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Regiments of the Theatre: Reenactment in Theatre and Military Culture[1]

La reconstitution militaire, discipline en émergence, révèle un champ d'exercice dans lequel le monde du théâtre et la culture militaire convergent. C'est à la fois la militarisation du théâtre et la théâtralisation de l'armée, un théâtre sans salle et une armée sans pouvoir. La reconstitution militaire souligne une grande affinité entre les mécanismes de démarcation des frontières à l'œuvre dans le monde de l'armée et du théâtre. Ceci suggère que la reconstitution n'est pas qu'une convergence moderne de l'armée et du théâtre, et que ces deux mondes ont des affinités historiques plus profondes, puisant leur origine dans l'organisation sociale et l'affichage masculiniste (et souvent exclusivement masculine). En examinant la pratique contemporaine de la reconstitution, nous constatons que le théâtre et l'armée relèvent d'un seul et même monde et qu'il sont tous deux chargés de constituer la nation et de l'ériger en monument. Le théâtre est une armée qui ne tue pas, et l'armée est un théâtre où l'on tue.

> One would be concerned with the 'body politic', as a set of material elements and techniques that serve as weapons, relays, communication routes and supports for the power and knowledge relations that invest human bodies and subjugate them by turning them into objects of knowledge. (Foucault 28)

1. Warriors Day, August 21, 2004: Canadian National Exhibition

Every year, the Canadian National Exhibition (CNE) in Toronto sponsors a Warrior's Day, during which military veterans of Canadian and allied forces receive free admission to the grounds and assemble for a parade. The parade continues the CNE's long tradition of military commemoration, which began in the late nineteenth century with pyrotechnic pageants of imperial victories. After the Second World War, the pageants gave way to pop culture grandstand shows, but the annual parade of veterans continues the spectacle of martial pomp. In the 2004 parade the several dozen units that passed in review comprised in the main pipe bands and colour parties from Royal Canadian Legion

branches from across Southern Ontario and aged veterans of various units, accompanied in some cases by honour guards from the present complement of the regiments in which they served. The assembly of units provided a cultural map of contemporary Canadian society: along with veterans from various Canadian regiments and services, there were African, Polish, Chinese, Korean, and United States veterans—but not German, Italian, or

The 1st Canadian Parachute Battalion reenactment group, on parade at the Canadian National Exhibition, August 2004.
Photo: Alan Filewod

The same unit, set up for a public display at Fort Niagara, Ontario.
Photo: Alan Filewod

Japanese.

The 2004 parade was dedicated to a commemoration of the D-Day landings, and pride of place went to the surviving members of the 1st Canadian Parachute Battalion. Old men now, they marched proudly, retaining the formation of the young men who had dropped into Normandy on the eve of the invasion sixty years earlier. Before them marched a colour party from the Canadian army and behind them came the ghosts of their younger selves: two dozen younger men kitted in authentic 1944 battle gear. These were reenactors, members of the 1st Canadian Parachute Battalion Reenactment Group, following literally in the footsteps of the men whose uniforms they wore.

In this meeting of veterans and their performative doubles, military reenactment emerges as both performance and commemoration. While it is clearly theatrical, it is equally grounded in the structures and protocols of legitimation in military culture. In this moment, theatre and military cultures converge, and in that convergence opens the possibility that they are deeply, reciprocally, connected.

2. Parliament Hill, Ottawa, 2004.

Ottawa's most famous tourist attraction is the Changing of the Guard, performed daily through the summer months on Parliament Hill (although the Ceremonial Guard of the Canadian Armed Forces doesn't actually guard Parliament; that function is allocated to the paramilitary counter-terrorist units stationed discretely around the perimeter of the ceremony). The Ceremonial Guard is a performance of an invented tradition that builds on a structure of contradictions: army that isn't army, guards who don't guard, soldiers who aren't soldiers, a history that never was. As a relatively simple ceremony devised to attract tourists to Ottawa in the summer, the Changing of the Guard encodes a convoluted history in which the army and its regimental traditions adapt to and inflect changing understandings of the Canadian nation.

Why do army reserve units recruited for the purpose parade daily on Parliament Hill? As a *Toronto Star* columnist commented in 1959, when the ceremony began at the request of the Ottawa Board of Trade, it was (and remains) "a wonderful Cecil B. De Mille box-office stunt, but little else" (Bird). And what exactly was being performed when the army produced a spectacle of imperial pomp at the historical point at which it was rapidly divesting the signifiers of British tradition?

The answer merits some detail because it reveals the complex

The Ceremonial Guard of the Canadian Armed Forces, Parliament Hill, summer 2004. Photo: Alan Filewod.

of political, ideological, and economic interests that produce spectacle in military culture. It begins with the Canadian army reforms of 1953. The Department of National Defence began to modernize its command structures to meet the requirements of the Cold War, which were quickly locating the Canadian military as an auxiliary to the United States defense complex. To the puzzlement of many, including serving military personnel and newspapers editorialists, when the overhaul of the army consolidated the existing regimental structure it added a new regiment that appeared to be a regression to an obsolete British traditionalism. When formed in 1953, the Regiment of Canadian Guards took ceremonial precedence over all other army units: it was devised as a public, performative enactment of the army as a national institution. The *Toronto Star*, in true Liberal fashion, denounced the move and deplored "the scuttling of a century and half of Canadian tradition for a mess of red coats, spit and polish" ("Canadian Tradition").

The establishment of the Guards can be seen as both a progressive and a preservationist move: progressive in that it sought to elevate a national regiment above the regional and provincial affinities of the existing infantry regiments, and preservationist in that it sought to retain a measure of imperial tradition in an army that was, in almost all other respects, happily Americanizing. On the one hand it was a step in modernizing the

army as a fighting force; on the other it satisfied the government's desire for signifiers of Canadian distinction in the era of continentalism. It is useful to note that the Canadian Guards were founded at almost exactly the same moment as the Stratford Festival, for many of the same reasons.

It was not until the summer of 1959 that the Canadian Guards began the Changing of the Guard ceremony at Parliament Hill on the basis of public interest evoked by their service as Household guard for the royal visit of that year. There is, of course, no historical reason why royal troops should be guarding the House of Commons, but there are strong commercial reasons. The actual ceremony was merely the occasion for colorful military display. But like the imperial pageants that were the great attractions for the CNE grandstand for decades, the performance of imperial tradition had a particular appeal to American tourists.

The Canadian Army continued to deploy regular force troops to this duty until the Regiment of Canadian Guards was disbanded in 1970 in a military shake-up that centralized command structures, unified the forces, added more francophone units, and systematically purged the forces of imperial signifiers (except on the local ceremonial levels, especially in the army reserve units, which adhered to the regimental traditions of the Militia). But the Changing of the Guard continued, with troops recruited for the purpose by the two remaining Guards units in the army reserve: the Governor General's Foot Guards, based in Ottawa, and the Canadian Grenadier Guards, based in Montreal. As the component units of what is now called the Ceremonial Guard, they still march on Parliament Hill, stand sentry duty at Rideau Hall and the Citadel in Québec, and attend the Governor General at ceremonial events throughout the year.

Throughout the 1980s and 90s, the two contributing regiments explicitly hired students for the ceremonial detachment, with minimal military training; today, the Department of National Defence emphasizes that all members of the guard receive full basic training and qualification as members of the reserve force. But no one pretends that the guard is a combat-ready formation, unlike the regiments that parade at Buckingham Palace.

3. Havana, December 2004

As the capital of an economically devastated revolutionary regime, Cuba's historical presence is anomalous in the modern world. One of the oldest cities in the Americas, Havana is dense with architectural riches and unspoiled by commercialism. It is also famously

In Havana, the officer commanding the evening canon ceremony mingles with the public after the event. Photo: Alan Filewod

shabby and desperately poor. Along dark cobbled streets, gracious old buildings covered in peeling paint serve as tenement housing.

Everywhere in Cuba there can be seen bold gestures to history in monuments, street names, murals, and slogans. For the most part the history is the perpetual memory of the revolution, conveyed in the ubiquitous personality cult of Che Guevara (who perhaps enters history as a surrogate of the much less visible Fidel Castro). But Havana's most enduring and colourful historical performance is the evening canon-firing at the fort of San Carlos de La Cabaña. As crowds gather, soldiers in eighteenth century uniforms march with lit torches through the streets of the fort to the ramparts, where they fire an antique canon to signal the end of the day. It is a tradition that has continued unbroken since the colonial era.

Like the Soviet Army detachment that paraded down the Champs Elysée in revolutionary Red Army uniforms during the bicentennial of the French Revolution in 1991, and like the United States Army's 3rd Infantry Regiment, "The Old Guard," a ceremonial unit based in Washington that parades in uniforms drawn from all periods of American history, the Havana artillerymen exhibit the importance of reenactment in professional military cultures. Most—perhaps all in some fashion—professionalized military cultures maintain units that embody and perpetuate commemorative tradition. Guards in historical commemorative units parade before royal and presidential palaces around the world, signifying the legitimation of historical tradition. In

Poland, troops wearing the four-pointed czapska, banned under the Communist regime, embody a history of Polish independence; in Rome, the Swiss Guards in their renaissance uniforms embody a memory of pontifical political power.[2] In most cases these ceremonial units are professional elites that embody military power, as were the Canadian Guards from 1953-1970. (In Canada, the Ceremonial Guard today is just the opposite: model citizens in uniform, enacting not the power of the army, but a quotation of the army.)

These reenactment traditions in the military do more than maintain cultural continuity and invest personnel in the military as a shared community. They have a deeper function, which again points to a complicit relationship to the theatre: they establish a boundary between legitimate and non-legitimate militaries, between the professional estate of the national army and the unprofessional guerilla. Reenacted tradition is in this sense the enactment of professional legitimacy. The distinction can be critical, a matter of life and death, because in the modern world most wars are fought not by national armies but by armed populations, variously known as guerillas, insurgents, militias, or, more recently, in a naming that has been used by the United States to imprison captives without recourse to the protection of the Geneva Convention, "enemy combatants."

4. The rhizome of reenactment

In these three model moments of ceremonial reenactment by amateur hobbyists, army reservists, and professionalized soldiers, military reenactment can be seen as a rhizomorphic field in which theatre and army are the same thing.[3] Reenactment is neither and both: militarized theatre, theatricalized army, a theatre without playhouses and an army without power. It is also extraordinarily pervasive and popular, and is clearly emergent as a cultural estate in its own right. At one point in its rhizomatic growth it sits within the theatre, as demonstrated by the immense Bolshevik revolutionary spectacles, staged spectacles like the Canadian "Meet the Navy" and the Edinburgh Tattoo, and indeed by medieval dinner theatres and the jousting tournaments of "renaissance fairs." At another point it sits within the army, in the pomp and circumstance of ceremonial military commemorations.

Despite the pervasiveness of historical reproduction in professional armies, the most familiar points of the rhizome of reenactment are the military reenactments staged by the civilian reenactor, the person next door who musters on weekends in an

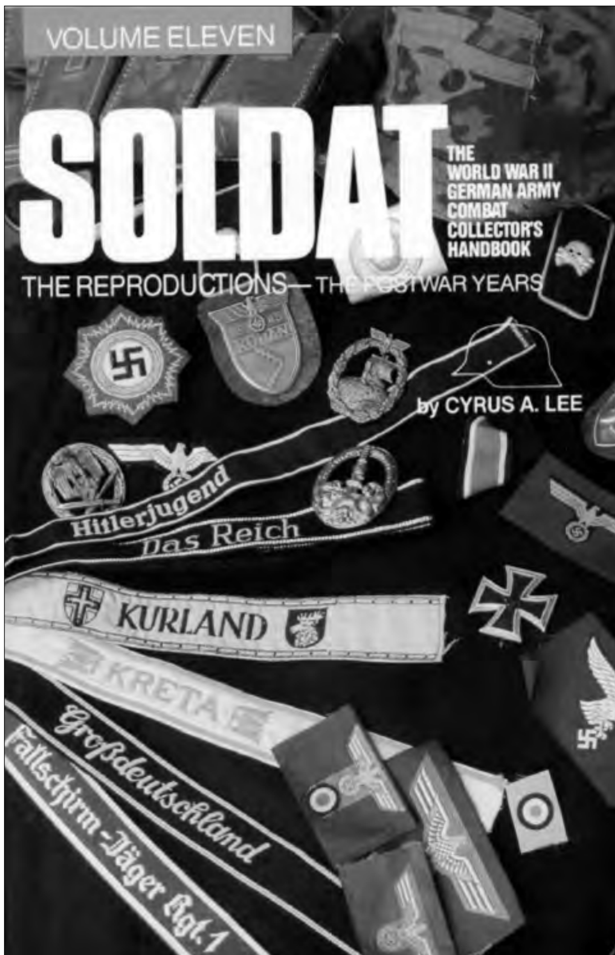
Reenactment as economy: Sutler's Row at a timeline event, Fort Niagara, summer 2004. Specialized trade and souvenirs, sold in a reenacted market. Photo: Alan Filewod

imagined but deeply researched past—or future, because it includes subjunctive future histories, such as the international web of *Star Trek* fan clubs, organized in military units and hierarchies. The most common image of reenactment is the Civil War movement, which has become a familiar trope in American pop culture and is the subject of Tony Horwitz's bestseller *Confederates in the Attic: Dispatches from the Unfinished Civil War*. Civil War reenactment began shortly after the war itself, when veterans restaged key battles, and has been an instrumental site for the renegotiation of American nationalism. The modern movement may have begun in 1961 with the centenary of the war, when some 4000 reenactors restaged the battle of Manassas (Dennison 3). Today hundreds of constituent groups comprise an economy of exchange that continually renegotiates the terms of historical commemoration and claims place in the narrative of the nation. There is, for example, a southern Ontario unit that claims to honour the estimated 50,000 Canadians who served in the Union forces and 10,000 in the Confederate army during the Civil War, a figure that, if true, suggests that more Canadians may have served in the American than in the British forces in the nineteenth century (2nd Michigan).

Most hobbyist reenactment reproduces periods that have passed from living, if not cultural, memory, and the further they travel in time, the more they enter the realm of fantasy. But as the

Canadian paratroopers demonstrate, reenactment of modern wars takes place under the eye of the survivors and intersects more clearly with the politics of memory in military culture. In recent years the Second World War has become one of the fastest-growing domains of reenactment. It began with collectors of militaria, especially vehicles and aircraft, and has now spawned a substantial economy of collector exchange and an industry of facsimile reproduction.

Pictorial Histories, a publishing house in Montana, has produced numerous volumes of illustrated texts that depict in detail the equip-



Reenactment as discourse: Pictorial Histories Publishing in Nebraska offers a substantial list of specialized guides for reenactors. Photo: Alan Filewod

ment, weapons, uniforms, and insignia for reenactors and modelers, including a volume on Canadian battle gear (Dorosh). Its series on the German forces, *Soldat*, runs to 11 volumes, of which the last focuses on post-war reproductions designed to alert hobbyists to a growing industry of counterfeits (Lee). The logistics of reenactment has become a professional estate on its own terms, with numerous suppliers who equip and train reenactors for film and television, drawing on

Reenactment as display: A reenactor demonstrates his gear at a Canada Day display in the gardens of John McCrae House, Guelph, Ontario, 2004. Photo: Alan Filewod

reenactment experts and veterans.[4]

The theatre of operations for Second World War reenactment is, like the war itself, vast and mobile, and its diversity is a useful example of the rhizomorphic nature of reenactment culture, regardless of period. There are a dozen parent organizations in the United States, with names like "World War Historical Preservation Group" and "20th Century Tactical Studies Group," each of which organizes numerous local units. Although the numbers are constantly in flux, my own count in the winter of 2003 identified in North America some 39 US Army and Marine Corps units, 15 Waffen SS, 13 German Army and 5 Luftwaffe, 10 Soviet Army, and 19 British, Canadian, and Polish units.

Of these, the SS units pose an ethical problem that is recognized in reenactment circles. One the one hand, battle reenact-

ments generate a need for an enemy: as one SS reenactment website states, "Simply put, you can't play 'Good Guys' and 'Bad Guys' with only the 'Good Guys' being represented" (9.SS). But beyond that there is obviously a level of political nastiness. SS reenactment units typically post a disclaimer that they refuse admission to extremists, but extremism is nothing if not a relative concept: at the same time they all invoke a romanticised image of the SS as an elite formation that models military valour, honour, and camaraderie. This begins to make sense when we note that American reenactment culture is closely linked to the National Rifle Association.

Because of the vast diversity of reenactment practices, which cross cultural locations, it may be futile to generalize about the ideological and political meaning of reenactment culture, beyond noting their entrenched masculinism. While reenactment cultures offer opportunities for "civilian" reenactment, their fundamental orientation to history as warfare is a gendering of history, which mirrors not only the masculinism of military culture but as well the centrality of war in the professionalized discipline of academic history.

Reenactment is characteristically a hetero-masculinist practice, but the politics of gender, in participation and reception, vary widely. In Second World War reenactment, women are almost invisible (although there are some women's reenactment groups and women enter Red Army units as "combatants"); in Civil War reenactment they are present in the simulations of civilian life as ancillaries in a masculinist world; in the Society for Creative Anachronism and Starfleet, gender equity is assumed, although still within a regulating frame of hetero-maculinism.

Although reenactment units and their members manifest social and ideological diversity and frequently condemn "extremism," they exhibit a general indifference to questions of ethics and history. This is particularly evident and problematic with those units that recreate the Waffen SS. The ethical questions posed by these units are, however, applicable to others. For this reason, Paul Fussell, the eminent historian whose book *The Great War and Modern Memory* was a formative landmark in the study of cultural memory, dismisses reenactors as "wierdos" who indulge "fantasies of heroism" (127). For Fussell, himself a combat veteran, reenactment is morally offensive: "Comprehensive as the re-enactors' ambitions to achieve absolute authenticity are, they neglect certain details, like the writhing of the wounded, their attempts to thrust back into their abdomen their protruding intestines, and their weeping and calling on Mother" (131).

On the fringes of the hundred or so Second World War units there are countless individuals equipped to participate in various units at "walk-in" events. Some of the units have hundreds of members; most have a few dozen; and some of them are just one guy with a jeep. Most commonly, these units parade in public displays, like the Warriors Day parade, or commemorative public events. The website of one American reenactment unit listed 42 different events for 2003, ranging from a 100-mile vehicle convoy trip in Missouri ("Railsplitters") to invitational battle reenactments, such as the "France 1944 Tactical Battle" in April 2003 in Rensselaer, Indiana, which was restricted to "mid/late-1944 western front American, British & Commonwealth, and German reenactors" with the stern caution that "This is NOT a public spectator event" (Indiana Historical Reenacting). Some of these events take place on land owned or leased for the purpose—there is for example a Great War society that maintains a system of trenches in Pennsylvania. (The Great War is the other coming reenactment domain: The Great War Association in the United States lists 43 member units, including the Fifth Anzac Battalion and the Salvation Army.)

If I develop my argument that military reenactment is a theatrical practice that disturbs the institution of the theatre as much as it throws into crisis the authenticity of the "solder" in military culture (and for the same reason), the question of spectatorship and specular politics is critical. Reenactment is performance insofar as it operates in the spectatorial relationship of actor and audience (however defined and regulated) and is governed by conventions that secure its reception as performative and mimetic. Reenactors typically resist the notion of *acting*, preferring instead to speak of creating "impressions" that commemorate historical actuality through the production of authenticity: in body, in location, in material culture, and in the sensation of experience. Although on one level *acting* and *enacting* mean the same thing, they connote differently. In reenactment culture, *enacting* can be defined provisionally as "commemorative acting"—that is, acting governed by strict adherence to conventions of dress, appearance, deportment, and movement that mark authenticity. "Closed" battle reenactments release participants from the constraints of liability, imposed largely by insurers. At public battles it is not uncommon to see regulations forbidding the discharge of firearms in proximity to the audience. Typically, organizers of the "Wasaga Under Siege" battle in Wasaga, Ontario in the summer of 2004 stipulated the following:

- The safety of the audience and participants is paramount and will be the governing factor in determining the location and

extent of demonstrations.

- During any opposed side demonstration, all weapons will not be deliberately aimed at "enemy" forces.
- Firing will cease within a minimum of 25 meters of two opposing sides.
- No objects or projectiles may be thrown during opposed side demonstrations. [...] ("Wasaga")

In "closed" events reenactors can focus attention to historical accuracy. Such private events may be the peak performances of reenactment, but they are relatively rare, and the units that participate are more commonly to be found in public displays.

Although reenactment practices vary in the extent to which they are public, all take place in a field of audience and reception. In this sense they perform and display within acknowledged structures of convention and value. All reenactments proceed by criteria that define terms of success and the success of the event is in critical ways a problem of audience. The presence of the spectator—as observer, witness, or audience—brings into play questions of aesthetics as well as ethics: the demands of spectacle and the demands of historical recreation do not always reconcile easily. Just as performers perform only when actualized by the presence of an audience, audience reception is shaped by the conventions of the performance.

As the example of Second World War reenactment indicates, reenactment culture is vastly diverse. In Canada the Canadian Reenactment website lists over 50 units (performing seventeenth century to Second World War); in the United Kingdom the National Association of Re-enactment Societies lists 31 members, some of which are umbrella organizations such as The Sealed Knot Society, with 58 regiments performing the British Civil War, and the American Civil War Association, Inc. (UK), with 28 units. In Australia and New Zealand, the Australasian Register of Living History Organizations lists 397 units. In the United States, Reenactor.net lists 312 Civil War reenactment units. In addition to the Second World War units already described, the Commemorative Air Force lists 73 constituent wings and squadrons that fly vintage aircraft. Worldwide, the Starfleet Marine Corps (a division of Starfleet International, the international Star Trek fan club) lists 88 reporting "Marine Strike Groups." When we expand this field to include classical, medieval, and renaissance groups (such as the 82 Roman-era groups listed on Reenactment.net and the 20 "kingdoms" and "principalities"

through which the Society for Creative Anachronism, Inc. is organized internationally), we are clearly dealing with thousands of groups.

As these examples indicate, reenactment groups function in relational communities that structure their enactments. These authorizing structures can be as formalized as state military formations at one end of the spectrum to loose affinities of self-defined enthusiasts at the other. In each case the authorizing structure institutes conventions and rules of governance that regulate the sense of community, control access, and generate both social and cultural capital. Commonly, these structures simulate military command hierarchies. The terms of association, membership, and event organization (and their auxiliary structures of recruitment, publicity, and discussion) can be analysed as performative practices, particularly when unit members communicate and respond in terms of their uniforms and ranks. In this the World Wide Web has had a profound effect, not just as a system of communication that produces relational meta-communities, but as a rhizomorphic structure that models and forms practices. "Starfleet" sprawls across the world through the web, offering on-line manuals, downloads, and courses that lead to promotion through the web-based "Starfleet Academy."

5. Somatic Historiography

Most of these reenactment groups claim legitimacy as popular historical interventions by allegiance to regimes of authenticity, but the terms of authenticity are commonly the most critical subjects of contestation, produced by the negotiation of authority and subjectivity. In performance terms, authenticity is experienced through the exact—or seen-to-be-exact—reproduction of the originary period and is confirmed by the somatic experience of recreated historical conditions. Authenticity can be understood as a condition and a practice that regulate the experience of reenactment and confirm through bodily response the historical knowledges so produced.

As popular reconstitutions of historical knowledge, reenactments are shaped by historiographic conventions of nation and period. As such, they are instrumental in what Raphael Samuel called the "theatre of memory," the collectively assembled practices by which history is transformed and reproduced in popular knowledge. Reenactment can be understood as a method of *producing* history. This can be taken literally, as in the example of a French group that reenacts the US Army in Vietnam, who describe

their mission as "[…] to accurately depict all aspects of the American involvement in South-East Asia from 1960 to 1975, with realistic photographs and super-8 movies" (Grunts). In this case reenactment stages performance only to produce documentary evidence, which, if done exactly, can supersede the real thing.

If reenactment is a popular intervention in history that seeks to confirm historical readings through the display of somatic experience, it is framed by the structures of periodization it performs. In this it manifests arguments about national history and enables "counterfactual" scenarios that confirm ideological and partisan historical readings. In this sense reenactment is always "about" the somatic proofs of historiographic argument.

At first glance, as the example of the Canadian Parachute Battalion suggests, reenactment manifests a commemorative linkage of performer, place, and unit, in which patriotic commemoration confirms what Homi Bhabha has referred to as the pedagogical nation (297). This has clearly been the model of Civil War reenactment. But Second World War reenactment, in contrast, restages the migrancies and diasporas of twentieth century life. A group of Americans reenacting a Canadian unit in California in all likelihood enacts several different motives: specialization in an economy of collecting; personal and family affinities; a claim for distinction in a crowded field. We can posit many reasons, of which patriotic commemoration may be the least important.

Despite a tendency to nationalisms, reenactment "plays" nation as texts manifest in collectible material culture. But reenactment, although it replays nation, is also transnational. It commands emotional response to invented nations, but for the most part these nations are dehistoricized or, perhaps we should say, bearing in mind the pervasive role of commemoration, *re*historicized. Reenactment, in all or any of its forms, addresses nation in ways that at first seem contradictory. Reenactors are invested in their performed nations: the "Canada" of Canadian Army reenactors in California is no more real than the United States of the Vietnam reenactors that have particular purchase in Eastern Europe or of the United Federation of Planets. All of these textualized nations exist in moments of elation and spectatorial response; all are equally felt to be true in the theatrical moment and all are made real through the fetishes of authenticity. This is one of the critical bridges between "hardcore" military and subjunctive fantasy reenactment. To both the professional military historian who engages in what Victor Suthren has described as "skin-out" authenticity (6) and the tributary reenactor who is deeply invested

in cultural memory, fantasy roleplay bears no relation to military reenactment. But as the somatic proof of authenticity, the experience of enacting a Starfleet Marine may be no less "real" than that of a Second World War paratrooper (and, conversely, as Fussell argues, they are equally fantasized).

This may be best illustrated by an anecdote. I have a friend who is active in *Star Trek* fan culture. He belongs to a fan club chapter that is organized as a Starfleet vessel, on which he holds officer rank. His chapter—his ship—is part of the worldwide club of Starfleet International, which includes hundreds of fictitious ships organized in regional fleets and headed by admirals who earn their command. Like his comrades in the organization, he progresses through the ranks by finishing courses offered by the Starfleet Academy. If he wishes, he can join the Starfleet Marine Corps and study hundreds of pages of tactical manuals based on US military publications. He knows this is just play, a reenactment of a history that exists only in fantasy, but it is based on a vast and growing encyclopedic literature and strict regimes of adherence to the authenticities of the various *Star Trek* series and timelines. At the same time, it is more than play because he has an ongoing identity in a growing culture of people who know one another only through this shared experience. The world is fantasy, but its relations, hierarchies, and feelings are very real.

Like all reenactment groups, Starfleet wages a virtual war and peace with its enemies, the most popular of which is the Klingon Domain and its marine auxiliary, the Klingon Assault Group. Klingon fan culture is somewhat famous—these are the people who go to conventions decked out in full gear and prosthetic makeup. The Klingon Language Institute—dedicated fans with backgrounds in linguistics—have published a Klingon dictionary and a growing library of translated works, including the *The Klingon Hamlet* (Schoen).

My friend, who in fact is a theatre historian and academic, described to me a ceremony he witnessed several years ago when a group of Klingons commemorated the death of John Colicos, the Canadian actor who was the first to play a Klingon in the original *Star Trek* series. They gathered in a circle, lifted their heads to the sky, and joined together in the Klingon Death Wail, a group howl that, according to startrek.com, "[…] signifies a traditional warning to the hereafter that 'a Klingon warrior is about to arrive!'" What was interesting about this commemorative moment, my friend tells me, is that it was powerful, emotive, and very "real." It was more than play because these people in their Klingon *personae*

deeply grieved for the man who had first given flesh to the culture in which they invested so much of their identity.

As a theatre historian I am drawn to this story because it suggests something about how performance is not just a reflection or display of social reality, but actually produces reality in the performative encounter of two ontologies merged in the elative moment. In "real world" reenactment we see this encounter as one of national as well as personal identities. Commemorative and patriotic reenactment monumentalizes this merging, confirming the performing nation in the textualities of the performed. There is a particular monumentalizing of lost causes, in which the mobilization of present reproduction erases defeat. This is clearly the case with Confederate reenactments, which seem to be more popular than Union reenactments, as if to prove that in a battle between American armies Americans never lose because Americans always win. This is also the case with Vietnam: a typical example from the Vietnam War domain is a group in the Pacific Northwest that reenacts the 3rd Platoon/Delta Company/2nd Battalion/5th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division, Airmobile—about as specific as they come in reenactment units. They say of their mission, "We exist to say 'thank you' to the true fighting men who fought and bled in Vietnam. They are our credentials. The freedom they bought for us in a far off land is beyond any feeling of gratitude that we can express" (2/5 1st Cavalry).

What then of the citational textual nations: the Waffen SS units, or the Canadians who perform the Civil War, or fantasized histories and futures? Their commitment, dedication, and emotional attachment are no less real. As a process of popular intervention, reenactment is a military occupation of history that claims space and territory through distributed performance and distributed spectators. It is always the performing nation in the uniform of the performed, but in this process of occupation the performing nation is itself reproduced and altered—and shown to be reproducible. Reenactment stages the anxieties of the nation as a site of crisis, and its reflexive transformations restage the battles of contemporary culture: military reenactment is in the end about its enemies. And while enemy is defined textually by the local, tactical dramaturgies of the spectacle, it is produced in the real by the rhetorics of honour and masculinist camaraderie all reenactment units claim.

6. The Theatre Army

As noted, the performativity of reenactment reveals a domain

of practice in which theatre and military culture converge. But while the theatricality of military culture seems apparent in this practice, the reciprocal axiom—that through reenactment we can see the militarism of theatre culture—seems less apparent. Nevertheless, reenactment does lead to this perception, not just because of its ambivalent position that bridges theatre and military cultures but also because that ambivalence disrupts disciplinary boundaries in both cases and reveals them to be congruent. This is the boundary between estate and rhizome that regulates the binaries of legitimate and illegitimate, uniformed and non-uniformed, army and insurgent, theatre and "performance," mainstream and alternative.

In his investigation into the structures of disciplinary regimes in his essay on "Docile Bodies" in his monumental *Discipline and Punish*, Michel Foucault examines the institution of the regimented army as one of the systems of categorization that produced the modern concept of the human. His inquiry enables us to see disciplinary professions as social machines. For theatre historians this is a particularly useful approach because it enables us to understand the relationship, for example, between the emergence of military drill and ballet and to perceive how and why national armies and national theatres emerged in Europe at the same time, for the same reasons. Other scholars, such as William McNeill, in his *Keeping Together in Time: Dance and Drill in Human History*, have noted the deep relationship of the embodiment practices in military and theatre culture. McNeill argues that because of their shared conditions of euphoria and group cohesion, "dance, drill and battle belong together" (10).[5] The example of reenactment leads to the proposal that just as military culture secures boundaries between "legitimate" disciplinarity and illegitimate refusal of disciplinarity (a process in which reenactment is a crucial instrument) as a manifestation of state power, so does theatre culture. This is the boundary of the disciplinary system that legitimizes and values certain practices as "the theatre," a system that Baz Kershaw has called the "theatre estate" (31-47). From the point of view of anthropological performance studies, the half-time show at a football game is as much part of theatre culture as *Hamlet*, but as understood in the conceptual structures of the theatre estate, *Hamlet*—even if it is not performed—is more authentically "theatre" than the half-time show. The theatre estate is shaped and maintained by professional tradition, discourses of mastery, pedagogies, canonicity, the cultural economy, public policy, and, of course, the very idea of the playhouse stage.

Following Foucault, we can posit that all disciplinary regimes—whether professionalized military, professionalized theatre, professionalized medicine, law, science—express the underlying informing matrix of the hegemonic state. But as the example of reenactment shows, there are particular affinities between these estates. Reenactment demonstrates a deep affinity between the boundary mechanisms of the military and the theatre, leading to the suggestion that reenactment does not just represent a modern convergence of army and theatre, but beyond that exposes their deeper historical affinities, originating in masculinist (and often exclusively male) social organization and display. This argument leads to the suggestion that there is a way in which theatre and army, as professional estates charged with a mission to enact and monumentalize the nation, are the same: theatres are armies that don't kill and armies are theatres that do. Seen in this perspective, it is no accident that theatre and army have a reciprocally informing exchange of vocabulary and language.

Armies deploy in theatres of operations; they stage invasions, display power in signifying costumes, and maintain cultural continuity through spectacle, parade, and ceremony. Theatres, in turn, organize themselves in hierarchies of authority and control that can be understood as fundamentally military. Historically the theatre estate has operated with the same structures of command, authority, and requisitionary power as armies. Even today a theatre company and an infantry company are amongst the most authoritarian structures in our liberal democracies, granted the extraordinary privilege to violate the persons of their members. Both are highly structured, hierarchical, and conservative estates that require tradition, commemoration, centrality, and authority; both are to that same extent capable of radical reconstitution—and both regulate internal radicalism within their fields (the theatre through poverty, the army through discipline and law). To suggest that they are both conservative does not disallow the importance of radicalism within them; in any professional estate, regulating structure is renewed through dissent, although clearly the theatre and the army regulate dissent as institutional capital in very different ways.

In both instances, the boundaries of disciplinarity are fluid as they meet, counter, absorb, and are renewed by disciplinary refusal. Professional militaries counter insurgency with "special forces," using guerilla tactics to fight guerillas. In the theatre, the "experimental" margins of canonical, institutionalized disciplinarity are marked by the encounter with radical forms and processes

in an ever-receding boundary. This may be why "oppositional" theatre practices tend to draw on the same corpus of theoretical and performance strategies. Radical theories of mobile staging, phenomenological bodies, and dramaturgical circularity and non-linearity are familiar features of the principles ascribed to most of the counter-disciplinary theatre cultures, especially left-wing radicalism, Aboriginal performance, and feminist dramaturgical practice. In each case, the principles of theatre radicalism express historical and cultural specificities (which opens debates about essentialism), but their commonality also suggests that the particularity of these principles is produced by the disciplinary formation of the canonical theatre. New radical counter-discourses tend to discover the same set of theatrical principles. The particular recurrence of these common principles of counter-discursive anti-disciplinarity in feminist theatre may be a reflection of the masculinist origins of the theatre estate.

In their respective ways, theatres and armies occupy the national territory. Historically they have operated as instrumental mechanisms of national legitimation, and both today confront the insurgent pressures of corroding disciplinarity, as national armies face non-uniformed combatants and canonical theatres face the interdisciplinarity of digital technology and disenfranchised fringe performance. In both cases, the corrosion of the disciplinary estate signals a crisis in the commanding power of the nation state as a cultural formation.

This notion of a particular, reciprocally constitutive relationship of theatre and nation, on the one hand, and army and nation, on the other, is a product of the Enlightenment, refined in nineteenth century romanticism, itself a cultural force produced by a crisis of imperial rupture and emergent nationalisms. It draws our attention to the historical weight of empire as an ontological formation, a subject that has renewed currency in the ongoing aftershocks of the Iraq war. In their book *Empire* Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri argue that we live in an era of dislocated supranational imperium that operates through national and corporate agents, but which cannot be reduced to any one nation state. In this argument nations exist as regulatory and enabling structures. In this context of postmodern empire, postcolonial theorists have argued for the recuperation of the national as a category of productive resistance, although Hardt and Negri offer a compelling argument that "it is a grave mistake to harbor any nostalgia for the powers of the nation-state, or to resurrect any politics that celebrates the nation" (336).

The crisis of nation and empire may explain the contemporary fascination with reenactment culture, in which nostalgia for the national is a defining condition. Reenactment is the empire in performance: sited in national identities and patriotisms, but moveable, transplantable, and adaptive. Reenactment culture exposes the historical contingency of nationhood by replaying embodied, reflexive nationalisms, marking them as real, proven somatically in the process of reenactment, and as elective, as an emotional knowledge that can be assumed and discarded. Reenactment is the performance of auxiliary nationhood. Canadian confederates, Australian Red Army tankers, New Zealand Vikings, British Starfleet Marines, American Canadian paratroopers: this is not just a field of play and simulation, but the investment of embodied elations that confirm through bodily response the historical knowledges they produce. It is tempting to speculate that the emotional affinities and allegiances so produced do for the modern empire, however defined, exactly what the imperial parade of exotic colonial armies did for Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee in 1897. But our imperial parade ground is the imperial rhizome—thousands of theatrical battlefields, conventions, websites—assembling in its parts the plural theatre of the imperial order. ❁

Notes

1 An early version of this paper was delivered as a keynote address to the Australasian Drama Studies Association and the Association for the Study of Australian Literature, 2 July 2003, at the Australian Catholic University, Brisbane. Some of the information on reenactment has appeared, framed in a very different argument, in "People's Theatre, People's Army: Masculinism, Agitprop, Reenactment" (See Filewod). I would like to acknowledge a debt to a former graduate student, Martin De Jonge, whose 1994 MA thesis on the performance of battle reenactment led me to this subject.

2 The very notion of the military uniform is itself a historically recent development that codifies historical tradition. James Laver, in his 1948 monograph *British Military Uniforms*, offered the important observation that uniforms are "the costume of a soldier *when he is not fighting*" (34, italics in original). He noted that "All wars, especially long ones, affect military uniforms by jerking them back into the direction of utility, that is, the fighting dress of the soldier becomes less and less formal and more and more an approximation to the country or sporting clothes of the civilian" (14), and that "Ceremonial uniform is often the battle dress (formalized and fantasticated) of the *last war but one*" (25, italics in original).

3 Deleuze and Guattari borrowed the concept of the rhizome from

plant biology to describe a system that has no discernable system and no discernable site, which exists only in its inter-connectivities. See Deleuze and Guattari.

4 The profession of military consultant has grown with the enduring popularity of war movies, many of which draw on veterans and specialists to achieve a measure of authenticity. When Stanley Kubrick hired a retired Marine Corps drill instructor to train his actors in *Full Metal Jacket*, he ended up casting the consultant as the drill sergeant in the movie (http://www.historyinfilm.com/jacket). More recently, Andy McNab, a British SAS combat veteran and author of a bestselling memoir of the Gulf War, served as screenwriter and on-set consultant for the BBC production of his book *Bravo Two Zero*. In Canada, Gordon Laco, a Canadian nautical historian who has been involved with the reenactment of eighteenth century naval units and the reproduction of British naval vessels in Pentanguishine, Ontario, served as the historical and sailing consultant for Peter Weir on the set of *Master and Commander: The Far Side of the World*. (<http://www.cbc.ca/roundup/interviews/audio2004summer.html>)

5 While Foucault examines military regimentation as a discourse, McNeill examines the social biology of rhythmic movement in group formations. Arguing that formation movement in dance and close order drill induces "boundary loss" (10), he proposes that the pleasure of regimented movement is physiological:

> The primary seat of bodily response to rhythmic movement is apparently situated in the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems. These nerve complexes are involved in all emotions; but exact paths of emotional excitation by the sympathetic nervous system and of compensatory restoration of bodily homeostasis by the para-sympathetic nervous system are not understood. Various hormones excreted by the pituitary gland and by other organs of the body play a role; so do the hypothalamus, the amygdala, and the right side of the cerebral cortex. Only after filtering through these levels of the brain does excitation derived from rhythmic muscular movement and voicing reach the left side of the brain, where our verbal skills are situated. With such a pathway of response to rhythmic muscular movement, it is no wonder that our words fumble when seeking to describe what happens within us when we dance or march. (6)

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