21.75 19). This weight given to soldier empowerment as the essential aspect of victorious fighting in a destabilized and chaotic spectacle is emblematic of the performative sea change within US Training Doctrine and Command
(TRADOC) theory and practice. Building on the processes already begun in basic training, the military now uses the period after basic training and before deployment to produce subjects, soldiers, through performance who are uniquely equipped to confront the decentered, fragmented and destabilizing nature of war.

A major tenet of the refocusing on the Warrior Ethos and the return to the vision of Warfighting has been the individual cultivation of the keynotes of performance management, “intuition, creativity, and diversity,” to work hand in hand with discipline (McKenzie 63). The efficacy of maintaining discipline rests on the individual and his or her spirit, manifested through the ethos. For example, Marines now require the most comprehensive course in “values and battlefield ethics” to compliment their already rigorous and physically exacting training. Focusing on “honor, courage, and commitment” as catchwords, the goal is to distill the notion that “it is each Marine who is ultimately accountable for his or her own actions” (Walker). It is not just discipline—in the form of drill and ceremony and represented in the Rifleman’s Creed through the emphasis on firing true, rifle maintenance, and combat readiness—that drives Marines to fight, but their spirit and values; being a Marine is not simply a matter of physical conditioning and top-notch soldiering, but letting “the values and ethics that define the Marine Corps […] guide every action” so that individuals have both the physical ability to execute their orders and “the moral courage to do the right thing all the time” (marines.com Values and Ethics, Watkins). Gen. Conway’s rededication to the Marine warrior ethos thus becomes the key to successful battlefield action, as the lessons from its repeated rehearsal are “applied on the training field, in scenarios that are important for both combat and life” (marines.com Values and Ethics). Armed with a rifle and the will
to selectively yet aggressively utilize its lethality, Marines can confidently enter the chaotic and problematic combat scenarios repeatedly confronting them in Iraq.

Even more specifically, the Army has constructed the notion of “the warrior mindset” as a two-part commitment from individuals that forms the central makeup of every soldier. In this line of thinking, discipline represents the first half of being a successful soldier, and “holds a team together, while resilience, the Warrior Ethos, competence, and confidence motivate Soldiers to continue the mission against all odds. Raw physical courage causes Soldiers to charge a machine gun but resilience, discipline, and confidence backed by professional competence help them fight on when they are hopelessly outnumbered and living under appalling conditions” (FM 6-22 113). Discipline thus serves as glue maintaining order and communication, enabling the Army as a whole to function aggressively and effectively. But the second half of the “warrior mindset,” “resiliency,” “appl[ies] in more situations than those requiring physical courage. Sometimes leaders will have to carry on for long periods in very difficult situations. The difficulties Soldiers face may not only be ones of physical danger, but of great physical, emotional, and mental strain” (FM 6-22 113). It is not enough to be brave; a soldier must find within himself the resolve to keep fighting effectively no matter the situation. It is precisely this relentless spirit—the complete abandon manifested as willing sacrifice in the name of the Army—that comprises the Warrior Ethos, which “demands a dedication to duty that may involve putting your life on the line, even when survival is in question, for a cause greater than yourself. As a Soldier, you must motivate yourself to rise above the worst battle conditions—no matter what it takes, or how long it takes. That is the heart of the Warrior Ethos, which is the foundation for your commitment to victory
in times of peace and war” (FM 3-21.75 19). The Army itself admits that no amount of discipline can overcome fear, as “[b]attling the effects of fear does not mean denying them. It means recognizing fear and effectively dealing with it. Fear is overcome by understanding the situation and acting with foresight and purpose to overcome it” (FM 6-22 111). Instead, the Warrior Ethos as performative empowerment creates and trumps discipline through training to enable “effective” battlefield performance—the Warrior Ethos conquers the moral elements of battle, while the resulting discipline guarantees material success. The Marine and Army Warrior Ethos thus represent a profound shift within infantry thinking, as the military leaves an intangible quality to guide soldiers, allowing them to take the initiative rather than be acted upon according to their orders. Whereas discipline leaves no space in which subjects can freely operate, performance—the Warrior Ethos—encourages, even celebrates, proactive and effective decision making. So long as training can frame what is to come so that it is not so traumatic when actually encountered, can literally remake the appearance of reality so that these warriors can be manipulated into feeling they have already faced the unspeakable terror confronting them, soldiers would perform exactly as expected.

The warrior ethos is representative of the larger shift within military TRADOC towards despecialization and a combat-first mentality, retraining every soldier’s body and mind as fighters so that incidents like the one that befell the 507th Maintenance and Kilo Companies cannot occur. The change performatively redefines the basic values of what it means to be a soldier or a Marine through emphasizing the importance of personal drive over discipline—indeed the Army’s Warrior Ethos comes directly before and effectively preempts the line “I am disciplined, physically and mentally tough, trained and proficient
in my warrior tasks and drills” (Soldier’s Creed). Soldiers repeat the Warrior Ethos and the Rifleman’s Creed over and over again throughout all levels of training, matching the repeated words to their repeated actions and, as training advances closer to combat, carrying out exercises that allow the mantra to take physical form. General Schoomaker went so far as to hand out dog tags to every soldier with the words “Warrior Ethos” and the accompanying lines emboldened across the back, ensuring that all members of the Army understood the new dedication to warfighting skills. Training thus seeks to produce subjects in part through iterative discourse, where the words they say directly affect their behavior in battle; both the Marine Corps and the Army are upfront that for them, saying is believing is doing. The Army writes that “these four lines [the Warrior Ethos] motivate every Soldier to persevere and, ultimately, to refuse defeat” (FM 3-21.75 17). And for the Marines, the point of the return to the creed is to focus on “how you translate thought into action. The purpose of all this reinforcement is not to pull out a rules of engagement card and write ‘justified’ and ‘ethical’ in each action. The purpose is because combat happens so quickly and this is to imbue a sense of muscle memory to support all the other training” (Walker). The hope is that the discursive process produces what it claims; in a co-option of Austinian performativity, the military positions soldiers, in learning and reciting their respective creed and seeing it emphasized wherever they go, to become warriors themselves, at least what they define as such.

**Heterotopia**

Part of the implementation of the “every soldier a rifleman” shift within the Army and Marines has been an intensification and even more pervasive reach of the military over subject’s lives, with the biggest changes occurring in Advanced Individual Training
(AIT), SOI, and post-mobilization training, changes aimed at further excluding military life from civil society. According to the Army, the purpose of Advanced Individual Training is to teach new soldiers “the skills to perform your Army job. At one of many diverse AIT schools, you'll receive hands-on training and field instruction to make you an expert in that specific career field. You'll also gain the discipline and work ethic to help you no matter what path you take in life” (goarmy.com). Once AIT begins at one of the countless training sites spread out across the country and abroad, it consists for the most part of “a lessening of control and an increasing emphasis on personal responsibility and accountability. The Soldiers receive reinforcement training on the seven Army Values and an introduction to the history, heritage and traditions” of their respective school (Neal). Indeed, the very name Advanced Individual Training demonstrates the devotion to ensuring the capability of each soldier to respond independently to combat situations.

Generally, once a soldier makes it to AIT, gone are the physical punishments and the aggressive, demeaning Drill Sergeants waiting to pounce on recruits for any mistake. In fact, platoon sergeants and squad leaders, culled from their own ranks, now replace Drill Sergeants, a change fitting with the newfound emphasis on flexibility and empowerment. The Army places the soldiers themselves in charge and authorizes them to lead, decide, and act based on their instincts, while at the same time ensuring that soldiers live up to their Warrior Ethos and self-regulate. Rather than an outside, all-powerful, disciplinary authority-figure doling out exacting and minute punishment for even the slightest transgressions, a member of the squad, promoted for exemplary behavior and success, motivates and drives his peers to push themselves and perform to higher levels. This restructuring of the leadership hierarchy allows soldiers more freedom to lead and
make decisions but holds them just as accountable for their actions, mimicking the “command and control structure”—“[t]he exercise of authority and direction by a properly designated commander over assigned and attached forces in the accomplishment of the mission”—under which they will spend the rest of their military lives (FM 6-0 17).

Soldiers for the first time share rooms with a small number of roommates instead of large dormitory rooms of bunk beds, have greater access to phones, recreation centers, and televisions, escape the mess halls into “dining facilities,” and have access to fast food and vending machines. Gone is the almost complete isolation and removal from civil society, the theory behind this being that “[s]pecific privileges are associated with each phase of training as incentives, and soldiers are eligible for these privileges as they progress in training. However, the decision to award privileges is based on an individual’s performance and the privileges authorized for that specific phase of training” (TRADOC Regulation 350-6 16). As long as a soldier performs well they see some of the strict restrictions against quotidian materials relaxed. Soldiers find themselves in a less physically grueling atmosphere with gradually increased freedoms, to the degree that formerly non-military contraband such as personal music and junk food are phased in. For instance, during basic training recruits are only eventually allowed “on-post” passes, meaning they can visit with their family but only on the grounds of the training site. However, within the first three weeks of AIT, soldiers are granted “off-post” passes, which allow them to travel within fifty miles of the base on specific weekends. And during the last weeks, soldiers receive overnight passes and have the possibility of wearing civilian clothing when off-post.
Since individuals now live as soldiers, the type of disciplinary control wielded by Drill Sergeants in the early stages of basic training no longer fits; instead, the Army emphasizes reprogramming soldiers to live within the military society, fixing each object to its martial meaning. Once soldiers have been broken down and the initial rebuilding has been completed, the formerly civilian possessions and luxuries are slowly reintroduced, but in a different capacity. Just as how in performance, objects “have a market value much less than the value assigned to the objects within the context of the activity,” since “during the performance these objects are of extreme importance, often the focus of the whole activity,” formerly civilian contraband is no longer seen as a right or natural extension of life; instead, the Army treats it as privileges, rewards for good behavior and demonstrations of advanced soldierization, despite their relative monetary insignificance or any lack of previous interest (Schechner 11).

Marine Corps training is both the longest and most demanding of the Armed Forces, and once recruits graduate from the thirteen-week boot camp, they immediately transfer to one of the two Schools of Infantry (SOI). The whole heart of Marine School of Infantry training is ensuring that “every Marine is, first and foremost, a Rifleman. […] Whether through classroom instruction, or in the conduct of live-fire exercises, the focus at SOI is on training warriors’. The Marine warrior ethos […] is instilled in Marines at SOI. Graduates are prepared mentally, physically, and morally for the challenges of 21st Century warfare.” (SOI West, emphasis mine). When the Marine Corps instituted its comprehensive training changes in 2007, the focus was two-fold: on the one hand, they expanded the total hours devoted to ethics training in boot camp from twenty-four to thirty-eight; on the other hand, they added seven additional days of combat skills training
to the School of Infantry. The prior, as already discussed, works to train recruits to not
just *act* as a Marine, but to *think* and *feel* like one too. It is no longer enough for recruits
to excel in combat skills and demonstrate a willingness to follow orders and an
aggressive spirit; Marines now need to think through every decision, a marked increase in
the empowerment of the individual soldier. The choice to use lethal force, to attempt to
negotiate, or to simply walk away lies within each Marine, but must be determined both
immediately and correctly. As a Marine commander phrases it, when Marines are
inevitably presented with a “situation with a woman, child and an insurgent, what do they
do? Take a shot, back away, take it another day, certainly not harm all three”; Marines
must always make “instantaneously the correct moral, ethical and legal and tactical
decision,” and “be able to take in all considerations in that split second and be dead
right—every time” no matter the situation (KPBS, Perry). A recruit’s most basic thought
patterns and notion of right and wrong must change, as quotidian morality cedes to the
martial in learning whom and how to kill—the goal is that when Marines are “on the
horns of a moral dilemma,” such as learning to “kill the right people and protect
everybody else,” they “refer back and think ‘What would my senior (drill instructor)
do?’” (Walker). In short, life as a Marine means surrendering the personal to the warrior
collective, so that every decision, no matter where or what, is made with the Corps in
mind.

Marine Corps training has always been dedicated largely to weapons and combat
skills; indeed, the essential difference between School of Infantry and Advanced
Individual Training is that SOI is almost wholly devoted to field-based, live fire exercises
and simulations. As with basic training, there are two branches of SOI, East and West,
located within Camp Lejeune, NC, and Camp Pendleton, CA respectively. The small number of Marines who will not serve on the front lines attend Marine Combat Training (MCT), which aims “[t]o train all non-infantry Marines in the infantry skills essential to operating in a combat environment [sic]” so that “[upon completion […] Marines will have the knowledge and ability to operate in a combat environment as a basic rifleman (SOI West). All other Marines report to the Infantry Training Battalion (ITB), which “trains all infantry, entry-level Marines in the infantry skills essential to operating in a combat environment” (SOI West). According to the Corps, the most important aspect of ITB is that through it recruits “become a complete Marine, by applying the Leadership Traits, and our Core Values in every aspect of […] life” (SOI West). The first two weeks focus on a “common combat skills package” for all soldiers, from marksmanship, to grenade training, to work with claymores and mines, all of which are taught in a combination of mostly field exercises with classroom learning and contextual videos mixed in. The basic goal of these two weeks are to prepare all Marines with “skills that are common to all infantrymen” in order to make the remaining thirty eight days—dedicated to more specialized weapons training—more efficacious; in order to focus on the skills needed to be a Rifleman, Machinegunner, Mortarman, Assaultman, or Anti-tank Guided Missleman—the military jobs trained in ITB—each individual must have a base level of competency with general combat related duties.

But incidents like Haditha reinforced for General Conway and other top Marine brass that even the intensive combat-specific training of SOI was failing to properly prepare recruits for Iraq, leaving troops difficult to control and unreliable in the heat of the moment. The response, in combination with the reinforcement of the Marine warrior
ethos, was to focus even more on combat skills training. SOI received an extra week of training dedicated to “more instruction time on machine guns, munitions, combat conditioning, values-based training and combat stress management, military operations on urban terrain, and combat medicine” as well as “more combat marksmanship and communications training” or “more time learning about […] service rifles, optics and night-vision devices,” depending on a recruit’s specialty (Johnson). The goal was both to provide recruits with additional training specific to the current conflicts in order to streamline the deployment process and emphasize the focus on going “back to the Marine ethos, ‘Every Marine a rifleman’” (Johnson). On the surface, the extension of SOI seems relatively straightforward—Marines were undertrained for Iraq and Afghanistan, specifically when it came to general combat skills, so the most sensible response was to increase the amount of training in that area. If recruits devoted extra time to rifle maintenance and operation, then the chances of the weapons misfiring or the Marines misusing them decreases. Likewise, training recruits on the proper situations to use lethal force and combining such ethics training with combat skills techniques would, in theory, reduce the chances of Haditha-esque incidents from ever occurring. But there is a further reaching objective within these training changes in both the Army and Marine Corps—extending their respective control over recruits exponentially in order to determine what is and is not traumatic. The primary concern in AIT/SOI, as in basic training, is to allow individuals to begin to exist as soldiers, both rewiring their basic functioning and instincts to focus on aggressive and immediate response and providing an arena in which the military replaces the last vestiges of quotidian life with martial equivalents. At the same time, both the Army and Marine Corps ensure that, in becoming a warrior and living up
to its ethos, soldiers and Marines are always aware of their special status through performances that emphasize the homogeneity of martial life. Whether that is through “openly advocat[ing] spirituality and religiosity as resiliency factors” via a singular focus on Christianity, maintaining the “Don’t ask don’t tell” policy at the expense of better recruiting numbers, or excluding women from combat assignments, Army and Marine policies work towards actualizing the warrior ethos into a warrior caste that is both exclusive and all alike (Leopold). And so the result of the extra time spent in School of Infantry and ethics training, as well as the Army devotion to living as a soldier in AIT, is that as recruits continue through their phases of training and undergo more rituals aimed at the same goal, it becomes more and more difficult for them to conceive of life as anything other than being in the military.

In short, the military has constructed an other space—a martial heterotopia—that stands apart from civil society and in opposition to it, a space wherein these warriors can exist and, more so, perform without the limitations of societal norms and restrictions. According to Michel Foucault, there are certain sites throughout societies, heterotopias, that hold “the curious property of being in relation with all the other sites, but in such a way as to suspect, neutralize, or invent the set of relations that they happen to designate, mirror, or reflect” (Foucault). Foucault theorizes that a heterotopia is a real place that is “something like counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted. Places of this kind are outside of all places, even though it may be possible to indicate their location in reality” (Foucault). A heterotopia is an “other space,” a space wholly external to cultural space and its system of relations and
basic functioning, but connected to it at the same time. Cemeteries, prisons, nursing homes, and life in the infantry—these stand apart from civil society but at the same time reflect its structures and offer lines of connection between those that inhabit them and “normal” society.

The heterotopic nature of military life has only been compounded by the performance paradigm, as, at its heart, theatre and performance themselves are heterotopias. As Foucault writes, heterotopias feature both spatial and temporal intricacies, since “the heterotopia is capable of juxtaposing in a single real place several spaces, several sites that are in themselves incompatible,” and “are most often linked to slices in time—which is to say that they open onto what might be termed, for the sake of symmetry, heterochronies” (Foucault). Additionally, Foucault theorizes that “[h]eterotopias always presuppose a system of opening and closing that both isolates them and makes them penetrable,” which is to say that they are not freely accessible and open to all and instead “[e]ither the entry is compulsory, as in the case of entering a barracks or a prison, or else the individual has to submit to rites and purifications” (Foucault). The same can be said of theatre and performance, as they collapse myriad places totally other than the site of the performance space and represent a sense of the “absolutely temporal,” in that they may “teem once or twice a year” or season and otherwise lie dormant. As Richard Schechner writes, performance spaces “lie fallow during great hunks of time. […] During large parts of the day, and often for days on end, they are relatively unused. Then, when the […] show opens, the spaces are used intensely […] The spaces are uniquely organized so that a large group can watch a small group—and become aware of itself at the same time” (Schechner 14). So in constructing infantry
existence as a heterotopia, standing apart and in distinction from “regular” life, the military opens itself up to the possibilities of performance, enabling training to function as rehearsal.

**Theater Immersion**

The recent focus on counterinsurgency and the continued emphasis on the Warrior Ethos have combined to necessitate a highly mimetic rehearsal process that takes the performance-based heterotopia of extant military training already discussed to a whole new level of performativity; this eventually cycles back on itself to create a self-perpetuating world in which rehearsal eclipses any final performance outside the hermetic system of representation—infantry training. All soldiers and Marines, no matter their Military Occupational Specialty (their MOS, military “job”), now undergo extensive “postmobilization training,” conducted after they have been called up for active duty as a means to assist with deployment and aimed specifically at rehearsing soldiers for their performances on the front lines. It is here that the lessons of Haditha and An Nasiriyah have been most profoundly felt, as, for example, a main conclusion of Army Lt. Gen. Peter W. Chiarelli’s investigations into the Haditha incident was that “Marine leadership failed multiple times, including in pre-deployment training” (Ricks). Both the Army and Marine Corps have dedicated massive time and resources to training troops directly before they deploy for combat in realistic, interactive training techniques, “ranging from individual to collective tasks and from stability and support focused operations through conventional combat missions” (Honoré and Zajac 3). Before the recent overhauls, postmobilization training generally lasted “from 35 to 60 days […] but the precise number of training days varie[d] based on the mission, destination, and latest arrival date
in-theater.” However, as “combat in Iraq demanded a different approach,” now 
“formations receive about 90 days of intense training from the individual level through 
brigade operations at the mobilization station” (Honoré and Zajac 3). The end goal for 
both branches of the Armed Forces is the same—to retrain servicemen and women in 
basic combat skills and to simulate “intheater” (meaning simulating live-combat) 
situations on a realistic, large scale, but at the same time provide a rehearsal atmosphere 
where soldiers can build up to the actual “performance,” itself made only a rehearsal.18 

Both infantry forces have recently turned to “immersion training,” a specific 
technique for troop readiness that draws upon the annals of the art of war as performance 
to put performative power into action and combine hired actors, scriptwriters, fully 
functioning model-Iraqi villages, and mixtures of live fire, laser tag-like equipment and 
other special effects to mimetically simulate combat in Iraq and Afghanistan. The Army 
states that theater immersion, its overtly performative term for such training, places: 

As rapidly as possible—leaders, soldiers, and units into an environment that 
approximates what they will encounter in combat. At the soldier level, training is 
tough, realistic, hands-on, repetitive, and designed to elicit intuitive soldier 
responses. It thrusts formations into a theater analog soon after they arrive at their 
mobilization station and places stress on the organization from individual to 
brigade levels. Theater immersion is a combat training center-like experience that 
replicates conditions downrange while training individual- through-brigade-level 
collective tasks (Honoré and Zajac 3). 

In fitting in with the main tenets of the dual Warrior Ethos focus, immersion training 
replicates a combat environment where each participant must fight and be able to carry 
out his tasks while under constant threat of attack. At the same time, in adapting to the 
more recent focus on counterinsurgency highlighted within the introduction, immersion 
training forces soldiers to balance delicate interpersonal and intercultural interactions on
a daily basis over the course of multiple days while remaining constantly vigilant for potential enemy combatants. And in accordance with the larger structure of performative power, immersion training forces each soldier to determine the correct actions and responses in the heat of the moment—realizing the call of Clausewitz, immersion training repeatedly sends recruits through battle maneuvers and simulations so that the entire infantry force consists of battled-honed veterans impervious to fear and capable of offensive initiative, despite potentially never having seen any actual combat. Following through on the 200 year old vision of Clausewitz, it is as if the primacy of combat has ceased to exist, leaving virtual war a worthy substitute, both for prepping individuals for what is to come and for matching its cathartic power.

In speaking to the problems of contemporary warfare, architect of immersion training Army Lieutenant General Russell L. Honoré stressed the resulting need for performance to instill the Warrior Ethos:

We are in a war with no rear areas or front lines. We have to instill the Warrior Ethos into the mobilized soldiers we train. Every soldier must be able to function as an infantryman. Soldiers must have tough, realistic, hands-on, repetitive training until their response is intuitive. When soldiers get off the bus at the [mobilization] station, they must feel they have arrived in Iraq or Afghanistan. We have a non-negotiable contract with the American people to prepare [our] sons and daughters for war. We must use imagination and innovation to do this better than we ever have before (Honoré and Zajac 1).

Honoré stresses the absolute necessity of making battlefield response instinctive, but instead of the potentially manifold innate responses of individuals facing combat and overwhelming emotions for the first time, the implication is that as a result of training to “prepare [our] sons and daughters for war,” these “natural” reactions would not be inborn civilian response but carefully rehearsed and therefore “intuitive.” Training thus becomes
a means of Stanislavskian rehearsal, practicing the correct tactical decision in myriad circumstances until each soldier, no matter his role, is capable of reproducing it time again—the goal is to make these “correct decisions” automatic, muscle-memory driven performances of how a soldier should act in such a situation so that no matter what he eventually encounters, it has already been prepared for and thus is not surprising. Honoré also emphasizes the need for mimetic realism, for immersing individuals into their roles while in training so that the boundary between rehearsal and performance is seamless. When in immersion training, troops must believe that they are in an actual war zone, so that eventually, combat is no different from the last simulation at home—or, in the words of the *New York Times*, so that “American soldiers will find the environment so real that they will make their mistakes here first, so they do not make them in Iraq” (Filkins and Burns).

In 2004 during the massive mobilizations of Army Reserve brigades for service in Iraq, the Army for the first time designed its entire post-mobilization training schedule around “immersing soldiers immediately into a replicated combat zone,” which “enable[d] focused training 24 hours a day and retraining as needed.” In order to facilitate the immersive environment, “[i]nstead of living in a normal garrison environment, soldiers were surrounded by concertina wire, ECPs, and guard towers to simulate the FOB [Forward Operating Base] environment” (Honoré and Zajac 4). As soon as soldiers complete a new set of physical examinations and undergo “Soldier Readiness”—a series of briefings and services designed to prepare soldiers and their families for deployment, ranging from mission specific information, to orientation on the culture, politics, and economics of their destination, to instructions on mail forwarding, insurance, and wills—
they “began operations as tactical formations” (Honoré and Zajac 4). While soldiers do take limited classes, the overwhelming majority of time spent in theater immersion training focuses on “acclimating to the battle rhythm typical of units fighting in-theater” and creating combat-ready troops. Soldiers in the Army spend “over 40 days operating from FOBs [Forward Operating Bases] and camps while under constant threat of attack by a resourceful enemy” (Honoré and Zajac 4). The key to immersion training is treating “every training event […] as a combat mission.” These training events might include individual weapons qualification, military operations on urban terrain (MOUT), and combat patrolling.

The intheatre environment reproduced in immersion training arises from the careful and detailed reproduction of a front-line mise en scène; indeed, according to Honoré and Zajac, the “most important component” of theater immersion “is a deliberate, continuous study of the contemporary operational environment intheater, particularly a study of the threat,” and so intelligence officers constantly update and check for the accuracy in reproducing the most current conditions in Iraq (Honoré and Zajac 3). Using a combination of surveys, on-the-ground staff, and analysis of intelligence reports and coalition TTP (tactics, techniques, and procedures) patterns, the Army’s training environment attempts to faithfully reflect the current trends intheatre. And this environment in the Army revolves around the use of realistic forward operating bases and simulated Iraq and Afghanistan villages that allow troops to cycle through various potential scenarios and witness in real time the consequences of their actions. For example, the Army’s Camp Shelby, located in Mississippi:
Currently has four fully functional forward operating bases. [...] Additionally, four populated villages [...] are located in the training area and two more are being developed. [...] A highway overpass was constructed, and local roads were lined with guardrails. The villages have mosques, offices for civil authorities, markets, walled residences, tunnel complexes, as well as traffic circles and low-hanging telephone and electric cables that are typical of Iraqi and Afghanistan villages (Zajac, Bissonnette, and Carson 44).

Likewise, in his persuasive paper “Rehearsing the ‘Warrior Ethos’: ‘Theater Immersion’ and the Simulation of Theatres of War,” Scott Magelssen describes the journey to Medina Wasl and Medina Jabal, two villages located within the Army’s National Training Center at Fort Irwin:

On our way to Medina Wasl on desolate Iraqi Highway 1, we pass wrecked cars along the roadside. [...] An austere mosque is silhouetted in the morning sky atop a distant hill. [...] We arrive in Medina Wasl, one of the most “realistic” towns in Ghanzi. [...] Wasl is 70% Sunni and 30% Shia, similar to Mosul in northern Iraq. [...] An abandoned borax mine sits silently up the hill overlooking the village. A Sunni mosque, small hospital, and electronics shop make up the main business district. There’s a sleepy Shia ghetto on the outskirts. We pass a pen with a half-dozen live goats on the way to the village center. There’s a card game going on in the schoolhouse. In the main square, a group of Iraqis are playing volleyball with an improvised net. (57)

These full-fledged simulations represent a dedication to and understanding of theatre previously unheard of and a testament to the influence of performative power within the Army; by the logic of theater immersion, the only way to truly prepare troops for battlefield conditions is to fully immerse them into their roles as warriors in advance and fully acclimate them to their likely experiences and reactions. And so the Army has spared little expense in constructing the “world” of Iraq, with multiple “Forward Operating Bases that have the same names as the ones they will occupy in Iraq—with villages outside their perimeters with the same names as the ones they will be next to in Iraq,” and surrounding areas complete with improvised explosive devices (IEDs),
checkpoints, and exploded vehicles (Association of the United States Army). While undergoing theater immersion training, soldiers live completely in the simulated world of “intheater,” not only under constant threat of attack, but because of the added element of professional actors, living with the consequences of the choices they make, many of which are felt over the course of multiple exercises and days. If a soldier shoots a civilian or fails to follow through on a promise, the aftershocks are often felt long afterwards in a myriad of different ways made possible only through adjusted scripts and the free play of the actors.

At the same time that the Army rolled out its theater immersion training centers at Fort Irwin, CA and Camp Shelby, MS, the Marine Corps was busy constructing its own mock-Iraq at the Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center at Twentynine Palms, next door to Joshua Tree National Park in California. “Operation Mojave Viper,” the codename for the Corps’ massive training program, revolves around the larger “town” of Wadi al Sahara (“Village in the Desert”), and the smaller “village” of Khalidiyah; both are a collection of “scattered and stacked containers” modified to resemble all of the elements of a current Iraqi village, with the smaller consisting of about 100 “buildings” and the larger of almost “400 buildings” (Hamilton). Marine immersion training follows the same tenets as Army theater immersion, in that all Marines deploying to Iraq or Afghanistan first train for one month at Twentynine Palms, spending the first two weeks rehashing basic combat skills and the second two weeks in full immersion. During the immersion training, “Marines are stationed away from the rest of the base, in housing known as Camp Wilson, with nothing but open desert around them” (Solvig). As in the Army, Marines first “sit through a blur of classes, one after another,” but quickly
transition to exercises, such as “an assault against insurgents through a section of town using live paint rounds—bullets that can be fired through their real weapons but that only leave a paint mark, and maybe a welt underneath. Or they might conduct a patrol or house search in which they would have to deal with the Iraqi role players while waging battles with insurgents” (Hamilton). In general, these early training exercises involve shorter operations aimed at targeting specific skill sets, including: “[t]ank and mechanized vehicle infantry integration,” which “allow the Marines to learn how to communicate with and work with tanks and large vehicles during patrols and in urban settings”; “Vehicle checkpoints,” where “Marines are trained to set up checkpoints and on what to look for in vehicles to make sure the drivers are not hiding improvised explosive devices (IED) to stop them from transporting wires or ingredients for a bomb”; and “[u]rban assault,” in which “Marines have a known enemy and are trying to capture them” in a populated environment (Facts About the Mojave Viper Training Base). As with the Army, the Marine Corps carries out immersion training as if operating out of a base in Iraq, so that participants are isolated and immersed in their roles. Marines spend their time under high stress, with daily briefings on the current state of “the war,” and interacting with or firing on reactive targets, whether that be hired role players or “plastic green figures that pop-up dressed as either a civilian or enemy” (Solvig).

In keeping with the dedication to replicating the combat environment, these exercises begin as basic patrols through the desert or as specific missions into Wadi al Sahara. What happens during the exercise, however, depends on the prescribed scenario and preplanted pyrotechnics, the actions of the role players, and the responses of the Marines themselves—while all of the exercises conducted in immersion training follow a
basic script, the specifics depend entirely upon how the participants act, react, and adjust throughout. An accidental shot, a misspoken or interpreted word, a wrong turn, or a panicked response can all send the situation spiraling out of control or off script; it is the task of the Marines and the role players, as well as the officers in charge, to ensure that the exercise gets back on track and the mistakes are clearly highlighted. Immersion training at Twentynine Palms concludes with a 72-hour exercise that combines all previously trained skills and an intensive focus on the Marine warrior ethos to simulate likely social interactions and allow all Marines to “make ethical decisions on using force” (Perry). Marine immersion training is no less obsessively updated to the current intheater conditions in Iraq than is Army theater immersion. In fact, the basic idea of this training emerged as a response to perceived failings in postmobilization training, where sans role players, “all [they] trained for was that the enemy are the only ones on the streets” without ever accounting for civilians (Raz). In order to insure that the situation in Wadi al Sahara mimics that of Iraq and therefore provides an up to date and realistic training environment, Lt. Colonel Andrew Kennedy, the officer in charge of Marine Corps counterinsurgency training at Twentynine Palms, “[a]lmost every day […] works the phone to Iraq” while reading “‘after-action reports,’ written accounts of each and every mission, large or small, undertaken in Iraq” (Raz). According to Lieutenant Colonel Kennedy, every exercise and training scenario conducted “is a direct result of reports that come […] from people who are over there [in Iraq],” as “[w]ithin 48 hours of any incident in Iraq—from an attack from an improvised explosive devices to contact with the enemy—officials examine what happened and work with trainers to see what reactive and proactive techniques might be incorporated into Mojave Viper training” (Raz, Facts
About the Mojave Viper Training Base). Both Army and Marine Corps immersion training thus takes great pains to make sure that their simulated towns both reflect the most recent intheater situations through basic mimicry and attempt to predict and prevent the future through simulations based on potential scenarios.

As opposed to training that separates different techniques and skills and then seeks to combine them in a final exercise, immersion training in both the Army and Marine Corps forces individuals to face battle conditions at all times, no matter the exercise. The implementation of all actions in a conflict environment frames everything these warriors do, decreasing the time between recognition of the situation and execution of the necessary actions. Carrying out orders as if on a combat mission, individuals repeat their actions and responses over and over again until correct. As proof positive of this dedication to rehearsal, the Marine Corps has also constructed what they have termed the “Infantry Immersion Trainer (ITT)” in a former tomato warehouse on Camp Pendleton, CA. The purpose of the ITT is “to provide the most realistic combat conditions and settings to the small unit, in a virtual format, in order to teach and reinforce combat decision making and small unit mission rehearsal” (Babb). The ITT offers an immersion experience to Marines before they train at Mojave Viper, essentially allowing them a chance to rehearse for their combat rehearsal. Because the 32,000 square foot building is located on the site of SOI West and training consists of half-day simulations, a greater number of recruits can experience “a realistic training for any type of environment a unit could one day deploy to” (Holt); thus, Marines entering the month long immersive training at Twentynine Palms have, in fact, already prepared themselves for what is to come, lessening the chaotic and stressful conditions they encounter in that desert. Adding
more and more layers of training that mimic live combat more and more exactly, life on base in the US becomes life abroad in Iraq, problematizing not only the notion of a front line, but the possibility of escaping service untraumatized.

The Infantry Immersion Trainer works by absorbing “the Marine into Iraq or whatever theater he is going into through mixed-reality technology and has role players and actors [portraying locals and an opposing force]. The technology provides the opportunity to make ethical and moral decisions, while the actors provide an interaction with local populous [sic]” (Holt). Consisting of “a maze of houses, streets, and alleys,” “complete with washing on the line, dusty bushes and rusty propane tanks,” the ITT offers Marines specific training scenarios monitored from “a control room where video cameras hidden in turrets and window bays record the Marines’ reactions” (Babb, KPBS). As with Mojave Viper, while “[t]rainees use their regular tactical equipment” while moving through the warehouse, they “are modified to shoot special effects small arms marking system (SESAMS) rounds, which are similar in concept to paintball rounds.” In addition, “[t]rainees and role players use paintball masks for added protection,” and “[a]s the trainees move from room to room, they may encounter live role players or virtual characters. Occasionally, pyrotechnics are used to increase realism” (Babb).

In both Marine Crops and Army immersion training, the goal is to present deploying troops with “a lot of friction points” that offer varying types of obstacles to leadership and basic execution (Holt). The ITT can allow training to concentrate on mental stress, decision-making, and tactical orientation and accuracy, among others. By getting “Marines used to the chaos” through simulated concealed fire, if recruits “lose
their mind” and succumb to the stress, it occurs in rehearsal, offering the chance that as
“the training goes on they get better and learn how to deal with any situation” (Holt).
Likewise, the ITT uses “[p]yrotechnics and M-16s specially equipped to shoot simulated
paintball bullets” in order to “accelerate the heart rates of the participants” and work
towards preventing “Marines from hesitating during combat” (Holt). And by forcing
“[t]he men [to] make their way through the maze of courtyards, struggling to determine
whether the robed figures they meet are innocent civilians or armed insurgents,” Marines
learn that “it’s only too easy to react to the wrong people in the chaos and confusion of
the darkened rooms, narrow passageways and seemingly endless maze of adjoining
courtyards”; however, by offering the chance to repeat, study, and correct decisions,
Marines also “are practicing […] making instantaneously the correct moral, ethical and
legal and tactical decision” (KPBS). In the end, Marines should depart ITT training and
head to Twentynine Palms ready for the larger scale, more realistic training that awaits
them there, leaving them better prepared to perform well in Mojave Viper, which in turn
promises greater familiarity and success and less that is unknown or terrifying when they
actually deploy to Iraq. At the same time, of course, Marines may never even see live
combat in Iraq, but with the confusion of the ontology of appearances, may already feel
as if they have.

**Mediated Realism**

Theater immersion hinges not just on the efforts to make the mise on scène
mimetically faithful or on the efforts of the soldiers to perform as expected, but on the
participation of hired Iraqi ex-patriots living in Detroit and San Diego to matrix into the
simulated world as inhabitants of the villages. Lieutenant General Russell L. Honoré and
Colonel Daniel L. Zajac, the second of the Army’s theater immersion masterminds, describe the first use of such actors:

To populate the simulated villages, the Army hired 300 civilians on the battlefield (COBs) including 80 Iraqi Americans. […] The COBs, particularly the Iraqi Americans, added a powerful dose of realism to each training event. Iraqi Americans portrayed linguists, mayors, police chiefs, religious leaders, terrorists, news reporters, and Iraqi National Guard, Army, and Border Police. They spoke to soldiers only in their native tongue and wore clothing appropriate to their positions. These COBs were given simulated identities, rehearsed at COB academies, and routinely participated in training events. (4, emphasis mine)

For the most part, the Iraqi American actors spend their time stepping into and out of character depending on the proximity of US patrols and living through the day-to-day intricacies of life in a village, from running a business, to hocking wares at a market, to living in a home constantly broken into by soldiers. Scott Magelssen describes the life of people playing Iraqi civilians at Fort Irwin:

As contractors, the actors make twenty dollars an hour, but must pay for their own travel to Fort Irwin, and pay for their own insurance. Actors live in the villages for seventeen days out of each month, sleeping, cooking, and eating in their shotgun-style shipping container houses and using portable latrines. As in Iraq, many of the villages have only four hours of generator power a day. Every three days the villagers are bussed several miles back to the garrison for showers. (54-55)

And just like the physical elements of the virtual Iraq, the actors themselves are constantly updating and refining their roles based on the most current information. As Magelssen notes:

The simulation adapts and changes in response to new information on insurgent and civilian behavior “in-country,” as well as to comments and suggestions that come back from trainees once they’ve been deployed. […] In the early stages of the simulation, before the Iraqis were brought in, actors playing Iraqis made no attempt at capturing the language. If there was a situation in which the Americans weren’t supposed to understand what an Iraqi was saying, the latter would speak in a “Charlie Brown’s teacher” voice; just nonsense-talk. It came back to them
that real Arabic would be a valuable element in the simulation, and they mobilized to make it happen. (63)

When units of soldiers roll through, the actors carry out their scripted actions. The scenarios are tightly regulated and controlled by “lizards,” the Army word for the writers of these pre-scripted actions, and by the actors themselves, who are also given a bit of freedom in the form of “injects,” where certain required actions can occur at times, locations, and in an order determined by the actors.20

The role of professional actors in Marine Corps immersion training is very similar to that of the Army. “Between 400 and 500 role players,” paid up to 275 dollars a day, live at Twentynine Palms. The role players are generally Iraqi-Americans and Marines—“who have grown their hair and beards out”—and at least “100 of them will not speak English, so Marines can practice their Arabic catch phrases and learn how to deploy the limited number of translators each battalion has” (Facts About the Mojave Viper Training Base). Because most Marines are sent to al Anbar, the actors perform as Sunnis. Role players “live in the town for days or weeks at a time, depending on the length of the training. They run stores and even hold town hall meetings, led by a designated mayor, voicing concerns such as a lack of water so the Marines can get used to public service parts of the job” (Solvig). Since the goal is to “provide the most realistic experience possible” to Marines, the mock towns are complete with functioning marketplaces, dignitaries, and their own security (Lewis). For instance:

Both Khalidiyah and Wadi al Sahara have their own town mayors, complete with an office in the town square. […] Since part of the troops’ duty in Iraq is training police, the towns have their own police force. In Wadi al Sahara, the three-story police headquarters is in the center of town and is surrounded by barbed wire for extra security. Part of the training is for Marines to develop a pit crew that stays there and trains the local police. […] More than a dozen merchants operate the
booths at the local soukh, or street market, selling everything from children's bikes to audio equipment. Marines learn how to deal with the crowds and how to work with the tank as it patrols the street. (Facts About the Mojave Viper Training Base)

Like Army role players, the “Iraqis” working for Mojave Viper step into character when needed and spend much of their extensive downtime speaking English, even helping recruits improve their Arabic or, in the example of Ahmed el Adeb, a “political refugee from Baghdad,” teaching “small groups of Marines everything from language to cultural sensibility” (Raz).

The presence of hired role players combines to offer a dynamic, interactive training environment where trainees transcend any isolated understanding of their individual responsibility or performance. Instead, trainees quickly gain awareness of how their responses, actions, and words affect the entire village, forcing participants to consider more than their immediate safety and instincts. For instance, the *New York Times* documented the theater immersion case of “The Deadly Mr. Hakim,” a character described as “a village hot dog salesman who sells his provisions from a stand called ‘Kamel Dogs Cafe’” (Filkins and Burns). Mr. Hakim charms the arriving soldiers into letting him sell his food in the FOB, does so for a few days, and eventually fills his cart with fireworks-qua-explosives and detonates them within the base. Thus, the initial failure of the soldiers in trusting Mr. Hakim has catastrophic effects that are only fully realized days later. The most obvious lesson, according to the *Times*, is to “never trust any Iraqis, no matter how friendly they seem. It is a lesson that, unlearned, has killed many American soldiers on combat duty in Iraq” (Filkins and Burns). As Magelssen theorizes, “One of the mistakes […] that Americans in Iraq commit most frequently is
making promises to Iraqi civilians, in an attempt at building good will, but which they cannot keep or don’t really intend to keep. […] In Iraq, if you don’t keep your promise, you are a liar. There is something deeply wrong with your character. If a soldier promises to bring water, and the next day shows up without it, he’s wrecked his reputation with that Iraqi” (56). However, as an exercise in the doctrine of performative power, the lessons are more enduring—each action, response, and mental decision impacts the effectiveness of the military machine, for better or for worse, and the imperative is to guarantee that every soldier does the right thing with no hesitation. Training must prepare soldiers for the range of countless potential actions wholly dependent on interaction by allowing warriors to freely play, to experience firsthand, in the moment and in-situ, the range of possible outcomes and then repeat them until they are all capable of exact and repetitious execution.

However, in the Marines, the Iraqi American actors role-play as non-combat characters and not as enemy forces. Some role-play as “friendly to the US, some hostile, some armed, some plaintive, some duplicitous” (Perry). But the role of armed insurgents, those who actually interact in combat with troops, is left to active and retired Marines. The Marine Corps contracts with The Tatitlek Corp., based in the small Native Alaskan village of the same name, for $35 million annually for “about 375 thoroughly screened role-players at a time for the training exercises” (Barbour). While “[a]bout 80 percent of the role-players—all of whom are employees, not independent contractors—are from places like Iraq, Jordan and Egypt,” for the most part these “foreign-born American citizens who have the language skills and life experiences required to replicate real life in the combat zone in question” generally role play as “religious leaders, mayors […]"
embedded interpreters, and others in simulated cultural roles” (Barbour). On the other hand, the violent and/or challenging roles, including many of “the civilians on the battlefield,” more often then not go to “mostly retired and former Marines”—the justification is that “[t]heir experience in readiness and predeployment provides them with the background to effectively act as refugees, military resistance operatives, terrorists and victims of terrorist attacks” (Cuomo and Donlon, Barbour). In addition, there is often a small number of active duty Marines, culled from the “highly trained enlisted combat arms instructors” who make up Instructor Battalion, TBS, who “augment the contracted role players as a dedicated opposition force” (Ruppert 102, Cuomo and Donlon). All this in order to “try to give them [Marines] something worse than in Iraq or another combat zone so when deployed they are ready for any situation” (Holt, emphasis mine).

In the Army, the difference is even starker—the main job of the Iraqi American actors in theatre immersion is to role-play as civilians. Instead of Iraqi actors, the Army casts its own personnel in the role of the “enemies” (Filkins and Burns 2006, Honoré and Zajac 4). Scott Magelssen interprets the racialized logic of this casting in terms of political correctness: “[w]hile Iraqis are in full support of giving the Americans the training they need, the Army has learned not to ask them to play ‘bad guy’ characters, for sensitivity reasons” (59–60). The Army has constructed what it calls a “full-time opposing force (OPFOR)” from “primarily mobilized reservists”—in other words a fully trained and permanent unit comprised of Army Reservists ordered to active duty—to act as “anti-Iraqi forces,” insurgents, and other forces fighting against the Iraqi government and coalition troops. The OPFOR engages “immersed training leaders and warriors in the
most realistic situations possible,” subjecting trainees to “IEDs such as booby traps, mines, projectiles, bombs, and vehicle-borne IEDs,” as well as “simulated sniper, rocket, and mortar attacks” (Honoré and Zajac 4). Honoré and Zajac describe how, in preparation for their role as insurgents in the initial theater immersion mobilizations, the opposing force “rehearsed operations for weeks before the brigades arrived. Dressed and equipped like anti-Iraqi forces (AIF) and with OPFOR academy training and daily S2 updates on the latest threat TTP, the OPFOR designed and executed threat counternetacts” (4). And in the above New York Times cited example of “Mr. Hakim,” it is not an Iraqi American actor “realistically” acting as the Al Qaeda operative, but rather “Staff Sgt. Timothy Wilson, 42, a probation officer from Sparks, Nevada” (Filkins and Burns).

Rehearsal

No matter the ostensible intent behind their casting decisions, the Army and Marine Corps’ curious choice to restrict the roles of enemy combatants to active or retired troops and not Iraqi American actors—despite the availability of an ensemble of ethnic Iraqi performers hired by the US government and awaiting their cues—exposes a paradox within immersion training’s stated goal of creating a “theater analog” situation within the “safe” confines of training. The image presented of immersion training in military discourse and mass media accounts is one of a relentlessly exhaustive attention to minute detail in the effort to maintain absolute, up-to-the minute consistency between training and combat. Infantry leaders and critics alike repeatedly emphasize the simulacral aspects of these villages, insisting on the importance of realistic training to the cause and for the well being of the soldiers themselves. Magelssen, for instance, gives the extreme example of a Turkish teacup being replaced with an Iraqi one to maintain
absolute faithfulness to the intheater environment; the Army calls such painstaking realism “texture.” Likewise, according to the Army, “FOBs and towns were named after existing locations in-country, and road signs, police cars, and markets were created based on recent photos from Iraq” (Honoré and Zajac 4). Marine Corps discourse is no less focused on the “realism” of their new training methods. There is of course the plentiful comments from the Marines undergoing the training that involve some commentary on the success of the simulation of Iraq, ranging from the typical “[t]his is as real as you can get,” or “[i]t's real life. […] You can not take a timeout. There are no timeouts,” to the melodramatic declaration of Mojave Viper inducing flashbacks to Iraq for veteran Marines (Solving, Hamilton). There are also examples of hyper-realism in action, as in the case of how the ITT “recreates a certain smell, reminiscent of cow dung and burning fuel oil […] to prepare a marine for those crucial moments when he must decide to kill or hold his fire” (KPBS). But while the military would have you believe that immersion training is all about mimetic reproduction and rehearsing for a performance of combat, its logic of racialized casting is at odds with its own discourse. By making the most catastrophic of scripted actions always in the hands of US troops-qua-Iraqis, the military ensures that the agency and importance of the Iraqi civilians cannot but disappear in the eyes of trainees. More often than not, the civilians are yet again “collateral damage,” the passive victims of the trainees and role players; the Iraqi Americans become no more than realistic background props as Army and Marine role players carry out actions and dialogue with combat repercussions.

And there are other seemingly curious choices that only serve to undermine the “realism” of immersion training. Indeed, while built to replicate a typical Iraqi village,
Wadi al Sahara’s very construction betrays its pretense. Constructed out of cargo containers “like those unloaded from cargo ships onto train flatbeds or pulled behind trucks,” the training site presents “a suggestion of reality” rather “than a copy” (Hamilton). In between patrols, or even sometimes in the middle of them, Marines receive instruction from officers and even from role players themselves, stepping out of character to capture a teachable moment. The ITT uses projections and other forms of two-dimensional media in addition to role players, a necessary but blatantly “unreal” element. At Medina Jabal, Army officers play the role of “referee,” alerting soldiers that they have become casualties of explosions during patrols with the so-called “God gun,” the laser tag pistol that can instantly mark a participant as “dead” or “wounded.” And in both cases, the intrusive presence of cameras streaming live video to Army and Marine officers in control rooms provides a constant reminder of the audience for whom they are performing. All told, instead of a hyper-realistic training environment that fully exposes soldiers to the actualities of life on the ground in Iraq at that very moment, the result is an incomplete simulacrum, a rehearsal space that intentionally mixes mimetic reproduction and incongruous falsity to perpetuate the military’s hermetic heterotopia indefinitely.

Scott Magelssen invokes Tracy Davis’s study of large-scale Cold War exercises, Stages of Emergency: Cold War Nuclear Civil Defense to point out the paradox between realism and affect at work in these training exercises. Davis characterizes this contradiction as fundamental to the exercises’ rehearsal aspect, arguing that:

Theater’s ability to tacitly acknowledge pretense while continuing to sustain it—imaginatively and corporeally—was openly deployed in the [civil defense] exercises and helped to give them efficacy. Learning through doing, repeating for mastery, and improvising with given circumstances—the hallmarks of rehearsal—
Theatrical rehearsals attempt to make actions twice-behaved behaviors, which Schechner defines as a “living behavior treated as a film director treats a strip of film. These strips of behavior can be rearranged or reconstructed; they are independent of the causal systems (social, psychological, technological) that brought them into existence. […] Originating as a process, used in the process of rehearsal to make a new process, a performance, the strips of behavior are not themselves process but things, items, ‘material’” (*BTA* 35).21

Rehearsals in this tradition aim to build a character through an ideal image of the role, fix his or her actions, and at the same time allow for improvisation without breaking down in the performance. But when applied to the apocalyptic scenarios of nuclear civil defense, rehearsal effectively forestalls the coming-into-being of war indefinitely, as each exercise appears as yet another rehearsal, and indeed comes to function as the rehearsal for a subsequent one, itself completely different and unique. As Davis writes:

> By understanding that civil defense exercises are in the realm of rehearsal, nuclear war is not brought into being, but neither is its possibility excluded. […] Indeed, it is the fact of war’s *possibility* and full knowability that the rehearsals portend yet hold at bay, for this kind of war is unintelligible. Rehearsal’s epistemology calls attention to its own failings—its incompleteness in comparison to the real thing—and in this environment permissive of failure (even expecting it), the discovery of unanticipated failings, partialness, and oversights of imagination is the creative byproduct that improves subsequent exercises. Rehearsal can help to make an act complete and perfect, but only the execution of war—its performance—could make an ‘original’ that could then be imitated with any certainty (87-88).

For Davis, because the large-scale nuclear attack being simulated had yet to happen, nor had anything like it ever occurred, such rehearsals inherently and mimetically failed—these rehearsals were necessarily conditional, as they were practice for an event that could be anticipated, but at the same time could not be planned for with any certainty or
pre-scripted with any degree of accuracy. The mimetic referent, that “real” towards which acting imperfectly imitates, had not yet come into being, so that “[d]rama’s paradox of doing while simulating an action finds a corollary in the mimetic impossibility of performing something as unknowable as nuclear war while making a claim to knowledge through rehearsal” (Davis 86). Because “[i]t is difficult for actors to play ‘as if’ with ‘if’ material, […] Civil defense rehearsal must fail insofar as it inevitably falls short in mimesis, so performance is the term reserved for the execution of similar actions during war, when horror on the fullest possible scale could be known for the first time” (Davis 86).

In the case of theater immersion, Davis’s paradigm invoked by Magelssen is an imperfect fit. It is not that war is unimaginable because it has never happened, but that because warfare constantly changes and adapts—because of the very performative nature of war, its inherent play of chance, to borrow from Clausewitz—it befuddles any attempt to anticipate its structure. Thus at best, training can use the already-known past and hoped-for future to create as “truthful” and “real” an experience as possible that can, with each subsequent rehearsal, incorporate the lessons of its predecessor. But it can still only remain an eternal rehearsal for a “performance” that never comes into being, as what was practiced for can never be the same as what is experienced. Rehearsal operates always a step behind, even if a very small one, but can never quite catch up; no matter how hard they might try, the Army or Marine Corps cannot duplicate actual combat or predict what might happen next. Thus, every time a soldier or Marine enters into battle, whether “real” or simulated, the actions taken and lessons learned serve to prepare him or her better for their subsequent performance instead of reflecting any perfected final product. Rather
than a performance that reproduces what was rehearsed, the result is yet another practice for a falsely promised hope of a final curtain.

Infantry training constantly forestalls wholehearted realism, ranging from the lack of actual death and the condensing of time within the exercise (with time devoted afterwards to extensive reflection and feedback) to the incomplete nature of the set, the presence of non-matrixed supervisors, and the trainees’ constant awareness of artificiality. Perhaps the most striking instance of realism intentionally falling short comes from the strange racialized logic of casting in which Iraqi American actors are essentially underemployed in theater immersion, but such theatrical choices must be understood as precisely what the military wants to happen. The goal of military training is precisely not to have soldiers completely absorbed in the realism of combat and its simulations, but quite the opposite—immersion training works to institute combat-as-rehearsal, in which soldiers have already been exposed to the horrors of war and are trained to remain so collected in their decision making that combat becomes simply another rehearsal, always downplayed as merely one more step towards a perpetually deferred performance. It is therefore of the utmost importance that the mimesis continuously fails, that soldiers never fully suspend their disbelief in training and remain capable of reflecting on their actions.

Immersion training, like rehearsal itself, revolves on repeating the right actions at the expense of the wrong ones, and both the Army and Marines combine the mediated realism presented in the simulations with targeted feedback to ensure that trainees not only constantly remained detached from the action, but repeat everything to perfection. After each patrol or exercise, there is an extensive amount of attention paid to analyzing
and discussing the mistakes made and lessons learned while immersed. Each event in immersion training features some level of after action reviews (AAR), which, as defined in Army Training Circular 25-20, “is a professional discussion of an event focused on performance standards, that enables soldiers to discover for themselves what happened, why it happened, and how to sustain strengths and improve on weaknesses” (Training Circular 25-20 1). Immediately summoning the ghosts of performance management, AARs provide a mechanism to discuss, criticize, and improve each soldier’s performance, providing lessons for soldiers to take with them in subsequent missions. For example, the New York Times documents two cases, one where “a lieutenant colonel whose unit came under attack by insurgents in Medina Jabal, called in an Air Force bombing run on a building from which insurgents had attacked his men. [...] Al Jazeera recorded the scene and broadcast it over and over on the local station” (Filkins and Burns). The lesson was not just taught in the world of the simulation, where the Lieutenant Colonel could experience the lasting power of negative press, but repeated over again in AARs. In a different situation, a “soldier wandered off alone, and suddenly found himself surrounded by Iraqi civilians. He panicked and opened fire, killing several of the villagers. The soldier was given a psychological evaluation and dismissed from the Army, for fear that he would have duplicated the behavior with live ammunition in Iraq” (Filkins and Burns). Likewise, in an observed Marine patrol, while attempting to search a house, at first “[s]ome Marines entered the dwelling too far apart from one another. Others literally got off on the wrong foot. Some turned the wrong way or looked in one direction while pointing their rifle in another.” But after further instruction and repetition, “the Marines were quick, efficient and ready to try it with real bullets” (Rogers). Each
singular event within theatre immersion is thus a rehearsal for the next, offering an opportunity to work through potential performance issues and receive directorial notes and then repeat “so they're not doing it for the first time in Iraq” (Solvig).

The video cameras that provide complete coverage of each “Iraqi” town thus play a much more important role, their very prominence an intentional and desired intrusion into each trainee’s absorption. Made to be constantly aware of their audience, of the very fact that at all times they are performing, soldiers and Marines must always uphold a duality. While in the moment, trainees are also always removed, maintaining a split between their actions in the moment and their actions as performance. As in Diderot’s paradox, these “actors” are constantly aware of the artificiality of their performance, always sustaining an eye towards the previous rehearsal and self-aware of their every move. As Diderot argued, succumbing to the sway of emotions in attempting to reproduce them on stage results more in a loss of control and inconsistent, irreproducible performance than in quality, effective characterization; for Clausewitz in a martial context, succumbing to the lure of passionate response in war without fail leaves the soldier helpless and panicked, incapable of following orders or effectively fighting. Instead, actors must draw on extensive rehearsal dedicated to repetition of producing the appearance of emotions, thereby remaining collected and dispassionate—the soldier in turn must fall back upon training aimed at replicating the outward show of combat in order to eliminate any presence of passions. The actor on stage, and so to the warrior on the battlefield, “has rehearsed to himself every note of his passion,” so that his actual performance becomes but “pure mimicry, lessons carefully learned” which “the actor remembers long after his first study of it, of which he was perfectly conscious when he
first put it before the public” (Diderot 16). Constantly referring back to rehearsal and the “inner model” of a built up character, the actor becomes “the spectator,” an audience to his own actions, and therefore left with “a full freedom of mind” (16). Emotionally removed and always evaluating, the actor/warrior is capable of both believable repetition and instantaneous adjustment. The goal, then, of immersion training, becomes to allow soldiers and Marines to suspend their emotional involvement by turning everything into merely another rehearsal, therefore ensuring, in theory, that actions and decision-making are devoid of the irrationality that often accompanies “real” warfare.

The soldier or Marine involved in simulating potential combat scenarios in immersion training, made to believe that he is really in battle in Iraq and at the same time that this is but a rehearsal for the “real” performance, cannot but conflate the two. Rehearsal for combat becomes combat, and combat becomes rehearsal for itself. Or, in the words of Tom Buscemi, Marine Corps Director of the ITT, “his [A Marine’s] first real fire fight is no different than his last simulation. […] [W]hen the Marine rifleman gets into the combat situation, he’s seen, he’s heard, he’s smelled, he’s less likely to be emotionally disturbed or not follow procedures, and do the correct thing” (KPBS). It is not so much that Mojave Viper, the ITT, or Theater Immersion works so successfully in mimicking actual combat as to expose participants to every possible situation they would ever experience in combat; instead, what Buscemi hints at is that in the end, the military seeks to extend the rehearsal indefinitely so that each performance not only resembles the rehearsal, but soldiers treat it as such. The goal of theater immersion training is to use performance to prevent any “fair fight,” in the words of Lieutenant General Russell L. Honoré (Association of the United States Army). And indeed, with an army already
inoculated to war, trained to react as “warriors,” skilled in negotiating the personalities and customs of civilians and officials, and most importantly, always treating combat as yet another rehearsal and thereby remaining detached and calculating, what could possibly go wrong? And indeed, the examples of trainees absorbing *too much* into the simulation cited above hint at the fact that, as will be borne out in the next chapter, such training practices have a fare more sinister and problematic core, an impossible and traumatic mission.
Chapter 4
Everything You Saw and Everything You Did:
The Burden of Perpetual Rehearsal

As he lay bound, gagged, and blindfolded on the floor in 2004, US Marine Lance Corporal Jesse Klingler must have questioned whether this was all really happening. But when an enemy combatant pressed an assault rifle to his leg, beat him severely and demanded that the young American soldier provide information, Klingler performed as expected, refusing to answer the questions. Unsatisfied, the assailant took his AK-47 and shooting first into one leg, then another, he finally pressed the muzzle of the gun against the back of Klingler’s neck, preparing to fire one last time. But just as the interrogator might have pulled the trigger in a moment of impulsivity and prematurely ended the Corporal’s life, Marine instructors overseeing the San Diego Miramar Air Station exercise interrupted the scene and called it to a halt, alarmed at the apparently real pain in which their trainee suddenly found himself. For in that moment, when the “enemy combatant”—actually Ali Mohammad Mohsen, a Muslim American actor hired to role-play as a specifically Islamic militant—fired blank rounds into Klingler’s body, he did so at point blank range and caused severe burns from the muzzle blast. And so while the Marines credited the instructor’s response with preventing “the incident from becoming deadly,” it was too late to save Lance Cpl. Klingler’s military career: subsequent surgeries for wounds inflicted and symptoms of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) forced him onto permanent disability (Farr).

A recruit injured undertaking a training exercise in preparation for war is not in and of itself unusual, but what surrounded the actual infliction of his wounds

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problematizes the performative approach to war. Klingler fell victim to a “simulated capture and interrogation” training exercise at Miramar Marine Corps Air Station meant to “realistically simulate the environments troops will find in war”; the event was run by defense contractor Strategic Operations Inc., tagline “hyper realistic training,” and an offshoot of porn producer Stu Segall’s film and television production company, the same company that runs the Marine’s Twentynine Palms Mojave Viper training (Farr). Indeed, both Klingler and Mohsen, in fitting in with the infantry’s utilization of performance, were participants in a staged performance featuring professional actors, props, and a script, designed to expose an audience of Marines to combat stress and provide experience in a range of potentially hazardous situations. But instead of preventing any future traumatic experiences, the exercise veered radically away from its intended goal, failing to live up to its promise and mimicking actual combat far too closely, leaving its participant suffering the effects of combat-related stress trauma before he ever saw actual war.

The failed Miramar exercise epitomizes the trend of increasing spectacularity and performance in military training designed to maximize soldier efficiency and effectiveness on the actual battlefield that comprises the bulk of this study. But even more so, the collapse of the virtual into the actual and the trauma that resulted calls attention to an alternative, more sinister prospect within the art of war as performance and current training practices. Indeed, the basic structure of training, in intermixing both theatricality and a mediated mimetic realism in a series of perpetual rehearsals, corresponds to a specific from of trauma. The very process instituted to prevent battlefield catharsis and allow individuals to succeed in combat actually promotes
traumatic cathartic reimaginings once the echoes of war have faded (or have even begun). And so while the military might try as hard as it can to identify, demarcate, and rehearse away the elements of warfare that cause cathartic trauma, it necessarily fails, as the fundamental nature of trauma is that it lies beyond any attempt to represent or prepare for it. An infantry fully dedicated to a doomed system capable of creating and traumatizing warriors independent of any real combat experience problematizes what delimits “real combat” and the power of the virtual.

This chapter completes the arc started in Chapter One, from the roots of current training methodology, to its implementation, and now to its effect on those who actually participate. My argument relies on continuing to read into the institutional discourse of the Army and Marines in the form of official documents, interviews, quotes, and other sources, analyzing their stated and implicit theories and practices for their consequences. Just as in the previous chapters where I delved into the top-down, organizational discourse of power to argue just how much the military recognizes the value of performance in manufacturing an indomitable force and the reasons for and desired effect of its process, I seek to bring the infantry’s stated practice to its (il)logical conclusion by arguing that the implementation of performative power into martial theory and practice ultimately falls short of its vision.

Trauma theory, specifically that of Cathy Caruth and Ruth Leys, and the rehearsal and performance theory of Richard Schechner and Tracy C. Davis provide the theoretical framework for this argument about the mirroring structures of training and the traumatic scene it produces. In addition, military studies on Combat Stress Reaction and PTSD, and General David Petraeus’ *Counterinsurgency* provide a specifically martial spin on trauma
theory. While the promise of contemporary training is the ultimate warrior, a preseasoned soldier impervious to the physical and psychical burden of killing and facing certain death while capable of reliable and precise self-empowered action, a potential problem arises with long-term consequences. Trained specifically for combat, what happens when these combatants no longer fight and must return to a society from which they have been intentionally estranged? Not only faced with the problem of reconciling their martial mores with those of civil society and readjusting to a completely different pace, style, and organization of life, soldiers face the impossibility of confronting the reality of their actions. What I am suggesting is that contemporary military training can serve as a source of trauma, insofar as a system designed to maximize battlefield effectiveness promotes the possibilities of missing the violent event itself. While overexposing the experiences of war beforehand can create soldiers capable of rehearsed repetition, it also allows for soldiers to fail to claim the impact of their actions and the force of what they have witnessed, leaving them unprepared for the inevitable and recurring return. That is to say, the US Army and Marine Corps intends to train its troops in a process akin to theatricality to become a flexible and reactive individual collective impervious to the effects of combat, but continuously disappoints, negating the entire process.

Mimesis, Catharsis, Trauma

Ruth Leys, in her *Trauma: A Genealogy*, contextualizes the current field of trauma studies as marked by a long-standing dichotomy between theories that highlight a specifically mimetic aspect as the basis for trauma and those that foreground an antimimetic one. Leys situates this polarity by tracing a genealogy of the concept of trauma. Both approaches to the roots of trauma revolve around witnessing and/or
participating in a catastrophic originary event but differ in their theorization of the relationship between event, victim, and memory. On the one hand, catharsis lies at the heart of trauma; Leys describes this as the “mimetic theory,” in that “the experience of the traumatized subject, can be understood as involving a kind of hypnotic imitation or identification in which, precisely because the victim cannot recall the original traumatogenic event, she is fated to act it out or in other ways imitate it” (298). The traumatic experience, “in its sheer extremity, its affront to common norms and expectations, shatters or disables the victim’s cognitive and perceptual capacities so that experience never becomes part of the ordinary memory system” (298). Drawing upon the traditional idea of hypnosis—“involving an altered state of consciousness” where the hypnotized act out or repeat all commands outside the normal system of self-representation—this line of thought defines trauma as “a situation of dissociation or ‘absence’ from the self in which the victim unconsciously imitate[s], or identifie[s] with, the aggressor or traumatic scene” (298, 8). Doomed to return to the originary traumatic event in the form of flashbacks, nightmares, and other reoccurrences that “instead of remembering […] repeat the earlier scenes or memories in the present,” the subject dissolves into that something other, stuck in reliving the traumatic scene yet unable to recall it (31). The continual reenactment of the originary traumatic event stands in for the lack of any actual memory of it so that all testimony falls into question. The event’s very un-locatability seemingly prevents any attempt at “truthfulness.” If the event “never […] became part of the victim’s ordinary memory,” how can testimony, even induced through hypnosis, achieve any semblance of veracity? Techniques of recovery rely on the perceived cleansing power of catharsis to attempt to “mimetically induce actings-out that
might faithfully represent the origin but might as well take the form of fictive-suggestive performances” in a “discharge of emotional scenes that might be authentic copies of the original but [are] frequently fictional in character” (Leys 303).

On the other hand, what Leys dubs the “antimimetic” approach theorizes that trauma exists completely outside a fully constituted subject, as an assault against a passive yet sovereign subject. The notion of absorption in the traumatic scene gives way to the victim as “spectator of the traumatic scene, which she can therefore see and represent to herself and others” (Leys 299). Instead of repeatedly imitating or reenacting the traumatic event in the form of hypnotic actings-out that eventually supercede the subject’s very being, the victim here never immerses into the scene and thereby remains fully constituted; thus “there is no problem of eventually remembering or otherwise recovering the event, though the process of bringing this about may be long and tortuous” (299). The trauma returns here in the form of “diegesis, in which the patient recounts and recollects the traumatic scene in full consciousness” (37).22 Whereas in the mimetic approach the victim can never actually remember the experience, the antimimetic approach holds that a person can, through hypnosis and other techniques designed to bring “traumatic memories into consciousness and narration,” eventually integrate it into memory’s narrative (303). Such a theory rests on a specular distance absent in mimesis, thereby allowing for a sense of agency, remaining separate from the traumatic scene and free from questions of identification with the violence itself that plague the mimetic theory.23

Leys charges trauma theory with a continuous vacillation, collapsing, or “interpenetration” between these two seemingly antithetical approaches to trauma,
resulting in an impasse. As Leys writes, “[t]he understandable but misplaced desire to resolve the mimetic-antimimetic oscillation means that discussions of trauma are characteristically polarized between competing positions each of which can be maintained in its exclusiveness only at the price of falling into contradiction or incoherence” (305). Problematically, the mimetic theory holds that because the victim is so absorbed in the moment, the distance between the traumatic scene itself and the subject collapses and vanishes. The result is that the victim cannot separate himself from the event and instead constantly suffers through literal reoccurrences. Because there is little hope for any semblance of overcoming or vanquishing a trauma that is unrepresentable, Leys argues that for the sake of therapy, theorists turn to a counterbalancing antimimetic approach, positioning the victim as external to the trauma and therefore capable of recovery. Using hypnosis and other immersive techniques, they uphold catharsis as a means to “recover” the traumatic memories. The antimimetic theory of trauma most often serves as a response to or attempt at solving the problem of hypnotic suggestibility and veracity built into mimesis, where, because the victim cannot access the traumatic scene, there is no way to know the veridical status of the therapeutic catharsis and to what degree the testimony has been influenced by the analyst through planting seeds of memories that may or may not be “truthful.” So instead, “such an analysis tends to produce a conceptualization of the dissociated or traumatic memory as completely literal in nature, as if an account of the traumatic experience as absolutely true to external reality, uncontaminated by any subjective, unconscious-symbolic or fictive-suggestive dimension, is necessary in order to reinforce a rigid polarization between inside and outside that is otherwise threatened by the mimetic dynamic” (Leys 38). In the
end, Leys sees trauma theory as hopelessly caught up in a wild oscillation between two seemingly opposite approaches to how the subject experiences the traumatic event, with each approach necessarily incorporating the other without resolving the underlying tension or offering any way to move beyond.

**The Structure of Training**

At first glance, the structure of performative training and that of trauma as outlined by Leys are remarkably similar. Military theory positions the experience of combat for the individual unprepared for its effects as mimetically traumatic, and the steps taken to resolve and prevent such trauma have been antimimetic in nature. The genealogy that comprises Chapter One is as much a history of the antimimetic approach to trauma in war as it is of the role of performance in military theory. The two are necessarily linked, as in order to recognize the role of performance in war and the need for a system of training that overexposes soldiers to combat’s cathartic pull in advance, it is first necessary to conceive of battle as inherently absorptive and therefore traumatic.

The experience of war, according to the Clausewitzian theory outlined in the first chapter, is powerfully affective, capable of reducing individuals to a terrified and panicked emotional state. The problem in this line of thinking is specifically the unpreparedness of the mind for combat, as soldiers are rendered passive, paralyzed, and unable to fire accurately much less obey orders. Adding to the examples already cited in Chapter One, Clausewitz writes of how “the novice is plunged into the deepest night” upon entering battle, the sensations of which “amaze and confuse him when he first comes across them. This “psychological fog” prevents the formation of any “clear and complete insights” into the experience, as these “new impressions are too powerful, too
vivid” (122, 108). Likewise, Colonel Ardant du Picq notes that the novice soldier, facing “the field of battle” for the first time, where “death is in the air, blind and invisible, making his presence known by fearful whistlings that make heads duck, […] hunches up, closes in, seeking aid by an instinctive unformulated reasoning.” But as the “strain” becomes overwhelming, when fear turns to full blown terror, he “does not hear,” “cannot hear anymore” because “he is full of fear […] of the unknown” and has lost “his reasoning power and become instinctive” (133, 52, 69, 33). And for SLA Marshall, preventing “uncontrolled fear,” which “chills a man’s blood” and “grips him with a paralysis” rests on “the extent to which all dangers and distractions may be correctly anticipated and therefore understood”; it is specifically the “shock” of “the mystery of their situation” which “no one had taught [him] to guard against” and “catches them unaware” (37, 45, 47). All of these theorists base their basic theory of war and strategy for achieving consistent victory on the premise that war is not just difficult and frightening, but its spectacular nature easily eviscerates all thought, functioning, and sense of self. The traumatic scene—in this case, taken literally as it is precisely the very spectacularity of what is seen, heard, and felt in relation to what is expected that provides the shock—so absorbs the soldier that it totally disables any ability to either fight or assimilate the scene into memory. The shock of battle destroys their sensory capacities and leaves them not only unable to function in the moment, but with a psychological void. Such an occurrence, inevitable according to these theorists, is directly the result of soldiers being unprepared for the weight of the scene before them and positions trauma as mimetic.
Determined to keep soldiers as active participants in the drama, theorists approached war antimimetically. But the intention was never to eradicate fear and trauma from war, but rather to prepare for and thus prevent the uncontrolled, and irrational terror and panic that leads to trauma and defeat and in so doing counter the mimetic, absorptive aspect of war by changing the very experience of soldiers to a more detached existential mode. As Richard Holmes observed, “[t]he overwhelming majority of soldiers experience fear during or before battle” no matter how seasoned they might be; what varies is “its nature and intensity […] and the manner in which it is managed,” thereby determining whether individuals experience it as “mild apprehension” or “paralyzing fear” (204, 205). If the basic experience of war could be altered so that the mind would respond differently, than the detrimental effects of spectacular catharsis could at least be mitigated. Teaching soldiers to steel their minds to the shock and awe of battle by making them fully aware of what to expect ahead of time in order to prevent the sudden and violent affront to the senses and allow soldiers to more fully confront the scene around them became the focus of training. Theatricality, standing aside and withholding sympathy in order to remain critical and take action, became the hallmark for a new system of training aimed at removing the mimetically absorptive traumatic potential. Instead of the absolute shock and awe of the soldier’s confrontation with battle completely shattering his psychical capacities and resulting in an internal failure to comprehend, the soldier entering battle should experience the spectacle detached and unaffected. The initiative of theatricality replaces the passivity of absorption, and so, in theory, should trauma become manageable.
The theories distilled in *Counterinsurgency* and discussed in the Introduction offer a clear realization of the antimimetic turn within military theory. Petraeus’ “Mission Command” approach of empowering individuals to carry out their superior’s orders based on their own “initiative and judgment” necessitates soldiers capable of critical assessment in the most trying of situations (1-26). Counterinsurgency demands far more than basic Warfighting skills, including holding “[a] clear appreciation of the essential nature and nuances of the conflict,” “[a]n understanding of the motivation, strengths, and weaknesses of the insurgents;” and “[k]nowledge of the roles of other actors in the AO [Area of Operation]” (1-23). Counterinsurgency therefore necessitates extensive preparation in training, requiring soldiers to remain aloof from the action around them. Only by remaining detached yet analytical is it possible to determine “the appropriate level of force” and to “learn and adapt” to the shifting faces and approaches of insurgents (1-25, 1-26). Training not only takes on a newfound level of importance, teaching officers and enlisted troops everything from language skills, to religious and cultural decorum, to urban warfare techniques, to the intricacies of local political customs, but also acknowledges that the specific ways in which soldiers react to their environment—actively destabilized by counterinsurgents—plays as great if not a greater role than force in achieving victory. From such a standpoint, it is easy to classify the switch to a counterinsurgency model of training and strategy as the latest manifestation of a debate on the best method for overcoming war, accepted as a traumatic, immersive experience. Training prior to and at the start of the Iraq war focused on a “traditional” Cold War era ground war using disciplinary power’s focus on a combat-first mentality that drills troops into strict obedience. Petraeus’ ascension marked a shift to performative power’s
dynamic, interactive training that approaches all aspects of warfare equally. But, while Petraeus’ advocacy of *Counterinsurgency* as the epitome of such Clausewitzean theory seemingly manifests Leys’ opposing approaches to trauma applied to war—with the belief that war is a mimetic experience leading to antimimetic approaches for overcoming its trauma—the attendant element of perpetual rehearsal complicates the analogy. While the theories behind current infantry training are certainly bound up with a rejection of mimetic absorption on the actual battlefield, the system of training as it exists today has done little to change the overall structure of combat trauma, as soldiers inevitably still suffer the effects of spectacular catharsis.

**CSR and PTSD**

From the onset, the study of trauma in war has focused almost solely on the period after the commencement of combat. Until relatively recently, the history of analyzing responses to combat focused solely on the short term reactions symptomatic of what is now called Combat Stress Reaction (CSR), commonly defined as “any response to combat stress that renders a soldier combat ineffective. Symptoms vary but often include debilitating forms of anxiety and depression and the “thousand-yard stare [a dazed, unfocused gaze]. Physical symptoms are also common” (Helmus an Glenn xiii). Although the external symptoms of CSR generally match those of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, they are not in and of themselves equal; CSR can subsequently develop into the longer term PTSD, but not always. CSR, as its name suggests, refers exclusively to the immediate reaction to a traumatic battlefield encounter and the short-term onset of debilitating symptoms of varying degrees. Only if the condition persists over an extended period of time or, as is often the case, if its symptoms appear much later on, can it be
diagnosed as PTSD. The earliest theories of CSR consisted of mostly physiological or psychical explanations for conditions thought to stem directly from proximity to combat. “Soldier’s Heart,” now called “Da Costa’s syndrome” after the physician to advance the theory, referred to Civil War soldiers with cardiovascular conditions characterized by palpitations, increasing pain, headaches, trouble breathing, excessive sweating, and poor vision. “Nostalgia,” on the other hand, sought to diagnose the characteristic “disturbed sleep, poor eating, and erratic behavior […] that sometimes resulted in death” as stemming from a severe feeling of estrangement from a faraway location and attendant homesickness. In the words of the Union Army’s *Manual of Instructions for Enlisting and Discharging Soldiers*, “Nostalgia is a form of mental disease. […] The extreme mental depression and the unconquerable longing for home soon produce a state of cachexy, loss of appetite, derangement of the assimilative functions, and, finally, disease of the abdominal viscera. […] As Nostalgia is not infrequently fatal, it is a ground for discharge if sufficiently decided and pronounced” (21). In both approaches, it was specifically the stress of combat and service that was theorized to cause of the onset of symptoms, only manifesting after direct battle exposure.

Similarly, during and after World War I doctors coined “Shell Shock,” attributed to the physiological symptoms of “microhemorrhaging of the brain caused by the explosion of artillery shells and the shock waves they produced” (Helmus an Glenn xiv). Most often it referred to the physical manifestations of uncontrollable shaking and twitching, inability to focus, and complete mental breakdown. When not classifying sufferers simply as “malingerers” and returning them back to active duty, doctors generally treated victims with isolation and hypnosis, as well as attempting to keep them busy through
work or other means. Dubbed “Combat Fatigue” during World War II, analysis and
treatment of CSR began to focus much more on a psychological explanation, but one still
rooted in combat as the cause of the onset of symptoms. As David H. Marlowe
summarizes in his RAND report “Psychological and Psychosocial Consequences of
Combat and Deployment with Special Emphasis on the Gulf War”:

Ultimately, during World War II, the dynamics of soldier breakdown and symptom
formation shifted from the previous “biological” perception (primarily a function of
constitutional nervous system inadequacy) to the appreciation of the battlefield and
war zone as stressors that interact with the soldiers and their social environment to
alter psychological and physiological behavior. It was established that for most
soldiers, external events had internal consequences and that, in part, postevent
expectations and beliefs about cause and outcome could shape such consequences.
(47)

World War II and the post-war period crystallized notions about the role of direct combat
experience on the mind, upholding combat stress as not just a legitimate ailment, but a
common, nearly inevitable “psychophysiological reality” when not properly prepared for
and treated (Marlowe 47). The postwar period also placed a greater emphasis on stress,
not as “the consequence of the transformation of present stresses into organs and organ
systems that were preselected by early relationships” as psychoanalytic approaches
contended, but as a more neurobiological, hormonal response (Marlowe 67). Theories on
the effects of combat thus began to synch with Clausewitzean notions highlighting the
psychological response to spectacle as the chief factor affecting soldier performance.

The Vietnam Conflict marked a shift in the theories of, treatment for, and attention
paid to the effects of combat on its participants. As Marlowe writes, the majority of
Vietnam stress casualties were not specifically the result of prolonged exposure to
combat:
Only a few situations in Vietnam possessed the characteristics that generated high incidences of combat fatigue cases in past wars: the static “slugging match” with prolonged commitment to combat and prolonged exposure to weapons of indirect fire. Vietnam combat casualties had primarily short-duration exposure to firefights in hour-long or day-long “meeting engagements,” combined with periods of rest and recuperation between such engagements and the sure knowledge of rotation home. (77)

Instead of large numbers of relatively short lived “proximate combat stress casualties,” the majority of incidents emerging out of Vietnam were much more lasting, postcombat neurosis. Initially dubbed “Vietnam combat reaction,” the symptoms included:

Insomnia; recurrent terrifying nightmares, which are usually a reliving of a severe psychic trauma (friends and fellow combatants severely injured, mutilated, or killed, the subject himself wounded close to a vital organ, or perhaps his unit overrun by enemy with few survivors); anorexia progressing to nausea; vomiting (precipitated by enemy contact or explosions) and sometimes even watery diarrhea; depression, including guilt over not having saved his buddy’s life or perhaps not having grieved enough for him, as well as shame for having broken down when others in his unit maintained emotional control; and, most prominent, severe anxiety with tremulousness, to such a degree as to make the soldier ineffective in combat. (Pettera, Johnson, and Zimmer 675)

For the first time, analysts began to consider the delayed, longer-term effects of combat and military service in general. Whether attributed to medication and drug use, poor unit cohesion, so called “short-timers syndrome,” lack of homecoming rituals or other factors, a large number of veterans demonstrated a nearly identical psychological casualty that appeared “toward the end of the 12-month compulsory Vietnam tour” and featured the now familiar hallmark of “repetitive nightmare” (Marlowe 80). The primary explanation that emerged held that veterans of Vietnam suffered from a condition—Post Traumatic Stress Disorder—stemming from having experienced “an extraordinarily high level of multilayered traumata” during their service (Marlowe 94). The reaction to this combination of many different sources of omnipresent stress—whether the threat of death
or killing, the decentered nature of combat, the opaque topography, the constant yet
undefined nature of threat, or otherwise—manifested not on the battlefield itself, as
veterans of Vietnam tended to experience lower levels of Combat Fatigue, but upon
nearing the end of the tour or upon arriving home. As a result, the era since Vietnam has
seen a decrease in discourse on CSR and an explosion of attention dedicated to incidents
of prolonged trauma and the diagnosis of PTSD. But as with previous theories, notions of
stress and trauma in the post Vietnam era focused on the period of active duty, on the
trauma of being deployed abroad and serving in a wartime environment.

On the one hand, discourse today on CSR consists mainly of military discussions
and education on immediate treatment for officers and other soldiers. No longer belittled
as an aberration or hysterical attempt at escaping combat, the military considers CSR an
“expected and predictable emotional, intellectual, physical, and/or behavioral reaction
from exposure to stressful event(s)” (behavioralhealth). And the cause of CSR has
expanded from solely combat and deployment, to “the result of combat like conditions
that are present throughout the entire spectrum of military operations to include: training,
all phases of the deployment cycle, peacekeeping missions, humanitarian missions,
stability and reconstruction, and government support missions” (behavioralhealth). The
military has also synthesized its approach to treating CSR in advocating “the
management principles of brevity, immediacy, contact, expectancy, proximity, and
simplicity (BICEPS)” (behavioralhealth). Brevity consists of “initial rest and
replenishment at […] facilities located close to the soldier's unit” lasting “no more than 1
to 3 days.” Immediacy entails that “measures be initiated as soon as possible when
operations permit,” while Contact demands that “[t]he Soldier must be encouraged to
continue to think of himself as a warfighter, rather than a patient or a sick person” and
“whenever possible, representatives of the unit or messages from the unit tell the Soldier
that he is needed and wanted back.” Expectancy involves explicitly telling “the individual
[…] that he is reacting normally to extreme stress and is expected to recover and return to
full duty in a few hours or days.” Proximity holds that “soldiers requiring observation or
care beyond the unit level are evacuated to facilities in close proximity to, but separate
from the medical or surgical patients at the battalion aid station (BAS) or medical
company nearest the Soldiers’ unit,” and Simplicity “indicates the need to use brief and
straightforward methods to restore physical well-being and self confidence”
(behavioralhealth). It is the Army’s belief that if these techniques are utilized correctly
and efficiently, “[m]ost Soldiers will respond positively” and return to active duty in a
relatively short amount of time. The goal, of course, is to bring the affected soldier back
to combat readiness as soon as possible, minimizing the impact of CSR on both the
individual soldier and the unit as a whole through quick and direct treatment. Which is to
say, the goal is to minimize the effects of catharsis and maximize soldier and unit
effectiveness and efficiency.

On the other hand, PTSD has dominated the civilian and media discourse of
combat trauma since Vietnam, whether, for example, in the form of “Gulf War
Syndrome,” or the toll the Iraq and Afghanistan Wars have taken on returning soldiers. A
major study by the Army in 2004 that concluded that up to one in eight soldiers return
home from Iraq with symptoms of PTSD received extensive national coverage, as did a
2007 report in the Journal of the American Medical Association that found as high as 33
percent of returning veterans develop symptoms of PTSD after six months (MSNBC,
CBS). The New York Times has published over 125 articles since the start of the Iraq War that have dealt with PTSD, compared to under thirty about “combat stress,” with only two mentioning actual CSR. There is a National Center for PTSD, a branch of the Army Medical Department devoted to Behavioral Health, that deals almost exclusively with returning soldiers and PTSD, and countless internet recourses and public information packets available dedicated solely to the history and symptoms of, treatment for, and countless other information on PTSD. Unlike the military’s approach to CSR, almost all discussion on veteran PTSD begins with the singular role of combat in generating it. The most obvious reason for this split, with CSR relegated to military discourse and PTSD dominating civilian discussions of trauma, lies in the fact that PTSD is a societal burden whereas CSR is a martial matter. Combat Stress Reaction is, by its very name, strictly limited to combat reactions and therefore only affects military performance; furthermore, because of its relative brevity, its effects are generally not seen by civil society. Meanwhile, PTSD refers to a far broader range of situations, including accidents, natural or manmade disasters, and severe illness, which affect society at large; combat PTSD gets lumped into this broad category of traumatic response, a mere percentage of the nearly 7.7 million people diagnosed with PTSD in the US (NIMH). Furthermore, the symptoms of PTSD develop and manifest over time and often persist long after the initial traumatic encounter or discharge from service, impacting the individual’s long-term health and ability to function on his own. Those diagnosed with PTSD, specifically soldiers, are often judged as failing to be productive members of civil society and noted for their inability to reassimilate. Whether it is in cases of domestic violence, alcoholism or drug use, criminal activity and/or violence, other major incidents,
or the more common yet less spectacular nightmares, isolation, and other general symptoms of PTSD, much of the media coverage deals with the manner in which combat trauma impacts civil society in negative ways.

As Todd C. Helmus and Russell W. Glenn recount in their RAND study *Steeling the Mind: Combat Stress Reactions and Their Implications for Urban Warfare*, CSR is merely the technical classification given to the emotional response of (mostly) novice soldiers to combat, elsewhere cited as stress, catharsis, and terror. In words that once again echo Clausewitz, they write that “[s]tress is known to have a number of deleterious consequences in both human performance and mental health,” impairing “many behaviors that are critical to effective combat performance” including “marksmanship, decisionmaking, and teamwork.” The stress from the “novel and frightening stimuli” of the combat environment “seems to disrupt goal-oriented cognitions or thoughts” as well as leading to “a loss in confidence” (97-98). Furthermore, “[b]eyond performance, stress increases the risk of psychological breakdown. It is understood in psychiatry that negative thoughts or physiological symptoms of fear, left unchecked, can in and of themselves be a cause of increased anxiety. […] The cycle self-perpetuates to a point where anxiety becomes overwhelming” (98-99). CSR considered as such reveals a more ominous process at work in the split between CSR and PTSD: the major impetus behind the movement towards rehearsing for combat in training lies in the desire to eliminate Combat Stress Reaction from the battlefield no matter the longterm consequences. In incorporating performative power into training in order to negate the effects of stress—spectacular catharsis—the infantry’s main concern is shown not to be the lasting consequences of PTSD and the burden it might place on society, but with conquering the
immediate, visceral response of CSR that directly impacts battlefield performance.

Returning again to Counterinsurgency—a system of training and strategy designed as much to reduce the impact of CSR as to win the hearts and minds of the populace—what might appear to be a strategy aimed at helping the individual soldier’s mental wellbeing, in fact deals exclusively with improving performance, no matter the ultimate cost to those involved. Soldiers operating under a counterinsurgency model still return home traumatized. Indeed, the number of cases of PTSD among returning and active duty soldiers serving in Iraq and Afghanistan has not decreased since Petraeus’ refocusing, but perhaps this should come as no surprise. Both Counterinsurgency and the antimimetic tradition in military theory are not ultimately concerned with preventing trauma, only with delaying its onset by indefinitely extending the period of latency. Just as Leys demonstrates how the antimimetic turn occurs in trauma theory as a means to an end, the whole theory behind the implementation of performative power into the military rests on the belief that training should, to the best of its ability, mimic combat so that soldiers will not be surprised or terrified upon entering battle and could therefore resist the debilitating effects of stress. Since “[r]esearch has demonstrated that individuals given information about an impending stressful event experience a reduction in anxiety and an increase in both confidence and objectively measured levels of performance,” training moved through more and more mimetically faithful methods of generating the external sights, sounds, chaos, and smells of combat, along with its concomitant internal sensations, stress, and emotional rush, not to mention the physical and mental demands of marching, firing, reloading, carrying out orders, and facing live fire (Helmus and Glenn, 99). Contemporary infantry training thus seeks to combat CSR by attempting to
approximate the stress of actual combat and thereby eliminate much of the novelty of warfare. As long as the military can maximize soldier performance here and now, any subsequent breakdown remains largely an afterthought. But in mixing the artificial and the real in the systematic effort to rehearse for that which defies any such attempt, the military not only sets itself up for failure, but collapses the boundaries between killing and dying and the mimicking of these acts, bringing trauma off the battlefield.

**Dark Play**

I would like to return to the performance of US Marine Lance Corporal Jesse Klingler and professional actor Ali Mohammad Mohsen at Miramar Air Base, an extreme example of the traumatic potential that remains in current training practices despite the military’s best efforts. The slippery slope between the actual and virtual broke down in the moments when Ali Mohammad Mohsen became overly immersed in the exercise and, perhaps believing himself an actual soldier, turned to physical violence and permanently injures the prone Marine. But what ultimately forced Klingler out of the service was not the PTSD he developed subsequently, but the physical injuries themselves—after two surgeries to heal a large hole in his leg and treatment for superficial burns, “Klingler [...] was hospitalized for two weeks, placed on 30 days of convalescent leave and received a medical discharge in September 2005” (Baker), unable to perform up to speed. The injuries left the Lance Cpl. in constant pain and reliant on “several pain patches and […] morphine regularly” (Randles). It was only once he had already left the military that Klingler developed psychological symptoms; rated “permanently disabled,” the Department of Veterans Affairs eventually diagnosed the Lance Corporal with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, stemming, as it were, from the gap in his memory of the
experience of the event. For when Klinger recounts his story, between the moment when Mohsen “pressed an unloaded gun against Klingler’s groin and pulled the trigger” and the moment when military supervisors witnessed the Iraqi American actor “yelling for someone to get his magazine, the sound of an AK-47 assault rifle being loaded and the crack of a gunshot as the gun’s barrel pushed hard against his leg,” there lies an ellipsis (Baker). Lance Cpl. Jesse Klingler, in describing his experience, cannot fully remember it. The recollection is marked by an experiential lacuna, a failure to remember leading to his diagnosis of PTSD. Thus, before ever actually entering real combat, Klingler experienced its emotional costs just as fully despite the lack of real bullets or death.\(^{28}\)

While Klingler’s case is particularly noteworthy for the physical violence that forced him out of active duty, his experience is exemplary of the risks within immersion training and perpetual rehearsal, costs whose power stem from the very real stakes. In addressing the question of how simulations that lack any “real” danger could be effective, Tracy Davis, building on Richard Schechner, writes that “when violence is acted out in theater, even though there is no physical violence, the activity is—rather than merely representing—dangerous and risky” (98). This risk stems from the element of what Schechner calls “deep play,” “playing which emphasizes risk, deception, and sheer thrill,” particularly when “some of the players don’t know they are playing” \((Performance\ Studies: \ An\ Introduction\ 106)\). Dark play applies to “activities of extremely high risk, physically, fiscally, and psychologically” that draw “the whole person into what amounts to a life-and-death struggle expressing not only individual commitment (even to the irrational), but cultural values” (106). Dark play “is all absorbing” to the point that “sometimes even the conscious players are not certain if they are playing or
not. What begins as a game, as a gesture of bravado, can quickly get out of hand” (106, 109). Because in theatre immersion training it is absolutely essential that participants, at least some of the time, feel that they are actually experiencing what they are merely rehearsing and, immersed, “forgot” that they are in training, it relies on dark play. So while most of the time participants are self-consciously “playing,” the style of play—flirting with death and killing, intentionally adjusting levels of stress and spectacle, and constantly changing the narrative—ensures that that play does indeed hold real stakes for those involved, whether as physical as what happened to Klingler, or largely psychological.

When the military rehearses for war, it relies on a certain amount of absorption in order to create the necessary amount of believability—the sense of danger, fear, and impending death—to in turn convince participants that what they are doing is “real.” The goal is for soldiers to react as they would in a “live” situation so that their actions can be critiqued, adjusted, and perfected. In order to eliminate stress and terror from the actual battlefield, they must be summoned forth in the virtual one and rehearsed away. To succeed, theater immersion training must engage in dark play in order to overexpose the threat of death and therefore forestall its effects and, in theory, arrival. The result is that, like in Tracy C. Davis’ Cold War defense drills, “absorption in the narrative is apt to fluctuate, just as it does for actors on the stage” (101). As Davis recounts, “[w]ar games and civil defense exercises harden participants to the gruesome facts of death, but their effectiveness also comes by simultaneously engaging intellects and emotions in the rehearsed scenario” (100). Switching between immersion and theatricality, feeling and thinking, training, rehearsal, and defense drills modulate levels of participation. While
participants may experience “the ever-latent breakdown of concentration as a result of
error or interruption,” they do so “in order to become less susceptible to breakdown when
infelicities arise in performance” (Davis 90). The goal, in theatre rehearsal, Cold War
drills, and infantry training alike, is “to become as effective as possible at coping in a
future […] crisis by normalizing it into a routine while also practicing how to cope with
the unexpected” (90). And so no matter the level of matrixing, whether fully immersed or
only partially, “[t]his rehearsal into reality creates ‘real possibilities’ or ‘possible
realities’ which ‘with a little coaxing […] might as well be real.’ They will not be real,
but an emotional experience of them may sometimes feel like it” (101). Theater
immersion and similar intensive, realistic training is, by its definition, designed to induce
CSR-type reactions in soldiers, but in the “safe” zone of rehearsal. Soldiers must still
undergo the same potentially traumatic process previously reserved for live fire, but, in
theory, the cost of the inevitable stress at facing these situations for the first time can be
more easily managed and would cause no damage during training. These exercises must
be realistic enough for participants to believe that they are actually in Iraq, or else
rehearsal would only be repeating and/or correcting a response unfaithful to how they
will eventually react to live fire; unless soldiers really believe there is risk of death and
that what surrounds them is the spectacle of war, they cannot hope to be inoculated. The
mediated realism of immersion training ensures that soldiers are conscious of the fact that
they are playing, but also of the risk involved.

At the very least, training simulations such as the Miramar interrogation can
immerse participants into its simulacrum for part of the time and convince them that it is
really happening, therefore leaving them “not certain if they are playing or not” and
actually believing they might die. As Marine Gunnery Sgt. Kelly Crawford says of Mojave Viper, “[t]his is as real as you can get,” or according to Army Sgt. Shawn Stillabower, Medina Jabal is so realistic that “sometimes, it’s really got me thinking, ‘Am I in Iraq?’” (Solvig, Fikins and Burns). Todd C. Helmus and Russell W. Glenn note in their RAND study, a “common criticism” of training designed to expose personnel to the stress of warfare, is “that the stress of combat can never be accurately and fully characterized in training exercises.” However, “research does suggest that complete and accurate re-creation of operational stressors is not necessary. For example, performance improvements derived from training under one stressor (e.g., noise) will generalize to other stressors (e.g., time pressure) and that improvements gained for one task will generalize to another” (103). So while there is little risk of actual death so long as the mediated realism holds true and participants don’t get as carried away as Moshen did at Miramar, the immersive aspect assures that the stakes involved in such training are raised enough that the soldier entering a simulation experiences the sudden and violent shock to the mind characteristic of traumatic events. Built into this system of training, then, is a high potential for trauma, a chance that such “exposure may itself produce such a degree of stress that soldiers become even more fearful than before the training” (Helmus and Glenn 103).

In theory, any potential stress reaction resulting from facing “combat” for the first time would happen in the safe confines of training, could be dealt with quickly and effectively there, and the soldier could thus return to training and eventually enter combat already inoculated to CSR. The military takes careful precautions to prevent any reactions in training from becoming too debilitating, slowly building recruits up to live-
fire drills in boot camp and only implementing mimetic simulations late on in pre-
development training. Furthermore, almost all training employs the “crawl, walk, run”
approach, where participants rehearse for their rehearsal, only contributing at full speed
when judged fully prepared. Even theater immersion training starts off with smaller-scale
simulations before eventually building up to the multi-day absorptive training. The theory
is that “stressors must be introduced incrementally so as to facilitate habituation and to
allow soldiers the opportunity to develop necessary coping skills” (Helmus and Glenn
103). Once on the battlefield, that same soldier should be able to resist the effects of
stress having already built up his resistance. Having absorbed into the training exercise
and faced death already, the soldier’s basic response to the spectacle of combat would
have, in theory, been diagnosed, improved, and rehearsed over again, providing him a
building block to refer back to when faced with “the real thing.”

**Everything You Saw and Everything You Did**

In bringing the shock and awe of the battlefield into the building-up process of
rehearsal, however, training begins to eclipse combat. A more realistic and intensive
rehearsal does not necessarily make a less frightening ultimate performance for the actor,
but blurs the margins between the two. Rehearsal does not eliminate the heightened
emotions and shocking sensations that would normally be felt live, but forces the
actor/soldier to experience them earlier. Indeed, in seeking to induce CSR in training in
order to prevent its appearance in combat, the Army and Marine Corps merely shift the
location of trauma from combat to training, sacrificing the prospect of PTSD for a chance
at battlefield control. While soldiers unprepared for war suffer in the moment—short-
circuited victims of overwhelming and unfathomable surges in emotions failing to
perform—contemporary infantry training both moves forward this inevitable confrontation into training and delays for a post-military date the fallout. The mediated mimesis of theater immersion and perpetual rehearsal, in absorbing soldiers into the scene and exposing them to overwhelming amounts of stress and spectacle through dark play, marks the originary event of mimetic trauma. Instead of the spectacular catharsis of war, it is the spectacular catharsis of immersive rehearsal that shocks and awes the individual; absorbed into the scene, even one that claims it is fundamentally “not real,” soldiers fail to record it. The structure of this trauma, marked by the tension between the real and the virtual that so dominates current infantry training practices and combined with the ellipsis in memory, is consistent with the notions of “the pathology […] consist[ing] solely in the structure of its experience or reception” as argued within Cathy Caruth’s trauma theory (Caruth Trauma 4-5). Case in point, Lance Cpl. Klingler’s mind, unprepared for the jolt to his mind from what was happening to him, experiences everything indirectly—“one moment too late” (Caruth UE 62). Thinking he “was going to actually die,” Klingler had to “confront the possibility of [his] death,” but indirectly, in his own words, as “a nightmare” (Fuentes, Caruth 62). Immersed in the intensity of the moment, forgetting that he is merely “playing,” Klingler cathects and thus (mis)experiences the initial traumatic scene.

In a telling chapter of Trauma: A Genealogy, Ruth Leys particularly takes Caruth to task for what she sees as “a fascination with, almost a relishing of, the currently modish idea that the domain of trauma is the unspeakable and unrepresentable” in Caruth’s Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History and Trauma: Explorations in Memory (304). Caruth, according to Leys, oscillates between an
antimimetic approach to trauma as visual memory and a mimetic stance that treats trauma as both infectious and “other than a representation.” The very dichotomous, oppositional nature of Ruth Leys’ thesis rests on the argument that trauma theory contains both sides of the mimesis/antimimesis debate, the one impossible without the other. As such, she posits Caruth’s theory as fitting into the mimetic/antimimetic oscillation that comprises the rest of the genealogy. Leys argues that “[b]ecause traumatic memory is understood by […] Caruth as above all visual, a scene, it may seem the antimimetic idea par excellence’ (304). She then counters that Caruth also incorporates elements of mimesis because trauma as articulated by her “is imagined as other than a representation” and “stands outside or beyond representation,” as well as holding a “tendency […] to infect or contagiously influence others” (304).

Leys’ ultimately faulty analysis of Caruth is a direct result of her attempt to force Caruth into the dichotomy of her genealogy, something that Caruth’s theory inherently resists. And because Leys cannot clearly fit it into this binary, the chapter on Caruth veers suddenly from genealogical investigation into the meanings of trauma that analyzes various historical moments for their approach to the term, to critical attack on the analytic accuracy and overall merits of Caruth’s theory of trauma as “unclaimed experience.” As Dorian Stuber argues:

Caruth stands as an insoluble challenge to Leys’s thesis, in that her theory of trauma is entirely mimetic; in it, trauma is forever inimical to its narration. […] In the earlier chapters, Leys had diagnosed a mimetic and antimimetic element in each of the models under investigation, to the point where she concluded such simultaneity was constitutive of every theory of trauma. But in Caruth’s self-proclaimed mimetic theory she can find no evidence for a countervailing antimimetic tendency. This fact leads Leys to contend that Caruth has simply misread her sources.
Leys dedicates her last chapter to condemning Caruth’s readings of Freud as “extremely forced” at best, which enables Caruth to claim that “the traumatic nightmare is a literal memory of the traumatic event” (Leys 274). Leys argues that “there is no warrant in the mimetic theory for their insistence […] that the traumatic experience stands outside or beyond representation as such” (304). Leys can hardly contain her disdain for Caruth’s scholarship, leveling critical accusations such as “tendentious claim,” “sloppiness of her theoretical arguments,” “she tends to dilute and generalize the notion of trauma,” and “her analysis depends on a ruse,” all the while structuring her chapter around exhibiting “what is wrong or problematic about her [Caruth’s] arguments” despite previously vowing not to “for a moment” attempt “to take sides” (304, 305, 288, 307). Leys reveals the structure of her own argument to collapse in the face of Caruth’s wholly mimetic theory of trauma.

That Cathy Caruth begins her first chapter of *Unclaimed Experience* with an epigraph from Michael Herr’s Vietnam novel *Dispatches* and initially uses an example of a soldier in war to clarify her argument is, perhaps, unspectacular. After all, it was the curious cases of shell shock arising in World War I that first interested Freud. But her reference to “the experience of the soldier faced with sudden and massive death around him […] who suffers this sight in a numbed state, only to relive it later on in repeated nightmares” and her citation of Herr’s statement that “It took the war to teach […] that you were as responsible for everything you saw as you were for everything you did” serve to highlight the particular relevance of Caruth’s mimetic theory of trauma to performative training and perpetual rehearsal in military training (10, emphasis mine). On the one hand, the very spectacle of war, the visual scene, carries as much of a mental weight on
soldiers as their own actions; on the other hand, that same spectacle plays a direct role in delaying the onset of the realization of that cost.

According to Caruth, trauma, in “its most general definition […] describes an overwhelming experience of sudden or catastrophic events in which the response to the event occurs in the often delayed, uncontrolled repetitive appearance of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomena” (11). It is within the moment of the “encounter with trauma—both in its occurrence and in the attempt to understand it”—that Caruth situates her now well-known theory. Trauma arises not simply from the event itself, from the fact of experiencing something shocking, but from the structure of (mis)experiencing it; as Caruth writes, “trauma is not locatable in the simple violent or original event in an individual’s past, but rather in the way that its very unassimilated nature—the way it was precisely not known in the first instance—returns to haunt the survivor later on (4). Trauma attains the status of a “missed event” in that it is not fully experienced psychically at the moment of its occurrence because the mind, absorbed into the scene, is unprepared for the stimulus of a perceived threat and fails to register what was seen or done. This in turn forces a break in the experience of time and thus causes the event to elude comprehension, to escape immediate grasping. According to Caruth, ‘[t]he breach in the mind […] is not caused by a pure quantity of stimulus […] but by ‘fright,’ the lack of preparedness to take in a stimulus that comes too quickly” (62). Such terror ensures that “the threat is recognized as such by the mind one moment too late.” Trauma is therefore an “unclaimed experience,” in that “at the heart of catastrophic experience” is an inherent “incomprehensibility” stemming from this experiential caesura that leaves trauma unrepresentable (58). Thus, “[t]he shock of the mind's relation to the threat of
death is thus not the direct experience of the threat, but precisely the *missing* of this experience, the fact that, not being experienced *in time*, it has not yet been fully known” (62). The initial confrontation with trauma is consequently mimetic and absorptive, since, in Leys’ already quoted words, “its sheer extremity, its affront to common norms and expectations, shatters or disables the victim’s cognitive and perceptual capacities so that experience never becomes part of the ordinary memory system” (298). Or to quote Caruth, “[w]hat causes, trauma, then, is a shock that appears to work very much like a bodily threat but is in fact a break in the mind’s experience of time. […] And it is this lack of direct experience that, paradoxically, becomes the basis of the repetition of the nightmare” (61, 62). Trauma arises from the collapse in distance between event and self, leaving the victim unable to remember yet incapable of moving on.

As the victim of trauma experiences the originary event absorptively, the specular distance necessary for the victim to have experienced it antimimetically simply does not exist, as “[i]n trauma […] the outside has gone inside without any mediation” (Caruth 59). Furthermore, “the experience of trauma” is necessarily mimetic since it does not exist in the direct attack of an original violent encounter, or even in “the forgetting of a reality that can hence never be fully known,” but instead in the “latency within the experience itself,” the “period of forgetting that occurs after the accident” (17). The locus of trauma lies in the event not being “assimilated or experienced fully at the time, but only belatedly, in its repeated *possession* of the one who experiences it” (Caruth *Trauma* 4). Because the mind is immersed in the scene and unprepared for what occurs, it not only fails to experience the event in situ, but continues the process of not remembering, existing in a indeterminate state. The originary event, “fully evident only in connection
with another place, and in another time,” returns as a flashback, dream, or other type of repetition. Only when something else, another scene, triggers the flashback, does the mind “awaken […] into consciousness,” shocked at having confronted death, but more specifically, “in having survived, precisely, without knowing it” (64). The structure of trauma thus hinges on this latency, on the flashback alerting the victim to his or her own trauma; as Caruth writes of Freud’s case of a father dreaming of his child’s fiery death, “[t]o awaken is thus precisely to awaken only to one’s repetition of a previous failure to see in time. […] *Awakening […] is itself the site of a trauma*, the trauma of the necessity and impossibility of responding to another’s death” (100). It is the flashback-dream that allows the mind to awaken to its trauma, to the very act of having (mis)experienced the originary event, which subsequently takes possession—the unconscious desire to continue to forget cedes to the unwanted confrontation with “the reality of a death from which he [the victim] cannot turn away” (99). Thus, “it is only in and through its inherent forgetting that it [trauma] is first experienced at all,” as the latency in turn allows for the repetitions and traumatic awakening (17). The very *indirectness* of the survival of the originary experience leads to the continuous loop of “attempt[ing] to master what was never fully grasped in the first place” by “confront[ing] it [the event] over and over again” (62). Trauma is thus endlessly deferred, an event experienced repeatedly and belatedly in unwelcome performances that consume the self in its own survival.

In the “attempt to *claim one’s own survival*” that marks the traumatic awakening, the flashback, in whatever form it takes, radically alters the subject’s relation to the self. In the traumatic awakening, the “very identity” of the subject is “bound up with, or founded in,” the experience “that he survives,” in that “[w]hat the [victim] cannot grasp
[...] becomes the foundation of his very identity” (92). In repeating and awakening, the victim does not simply represent the traumatic nature of the initial encounter, referencing its effect, but performs the trauma itself; each repetition subjects the mind to the event all over again and “dramatizes [...] the story of a repeated failure to respond adequately” (103). The self dissolves into these repeated flashbacks, dreams, and actings-out, which are “an interruption,” “something with a disrupting force or impact” equivalent to “an interruption of a representational mode” that “cannot be thought of simply as a representation” (Caruth 115n6). Because the victim cannot narrate what was never brought into memory, cannot refer to something that isn’t “known,” language inherently fails. As Caruth discusses in an extended analysis of Paul de Man and the failure of referentiality, any attempt to symbolize, narrate, or otherwise represent the traumatic event would be necessarily distortive; the event having been missed, leaving a psychic gap that language cannot fill, the signifier would be empty. Thus, Caruth writes that the actings-out characteristic of trauma possess the victim, who can only perform its reoccurrence. The flashbacks are not mere imitations of the traumatic scene, but the very thing itself; or rather, the repossession of the victim is “both the truth of an event and the truth of its incomprehensibility” (Caruth Trauma 153). These performances consequently center on a notion of catharsis as central to trauma—the power of absorption and sympathetic, emotional spectating is both the locus of and entrance into trauma as well as the self’s potential salvation. The basic structure of trauma is thus an ellipsis in experience only realized upon the return of the originary event in the form of repeated cathartic performances.

The experience of trauma as understood by Caruth therefore is akin to that of
mimetic theatrical spectating in that the event “immerse[s] the victim in the traumatic scene so profoundly that it preclude[s] the kind of specular distance necessary for cognitive knowledge of what had happened” (Leys 9). Returning again to Tracy C. Davis’s *Stages of Emergency: Cold War Nuclear Civil Defense*, she notes that theatre is “mimetically referential to something known beyond the fiction of a play and the confines of a theater”; when “doing” something on stage or in the rehearsal room, actors invoke “a thing done,” which is to say that they refer to “real” acts at which they merely play (85). Mimesis “refers to an ideal ‘real’ which can never quite be successfully invoked,” which, according to Plato, leaves it always twice removed— theatre imitates a concrete representation by humans of an ideal idea divinely created (85). This gap causes mimesis to fall short of what it imitates, unable to create an exact representation. As discussed in Chapter One, Plato argued that this aspect of theatre made it useless, offering no positive, educative value, and at its worst, dangerous; since theatre attempted to convince its audience that what it played at was “real,” it was inherently duplicitous, offering an imitation as reality. Furthermore, theatre purposefully plays on the emotions in order to achieve its deception, creating illusions that please but caring little for the truthfulness of its content. These emotions, pity and fear, interfere with reason and leave individuals impaired and paralyzed. Anthony Kubiak argues that cathartic theatrical spectating is a fundamentally traumatic encounter, resulting in a loss of identity and the “collapse of the subject/object into a third term, an Unnamable” (19). Absorbed in the moment, the spectator-qua-victim sympathetically connects with that other, whether actor/character or traumatic scene, and suffers too. Spectators dissolve into the moment, passively allowing the emotions of the scene to become their own and thereby collapsing
the distance between them and the performance and leaving a gap in memory. The result is a total failure to process, leaving the spectator/victim unable to actually deal with what they witnessed. Instead, they can merely reenact the originary moment imitating the scene over again. Catharsis as a result of imitation, haunted by the specters of inauthenticity, consumes the subject. Soldiers made audience cede to the passivity of unnamable and self-effacing trauma, whether in combat or training.

**The Location of Trauma**

The Miramar incident exposes the promise of dark play as also its risk. Quoting Schechner, Tracy Davis asserts that the danger of dark play is “a mortgaged actuality indefinitely postponing the catastrophe. […] The present moment is a negotiation between a wished for future and a rehearsable, therefore changeable past. […] The mortgaged future is always death; the past is always life-as-remembered, or restaged” (98). Schechner continues that, “[t]he fictive violence of the stage refers not to the past or to elsewhere but to the future—to threats, to what will happen if the aesthetic-ritual project crashes” (*TFOR* 259). Thus, the negotiation between “a changeable past and a dreaded future that in turn is ghosted in a wished-for outcome that rehearsal is supposed to optimize” is, as Davis argues, the “principle of ‘restored’ or twice-behaved-behaviors” (98). In the case of immersion training, for the military, that “dreaded future” is not death but CSR, and the “wished-for outcome” is immediate, accurate response to any situation faced, and in turn, an invincible force. The “fictive violence” enacted in such training helps to “inoculate” soldiers to the “real” violence that they would face in “the real world.” Bound up in catharsis, theatrical violence asks the audience to immerse into its fiction and imagine what it performs as *real*. In so doing, in allowing the imagination free
reign, the “threat” of what could happen is often far greater than what ever could. By staging and allowing soldiers to immerse into war, in using rehearsal training to flirt with and challenge death via dark play, the goal is to ultimately shrug it off and postpone it, allowing soldiers to enter combat without the debilitating threat of terror, panic, or CSR. But it is that very act of postponing that marks dark play’s potential costs.

The structure of contemporary training as an endless series of rehearsals essentially extends the period of latency indefinitely. With the initial encounter with death experienced indirectly due to absorption, the rest of military life is spent rehearsing what was never directly remembered, so that the mind enters an indeterminate state where the originary event lies latent and outside the realm of understanding, representation, and memory for an extended time. Rehearsal essentially prolongs the onset of trauma by preventing its possession. Any stress reaction during training would be immediately dealt with through a combination of the BICEPS method discussed above (brevity, immediacy, contact, expectancy, proximity, and simplicity) to treat the physical and emotional symptoms, and targeted instruction aimed at correcting the behavioral effects. The goal in such treatment is quickly to mitigate the loss of manpower through short-term treatment, which does not address the roots of the problem but merely aims to cure its outermost signs. The use of the “5 R’s,” “Reassure, Rest, Replenish, Restore, and Retain” seeks to assure soldiers of the normalcy of their reaction, and with outward symptoms abated, the military “expect[s] […] Soldiers to RTD [return to duty] rapidly” (behavioralhealth). Approaching CSR like a physical wound from a triage perspective, the theory is that “early recognition” and “prompt intervention” can quickly and effectively heal the wound and, once seemingly recovered, the victim can return to active
duty with no lasting effects and, potentially, even stronger than before. Indeed, from the point of view of the military institution, as long as soldiers fight while on the battlefield, once they leave, the impact of what they experienced no longer directly affects military operations and therefore does not matter. By attempting to ensure that if CSR does appear, it does so in training in order to perfect battlefield response, the Army and Marine Corps willingly mortgage the future in the form of PTSD for the dubious promise of battlefield performance by rehearsing the already rehearsed yet never memorized.

When Klingler and Moshen performed their simulation, they did so to mimic a potential future that neither of them could reference. Tracy Davis notes that the failure of referentiality characteristic of both mimetic trauma and theatre was an essential aspect of Cold War Civil Defense drills, and so too is it now in theatre immersion such as the Miramar simulation. Touched on briefly in Chapter Three, the nuclear defense exercises mimetically failed precisely because:

Nothing quite like all-out nuclear war had occurred, so exercises, on an existential level, strove to anticipate a mimic referent. Because this was anticipatory, they could not succeed in mirroring an unprecedented future: it is a variant on the classic mimetic failure to fully or successfully mirror a referent, though the unimaginability of nuclear war poses a special problem distinct from the usual ontological gap of mimesis. (86)

Cold War exercises attempted to build up knowledge and experience through rehearsal for a performance that could neither be imagined nor represented. As Davis notes, “the exercises are ‘texts’ made up of bits of knowledge grafted onto behavior; like other kinds of texts, these have precedents and so are mimetic acts, though in this case freely playing with doubling and substitution with respect to the ‘original’ that they ‘mimic’” (86-87). So while participants could imagine something they thought might be similar, what they
actually rehearsed “was unknowable, short of it actually happening. Exercises postulated future conditions but could not know them.” Rehearsal for war is thus a “deferred event,” in that each rehearsal anticipates some future event by “imprint[ing] behaviors on the body, and in so doing creat[ing] cognitive condition and a corporeal memory more likely to be reproduced” (85). Rehearsals “can help to make an act complete and perfect,” but only the actual performance “calls something into being” (87, 86). And in the case of nuclear war, those performances never had or would come about, leaving the participants in an endless state of waiting. The actions of those rehearsing were “conditional,” in that they were “a rehearsal for a feared future […] which forestalled performance while inherently referring to its possibility” (90).

Likewise, Klingler, Moshen, and other participants in theater immersion and similarly mimetic, absorptive training regiments rehearse for an unpredictable future precisely because it might never happen as planned and has never happened exactly that way before; while some of what they will inevitable face will resemble their training, much of it will appear utterly foreign. The goal of theatre immersion being to prepare soldiers for combat before ever experiencing it, it too relies on asking “actors to play ‘as if’ with ‘if’ material” (Davis 86). Neither the actors nor the supervisors at Miramar had any “real” to mimic, only the possibilities and the already happened, themselves unique and necessarily different. Because war is ever evolving and never repeating, it practices for a performance that never arrives; whatever combat soldiers do eventually enter will necessarily be something other than for what they trained. Because it refers to what is unimaginable—both a feared future and a (mis)experienced past—infantry training matches and extends the structure of trauma where the (mis)experience of the traumatic
event delays and leaves it beyond representation. Trainees, absorbed in the pull of immersion training, suffer the trauma of mimesis; subsequently asked to rehearse based on this initial experience, they must build upon something that fundamentally does not exist, deferring the realization and costs of such a reality. By rehearsing for the never has and never will, infantry training not only offers an experiential structure matching that of trauma, but like the defense drills, “forestalls performance” and in so doing, traps soldiers in an endless ellipsis. It is no longer combat that traumatizes, but military existence.

Framed by their initial immersion into the false combat that caused it never to enter normal memory and their eventual awakening to their survival, soldiers and Marines experience the rest of their military existence going through subsequent versions of their initial combat encounter and, because of the structure of theatricality, never experiencing the present directly—this period of latency after the initial missing of the event is therefore antimimetic, as if happening to another. Theatricality also rests on a fundamental ellipsis in experience, a stance apart that allows the withholding of sympathy in order to critically assess the situation and take responsive, informed action. In order to do so, theatricality demands that the audience member not become absorbed in the spectacle and exist in its moment, but instead view the action as if another person, split from the normally emotional self. As in Diderot’s paradox of the actor discussed in Chapter Two, the spectator, physically present and seemingly spontaneous, is at the same time psychically removed and carefully rehearsed, the result being a fundamental distance between spectator and event, a gap opened up between the events being witnessed and/or suffered, and the actual experience of those events. Spectators are able to do more than reflect on the scene and can take action, precisely because of the external
quality of the event; in so doing, theatrical spectators become actors themselves, just as the trauma victim has the ability, however lengthily, to eventually recount the event through therapy. Theatricality demands an active, engaged subject who resists the overwhelming nature of the event, leaving him in possession of his ability to think and act. In the case of classically delineated theatrical spectating, or even everyday witnessing in civil society, theatricality’s potential for an experiential interruption is precisely its strength, offering a solution to the problems of mimesis through its ability to turn spectator into actor by means of critical reflection. However, in the case of war or other violent events, the potential exists for theatricality to match mimesis, as the detached spectator necessarily can not claim the impact of what they did without experiencing the moment in situ.

Theatricality forces soldiers to experience everything indirectly; always looking backwards and forwards, the simulations and actual combat can not serve as the reoccurrence that awakens the victims to their trauma. Training keeps the soldier looking backwards to previous rehearsals in order to take action, relying on built up associations that dictate exactly what to do in any situation. At the same time, soldiers are constantly looking towards the future, aware that their actions now will determine their future decisions and that the experiences and situations they face are rehearsals for subsequent ones, virtual or actual. This temporal split defines theatricality, leaving spectators detached from the present and, as Davis writes, “imagining ‘then’ as now, what could be as if it were, and calling the future into the present as easily as if it were the past”; soldiers thereby resist the absorptive pull of war and can remain performers (101). Theatricality leaves soldiers always acting, playing a role and therefore apart from
themselves. They are thus stuck in an endless chain of deferment, each simulation and combat experienced belatedly, leaving the witness unable to claim its impact. As long as the soldier keeps training, there is always another rehearsal in which to participate, another performance for which to prepare. The mind, so occupied and distanced, does not, cannot, awaken to the full impact of what it has previously (not) seen or done. Soldiers are thus never afforded the time or space to begin to process their first mimetic simulation, let alone their last, endlessly entering new combat situations, familiar but forgotten, and forestalling the eventual awakening indefinitely.

And so while seemingly offering a better model for protecting the wellbeing of soldiers while also guaranteeing more effective and efficient performance, martial theatricality is equally problematic and tied into trauma to those who actually fight. As in McKenzie’s analysis of performance management, performative power in war, while empowering individuals with greater freedom to take initiative and act according to their judgment, places just as much stress on them. The “or else” that completes the challenge to perform, in our case, carries the menacing threat not just of being “fired, redeployed, institutionally marginalized,” “socially normalized,” or “outmoded,” but killed, or perhaps worse, traumatized (7, 9, 12). Soldiers may be capable of higher levels of battlefield performance, but the costs to their mental wellbeing are just as severe, if delayed. The goal remains to force humans to see and do things far beyond the norm and to do so at high rates of success no matter the burden. Theatricality thus works to forestall the inevitable; because trauma—or at least stress and fear—is unavoidable, such training works to prevent it arising on the battlefield, exposing soldiers to the shock and awe early on and then prolonging its eventual upsurge indefinitely through these rehearsals. But
such training fails, insofar as it falls short of its promise of preventing trauma and producing perfect warriors, leaving training a debased and ineffectual mimicry of combat instead of any answer to it.

In the case of Lance Cpl. Klingler, what followed the originary traumatic training event was a delay, as over a full year passed before he reported his mental turmoil. While the defense attorneys for Stu Segall Productions attributed this interval to dishonesty, to Klingler falsifying his condition in the hopes of monetary gain, the preceding analysis reveals the temporal gap to be the period of latency. Only after Klingler has already left the military does he feel the psychological effects of the traumatic scene, when, surgeries over and no longer rehearsing, he awakens to the impact of what he experienced without any system of support. No longer the concern of the military, Klingler was left to face his trauma alone; despite his suffering wounds while in the service, the basic structure of both trauma and military life meant the symptoms would only manifest upon returning to civil society. Already at odds with civic norms, Klingler could not adjust; without any path forward, he turned to litigation to at least cover the costs of treatment. And even that, in the end, failed, leaving the former Lance Corporal to face down the traumatic impact of his martial experiences alone. Not the first and certainly not the last, Klingler is indicative of a very real problem facing both the infantry and US society. If the infantry is using a system of training that by its very structure positions its participants to (mis)experience combat before ever actually facing enemy fire, then the costs, to the soldiers and to civil society, are only going to rise exponentially.
Conclusion

Bearing Witness to an Unrecoverable Truth:
Veteran Theatre as Testimony

At the start of the Iraq War play *The Sand Storm: Stories From the Front* by actor cum playwright cum veteran Sean Huze, an as of yet unnamed Marine stands upstage, physically and psychically removed, with a bandage over his head as news from the war broadcast “softly at first and build to the point of being uncomfortably loud.” As “[v]arious news reports overlap with each other, the ethereal narrator addresses the audience directly, snapping his fingers to stop the noise” (1). Cutting to the heart of the play’s subject matter, the Marine states that while “[e]veryone that’s actually been over there” has “war stories,” “[t]here’s a code” about them which states that “[y]ou’re not supposed to share ‘em” (2). What follows the Marine’s opening monologue is a one-act play devoted to ten Marines doing quite the opposite, sharing their experiences, based on the author’s own memories of duty. But before any of that, the Marine adds three more lines that dramatically alter the import of what follows, remarkably encapsulating the process of becoming soldiers and the cost. Instead of sharing your war story, the Marine confesses, “[y]ou’re supposed to go through absolute Hell, become something so base you can’t hardly believe it’s still you, but whatever you do, if you make it home…keep it to yourself” (2, emphasis mine). Speaking to each specific member of the audience, the Marine demands that they “[b]ear witness if you will. Otherwise no truth will ever come out of it” (emphasis mine). The emphasis in these lines on becoming something other, bearing witness, and the power of the audience underscores the potential of theatre to offer a possible means to detangle the interconnections between infantry service, training,
and trauma. Indeed, in the end, it might be that a return to theatre, the very thing targeted as the locus of soldier trauma and their failure to perform within contemporary infantry training, is the best and brightest hope for veterans returning home and facing the magnitude of their actions and the repercussions of yet another failed attempt to perfect warfare.

Huze’s biography and the content of his plays offer strong support for the arguments within this work. But they also serve to situate within this study of the art of war as performance the theatrical institution itself by laying bare both the reasons for and problematics of the phenomenon of soldiers turning to the dramatic arts to search for, in the words of Huze’s Marine, those willing to “bear witness.” My conclusion thus marks both the completion of the thesis laid out within these pages and the end of military life. Soldiers, upon returning to civil society, must reconcile the fact that they are no longer who they were before they served, and that their martial tendencies simply do not match those of society’s norms, while also contending with the aftershocks of the manipulation of appearances that so dominates performative training. The Warrior Ethos ensures that soldiers and Marines live in an elite collective made up only of their fellow professionals, apart from and defined against civil society. This warrior caste upholds individual initiative on the battlefield, but at all other times enforces rigid conformism, ensuring through uniforms, standard haircuts, a singular focus on the importance of Christian spirituality, and other techniques already discussed, that the warrior class remains paramount. With so much time and effort devoted to initiating recruits into service and attempting to overcome their resistance to killing and the effects of terror and confusion in battle, it is shocking that a similar process does not take place when soldiers leave the
Once a civilian becomes a soldier, that soldier must then be made back into a civilian, or at least prepared to cope with the realities of civilian life. Military scholars such as Dave Grossman, Anthony Kellet, and Theodore Nadelson have argued that the importance of long return voyages back home, parades, ceremonies, and other homecoming celebrations and rituals cannot be underestimated for avoiding the effects of PTSD and incidents of non-civic adjustment, which speaks to the need for similarly theatrical techniques to engage the process of unmaking the soldier. And yet, the time between live combat and civilian life has dramatically shrunk as transportation has increased in speed; a soldier in Iraq can go from active duty to life at home within three days, with little to no time devoted to preparing the soldier for such a radical transition. Suddenly thrust back into civil society, veterans stand outside the hermetic and highly structured military heterotopia, and, no longer rehearsing, must confront the traumatic potential of having both survived and exited that heterotopia, without necessarily having realized it.

**Theatre and War**

Sean Huze’s pre-Iraq narrative follows the script of the all too well worn, “heard that already” line of post September 11th patriotism. On September 12th, the struggling 26-year-old Los Angeles-based actor yet successful daytime health care recruiter, went to the Hollywood recruiting station and joined the US Marine Corps. Just 14 months later, Huze was in active duty in Operation Iraqi Freedom, serving with the 2nd Light Armored Reconnaissance Battalion based out of Camp Lejeune, NC, as an element of the initial invasion from Kuwait. Serving as part of the mechanized infantry—infantry troops transported and accompanied by tracked armored personnel carriers capable of both
offering physical protection and directly engaging hostile forces with mounted weapons—Huze participated in the first major combat of the War, the (in)famous Battle of An Nasiriyah on 23 and 24 March 2003. A sandstorm allowed Iraqi forces to attack the battalion from all sides while pushing north; the Marines performed valiantly, holding their ground and staving off the attack while avoiding a single casualty despite heavy fire. Just two days later, a late night accident injured Huze when his transport rolled off the road in another sandstorm, injuries that would only be diagnosed as “internal nerve damage” and a “post-concussive condition” on his return from duty seven months later (Chaudhry).

It is here that Huze’s narrative veers off course, but it was not because of his physical injuries, but rather, “[w]hat he saw and did there” that “made him question the mission” (Shetterly). No longer a drama of inspired patriotism and selfless service, Huze came home changed from the “true believer” who enlisted (Chaudhry). Huze turned specifically to the theatre to “share his pain,” first informally as “his acting coach, Marlon Hoffman, encouraged Huze to write down his memories” (Nichols). Huze’s reflective journal evolved into monologues, which in turned evolved into his first play, Sandstorm: Stories from the Front, a “fact-based […] amalgam of his and his comrades’ experiences, accompanied by Huze’s digital photographs from the front” (Nichols). Huze took a leave of absence to perform and produce the play in Los Angeles, during which the Marine Corps threatened Huze with sanctions (although he was later granted an Honorable Discharge), and he came under fire from people who took issue with the content of his work. For Huze, it was all a part of giving voice to “what he saw and did” in Iraq, so the fact that “some people didn’t want to hear what he had to say when he came home” made
him “furious” (Shetterly).

That Huze, a former actor, returned to performing away from the front lines should not come as a surprise, but that acting and playwriting were the tools he employed as therapeutic and political tools is telling. And Huze did not stop with *Sandstorm*. Huze wrote his second play, *The Wolf*, over three days in a fit of sleepless inspiration he describes as “vomit[ing] the first draft out onto my computer” (Shetterly). The experience allowed him to “realize just how angry I was, how volatile I was” (Shetterly). Deciding that “wasn’t how I wanted to live” and fully believing from his own experiences that “[t]he value of live theatre is immeasurable,” Huze founded the foundation and theatrical company VetStage, which describes itself as presenting “one of the best opportunities for our nation’s veterans to define their experience and how it is perceived by the public” as well as providing “a positive, creative outlet for veterans to process their personal experience, enable them to make an artistic contribution to society and ease the transition back into civilian life” (Shetterly, VetStage.org). The company offers classes “focused on building self-confidence through playwriting, acting workshops and performance,” as well as performances dedicated to “new rendition[s] of classic war and homecoming plays, or new works developed by VetStage” (VetStage.org). In its brief existence, VetStage has met with success and challenges, having produced four shows, held numerous classes, hosted fundraisers, and been forced to leave its theatrical home because of financial shortcomings.

I delve into Huze’s history because the narrative of his path from civilian, to soldier, to actor/playwright mirrors the process of becoming soldier, offers a glimpse of its problems, and ultimately reveals a potential solution. Huze, swept up in the post-9/11
rhetoric, became subject to the force of his own “civilian” emotions. In his own words, he, “[I]ke probably most Americans, […] experienced the entire range of emotions: despair, fear, powerlessness, rage” and impulsively joined the service on the spot (Nichols). Faced with the overwhelming spectacle of September 11th, Huze responded cathartically, allowing his emotional reaction to override his ability to function and reason, and swinging wildly from paralyzed with the sheer weight of his passions to making an ultimately costly split-second decision with only a “friend's remark—‘I don't see you down at a recruiting office’”— as catalyst. From there, undergoing the full regiment of infantry training in San Diego, CA and Camp Lejeune, NC, Huze became a Marine. Trained into a fighting machine ready to kill, Huze distinguished himself in combat, earning “a Certificate of Commendation citing his ‘courage and self sacrifice throughout sustained combat operations’; the Combat Action Ribbon; Meritorious Promotion for Corporal; the Presidential Unit Citation, [and] the National Defense Service Medal,” among other awards for his combat actions” (Chaudhry). But, as Huze himself noted, the weight of what he saw and did while abroad failed to settle in, as “when you're in combat […] all you have time to think about is getting home and making sure that the man to your left, to your right, they get home too. You don't think about the dead child you see, or the dead man and wonder if he had children of his own” (Nichols).

Upon returning home, Huze found himself forever changed, feeling estranged from civil society and much more a Marine than anything else, suggesting that a return to active duty would be best; as expected, Huze felt the only place for him was within the martial heterotopia, having been broken down and rebuilt with morals and instincts opposed to the society to which he returned. To quote Joey Dallriva, the Marine Huze
himself played in *The Wolf*, in explaining his massacre of an Iraqi family, “[t]hey were sheep, [...] and I am a wolf and I did what wolves do and that’s what I told ‘em and that's why they keep me locked up. [...] You can't turn someone from a sheep into a wolf and then back again, so where does that leave me now?” (Huze qtd. in Glantz). Once soldiers have been trained to kill and to make life and death decisions aggressively and instantaneously, how feasible or safe is it to simply release these warriors into society and ask them to return to the rigmarole of civic life? Not only must they readjust their very basic wiring, but they must also face the implications of their service time actions under the lens of civilian norms. And so while home, Huze found himself confronting his experiences and thoughts; no longer cycling through endless rehearsals of potential combat, he struggled to reconcile his past with his present. As Huze puts it, upon returning home, “you don’t have anything to balance everything you’ve seen and been through. You're just stuck with it. And it hurts. You have to deal with what you’ve already been through—the death and destruction that's haunting you” (Nichols). With no system of support or means to reconstruct his own combat narrative, he found himself “daring somebody to be the one that I could just take everything and just focus it on them” (Shetterly). Huze’s path to, during, and after serving in the infantry and witnessing first hand the chaos and power of live combat is yet another tangible illustration of the theories behind current infantry training and its potential cost. But through the theatre, through performing again his past for a live audience, through seeking to “[b]ear witness” so that the “truth” could come out, Huze’s post-military narrative also offers hope.

Huze’s turn to the theatrical is echoed in other soldier’s paths, both those who have worked with VetStage and other returning soldiers or Marines who have turned to the
theatrical institution as a means of coping. The phenomenon is not new, with, for example, Aeschylus writing *The Persians* eight years after fighting at Salamis, British General John Byrgoyne satirizing his war experiences during the Revolution, and more recently David Rabe and John DiFusco writing their Vietnam plays upon their return. What is remarkable is the scope, breadth, and organization of the intertwining of veterans and theatre over the past five years. David Tucker and his *Another Day in Baghdad*, Jeff Key and *The Eyes of Babylon*, Michael Reyes’s *Over There/Over Here*, Jason Christopher Hartley’s *Surrender*, Barry Brodsky’s *The Boys of Winter*, and Joshua Casteel’s *Returns*, are all plays written by veterans in the past few years dealing specifically with their experiences. Additionally, there are the street performances by members of Iraq Veterans Against the War such as *Operation W.A.N.T. (We Are Not Toys)*, which involved placing 4,200 toy soldiers at a gas station in Los Angeles in front of a sign reading “The Price of Gas: 4171 US SOLDIERS” in the early morning. There are cases such as that of Melissa Steinman, who served as “military adviser to the dramaturg, design team, and cast of six actors” on the Oregon Shakespeare Festival production of *Welcome Home Jenny Sutter* by Julie Marie Myatt (Knickerbocker). Or the compilations of combat narratives found in works like *Black Watch*, by Gregory Burke, or the adaptation of Yvonne Latty’s *In Conflict* by Douglas C. Wager. Not to mention the numerous documentary films such as *The Ground Truth: After the Killing Ends*, and *The War Tapes*, both of which combine live footage shot often by soldiers themselves with direct testimonial from veterans about their experiences and their subsequent costs. All of these deal almost exclusively in their respective ways with recounting lived experiences, even to the point of appearing as barely staged dramatizations of journals, as if the
creators and collaborators shared the same need to speak, to show, to share war with an audience. Beyond theatre-as-therapy, it is the manifestation of a primal desire to stage that which is impossible to represent, to voice the silent scream of unnamable terror and unassimilated trauma, as if by offering up their personal narrative to a live audience, they can reconcile the seeming gap between their actions, sights, and sensations and their memories. After all, the power of theatre is its very liveness, the ephemerality that demands a new, distinctive performance each night and thereby offers a connection between actor and performance which is the very interaction at the heart of catharsis, explicitly rejected as dangerous by the military.

**Testimony**

Cathy Caruth’s mimetic theory of trauma holds that the flashbacks to the traumatic scene that characterize the experience of trauma are more than just representations of the originary event, but rather its literal return. Outside of and exceeding the system of representation, the victim can only perform over again as if it were happening anew. These performances, in turn, offer another direct, affective, and therefore traumatic scene to anyone witnessing it, just as the originary event did for the initial victim. Instead of words or actions referring to a past event or action, with the referentiality of language broken down, the performance of trauma transmits the trauma itself. Caruth implicitly supports the theories of Shoshanna Felman and Dori Laub in attesting to the power of witnessing within the experience of trauma and offering testimony as a means of working through its effects.

I delve into Felman and Laub’s theory of the performative power of testimony not just because it accords nicely with Caruth’s theory of trauma as “unclaimed experience,”
but to offer a possible rationale behind the drive to stage soldier narratives and its potential fallout. Felman and Laub, like Caruth, approach trauma from a mimetic standpoint, arguing that trauma is a memory “that has been overwhelmed by occurrences that have not settled into understanding or remembrance, acts that cannot be constructed as knowledge nor assimilated into full cognition, events in excess of our frames of reference” (5). As in Caruth’s theory, the mind (mis)experiences the traumatic scene, as “[m]assive trauma precludes its registration; the observing and recording mechanisms of the human mind are temporarily knocked out, malfunction” (57). While the traumatic experience “uncannily returns in actual life, its reality continues to elude the subject who lives in its grip and unwittingly undergoes its ceaseless repetitions and reenactments. The traumatic event, although real, took place outside the parameters of ‘normal’ reality, such as causality, sequence, place and time. The trauma is thus an event that has no beginning, no ending, no before, no during and no after” (69). Felman and Laub argue that trauma necessitates testimony, in that the victim-witness must speak his trauma, but can only do so in a fragmentary form “akin to a loss of language” (50). Referentiality again fails. Despite feeling “a deep need to talk,” language remains inadequate. In speaking, the subject “constantly bears witness to a truth that nonetheless continues to escape him, a truth that is, essentially, not available to its own speaker” (15). Precisely because trauma exceeds normal frameworks of sense making, “the trauma survivor who bears witness has no prior knowledge, no comprehension and no memory of what happened” (58).

Using the Holocaust as a case study, Felman and Laub posit trauma as that which cannot be heard or witnessed and argue that only through testimony can trauma be placed into narrative and therefore be transmitted and heard. As Laub writes:
The victim’s narrative—the very process of bearing witness to massive trauma—does indeed begin with someone who testifies to an absence, to an event that has not yet come into existence, in spite of the overwhelming and compelling nature of the reality of its occurrence. While historical evidence to the event which constitutes the trauma may be abundant and documents in vast supply the trauma—as a known event and not simply as an overwhelming shock—has not been truly witnessed yet, not been taken cognizance of. The emergence of the narrative which is being listened to—and heard—is, therefore, the process and the place wherein the cognizance, the ‘knowing’ of the event is given birth to. (57)

The narrative of the victim-witness, upon hearing, marks the occurrence of the traumatic event. The very act of testimony is what can bring the traumatic scene into meaning, can turn incomprehensible and fragmented utterances into contextualized and meaningful memory. Despite (mis)experiencing the originary event and therefore lacking any knowledge of it, “one does not have to possess or own the truth, in order to effectively bear witness to it” (15). Victims of trauma cannot assimilate the originary event into the normal memory system, having seen the event but nothing more, but, in the presence of another who serves as witness, can “undo this entrapment in a fate that cannot be known, cannot be told, but can only be repeated” (69). Bearing witness to trauma is thus a necessary and potentially positive process, one where “[t]he testimony to the trauma thus includes its hearer, who is, so to speak, the blank screen on which the event comes to be inscribed for the first time” (57). The presence of a listener, the person who is “party to the creation of knowledge de novo,” enables the witness to recount his traumatic story, allowing the victim “to tell the story and be heard, to in fact address the significance of their biography—to address, that is, that suffering, the truth, and the necessity of this impossible narration—to a hearing ‘you,’ And to a listening community” (57, 41). Testimony turns the inside back outside, bringing the event into memory and narration and in so doing reasserting fundamental subjectivity and therefore control over “the evil
that affected and contaminated the trauma victim”; in effect, by “constructing a narrative, [...] reconstructing a history and essentially, [...] re-externalizing the event,” testimony shifts the trauma—albeit belatedly—to an antimimetic, and therefore manageable, experience (69).

There is thus great potential within theatre as a means of testimony, a hope that through embodied practice and storytelling a space can open up between performer and spectator wherein, as the Marine in Sandstorm orders, the audience can “bear witness” to the truth of the testimony. More than simply a journal or memoir, plays like Sandstorm ask the audience to play an active, engaged role in the process. In a series of quasi-monologues, Sandstorm recounts the unit’s Iraq narrative, which in turn dramatizes Huze’s own attempts at testifying. Huze, feeling “empty, with nothing but a lot of pain,” uses the stage to “share” his drama (Nichols). Writing and performing the play, “putting these feelings on to characters,” was “a safe way [...] to start the road home” from having gone “numb” from realizing how estranged from civil society he had become. In his own words, “[e]verything that makes you a functional and healthy individual amongst society are all detriments in a combat zone, and it takes a while to decompress from that. [...] It’s difficult as a husband and as a father to reconcile who I was over there with some of the things that I saw. I mean, a dead child on the side of the road in Nasiriyah, about the same age as my son right now. And how unfeeling I was at the time about it, with who I am now, how I feel about it now” (McNally). The play testifies, in fragmented and pained memories filled with gaps in remembering, to Huze’s own inability to reconcile his wartime experiences and the failure of training to relieve him of the burden of combat. The main character—at the end revealed to be Sergeant Casavecchia, the idealized and
loved unit leader—ends the play with a long monologue describing a security mission to protect a village. The experiences described, initially peaceful with children playing soccer and interacting with the Marines, villagers sharing tea and food, and a girl kissing a picture of his baby son, turns violent and tragic at the end, as Casavecchia dies in a sudden attack. The story described is Huze’s, who in interviews has spoken of the moment that ends the monologue immediately before the attack where he “passed the little girl who had kissed my son's picture. She smiled at me and gave me a peace sign, which I returned” (Huze 32). Huze’s choice to, in effect, kill himself in the play (Casavecchia is also the role Huze himself acted, making the death a doubled one) is more than a dramatic turn, reflective of his estrangement, pain and inability to cope. Through Casavecchia-cum-Huze’s death, the play asks the audience to bear witness to Huze’s trauma, to bring the fragments together into a comprehensible and understood narration. But in so doing it also carries a burden for the witness; necessarily a dialogue, testimony implicates and forces the listener also to experience the traumatic event.

As Laub and Felman maintain, the process of listening is itself mimetic, as “[f]or the testimonial process to take place, there needs to be a bonding, the intimate and total presence of an other—in the position of one who hears” (70). Because bearing witness is both a painful and difficult process that the mind inherently resists and fears, “there is a need for a tremendous libidinal investment in those interview situations: there is so much destruction recounted, so much death, so much loss, so much hopelessness, that there has to be an abundance of holding and of emotional investment in the encounter, to keep alive the witnessing narration” (71). Because the performance is more than a mere representation, the immersed listener “comes to be a participant and a co-owner of the
traumatic event: through his very listening, he comes to partially experience trauma in himself” (57). There is very real danger then, that the listener too will “experience a range of defensive feelings” akin to those felt by the victim, including “a sense of total paralysis,” “a sense of outrage and of anger, unwittingly directed at the victim,” “a sense of total withdrawal and numbness, “foreclosure through facts, through an obsession with factfinding,” and, most tellingly, “a flood of awe and fear,” (72-73). Just as the victim before him, the listener can easily succumb to the power of catharsis in the moment, exploding any hope of therapy and leaving the testifier and the testimony “simply flooded, drowned and lost in the listener’s defensive affectivity” (73). In a moment of theatricality, then, the listener must maintain a duality, at once being “a witness to the trauma witness and a witness to himself” (58). Paradoxically, only by simultaneously sympathetically connecting with the trauma-performer and standing aside to monitor and guide the emotional flow—“through his simultaneous awareness of the continuous flow of those inner hazards both in the trauma witness and in himself”—can the listener escape his own traumatization (58). In so doing, “he can become the enabler of the testimony—the one who triggers its initiation, as well as the guardian of its process and of its momentum” (58).

The audience watching Sandstorm or another play dramatizing veteran’s journals, faces a catch-22: on the one hand, the play, as an attempt to overcome trauma, asks them to watch emotionally and cathect, their understanding and sympathetic stance bearing witness to the narrative contained within the play; at the same time, the risk of mimesis is that the audience, too absorbed, lacks any critical distance to provide the necessary feedback and response that in turn marks the play as testimony. If the audience cannot
invest in the play, they cannot “keep alive the witnessing narration” necessary to testimony’s effectiveness. If Huze had used the play to, in fact, “expose himself through these stories,” then an unresponsive audience would only compound the trauma (Nichols). At the same time, an audience too invested, too caught up in the emotional power of the traumatic scene offered up, would lack the awareness of self to prevent their own cathartic response. While not traumatic to the degree suffered by the original witness, such a process could cause the spectator to shut down, to reject the testimony as a means of self-defense. Indeed, the listener is of utmost importance, for if “one talks about the trauma without being truly heard or truly listened to, the telling might itself be lived as a return of the trauma—a re-experiencing of the event itself” (67). The burden for the audience becomes more than simply determining the success or failure of the play, but controlling the triumph of the testimony itself. But the risk for the witnesses is the obliteration of their subjectivity, as “[t]he absence of an emphatic listener, or more radically, the absence of an addressable other, an other who can hear the anguish of one’s memories and thus affirm and recognize their realness, annihilates the story. And it is, precisely, this ultimate annihilation of a narrative that, fundamentally, cannot be heard and of a story that cannot be witnessed, which constitutes the moral eighty-first blow” (68). Catharsis, returned to its Aristotelian vaulted status, indeed offers the promise of a cleansing purgation, but always threatens to collapse into newfound traumatic repetitions.

The promise of theatre as testimony seems to be balanced by its risks. *Sandstorm*, at least judging by the positive critical reception and Huze’s own comments on its therapeutic effect, perhaps then offers a model in several key elements. Huze wrote the play when he was already out of the military with the specific goal of voicing his pain,
and he did so through *diegesis*. The play forsakes mimesis for secondhand narration, with each character describing the action from his memory, complimented by the narrator’s interjections. Although the production used photographs taken in Iraq and the sounds of gunshots and explosions, its basic structure was that of storytelling. The effect of this is to prevent wholehearted absorption and allow for, however minimally, a certain level of critical response by keeping the audience at a distance; with only their imagination to recreate the memories instead of false recreations, spectators cannot become too passive. Additionally, Huze performed in the play, offering himself to the empathy of the crowd. The testimony is thus direct and repeated, as each night Huze had to repeat the ritual of reconstructing his narrative and offering it for the audience’s consumption, to digest and in so doing, to own some part of the trauma. These aspects of *Sandstorm* seem key to any hope of finding the power within theatre’s liveness and ephemerality to bear witness to trauma. But they also underscore another troubling danger. For in “exposing himself” night after night, Huze ran the risk, if the audience rejected the play, of continuing the process of perpetual rehearsal on his own accord.

Asking a theatrical performance to serve as a means of therapeutic testimony by virtue of the audience’s connection to the material staged is a lofty demand, one whose relative consequences would be difficult to pin down. For Huze, was it simply the act of putting pen to paper and attempting to narrate his war memories—giving voice to that with which he had previously struggled verbally—that provided the positive effect rather than the actual theatrical event? How do you quantify audience absorption and investment? Despite theatre’s potential for powerful affective embodied performance capable of positive catharsis, leaving something with such risk to the whims of the public
seems problematic at best. Indeed, the process of scripting Huze’s wartime memories, assembling them into dramatic form, rehearsing them over and over again while revising and perfecting everything contained within, and finally performing the assembled material for a receptive audience, only, upon closing, to begin the process anew for a performance in a different venue, threatens to collapse into another circular entrapment. Theatre as testimony can just as easily become perpetual rehearsal, ensnaring the already traumatized veteran into another endless series of forestallment. Without an addressable other, testimony loses its effectiveness and becomes traumatic re-experiencings, exposing the witness to the originary event all over again. Rather than moving forward, the veteran turned playwright/actor would remain trapped in the past, or rather, stuck attempting to recover a forgotten and irretrievable past never spent in the present. And so the turn to the theatrical would be in itself traumatic and counterproductive, returning the veteran to a lived experience akin to military service but without its system of support, another failed attempt to represent and thereby prevent trauma. Veterans, no longer in the martial heterotopia but prevented from moving forward into civil society, would thus be stuck, continuously rehearsing not for a never-arriving future, but for a long-forgotten past.

Conclusion

The implications of a military that knowingly transforms citizens into elite professional warriors whose very existence is constantly defined against their former selves, that willingly traumatizes its warriors in the interests of battlefield performance, and that subsequently asks them to return abruptly to civil society once their use value has been sapped is frightening indeed. In seeking to craft the perfect fighting machine, the US infantry has created a system of training that by its very structure increases the
chances of traumatization. The Army and Marine Corps have mortgaged the future not only of the soldiers, but of society at large by shaping the structure of training to match that of trauma in the doomed hope of producing effective, efficient, and reliable soldiers resistant to the spectacle of combat. The military has, in effect, eliminated the citizen-soldier and attempted to replace him with a flesh and blood version of James Cameron’s *Terminator*, a highly effective killing machine who, by its very nature, cannot easily exist within US society. Once the bedrock of American democracy and citizenship, the civilian-soldier militia has no place in today’s infantry. Rather than a force of freely consenting civilians serving only when summoned and subsequently returning to their primary role as citizens, the infantry is now entirely an elite class of professional warriors who can only exist in the hazy borders of real and virtual combat.

Perhaps the greatest indication of this shift away from the citizen-soldier is the role of the National Guard in the two current wars. Indeed, the National Guard is the modern incarnation of the colonial militia, a joint State and Federal force that in its own words, “continues its historic dual mission, providing to the states units trained and equipped to protect life and property, while providing to the nation units trained, equipped and ready to defend the United States and its interests, all over the globe” (ngb.army.mil). The embodiment of the citizen soldier ideal, National Guard troops train on select weekends as well as an additional two weeks throughout the year (their motto being: “one weekend a month, two weeks a year”), the rest of the time living as “regular” citizens—prior to 11th September 2001, the deployment period for the National Guard was limited to no more than one year. Existing outside of the hermetic military heterotopia, National Guardsmen have a separate life to which they return after their
respective tours of duty. But in the Iraq and Afghanistan Wars, the National Guard has become the regulars, with nearly a quarter of the total force deployed at any moment and the service time increased to eighteen and then twenty-four months. With extended tours of duty and undergoing the same predeployment training as the regulars, National Guardsmen face a far greater difficulty maintaining the first half of the citizen-soldier moniker. And perhaps these troops, who despite their repeatedly extended tours are arriving home sooner and more often than the regulars, offer a sign of things to come. Literally half of National Guardsmen returning to society after service time are citing “psychological concerns such as traumatic brain injury and post-traumatic stress disorder after returning from deployment,” according to a report by the Defense Department’s Task Force on Mental Health (MSNBC). Rather than creating any mechanized invulnerable force, performative training has done the opposite, leaving society with a burden it cannot hope to manage.

With the promised eventual return of all troops from Iraq, the prospects are daunting at best for a society already struggling to help returning veterans. Perhaps, then, it would be best, as the military seems to wish, if these soldiers did in fact live permanently separate as their own distinct society, wholly separate and cut off from the rest of the country. Or perhaps theatre really does offer a hope as a tool to help suffering veterans. If the military is so able to bend theatre and performance to its own devices to craft its warriors and manipulate their existential reality, then why should it not be put to similar but opposite means? There is a very real need for the institutionalization of rituals devoted specifically to training soldiers to be civilians again. Theatre can be put to use both on the stage in the form of testimony, and offstage, in the form of parades,
celebrations, speeches, group sessions, and other homecoming rites, along with actual performative training with the opposite goal. Tapping into theatre’s positive potential, if soldiers can be made theatrically, should they not also be unmade theatrically?
Notes

1 The Army developed “America’s Army,” as a public relations initiative. Since “debuting on July 4, 2002, America's Army has more than 8.5 million user accounts and has been one of the top ten action games played online since its launch” (Dunham). Although the Army claims that the game is not for recruitment but merely to “provide civilians with insights on Soldiering [sic] from the barracks to the battlefields,” the game specifically targets men coming into recruiting age, has links to the Army recruitment webpage, and is set up to mimic life in the army, with everything from weapons to academic study to boot camp (americasarmy.com, White).

2 See the Introduction, Chapter Three, and Chapter Four.

3 The notion of catharsis is certainly contentious, divided along two main arguments: that catharsis serves as a healing process based in the release of built up, harmful emotions; and the one which I follow, that catharsis is an educative experience tied to the mimetic representation of powerful events which allow the viewer to experience pity and terror safely in the theatre as opposed to in “real” life. For extended discussion, see: Richard Janko’s introduction to Aristotle: Poetics, (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1987), Halliwell’s book length 1986 study Aristotle’s Poetics (London: Duckworth, 1986) as well as his introduction to his 1987 translation, The Poetics of Aristotle: Translation and Commentary. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1987), and Anthony Kubiak’s Stages of Terror: Terrorism, Ideology, and Coercion as Theatre History (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991).
See Grossman’s *On Killing* and the introduction to *Men Against Fire* for a detailed discussion of and refutation of arguments against Marshall’s ratio of fire. What matters is not the exact veracity of his figures, but the simple fact that soldiers in battle are loath to kill one another, and, as has been shown and will be further proved, that military theory has increasingly incorporated techniques to combat this horror. What interests me here is not exactly how many soldiers actually fired their weapons, but how Marshall, in basing his theory of the art of war off such figures, furthers the Clausewitzean line of military theory.


6 For other theorizations of theatricality, see the 2002 volume 32, joint issues 2 and 3 of SubStance Journal, particularly the contributions by Josette Feral, Joachim Fiebach, Silvija Jestrovic, and Jean-Pierre Sarrazac, all of which focus specifically on defining the term. Also, see Samuel Weber’s Theatricality as Medium, (New York: Fordham University Press, 2004).

7 See Grossman 35.

8 Much of this dissertation owes a debt to the analysis of the writings and propaganda of 1920’s fascist soldiers serving in the Friekorps that affords insight into the modern soldier identity by Klaus Theweleit in Male Fantasies. Fascism, as differentiated from Nazism, is a “specific form of production of reality” located in the fear of the feminine and the fear of fragmentation. The fascist soldier can only seek constant pain to assure himself of his boundaries, manifested in drill, whippings, war and the uniform; these external maintenance mechanisms combine to create a “body-ego” which protects the body from the perception of an interior, soft, feminine, visceral mass which must always be destroyed. As this dissertation argues, much like the contemporary US infantry soldier
and Marine, it is this process of development and education aimed towards creating a warring machine-like body which creates the soldier, not the actual experience of war.

9 Also see Grossman 4-16.

10 For example, Theodore Nadelson, a clinical psychiatrist who worked with Vietnam veterans and studied the simultaneous revulsion and pull of killing and combat in Trained to Kill, notes that civilian society, for better or for worse and perhaps unsurprisingly, serves as a major source of the refusal to kill:

Training must remove conscripts from the framework of the inhibiting force that civilization has raised against killing. The restraint against mortal force remains deep and pervasive among most combatants at the moment before they kill, even the well trained. In many soldiers, that innate restraint exerts a stronger force than the fear of their own death. That restraint in our society embodies the central theme of civility. For many soldiers, breaking through that restraint to achieve the soldier’s purpose is not easy. (43)

For further discussion, see also Grossman’s On Killing (29-39). On a related note, SLA Marshall addresses the role of society in preventing men, specifically, from fighting well. He chooses to conclude his study on the performance of male soldiers in combat situations by arguing for a much further reach of military power. Training should start long before basic training as it is not for the military to be “the guardians of the national security” since “national strength lies only in the hearts and spirits of men.” He concludes that society must indoctrinate each generation to the qualities necessary to predispose recruits to killing, as “[t]he search [for good soldiers] begins at the cradle where the mother makes the decision, either to tie her child to her apron strings or to rear him as a man. It continues through the years of schooling when children are taught either to place personal interests uppermost or to think in terms of their responsibility towards their
society, their country, and all of mankind” (211). Leaving aside the obvious problematics surrounding the author’s gender exclusion and bias, Marshall makes the claim that society should not foster ideals that cause recruits to resist the act of killing, but should instead do quite the opposite, to begin the work that military training would finish. In such a line of thinking, perhaps not far from the military’s own, recruits should enter basic training already in control of their passions, devoid of the civilian tendencies that cause them to fail at their soldierly duties in actual combat and therefore impervious to catharsis.

11 See Chapter Three for an extended discussion of the military heterotopia.

12 While at first glance it would seem that Scarry’s discussion of pain in war is a more fitting avenue of argumentation, a closer examination of the differences between war and torture solidifies the categorization of training-as-torture. As Scarry writes, “[w]ar more often arises where the enemy is external, occupies a separate space, where the impulse to obliterate a rival population and its civilization is not (or need not at first be perceived as) a self-destruction.” On the other hand, “[t]orture usually occurs where the enemy is internal and where the destruction of a race and its civilization would be a self-destruction, an obliteration of one’s own country. Hence there must be more drama in torture, the destruction must be acted out symbolically” (61). In basic training, the enemy is within the individual, the singular being who cannot actually die in order to succeed. Torture, while with a very real physical toll and often overwhelming, is largely symbolic in the sense of only miming death; the scale is entirely on the personal level, designed to make the recruit the living, breathing testament to the power of the US and its infantry.
While torture and war may be “parallel act[s] of destruction,” with torture “imitat[ing] the destructive power of war,” the scale, relations, and target are vastly different (61).

Training-as-torture serves the cause of war, with the explicit goal of perfecting it.

13 See Stanislavski, Creating a Role, Chapter Two for an extended discussion.

14 The original creed reads as follows:

I am an American soldier. I am a man of the United States Army—a protector of the greatest nation on earth. Because I am proud of the uniform I wear. I will always act in ways creditable to the military service and the nation it is sworn to guard. I am proud of my own organization. I will do all I can to make it the finest unit of the Army. I will be loyal to those under whom I serve. I will do my full part to carry out orders and instructions given me or my unit. As a soldier, I realize that I am a member of a time-honored profession—that I am doing my share to keep alive the principles of freedom for which my country stands. No matter what situation I am in, I will never do anything, for pleasure, profit, or personal safety, which will disgrace my uniform, my unit, or my country. I will use every means I have, even beyond the line of duty, to restrain my Army comrades from actions disgraceful to themselves and the uniform. I am proud of my country and its flag. I will try to make the people of this nation proud of the service I represent, for I am an American soldier.

The new creed, in its entirety with the Warrior Ethos in bold, is:

I am an American Soldier. I am a Warrior and a member of a team. I serve the people of the United States and live the Army Values. I will always place the mission first. I will never accept defeat. I will never quit. I will never leave a fallen comrade. I am disciplined, physically and mentally tough, trained and proficient in my warrior tasks and drills. I always maintain my arms, my equipment and myself. I am an expert and I am a professional. I stand ready to deploy, engage, and destroy the enemies of the United States of America in close combat. I am a guardian of freedom and the American way of life. I am an American Soldier.

15 See Clausewitz, 120-22, 148-149, among others.

16 The creed in its entirety:

This is my rifle. There are many like it, but this one is mine. It is my life. I must master it as I must master my life. Without me my rifle is useless. Without my rifle, I am useless. I must fire my rifle true. I must shoot straighter than the enemy
who is trying to kill me. I must shoot him before he shoots me. I will. My rifle and I know that what counts in war is not the rounds we fire, the noise of our burst, or the smoke we make. We know that it is the hits that count. We will hit. My rifle is human, even as I am human, because it is my life. Thus, I will learn it as a brother. I will learn its weaknesses, its strengths, its parts, its accessories, its sights and its barrel. I will keep my rifle clean and ready, even as I am clean and ready. We will become part of each other. Before God I swear this creed. My rifle and I are the defenders of my country. We are the masters of our enemy. We are the saviors of my life.

17 See http://www.goarmy.com/life/advanced_individual_training.jsp for a full listing of Army AIT schools and locations.

18 “In theater” operations are those conducted in live combat situations. Just as a “theater of operations” represents a separate geographical area of combat coined by Clausewitz in *On War* as denoting “a sector of the total war area which has protected boundaries and so a certain degree of independence,” being “in theater” refers to time spent not only in the general area of war, but on the front lines in situations where combat is likely (280).

19 Scott Magelssen provides an invaluable insight into the lives of these professional actors based on his interviews and experiences visiting Ft. Irwin, the main location of theater immersion training, in his “Rehearsing the ‘Warrior Ethos: ‘Theatre Immersion’ and the Simulation of Theatres of War.” I am deeply in debt to Magelssen, whose piece has proved immensely helpful in providing both detailed and otherwise unavailable information about the intricacies of the training process as well as in offering a point of departure for the theoretical argument of this piece. His willingness to exchange ideas is greatly appreciated.

20 Magelssen describes the role of free play for both the role players and the trainees in much greater detail. In terms of the Injects, he writes that “[e]vents, called ‘injects’ are
strung together in narratives called threads. Perhaps a sniper is supposed to attack on Tuesday morning. That attack, though, might come anytime between 8am and noon. Perhaps the Shias will conduct a rally decrying a recent Sunni bombing of one of their mosques. The lizards identify the desired injects, but not the precise times, and not necessarily in a particular order” (11). Thus, “[t]he free play, then, is driven by the behavior of the Americans. They are rewarded for good behavior and punished for bad. And the events won’t occur if they’re ‘interdicted’ by the Americans. If a sniper is identified and killed or detained before acting, that inject will not be part of the day’s scenario” (12). The Army leaves the most leeway for the trainees themselves, as their unpredictable responses and actions are essential to the teaching environment—it is as important to focus on what was incorrect and why as what each soldier did successfully. For example, “if a soldier disregards the very particular cultural mores about the treatment of the female body and searches a wife or daughter of an Iraqi man, (rather than having the husband search her, or having her conduct a self-search), that man might need to ‘strap on a bomb on and go blow up some Americans’ to vindicate her honor” (12).

So when the military rehearses for war, it is precisely to craft restored behaviors, to make all actions on the battlefield “material,” as accessible for use as the gun and readily called up and enacted at a moment’s notice without conscious thought.

Diegesis is the other side of mimesis, not first person accounts but third person narration; as opposed to mimesis’ showing, diegesis describes. Martin Puchner, in Stage Fright: Modernism, Anti-Theatricality and Drama, situates diegesis within the Platonic antitheatrical attack on mimesis. Plato cited the moment when the Homeric poet switches
from the third person, narrating “the action occurring in the past, the present, or the future” to the first, no longer reporting “a character’s speech but ‘liken[ing]’ his voice and gesture to those of the character; the rhapsode no longer is a narrator but is on his way to becoming an actor. At this moment rhapsodic diegesis turns into the mimesis performed by an actor” (22). This “direct presentation of […] objects, persons, speeches, spaces, and events on a stage” that characterizes mimesis subjects the audience to dangerous artifice and emotions, so Plato called for the “indirect, descriptive or narrative representation of objects, persons, spaces, and events through language” of diegesis to interrupt any possibility of mimesis and catharsis (24). See Puchner for an extended discussion of the history of the diegetic theatre as an antitheatrical technique, “marked by the […] distrust of the stage” and invoking “techniques of dissociating gestures from their actors, of isolating stage prop and spaces—in short, of utterly fragmenting the theatre by means of diegetic language” (120).

23 See Leys Chapters Two and Three for a more detailed discussion.

24 Short-term syndrome is “defined as a drop in morale, rise in anxiety, and a withdrawal from commitment to combat, among other patterns of behavior” characteristic of short tours of duty (Marlowe).

25 See Nadelson, Kellet, and Grossman for detailed discussion of the correlation between short homecoming experiences and trauma. While the voyage home for soldiers in WWII often involved long boat trips with fellow soldiers and parades other similar extravagant and lasting celebrations, soldiers in Vietnam, because of the introduction of tours of duty
and faster methods of transportation, often arrived home in under four days, alone, unannounced, and to a less than sympathetic public.

26 The 2004 DSM IV revised criteria for PTSD lists the classic types of traumatic events that can cause PTSD, divided by: direct experience (“military combat, violent personal assault (sexual assault, physical attack, robbery, mugging), being kidnapped, being taken hostage, terrorist attack, torture, incarceration as a prisoner of war or in a concentration camp, natural or manmade disasters, severe automobile accidents, or being diagnosed with a life-threatening illness”); witnessed events (“observing the serious injury or unnatural death of another person due to violent assault, accident, war, or disaster or unexpectedly witnessing a dead body or body parts”); “[e]vents experienced by others that are learned about” (“violent personal assault, serious accident, or serious injury experienced by a family member or a close friend; learning about the sudden, unexpected death of a family member or a close friend; or learning that one's child has a life-threatening disease”) (DSM IV, qtd. mental-health-today.com).

27 According to the 2004 DSM IV revised criteria for PTSD, “[t]he essential feature of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder” is:

The development of characteristic symptoms following exposure to an extreme traumatic stressor involving direct personal experience of an event that involves actual or threatened death or serious injury, or other threat to one's physical integrity; or witnessing an event that involves death, injury, or a threat to the physical integrity of another person; or learning about unexpected or violent death, serious harm, or threat of death or injury experienced by a family member or other close associate (Criterion A1). The person's response to the event must involve intense fear, helplessness, or horror (or in children, the response must involve disorganized or agitated behavior) (Criterion A2). The characteristic symptoms resulting from the exposure to the extreme trauma include persistent reexperiencing of the traumatic event (Criterion B), persistent avoidance of
stimuli associated with the trauma and numbing of general responsiveness (Criterion C), and persistent symptoms of increased arousal (Criterion D). The full symptom picture must be present for more than 1 month (Criterion E), and the disturbance must cause clinically significant distress or impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning (Criterion F). (DSM IV, qtd. mental-health-today.com)

Klinger has since sued Stu Segall Productions, the company that ran the training as well as operating the Marine Corps’ Project Viper discussed in the previous chapter, and was awarded nearly $100,000, far less than the one million dollars asked for by his lawyers. However, he only received a fraction of even that amount. The jury concluded that “the Marine Corps was 75 percent responsible for the September 2004 shooting of Jesse Klingler […] and that Stu Segall Productions, […] and Rocky Mohsen […] were 25 percent responsible. The latter three defendants were ordered to pay Klingler $55,750 based on a complex formula devised by the jury that took his lost income and pain and suffering into consideration” (Baker 2007). Because the Marines were not named in the suit, the remaining amount awarded will not be paid, and Klinger will also have to pay the defendant’s legal costs, leaving him with little of his payout.

See Chaudhry and McNally.
Works Cited


---. *The Wolf.* (Unpublished play).


