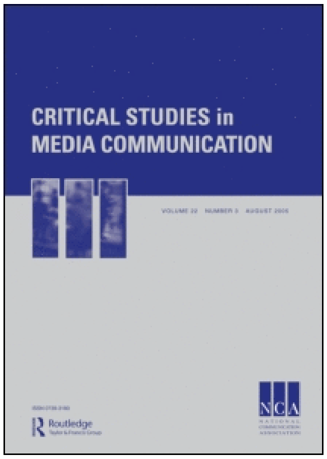
This article was downloaded by:[Gunn, Joshua]
On: 7 February 2008
Access Details: [subscription number 790460602]
Publisher: Routledge
Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954
Registered office: Mortimer House, 37-41 Mortimer Street, London W1T 3JH, UK



# Critical Studies in Media Communication

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:
http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/title~content=t713597236

## Father Trouble: Staging Sovereignty in Spielberg's **War of the Worlds**

Joshua Gunn

Online Publication Date: 01 March 2008
To cite this Article: Gunn, Joshua (2008) 'Father Trouble: Staging Sovereignty in Spielberg's **War of the Worlds**', Critical Studies in Media Communication, 25:1, 1 - 27
To link to this article: DOI: 10.1080/15295030701849332
URL: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/15295030701849332

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Full terms and conditions of use: http://www.informaworld.com/terms-and-conditions-of-access.pdf

This article maybe used for research, teaching and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, re-distribution, re-selling, loan or sub-licensing, systematic supply or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden.

The publisher does not give any warranty express or implied or make any representation that the contents will be complete or accurate or up to date. The accuracy of any instructions, formulae and drug doses should be independently verified with primary sources. The publisher shall not be liable for any loss, actions, claims, proceedings, demand or costs or damages whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with or arising out of the use of this material.

*Critical Studies in Media Communication*
*Vol. 25, No. 1, March 2008, pp. 1–27*

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

# Father Trouble: Staging Sovereignty in Spielberg's *War of the Worlds*

Joshua Gunn

*This essay argues that Spielberg's* War of the Worlds, *constitutive of anxieties generated by Nine-eleven, tacitly cultivates an affective response of desperation in order to promulgate an ideology of paternal sovereignty. To this end I first claim that the film is about sovereignty because it re-stages a state of nature as a "state of emergency." Second, drawing on the work of Jacques Lacan and Giorgio Agamben, I argue that the father figure of the film doubles as the figure of a sovereign insofar as both represent the authority of the law, both are charged with protecting their people, and both have the power to assert a state of exception. Finally, the essay concludes by describing the parallels between the film's plot vis-à-vis the father and the narrative arc of the presidency of George W. Bush.*

*Keywords: George W. Bush; Father Figure; Ideology; Sovereignty; State of Exception*

> Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength because of thine enemies, that thus mightest still the enemy and the avenger.
>
> Psalms, 8:2

After learning that Manhattan has been besieged by large, tripod-driving invaders from another world, Ray Ferrier, a single divorcee and presumably a rotten father, loads his two visiting children into a stolen mini-van and races toward Boston to escape life-zapping heat rays. As the final draft of the shooting script of Stephen Spielberg's *War of the Worlds* details, approximately 31 minutes into the film the not-so-subtle subtext comes out of the mouth of a babe:

> [T]he kids begin SCREAMING, but it's hard to hear over the racing engine, the SCREECHING tires. Ray leans forward, trying like hell to see through the windshield, through the smoke that's now blanketing the block. THROUGH THE

---

Joshua Gunn is an assistant professor in the Department of Communication Studies at the University of Texas at Austin. Correspondence to: Joshua Gunn, Department of Communication Studies, University of Texas at Austin, One University Station, Mailcode A1105, Austin, TX 78712, USA. Email: slewfoot@mail.utexas.edu. Insofar as all published essays are co-authored at some level, the author would like to thank Barry Brummett, Dana Cloud, Tom Frentz, Chris Lundberg, Kenneth Rufo, Eric Watts, and the blinded reviewers for their advice and patience.

ISSN 1529-5036 (print)/ISSN 1479-5809 (online) © 2008 National Communication Association
DOI: 10.1080/15295030701849332

> WINDSHEILD, we see he's reaching the end of the block, which is a T intersection. Directly ahead of him is a bank of row houses. As we [the spectators] look at them—their second floors burst into flames. . . . BACK IN THE CAR, Ray cuts the wheel to the left. Robbie turns and looks out the back window, gets just a glimpse of the top of the Tripod as it rises up over the rooftops behind them. ROBBIE [the teenage son played by Justin Chatwin]: WHAT IS IT? RACHEL [the 11-year-old daughter played by Dakota Fanning]: "Is it the terrorists?!" (Friedmann & Koepp, 2005, pp. 37–38)

The decision to reference explicitly the events of September 11, 2001, was Spielberg's. Because the film opens with scenes of Manhattan, because the inaugural violence of filmic action takes place in Newark, and because the characters of the film explicitly reference Nine-eleven, Spielberg's remake of *War of the Worlds* is unquestionably positioned as a not-so-indirect commentary on the most traumatic event of recent times.[1]

In an interview David Koepp, one of the two script writers, justifies the references to Nine-eleven by underscoring the ubiquity of invasion themes in Western culture. All iterations of the H.G. Wells story, Koepp explains, have "vast political implications": "In the late 1890s, it was about British imperialism; in the late 1930s, it was about the fear of Fascism; in the early 1950s, it was the Commies are coming to get us." Because spectators and critics would inevitably yoke the destruction of the film to the destruction of the World Trade Center, suggests Koepp, "we just decided not to censor ourselves, because that's not realistic, that's not the world we live in." He continues:

> As for specific 9/11 references—like Dakota's character [Rachel] saying, "Is it the terrorists?" or when Tom [Cruise] is covered in ash—those weren't put in because of 9/11; they were put in because we all lived through 9/11. . . . In the first draft Dakota didn't have that line, but Steven said, "Wouldn't she think it's the terrorists?" And I said, "Well, yeah, but do we really want to evoke that, do we want to come out and say it?" And he said, "But she would, she's 11." And it's true, she would. So she did. (Friedmann & Koepp, 2005, p. 143)

Spielberg's insistence that an innocent yet precocious child explicitly establish the relation between that bloodthirsty, exogenous evil from beyond and the staple enemy of our current contemporary, political discourse confounds the often printed sentiment that *War of the Worlds* is a "piece of perfectly realized, pure entertainment" (Tyler, 2005, para. 8). The evocation of the problem of evil (e.g., how can someone or something kill an "innocent" human being?) is a political gesture that extends beyond the screen. As Barbara Biesecker has persuasively argued of *Saving Private Ryan*, for Spielberg this gesture bespeaks a nostalgic reclamation and resignification of World War II in contemporary discourse, a trend continued by the deliberate, if awkwardly anachronistic, 1950s aesthetic of *War of the Worlds*.[2] Biesecker argues that Spielberg's spectacles over the past decade have buttressed a well-worn "American" identity, forwarding a patriarchal, civil pedagogy of complacency as the answer to the anomie and chaos signified by "meticulously chronicled mass slaughter" (2002, p. 394). Insofar as the civic lesson intoned by *Saving Private Ryan* assists in the "reconsolidation and naturalization of traditional logics . . . of privilege," we should expect a similar, violence-then-teaching pattern in *War of the Worlds* (Biesecker, 2002, p. 406). In Spielberg's films the event of filmic violence usually heralds a tutorial in civic virtue.

This essay advances an ideological critique of *War of the Worlds*.[3] I argue that the film's construction of paternal sovereignty is constitutive of anxieties generated by Nine-eleven. In exploring and restaging our recent, traumatic experience of alienation during the state of emergency that followed the "terrorist" attacks, the film cultivates a peculiar affective response in the spectator: a longing for a strong, paternal figure to restore order, unite the community, and defeat the enemy. In other words, I argue that the civil pedagogy of *War of the Worlds* is that father knows best, but only insofar as the father is understood as the paternal sovereign—the strong, seemingly omnipotent political figure that actually fails to appear within the filmic frame. As a production of culture, an analysis of the film along these lines underscores how the film industry both consciously and unconsciously intervenes in extra-cinematic processes of social and political mediation.[4] As civil pedagogy, however, I also argue that an analysis of the film keyed to the affective construction of paternal sovereignty helps to explain the post-Nine-eleven popularity of George W. Bush. That the narrative arc of *War of the Worlds* is homologous to the Bush administration's rise in power is not coincidental, but ideologically overdetermined. Indeed, because of the overwhelming sense of dread created by the film's pacing and special effects, I will ultimately conclude that *War of the Worlds* unwittingly teaches spectators how to love a dictator.

To this end the essay proceeds in three parts. Drawing on Hollywood films for illustrations, in the first part I detail how the "state of the emergency," the conceptual cousin of what social and political philosophers term the "state of nature," is the precondition for the emergence or reinforcement of a sovereign. In the second part, using Jacques Lacan's theory of the father, I explain how *War of the Worlds* advances a fictional father as a substitute sovereign. Finally, in the third section I describe how *War of the Worlds* melds the father figure and the concept of the sovereign into a composite, paternal sovereign, which is a figure that Giorgio Agamben warns is ultimately a dangerous harbinger of death. Insofar as film and politics are mutually fantasmic and increasingly informing one another, I conclude by suggesting that an awareness of the tacit ideology and affective politics of the film can help us to understand popular support for the unprecedented power of the Bush II administration.

## Staging States of Nature and Emergency

> If it's not love, then it's the bomb, the bomb, the bomb, the bomb,
> the bomb,
> the bomb that will bring us together.
>
> The Smiths/Morrissey, 1987

Along with *The Blob*, *Invaders from Mars*, and *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, *War of the Worlds* is part of the "alien invasion" genre of American filmmaking. The basic plot of Spielberg's film, however, is not so much about aliens as it is about the behavior of people when they are reduced to states of emergency or exception, a modern iteration of what political philosophers once termed the "state of nature." In the Western intellectual tradition, the state of nature refers to the mode of human existence in the absence of government, police, or the state. States of exception or emergency refer to economic or political catastrophes that require "extreme measures" or otherwise unusual responses to re- establish a sense of order. The difference between the two related concepts is philosophical: a "pure" state of nature is not possible, insofar as the concept is used by philosophers in thought experiments to make arguments about the character of politics and human behavior, whereas states of emergency and exception are real, historical realities in which a regression toward a state of nature is the primary threat. In short, states of emergency and exception are premised on the fear or worry that a communal order can collapse into some primary, albeit mythic, default chaos.

U.S. moviegoers are probably more familiar with states of emergency and exception in so-called disaster films. After some natural calamity or crash, a given community is almost reduced to a state of nature and its members are forced to confront the absence of the State and to get along for their mutual survival (see Keane, 2001). Whether the emphasis is on being stranded (e.g., *Lord of the Flies*), lost, or trapped (e.g., *The Poseidon Adventure*), disaster films usually concern what people do to protect themselves and each other when reduced to a basic human minimum: without the symbolic privileges of class, race, gender, and other socially significant marks of entitlement or protection, what do humans do?

Traditionally, Hollywood filmmakers and political philosophers alike have answered that in the state of nature humans tend to pick or follow a leader, which is why the concepts of sovereignty and the state of nature are inextricably wed. Indeed, the concept of sovereignty descends from assumptions concerning how human beings would "naturally" behave in the absence of governance. If human nature was described as essentially other-oriented, empathetic, and "good," then a thinker tended to argue in favor of republicanism and limited sovereignty. If, however, human nature was described as essentially self-serving and narcissistic, then a thinker tended to argue in favor of strong or absolute sovereignty. Perhaps among the most famous arguments made in favor of an absolute sovereign were penned by Thomas Hobbes in 1651, who wrote in *The Leviathan* that in the state of nature humans would behave as if at war:

> In such condition there is no place for industry, because the fruit thereof is uncertain: and consequently no culture of the earth; no navigation, nor use of the commodities that may be imported by sea; no commodious building; no instruments of moving and removing such things as require much force; no knowledge of the face of the earth; no account of time; no arts; no letters; no society; and which is worst of all, continual fear, and danger of violent death; and the life of man, solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short. (Hobbes, ch. 13, para. 9)

Hobbes argued that there are five fundamental "forces" of nature exemplified by humans most blatantly in war: egoism, competitiveness, distrust, and glory and power seeking. Only an absolute sovereign willed collectively by the people, he argued, could maintain justice and keep the peace.

In the century after Hobbes, however, Jean-Jacques Rousseau based his social contract theory on the opposite view of human essence: human beings in the state of nature are noble savages, "born free" and inherently good but perverted by society. Such perversion results from the scarcity of resources that is a consequence of increasing populations and to escape a progressively degenerate and deadly state of nature people must contract with one another to subsist under the rule of morality or law. For Rousseau, passage "from the state of nature to the civil state" occurs when a people recognizes itself as the "body politic" or capital-S "Sovereign," which he likened to a rather large family. This comparison was obvious to Rousseau, who said the family was "the first model of political societies: the ruler corresponds to the father, and the people to the children" (Rousseau, 1988, p. 15). For Rousseau, the Sovereign is the people, and government fulfils the paternal function. Although Rousseau's more optimistic understanding of human nature is not as popular in Hollywood film, examples are not difficult to find (in Disney's *Swiss Family Robinson*, for example, a shipwrecked family lives largely harmoniously—despite a coconut cannon ball barrage from a group of naughty pirates—on a desolate island because of the stability of the nuclear family structure, which is a message particular to Disney films in general).

Like most disaster films, Spielberg's *War of the Worlds* re-stages the scene of sovereignty as a state of emergency and regression, albeit in a manner that slowly builds into a gruesome massacre and simultaneously creates the yearning for a powerful, protective leader. The film opens as Ray Ferrier returns home from his work at a Newark dock as a crane operator to receive his two children, Rachel and Robbie, from his ex-wife Mary Anne, who is en route to Boston to visit her parents. After the children are taken in and the mother leaves, a massive, swirling storm cloud forms in the sky behind the row house where Ray lives. Intermittent shots of television news reveal that mysterious storm clouds have been forming worldwide; lightning from these clouds has been disabling electronic machinery and causing massive power outages. After a series of lighting bolts repeatedly strikes the ground at a downtown intersection, all machinery, including battery powered wristwatches and clocks, stop working. Ray leaves his children and heads downtown to investigate. Cars and trucks litter the road as stunned people walk toward a crater that has formed where the lightning struck. That this scene is a prelude to the state of emergency is signalled by the prominence of police officers in the script, whose impotence and gradual disappearance from the screen represent a regression toward the state of nature:

> There are maybe a HUNDRED PEOPLE there looking at [the crater], most huddled in small groups, comparing stories. Nobody seems to have been hurt, and their initial fear is starting to ease. There are half a dozen COPS, but without cars or radios, they're reduced to old-fashioned crowd control, which is not much. (Friedmann & Koepp, 2005, pp. 25–26)

In the film the imminent helplessness of the police is foreshadowed by the unheeded dialogue of their commands and orders. As people move toward the crater a policeman is heard to say, "Let us through, let us through here," and at the crater scene a stunned cop looks to the sky and then back to the crater: "I've never seen anything like this before. That many strikes of lightning in one spot?" A shot of the confused look on the face of the policeman is then framed with increasingly demanding orders from off-screen officers: "Back up people! . . . Move back!" Two policemen stand at the center of the screen, immediately in front of the crater, with bemused faces, debating whether the rumbling under their feet is a broken water main or subway car.[5]

This dialog is important because no-one on screen leaves the scene of the crater despite the repeated demands of the police; even before the violence begins, the State is helpless to control the curiosity of the masses. People do begin to respond, however, to the radiating cracks coming from the crater. As the street begins to split, causing building foundations to crumble and windows to shatter, the crowd quickly disperses. A gray-haired policeman with a moustache screams a superfluous command, "Move! Everyone clear the intersection! Get out of the way!"

People are running in all directions away from the widening crater. A prominent church facing the intersection splits into two pieces, its steeple crashing to the street, reinforcing the symbolic castration of traditional authority. By the time a large, tripod ship emerges from the crater, the previously pronounced policemen are reduced to the shot of a single, slack-jawed, uniformed figure on the periphery of a group of awed onlookers. By the time the tripod ship begins firing weapons that vaporize fleeing victims, the police are conspicuously absent. Over the course of ten minutes the police are first rendered impotent, and then completely absented from the screen.

Representatives of State power do not return until a half-hour later, when the military appears. In the thirty minutes between the disappearance of the police and the arrival of the military, the film establishes an ambivalent vision of the state of emergency—some survivors are nasty while others are noble—in a manner that deliberately recalls scenes of New York after the attacks on September 11, 2001. For example, as seemingly hundreds of people flee the heat-ray weapons of the attacking tripod, the camera tracks Cruise as he runs through a woman disintegrating. As the woman's face and body disappear into a thick, gray smoke, Cruise's character literally runs though her ashen remains. Covered in gray dust, he races home to his children:

> BANG! Ray, covered in ash, SLAMS through the front door and staggers into the kitchen. He gets there and turns in a half circle, traumatized. . . . Robbie and Rachel are visible though the open back door, staring over the tree line at the mayhem in the distance. They hear him and come into the house. ROBBIE: "What happened?" He doesn't answer. RACHEL: "Are you okay?" Still no answer. RACHEL: "Dad, what's the matter?" ROBBIE: "What's that stuff all over you?" Ray gets up and turns to the sink, catches sight of himself in a mirror hanging there. His face is covered in gray ash. (Friedmann and Koepp, 2005, p. 33)

Unlike in the shooting script, in the film the children watch Ray enter the home and sit on the floor in a trance. Rachel asks demandingly after Robbie, "What's all this stuff?" while nudging her father. Startled, Ray moves abruptly and conspicuous wafts of ash float into the air. Recalling the much-discussed ash that rained from the felled twin towers on Nine-eleven, the remains of a former human being serve as a ghastly signifier of death, betokening a state in which life for many people has become "nasty, brutish, and short."

Until the very end of the film, scene after scene reminds the viewer of the inability of State power to stop the violence and establish a sense of order and protection; consequently, the spectator senses the tremendous pressure and responsibility placed on Ray as the only individual throughout the film who has the power to protect. This power is explicitly (if not excessively) paternal. For example, during the inaugural "extermination" of Newark, Ray steals the only working vehicle and attempts to speed his children away to safety. After driving many miles away from the city, they stop in a rural area so that Rachel can go to the bathroom. In a scene that recalls James Whale's chilling depiction of Frankenstein's monster drowning a young girl, Rachel makes her way past a grove of trees to the side of a river, where she is terrified by seeing dozens upon dozens of dead bodies floating downstream. Ray startles her from behind by covering her eyes as she screams, carrying her back toward the road where a caravan of military trucks with armed soldiers is racing by. Robbie runs after the trucks, insisting that he wants to go with them and, after they pass, gets into an argument with Ray about his ability to parent, accusing him of trying to abandon them again. Upset that Robbie considered leaving, Rachel screams, "Who's gonna take care of me if you go?!" The hideous mass of floating corpses, followed by scenes of military might—and then an argument about fatherhood—frames the conflict of the film as one of authority in a state of crisis. More specifically, after the first hour *War of the Words* presents itself as a drama about fatherhood, as an attempt to answer Freud's famous question, "What is a father?"

## The Social Dimension of *War of the Worlds*: What is a Father?

> We would be mistaken if we thought that the Freudian Oedipus myth puts an end to theology on the matter [of desire]. For the myth does not confine itself to working the puppet of sexual rivalry. It would be better to read in it what Freud requires us to contemplate using his coordinates; for they boil down to the question with which he himself began: "What is a Father?" (Lacan, 2004, p. 298)

The rivalry between Robbie and Ray over the care of ten-year-old Rachel implies the familial conflict is Oedipal. Perhaps the most famous of Freud's teachings, the Oedipal myth helped to explain the sexual dynamics of the Victorian family from the son's point of view: the son was jealous of his father and resentful of the fact that the father prohibits him from loving his mother in a romantic way (see Freud, 1961, pp. 107–194; Freud, 1989a, pp. 661–665). For Freud, father/son rivalry was an overdetermined conflict that resolved itself when the son learned to identify with and to emulate the father, seeking a substitute for his mother via courtship or dating. In this respect, Robbie and Ray's struggle over Rachel in a state of emergency is something of an Oedipal hiccup. However, is this struggle sexual, or does the fact that it is contextualized in a state of emergency suggest an alternative reading? What can this filmic struggle over the care of a child tell us about the film's paternal politics?

In his refiguring of the Oedipal myth, Jacques Lacan tempered the psychosexual aspect by underscoring the function of the father figure as "the original representative of the Law's authority" (Lacan, 2004, p. 299). This figuring of the father directly links the failure of the State in *War of the Worlds* to Ray's attempts to control and protect his children: at the level of signification, the homologous plots are actually different iterations of the same cultural operation of paternal authority. What spectators are watching on the screen—and the reason why some spectators respond with strong emotion—is a restaging of the emergence of subjectivity as such, which I will later argue is the affective precondition for sovereignty. Drawing on Lacan's reading of the myth of the primal horde, in this section I will focus on Ray as a representative of what is termed the paternal function, preparing the way for a focus on sovereignty as the ultimate representative in the next.

## *Dead Daddios, or, What's for Breakfast?*

Lacan's immediate answer to the rhetorical question "What is a father?" is unsurprisingly cryptic: "'It is the dead Father,' Freud replies, but no one hears him" (2004, p. 298). Aside from the seminal joke, here Lacan means to index three things. First, Lacan is suggesting that the dominant forms of psychoanalysis in Europe and the United States at that time were ignoring Freud's later works, such as *Totem and Taboo* and *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, which refigured his earlier explication of the Oedipus complex. Second, Lacan is suggesting that the most important understanding of the father is one in which the father is "dead," which is a reference to the story of the primal horde in Freud's *Totem and Taboo*. Third, by asking the question and designating one kind of father as most important, Lacan implies that there are many other kinds of fathers; the father figure is a composite of many things that need to be disarticulated from one another to be better understood: the symbolic father, the imaginary father, and the real father.

Early in his work Lacan was concerned with the "contemporary social decline of the paternal imago (clearly visible in the images of absent fathers and humiliated fathers . . .)" and endeavored to understand the figure as a psychical structure to help explain this decline (Evans, 1997, p. 61). According to Dylan Evans, Lacan argued that real, biological fathers had to manage two frequently conflicting expectations.[6] On the one hand, the father entails a protective function and is called upon from time to time to transgress social rules and laws to keep others from harm. On the other hand, however, the father figure entails a prohibitive and legislative function and is responsible for teaching social rules and making laws (see Evans, 1997, p. 61). Anyone that is designated a "father," then, is typically asked to navigate these (sometimes) competing functions.

Later in his work Lacan would combine the protective and legislative function of the father in terms of the "symbolic father." Unlike the idealization or image of a father that we harbor early in life (viz., the imaginary father), the symbolic father has more to do with signification as such and less to do with a real person. For Lacan, what is most important about the figure of the father is neither the cultural myths about good or bad fathers nor his sexual identity (male or female), but rather that, to the child, there is no higher authority than the father; he is the one who responds "Because I say so!" in answer to "Why?" He is the one who appears to have the power to punish transgressions and to suspend the rules and norms in times of emergency or need. Consequently, this is why the father is the original representative of the Law as such; it was he who first uttered the word "No!" or, as Moses is said to have reported, "Thou shalt not!"

This symbolic father is equivalent to the dead father precisely because it is not a living being, but rather an operation or function of Western society. When Lacan

> interprets the Freudian account of the Oedipal conflict by claiming that it is essentially a symbolic matter, an act of substitution, a metaphorical operation . . . it is precisely in order to stress this relation to death, to distinguish between the father as an actual person . . . and the symbolic operation . . . by which the symbolic order of difference and mediation is established. (Shepherdson, 2000, p. 135)

The father as an actual person—that individual who is said to be the biological father of a child—is the "real father," and should be sharply distinguished from the symbolic father, which, as a function or operation, is "dead." To understand better what Lacan means by the symbolic or dead father, it is useful to recount the story of the primal horde in Freud's understudied monograph, *Totem and Taboo*.

In *Totem and Taboo* Freud tells a tale, extrapolated from Darwin, that he claims is homologous to the Oedipus myth and analogous to the development of each individual's psyche. Basically, the story goes like this: in the beginning there was a pack or horde of brothers ruled by a chief who kept all the women to himself. Resentful of the leader's unbridled sexual enjoyment, the brothers overthrow the primal father and murder him. "As soon as they kill him," reports Laurence Rickels, "they do what comes naturally: they devour him . . . and as they kill and devour the detested father, they double over with indigestion and ambivalence overload, and thus they find they must also mourn him, that they are already mourning him" (1999, p. 41). At first the ambivalence leads to chaos—the war of all against all that Hobbes envisioned. Eventually, however, the brothers are dominated by guilt and resurfaced love for the murdered father; they refashion the father as a "friendly ghost" or ideal father and then vow to follow his laws themselves and agree there will be no more inbreeding (Rickels, 1999, p. 41).

Unless one separates the imaginary father as an image and the symbolic father as a function, it is easy to get the two confused. In fact, it is this confusion that Lacan suggests is typical of psychosis, broadly conceived. Understanding the story of the primal horde as a useful myth, the imaginary father is first represented by the tyrannical father who imposes the incest taboo, and later as the friendly ghost, the ideal father. In this respect the imaginary father is "an imago, the composite of all the imaginary constructs that the subject builds up in fantasy around the figure of the father" (Evans, 1997, p. 92). Psychotics, or those individuals who are incapable of making distinctions between the world of images and the meaningful reality that most people share, typically confuse the symbolic father with the imaginary father. This is why the horde kills the primal father in a psychotic rage, and they are only able to recover from the resulting chaos, *bellum omnium contra omnes*, by integrating the law and, thereby, banishing madness. The primal father thus functions over the course of the story as the harbinger of the first taboo, the law of exogamy for the sake of sanity, and the first resounding "no" that brings stability via death (Freud, 1989b, pp. 500–503).

In life the primal father was powerful and was the law. However, in death he became even more powerful, for life is no longer a pre-condition for demands. For Lacan, this ghostly father that rules from beyond the grave is really no person at all (he is dead, after all), but the function of signification as such. What the myth of the primal horde and the dead father teaches us is that even if imaginary and real fathers represent the law, they cannot be or fully embody the law: the primal father was killed at the moment his corpse became the metaphor for the law of exogamy. In more common parlance, Lacan's understanding of the symbolic father as a legislative function articulates the "rule of law": that no-one is above or beyond the law, including those who claim to represent it.[7]

Like the stories of Oedipus and the primal horde, *War of the Worlds* demonstrates the interplay between the imaginary and the symbolic father, announcing at the onset that it is another tale of the dead father by underscoring paternal failure at almost every turn. In the widest narrative context, the failure of the State represents the patricide that leads to a state of emergency and a regression toward the state of nature (psychosis); the film thus collapses (or confuses) the imaginary and symbolic fathers in the figure of Ray, who becomes the paternal imago for the spectator. Ray is literally an imaginary father insofar as he is a film character (hence his "bad father" and eventual "good father" personae are stereotypes). As the world becomes chaotic on the screen, Ray also increasingly becomes a representative of the symbolic father. From a psychical standpoint, the film thus represents the way in which the fallen father or State is regurgitated by—or the way in which the paternal metaphor is integrated into—the broken but nevertheless functional family; *War of the Worlds* represents the triumph of the rule of law, the persistence of the dead father.

The film opens by establishing Ray as the typical "bad father" of filmic fantasy who has failed to emerge from his own adolescence: he is a half-hour late to receive his children at the beginning of the film; he drives a "hot rod" and is re-building a car engine on the kitchen table; he has no food in the house for his children to eat; when the destructive lightning begins to strike, he makes his daughter join him outside to watch it. In addition to his inability to protect and provide, Ray's status as a representative of the law's authority is also repeatedly questioned. While throwing a baseball with Robbie in the backyard, he orders his son to finish his homework: "Your mom says you got a report due Monday. You're gonna work on it when we're done here." Robbie says that it's almost finished, to which Ray responds insultingly, "Bullshit!" "Just do the report," continues Ray, "we don't send you to school so you can flunk out." Robbie then evokes the ideal father of the film, his step-father Tim: "You don't pay for it, Tim does." In this scene Ray is shown to be a powerless enforcer because of a lack of both economic stability and maturity; after Ray angrily throws the baseball into a basement window, his impotence is further underscored when ten-year-old Rachel counsels him on his parenting: "That's not how you're going to get to him. If you want him to listen to you have to … " Ray interrupts, "What are you, your mother? Or mine?" The figure of the mother is invoked here in terms of her prohibitive function: Ray sarcastically acknowledges his lack of authority by referring to the true parental power. In other words, in the opening diagetic space of the film, the mother represents the symbolic father. The plot is thus announced as a process of substitution: how will Ray escape his status as the bad father to replace the mother as the representative of the law?

In the plot of the film, the substitution of the mother is achieved by literally removing her from the screen: she and her new husband are off to Boston, leaving the children with the bad father. The gradual ascent of Ray from his status as bad father to his ability to protect and command as a good father, however, is relatively swift and complete by first hour of the film. Not coincidentally, this transformation is signalled in a scene in which the previously ambivalent state of nature takes a horridly Hobbesian turn: after the conflict with Robbie over Rachel in the rural setting, they drive for some miles until they gradually discover hundreds of people marching toward the Hudson river. Suddenly, the family is ambushed at dusk by what seems like hundreds of feverish men who desperately want their vehicle (viz., a primal horde of sorts). Ray ends up pulling and firing a gun to take control of the situation temporarily. Although Ray eventually loses the weapon to another angry and desperate man, in this violent scene Ray nevertheless establishes himself as the father who, however flawed, has the power to protect by means of transgression—because of his proximity to death. From this Hobbesian moment onward, Ray's children never doubt his status as their father—not simply as their real father, but in terms of his ability to represent the law in an otherwise lawless environment. Ray finally comes to occupy the position of the symbolic father—albeit precariously—protecting his children from chaos/psychosis.

Shortly after the family escapes this mob scene, however, Ray's function as the representative of the authority of the Law is challenged again by Robbie, and then re-established with his daughter. This second challenge from Robbie is not about rivalry for the mother (not traditionally Oedipal), but rather concerns Robbie's own desire to represent the Law by becoming a soldier with the power to kill (the primal horde). Running away from another site of alien attack (a ferry dock on the Hudson river), the family suddenly find themselves in the midst of yet another battle in a country field. Dazzled by the bright lights and the sound of explosions, irrationally—psychotically—Robbie runs away from Ray and Rachel with the obvious intent of joining the military.

The camera cuts to the top of a hill, where soldiers admit, with some frustration, that their weapons are having “no effect” on the alien ships. Leaving Rachel near a small tree, Ray runs toward the top of the hill and catches up with Robbie. They wrestle and Ray eventually wins by sitting on top of his son, signifying his resolute authority in this conflict. Like the military’s weapons, Ray’s words have no effect on Robbie: “I want you to listen to me,” screams Ray. Robbie responds, “I want to see this, I need to see this,” as Ray repeats over him, “No, you don’t! You don’t!” The spectator is then shown an apparently well-meaning couple trying to take Rachel, now yards away, and usher her to safety. As Rachel screams for Ray, he is forced to make a choice: either let his son go to his certain death, or rescue Rachel from the well-meaning couple. He must decide which life is expendable, and which is worth preserving; he must represent the Law at the very same time that he cannot completely occupy that function.

The son and father stand and face each other solemnly as Ray decides to violate his charge as a protector and let his son go. Manic and overcome with a sense of mission, Robbie runs resolutely over the hill toward the battle scene (a death wish indeed), while Ray retrieves his daughter from the couple, repeating, “I’m her father, I’m her father.” That Ray’s next words are “I’m her father” is significant because he is no longer Robbie’s father, thus hinting that, while he may be her “real father” in the space of the film, no-one can be the symbolic father. No-one can be the symbolic father, unless, of course, s/he is dead.

## *Signifying Substitutions, or, Film for/as Culture*

This understanding of the symbolic father as dead, or rather as the paternal metaphor and the legislative function that is not an actual person, has important implications for the Oedipus complex—implications that come before the sexual differentiation that is often said to be Freud’s central concern (see Shepherdson, 2000, pp. 115–151). Symbolically, the prohibitive function of the father concerns his intervention in the mother/infant dyad so that the child is introduced to the social world outside of that primary bond; in this respect, the father represents the “introduction of a third term,” a fundamental cut into social reality that puts an end to what is a kind of harmonic plenitude in which the child cannot distinguish itself from its mother (Lacan, 1993, pp. 92–97; Lacan, 2004, pp. 65–67). Understood symbolically, the father’s prohibition of the infant’s romantic love for the mother actually represents the demand that the child become a social subject and civic being (Lacan, 2004, pp. 297–300; also see Evans, 1997, pp. 61–64; Fink, 1995, pp. 55–58). In this way, the figure of the father embodies the charge to protect via prohibition, and thus the original conflicting expectations of the father—to protect and to deny—become two iterations of the same legislative operation. By denying the child complete identification with the mother, the father figure “triangulates” the relationship, giving the child another point of reference and thereby introducing her to the social world, the world outside of the myopic mother–infant dyad.[8] Without the intervention of the “No!” and the new point of reference for the child, Lacan argues, “the constitution of the subject is in jeopardy" (Shepherdson, 2000, p. 127). Lacan suggests that the unmediated subject can become psychotic, unable to distinguish between illusion and the symbolic world the rest of us share (Lacan, 1993, pp. 190–195). Metaphorically, the story of the primal horde details this: the brothers encounter the primal father as a limit or prohibition; they identify with the father by eating him; and thereby in guilt internalize "the law." They realize—only in retrospect—that the father's law was protecting them all the time. Regardless of which dead father story one prefers (Oedipus or the primal horde), self-conscious subjectivity is a succumbing to the symbolic world of meaning for sanity, the world of limitation and the world of "No!"[9]

The concept of the symbolic father helps us to rethink the Oedipal dimensions of *War of the Worlds* in a way that goes beyond Ray struggling to assume the position of the symbolic father. *War of the Worlds* can be read as a negotiation of the anxieties of subjectivity itself at multiple levels of the narrative. For example, the scene in which Ray and Robbie wrestle over whether the son will be allowed to flee to his ultimate doom can be read as the struggle of the psychotic subject to integrate the paternal metaphor, to succumb to the symbolic and overcome imaginary delusions (in this case, of grandeur). At no point in the scene is the spectator asked to empathize with Robbie's desire; we long, rather, for Robbie to accede to his father's command in the name of paternity alone (viz., the "Name-of-the-Father").[10] In other words, the father-imago of Ray is fashioned to help audiences negotiate social anxiety about the paternal function and to accept the Law, even if its representative—or, rather, especially because its representative—is a flawed human being, a former dead-beat.

Finally, understanding that the father is not simply a real person but someone who represents the Law implicates *War of the Worlds* in a larger cultural crisis of lawlessness that the bad, absent, or incompetent father betokens. Of course, Spielberg has acknowledged that problematic and haunted fathers are central to his most widely watched films; they reflect his once strained relationship with his own father after his parents divorced.[11] Spielberg's filmic fathers also register, however, a presumably alarming cultural trend decried by scholars who study the family:

> More and more single women are deliberately having children . . . and more and more lesbian couples are raising children, seemingly eschewing or downplaying the importance of the father. Combined with the de facto increase in the divorce rate and the consequent increase in the number of children being raised solely by their mothers, and with the growing antiauthoritarian attitude toward children among men . . . the paternal function seems to be in danger of extinction in certain social milieus. (Fink, 1997, p. 110)

Most recently fatherhood has been implicated in the so-called crisis of masculinity and the presumed decline in positive male role models for boys, which has been said to cause everything from truancy to gang violence (see Browning, 1999; Bush, 2001; Edwards, 2006; Silverstein & Auerbach, 2001).[12] Robbie's refusal of his father's authority and his blind march toward his own death reflects this cultural fantasy: without a positive father figure, young people go berserk.[13] However unfounded we find these cultural fantasies to be, what is instructive about them, and what a psychoanalytic approach helps us to see better, is that they are actually not about this or that specific and real father, but about the law-giving and law-sustaining function of the symbolic order or representation itself, "the paternal function." Lacan's theory of the father thus helps to explain how *War of the Worlds* works at a psycho-affective level toward a cultural politics external to the film. We can now suggest that the film also entails a warning—that without a sovereign, the polis goes berserk—because any politics of paternity is the politics of signification as such.

## The Third Term Refigured: On Paternal Sovereignty, or, the Politics of *War of the Worlds*

> [L]ife originally appears in law only as the counterpart of a power that threatens death. But what is valid for the pater's right of life and death is even more valid for sovereign power (imperium), of which the former constitutes the originary cell.
>
> Giorgio Agamben (2000, p. 5)

*War of the Worlds* was almost universally criticized for the implausible and unsatisfying focus on fatherhood in a more traditional (non-Lacanian) sense. After almost two hours of harrowing chase scenes, "numbing portrayals of social collapse," and "chilling references to 9/11," the story is resolved with a paean to passionate parenting: the film ends when Ray and Rachel are joyfully reunited with Robbie, the mother, and the new husband at the Boston home of the former in-laws. As one rather cloying review summarized, "when it's time to protect his kids, Ray is a great dad" (Wirt, 2005, para. 7). In part, this ending was panned because it is emotionally unfair: Spielberg asks audiences to open a wound by surfacing the memories of the real trauma that concentrates U.S. political discourse, but fails to close it by deliberately keeping the narrative apolitical; the questions of State authority and international political issues are deliberately back-grounded. As Stuart Klawans suggests, the rather mawkish conclusion with its Thanksgiving-style homecoming, particularly after excruciating "eruptions of violence, which in length and intensity surpass all expectation," points to a blind spot in Spielberg's vision. The director's refusal to see himself as the source of ecstatic violence without reason, Klawans argues, "deserves our attention," because "this refusal of self-knowledge" is homologous to the refusal of other "daily silences—the newscasts that don't reckon up the war dead, for example, or the conversations where people won't call incipient fascism by its name" (2005, p. 42). The critic suggests that it is as if the filmmaker threw a violently spectacular temper tantrum with profound and "vast political implications" that are abruptly abandoned in favor of teaching us that father knows best. Insofar as this father is dead, obviously Spielberg's silence bespeaks something off-screen.

The disjuncture between the narrative plot and the emotional experience of the spectator is the symptom of a deeper ideological labor that transcends any facile commentary on the successes and failures of the nuclear family. In the previous section I argued that the film restages the emergence of subjectivity by portraying the struggle to integrate the paternal metaphor. From a psychoanalytic vantage, I suggested that Ray and Robbie's rivalry is an Oedipal one better informed by the myth of the primal horde than the more familiar story of sexual differentiation (e.g., castration anxiety, penis envy, and so on). *War of the Worlds* is a narrative about the operation of the symbolic father and the way in which subjects either reject it, tempting psychosis, or accept it, becoming social subjects.

Insofar as *War of the Worlds* is a deliberate attempt to resurface and react to the trauma of September 11, 2001, however, the film is about the dead father not only socially but politically: the film is staging a drama in which Ray's ability to care for his children is compared to the State's ability to care for its people. For this reason Rousseau's commentary on the sovereign as father is no mere analogy (1988, p. 15). An attention to the plot of *War of the Worlds* in terms of the formal, symbolic function of the father figure as a representative of the Law re-characterizes the focus on the biological father and family unit as an ideologically informed displacement of the questions about governance and the State, in effect disguising a soul-deep longing for an effective and forceful leader with the power to destroy quickly any threat to security. *War of the Worlds* collapses the father and the sovereign at the site of affective intimacy.

### *What is a Sovereign?*

Much has been written about the concept of sovereignty since the eighteenth century, and one could easily detail many different types.[14] Previously I noted that theories of the sovereign are often advanced in relation to what a thinker believes about natural human tendencies in the "state of nature": Hobbes believed human nature is competitive and egoistic, and consequently argued for an absolute sovereign whose will is the law. Rousseau argued that human nature is essentially noble and good, and that sovereignty is the register of a social contract necessitated by increasing population and the need to coordinate and pool resources. After the advent of fascism and the horrific holocausts of the twentieth century, however, scholars have been drawn to discuss the inherently paradoxical character of the contemporary sovereign as a law-giver or enforcer who has the power to transgress the Law. Contemporary thinkers such as Giorgio Agamben, Michael Hardt, and Antonio Negri have even argued for the dissolution and abandonment of the sovereign in literal and conceptual terms.[15]

In (nascent) modernity, Hobbes resolved the paradox of the sovereign as a lawless authority of the Law by collapsing power and the Law, merging the political and juridical. The issue is more complicated with the popular sovereignty advanced by Rousseau, Locke, Jefferson, and others, however, because the sovereign is the result of the "will of the people" contracting under the rule of law. The paradox of sovereignty then concerns the relation between its power (or politics) and the rule of law, not in a state of normalcy but rather when asserting something exceptional, like martial law. In his career-long assault on liberalism, the political philosopher and Nazi jurist Carl Schmitt attempted to resolve this conceptual problem of the sovereign by embracing the paradox as its core: "[I]t is precisely the exception that makes relevant the subject of sovereignty, that is, the whole question of sovereignty" (1922, 2005, p. 5). Schmitt believed that in any established legal system there is a need for a leader who stands between chaos and the Law, a leader who has the power to decide what is and is not a state of emergency to help maintain the legitimacy of the illiberal State. Giorgio Agamben's insightful analysis of Schmitt's theories underscores the philosophical and (social) theoretical implications of Schmitt's notion of sovereignty in a way that helps us to see better the cultural politics of the paternal metaphor in *War of the Worlds.*[16]

According to Agamben, Schmitt's notion of sovereignty is established or founded in moments of crisis and anomie. This is why, for Schmitt, sovereignty is fundamentally a "borderline concept," which does not mean that it is vague or ambiguous, but rather that the character of sovereignty cannot be discerned from the mundane or routine, but only at the extremes. The fundamental character of sovereignty is only discernable when events suggest a regression to the state of nature, when a polis is unquestionably in some kind of emergency, because its power is fundamentally and decisively transgressive. "Sovereign is he who decides on the state of exception," writes Schmitt, meaning that the sovereign is the body or individual who is, paradoxically, legally sanctioned to declare an exceptional right to lawlessness in states of emergency (Schmitt, 2005, pp. 5–15). Sovereignty is defined in such a moment. Such a view is comparable to Freud's primal father and Lacan's characterization of the symbolic father: the sovereign—be it a group or an individual—has the legal power to determine when there is an exception to the Law. Just as a child sees a real father as a god-like figure who has the power to transgress his own rules, so may the sovereign come to function as a kind of legalized figure of lawlessness in the eyes of his subjects.

Insofar as the state of emergency staged by *War of the Worlds* foregrounds no obvious sovereign, the only sense in which the sovereign appears on screen is in the figure of Ray; the character does double duty. In other words, when we understand that both real fathers and the state are representatives of the symbolic father—that is, both are legislative and both stand in for the power to protect and prohibit—then Ray represents the sovereign. If this is the case, at some point in the film one would expect the fantasy father to assert a "state of exception." The character of Ray, of course, does assert an exceptional state at multiple points in the film: against the protest of a mechanic, he steals the only working vehicle to rescue his children; when the family is overcome by a mob, Ray pulls a gun and threatens to kill those who do not stand back; and the second time Robbie pleads to leave and join the military, Ray makes an exception to moral demand and lets his son go.

Political exception is not merely defined in terms of the law, then, but also relates to the relaxing of moral and social norms. As the concept represents a nexus of moral and legal spheres, in both philosophical ethics and everyday life, murder is frequently the paradigm topic for discussing what does and does not count as an "exceptional state" (e.g., what constitutes "extenuating circumstances" for killing, and so on). Consequently, one should not be surprised to learn that issues of sovereignty are negotiated in *War of the Worlds* in scenes that concern the murder of "friends," not foes. The most dramatic scene in which Ray invokes the power of the sovereign to suspend the law is, indeed, the first, visible act of human murder that comes after a lengthy, twenty-minute build.

After Robbie leaves to join the military and Ray rescues Rachel in the country field, they are shepherded into a farmhouse cellar by an emergency medical technician (EMT) and ambulance driver, Harlan Ogilvy (played by Tim Robbins.) The dramatic climax of the film actually takes place in the cellar with Ogilvy, a character who gradually becomes unhinged. While they are holed up in the cellar, as their food supply dwindles, Ogilvy begins to make veiled threats to Ray, and suggests to Rachel that when her father dies he will take care of her. Oedipal rivalry builds between the men over the custody and care of Rachel. The group is visited by an alien spy periscope, and Ogilvy almost blows their cover in a crazed panic. Fearing for the life of his daughter, Ray decides that they are in an exceptional situation and serious, moral transgressions are justified. The shooting script describes the scene well:

> From the other room [a deeper cellar], Ogilvy can be heard ranting, LOUD. RACHEL: "(a whisper) Dad?" Ray finds what he was looking for, or something close enough anyway. It's an old tee shirt. He goes to Rachel and drops to his knees in front of her. RACHEL: "What are you doing?" RAY: "No matter what you hear, do not take this off. Okay?" . . . Ray reaches out and wraps the tee shirt around her head, tying it firmly in the back. . . . We [the spectator/camera] stay on Rachel's face, half-covered by the dirty tee shirt, and see none of what follows, we only hear the sounds and see the reactions on Rachel's obscured face. (Friedmann & Koepp, 2005, p. 109)

As Rachel winces, Ray enters the room with Ogilvy, the door closes, and sounds of a struggle are heard as Rachel sings "Hushabye Mountain." The soundtrack's pounding percussion builds for an excruciating thirty seconds until, abruptly, Rachel stops singing and Ray emerges from the deeper cellar room in silence. The spectator knows that Ray has just done something exceptional—he has murdered a man—but was morally sanctioned to do so in his capacity as a father.

For the spectator, what is disturbing about this scene is the way in which its transgression is foregrounded and contrasted with the carnage taking place outside of the cellar. The murder scene occurs three-quarters of the way through the plot's sequence and takes place after the viewer has seen countless killings by the aliens. Up until this scene, one human after the next has been seen vaporized in quick succession to mindnumbing excess. The scene in the cellar, however, builds to the murder over a long period of time. One gets to "know" the victim, and is made to feel anguished with Ray about the decision. Furthermore, we do not see the murder; we only hear it. Visually, the spectator is shown the attractive, lily-white face of a child whose eyes are covered with a dirty, dark green blindfold. The contrast of the visual signifiers of innocence with the sonorous signifiers of murder and death is jarring—even more excruciating than the rather explicit death-by-heat-ray scenes in the inaugural massacre scene. This contrast between aliens and the father figure in terms of the style of violence is obviously meant to underscore the profound responsibility of the individual who declares the state of exception. Less obviously, the scene glorifies the figure of the father as an authority of lawlessness, a loveable outlaw who will do anything to protect his daughter.

Because *War of the Worlds* is a commentary on Nine-eleven, lauding such a model of symbolic fatherhood/sovereignty may be more dangerous and politically disastrous than some spectators realize. As we saw with Lacan's reading of the myth of the primal scene, no-one can be the symbolic father; it is an operation that represents how the subject internalizes the symbolic world to become a self-conscious subject. The only way to become the symbolic father is through death. However, Lacan does not discuss the real-world consequences of attempting to become the Law other than psychosis. It is Giorgio Agamben who explains the disastrous, real-world, political consequences of collapsing the symbolic and imaginary fathers.

From the perspective of Agamben's work, what is disturbing about the murder scene, as well as many that precede it, is the way in which it underwrites the political legitimacy of sovereignty in terms of an essentially negative view of human nature—a view in which guilt and love does not motivate people toward order. For both Freud and Lacan, communal order is established by internalizing the paternal metaphor, and the motive to do so is the ambivalence of guilt and love. Although there are instances in which people are seen to be "noble" in *War of the Worlds*, all the major, decisive moments in the film's plot turn on the essential, psychotic brutality of human beings who exhibit neither guilt nor compassion: both Ray and Ogilvy demonstrate every Hobbesian characteristic of the paradigm human in the state of nature; they are egoistic, competitive, distrustful of each other, and seek their own power and glory (albeit in differing ways). Presumably, what justifies Ray's murder of Ogilvy is his "natural" mandate to protect Rachel. Analogously, the ideological justification that *War of the Worlds* advances in favor of the sovereign is the fantasy of the social contract based on a negative, Hobbesian view of human essence. In this problematic view, the social contract is actually a ruse, a misdirection for a forced-feeding of the dead father.

## *What is a Paternal Sovereign?*

> It is obvious that a soldier takes his superior, that is, in fact, the leader of the arm, as his ideal, while he identifies himself with his equals, and derives from this community of their egos the obligations for giving mutual help and for sharing possessions which comradeship implies.
>
> Freud, 1959, p. 85

From a psychoanalytic standpoint, thus far I have suggested that the figure of the sovereign is a representative of the symbolic father who embodies the function of protection and prohibition. In other words, the paternal metaphor has many substitutes, and for a people the most significant and potentially deadly one is the sovereign. From a political standpoint, most individuals understand this figure in terms of the monarch, the autocrat, or simply the dictator. In dictatorial regimes, the sovereign is the one who has the power to decide who counts as a human being worthy of consideration (e.g., of citizenship) and who is expendable. In light of

Rousseau's theory of the social contract, of course, *War of the Worlds* is merely one of many Western fantasies that collapse the father and the sovereign; in fact, such a collapse into a singular figure has a name. In the philosophical tradition, the political leader who claims to be the symbolic father is the "paternal sovereign," a concept first and most famously advanced as the "philosopher king" in Plato's *Republic* and continued in Hobbes' *Leviathan* (Plato, 1945, pp. 189–193).

What is troublesome about the paternal sovereign is that, first and foremost, no-one can be the symbolic father; the paternal sovereign is effectively a deceit. Second, more often than not the paternal sovereign is portrayed as benevolent in Western fantasy. Perhaps because he is usually explicitly paternal, rarely is his absolute power of discernment questioned. As a representative of the paternal sovereign in *War of the Worlds*, for example, Ray's murder of Ogilvy is excruciating but ultimately justifiable, insofar as he is the only figure with the power of judgment in an undeniably exceptional state. Whether or not one believes, as does Agamben, that an exodus from contemporary sovereignty is possible (or as Hardt and Negri would have it, inevitable), we know from history that an ideology of paternal sovereignty is problematic because it promotes the concentration of political power into a single figure or leader who asserts the right to murder others in terms of a "natural" or "elected" mandate. If the sovereign is the one who "decides on the state of exception," as Schmitt argues, then the paternal sovereign is the one who decides who is and is not worthy of life in such a state as well in the name of protection. What is unclear in many contemporary discussions of sovereignty is how such a figure comes to power: why do people accept a paternal sovereign? Or, put differently: what is the appeal of the dictator and demagogue?

In his lesser known later works, such as *Totem and Taboo* and *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, Freud set forth a theory of group behavior and leadership that Mark Edmundson (2006) argues anticipated the most infamous paternal sovereign in recent history—Adolph Hitler. Arguing that groups or communities behave in a manner that is analogous to the individual psyche, Freud's theory of political leadership begins with the assumption that groups are only sustained over the long term by strong leaders. Downplaying the theory advanced by Gustave Le Bon that crowds function somewhat autonomously with a collective mind, Freud argued that most significant communities and groups persist only to the degree that they have a powerful leader who inspires the transference (that is, the misattribution of feelings about an early childhood relationship with a parental figure to a leader). Freud suggested that strong, paternalistic leaders come to stand in for the superego, which is that aspect of the individual psyche that functions as a social authority (essentially, an aspect of paternal metaphor). Moreover, leaders come to occupy the place of the superego in a demonstrably erotic manner that helps to quell, however temporarily, a default psychic discomfort that every self-conscious subject experiences. Another way to put this is, again, with reference to the story of the primal horde: strong leaders evoke feelings for the post-hoc ideal father—that friendly ghost which represents powerfully positive (and impossible) images of benevolence.

So how does a leader hijack infantile feelings for the ideal father and function as the superego? For Freud, this happens through the transference of intimacy among different representatives of the symbolic father. The individual psyche is conflicted between the demands of the Law and human drives and desires, which the ego ceaselessly mediates. Edmundson elegantly explains that:

> Humanity, Freud says, has come up with many different solutions to the problem of internal conflict and the pain it inevitably brings. Most of these solutions, Freud thinks, are best described as forms of intoxication. What the intoxicants in question generally do is revise the superego to make it more bearable. . . . Falling in love . . . has a similar effect [to drinking wine]. Love—romantic love, the full-out passionate variety—allows the ego to be dominated by the wishes and judgment of the beloved, not by [the superego]. The beloved supplants the over-I [superego] . . . and sheds glorious approval on the beloved and so creates a feeling of almost magical well-being. Take a drink (or two), take a lover, and suddenly the internal conflict in the psyche calms down. A divided being becomes a whole, united, and (temporarily) happier one. (2006, para. 7)

Consequently, Freud argued that "love relationships" constitute a group just as they do a family, and they make both cohere by revising individual superegos. These relations, however, necessarily need an individual or person who has the power to recognize them or the crowd will disperse. For example, Freud argues that the two "artificial groups" of the church and army are held together by the "illusion" of "equal love" from the "Catholic-Church-Christ" or the "Commander-In-Chief." The story here is that a paternal figure comes to power by standing in for the individual superego via love. The leader remains in power, Freud suggests, insofar as s/he is able to permit some transgressions that were previously prohibited by the individual superego. Freud's answer to the question "Why do people come to accept a dictator?" is simply that they love him.

Combined with Lacan's understanding of the symbolic father, Freud's theory of group psychology helps to explain why a film like *War of the Worlds* participates in the erotic economy of the contemporary political scene: after seemingly countless images of destruction, the character of Ray—played by well-known "hunk" Tom Cruise—emerges as the love object and, eventually, the paternal sovereign. The feelings of yearning and love (as well as the adrenaline rush) inspired by the action and violence of *War of the Worlds* are scopophilic and directly related to the "ideological apparatus" of the cinema itself, which is why film in general has such a powerful, emotional effect on spectators.[17] What is particularly powerful about the ideological promotion of paternal sovereignty in *War of the Worlds*, then, is the psychical transference of affective intimacy between the father figure and the paternal sovereign, its unrelenting violence (which overdetermines the yearning for a sovereign), and the "suturing" of the movie-going experience itself (Silverman, 1983, pp. 194–236). The ideological effect and affect of the film is thus not simply reducible to the plot, which promotes an essentialist view of human nature as fundamentally "ugly," or reducible to its tacit call for a sovereign to save the world.[18] What is noteworthy about *War of the Worlds* is the way in which the spectator is made to feel helpless in the service of these plot features as an operation of substitution with the paternal metaphor: the State fails at every turn, and the spectator is forced to see Ray as the only figure of hope. Ray asserts the state of exception at every crucial event in the plot, and the spectator is caused to love him.

## Concluding Remarks: Cruising (for) Bush

> Americans love their masters not simply in spite of their frailties but because of them.
>
> Joan Copjec, 1994, p. 149

In this essay I have argued that *War of the Worlds* tacitly promulgates an ideology of paternal sovereignty through its negotiation of the father figure. Insofar as *War of the Worlds* deliberately recalls the events of September 11, 2001, and negotiates trauma by restaging the subjective integration of the paternal metaphor, the film directly intervenes and participates in contemporary social and political realities. Socially the film restages the Oedipal process whereby a child becomes a subject by accepting the father as a representative of the authority of the symbolic world. To show how this is the case, I rehearsed Lacan's refiguring of Oedipal rivalry in terms of the primal horde and the dead father—not the story of sexual differentiation that is usually associated with Freud's theories. The spectator's affective response to the film is in part explained by the way in which the film restages the subject's introduction to the social world by integrating the paternal metaphor.

On the basis of this psychosocial labor, however, the film also mediates contemporary political discourse in two ways. First, like most of Spielberg's widely watched films, *War of the Worlds* reflects current anxieties about the decline of the father figure in the United States and the consequent fantasy of the erosion of the nuclear family. Related to this cultural commentary, however, is a second, more disturbing ideological labor: the film works to transfer the feelings of intimacy engendered for a representative of the symbolic father to the figure of the paternal sovereign—from the social sphere of familial life to the political domain of the State. As Lacan shows us, because the symbolic father is ultimately an operation or function and not a person, Ray's doubling as a familial father and sovereign is a matter of figural substitution at the level of fantasy. The affective economy set into motion by *War of the Worlds*, however, is the very same economy that underwrites contemporary political discourse. Consequently, I have suggested that the film, however unwittingly, is a pedagogy of dictatorship.

At this point I hope it is no surprise to readers that the analysis of *War of the Worlds* offered thus far is also a commentary on the Bush II administration.[19] Although this essay advances an analysis of *War of the Worlds*, the critique is meant to detail how all cultural productions—not simply so-called news, presidential speeches, political talk shows, newspaper columns, and so on—participate in the affective economy of the political. As a story about fathers and an obvious restaging of the trauma of Nine-eleven, it is difficult to read *War of the Worlds* outside of the context of the United States government's post-Nine-eleven policies—policies which, until recently, were widely supported by U.S. citizens. Although psychoanalytic theory has its limitations, it is particularly useful for explaining the influence of affect in contemporary life; the social and political function of the symbolic father helps us to explain how *War of the Worlds* can be understood as a reflection of the very same affective preconditions that led to the support of a "real life" paternal sovereign for two terms of office.

As a number of scholars have commented, the conception of the sovereign as the one who can assert the state of exception, and as the one who decides what is and is not valuable life in the name of protection, is easily illustrated by contemporary political and legal events.[20] In *War of the Worlds* no political sovereign steps forward in the name of the symbolic father after the alien attacks. Shortly after Nine-eleven on September 14, 2001, however, George W. Bush toured "ground zero" and visited firefighters in a highly publicized attempt to reconstitute his authority:

> During his visit he stood atop the hulk of a New York City fire engine, which was partially buried in the rubble, and addressed a group of construction workers. One of the workers yelled, "We can't hear you." To that, Bush responded, "I hear you, the rest of the world hears you, and the people who knocked down these buildings will hear all of us soon!" ("43rd President," 2004, para. 25)

After Nine-eleven the Bush II administration has repeatedly declared that the country is in a state of emergency (or in a "war on terror") and has asserted that many of the controversial practices of the military and other government bodies (e.g., wire tapping, torture, and so on) are exceptions to the rule of law.[21] In recent memory the most familiar assertion of paternal sovereignty in the Schmittian vein was George W. Bush's "military order" on November 13, 2001, that authorized the indefinite detention of suspected "terrorists" at prison camps in Guantánamo Bay (Agamben, 2005, pp. 3–4).

Agamben argues that these more recent, post-Nine-eleven assertions of sovereignty are problematic—indeed, dire—for two reasons. First, they reflect a dark view of human nature as fundamentally dangerous or "evil," which contributes to the dehumanization and destruction of others as "terrorists." *War of the Worlds*' many traumatic scenes—most especially the brutal carjacking and the murder of Ogilvy—reflect this view; as wave after wave of the "evil" alien Other decimates throngs of humans, the spectator is made to yearn for their decimation as well. Although the aggressive feelings inspired by the film concern either computer-generated monsters or over-acting extras, these are the same feelings that have been cultivated in Bush's post-Nine-eleven speechcraft: feelings of survival and vengeance. Second, such assertions of sovereignty are symptomatic of a troubling political trend first noted by Walter Benjamin in the wake of the first total war and in the shadow of the second: "[T]he 'state of emergency' in which we live is not the exception but the rule"—meaning that the norm has collapsed into the exception, thereby tempting atrocity (Benjamin, 2003, p. 392). As *War of the Worlds* demonstrates, when a paternal sovereign asserts a continual and never-ending state of exception, "when the state of emergency becomes the rule," then "the political system transforms into an apparatus of death" (Agamben, n.d., para. 29).

Fortunately, *War of the Worlds* may also serve as a warning. Whatever one's personal political beliefs, it is clear that the international community thinks that George W. Bush has abused his sovereign power in the so-called war on terror. A 2006 poll conducted last November by the British newspaper *The Guardian* revealed that the United States is "now seen as a threat to world peace by its closest neighbors and allies" (Glover, 2006, para. 1). The poll report concludes: "British voters see George Bush as a greater danger to world peace than either North Korean leader Kim Jong-il, or the Iranian president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad" (Glover, 2006, para. 2). These opinions are not new, since the descriptions of Bush as a "dictator" and "demagogue" surfaced long before public attitudes about the war in Iraq began to sour significantly in 2005; criticisms of his cowboy, go-it-alone style of foreign policy were widely known before the 2004 election. In light of these blunt criticisms of the president, the question many have asked is: Why was a leader roundly criticized as dictatorial, hardheaded, and intellectually limited re-elected to office? Although his popularity has finally dwindled as a consequence of the failures in Iraq, why did people so fervently support the leadership and policies of George W. Bush?

Many pollsters and scholars have responded to the "why?" question by arguing that a large part of the answer is Bush's war on terror.[22] Echoing the opinion of a number of commentators and scholars, Peter Hart, a well-known public opinion research analyst, argues that the threat of terrorism decisively won Bush the election in 2004. What few have discussed, however, is the affective economy set into motion by the war on terror and the central role of Bush as a father figure who inspires feelings of love: as Freud said of group leaders in general, Bush's continued success among a certain public has to do with his ability to refashion the superego such that previously impermissible acts—such as torture, wars of aggression, phone-tapping, and so on—become permissible as a consequence of a new, exceptional state of affairs.

In Bush's case, however, the Freudian model requires a Lacanian revision. Whereas strong, dictatorial leaders of the World War II era represent flawless sovereigns, a political creatures of absolute autonomy impervious to critique, even those few who continue to support Bush today are cognizant of his many shortcomings. The persistence of Bush is only explained by the way in which he inspires love in spite of his impotence, by the way in which feelings for a strong father have been transferred to a dictator, and in this sense the arc of the Bush presidency closely models that of *War of the Worlds*' plot: the Bush presidency began with the theme of "dead beat"; Bush's meteoric rise to popularity was a direct consequence of Nine-eleven and the feelings of desperation and impending catastrophe catalyzed by the death of thousands. *War of the Worlds* not only replicates the feelings of Nine-eleven, but also uncannily tracks the narrative trajectory of George W. Bush's rise to popularity as a paternal sovereign. Such a homology implicates what Lacanian critic Joan Copjec has termed the "*unvermögender* Other"—the impotent father or daddy without means—as more central to the patriarchal sovereign of contemporary American political fantasy than

Freud's ideal, unassailable dictator of the past. The spectator falls in love with Tom Cruise's character Ray in *War of the Worlds* because of Ray's shortcomings, which remind us that he is like us, and because he protects his children and comes to adopt the position of the symbolic father.[23] Similarly, our sitting president was party to the same fantasy, moving from "bad" father toward the achievement of good parenting ("When it's time to protect his people, George is a great dad!"). If one wants to understand why George W. Bush garnered support as a paternal sovereign, she needs to see *War of the Worlds* and reflect on what he feels about Ray.

## Notes

[1] I deliberately refer to the events of September 11, 2001 as "Nine-eleven" to underscore their fetishization and commodification.

[2] "With War of the Worlds he [Spielberg] has made what is arguably one of the best 1950s science fiction films ever, and that is not a backhanded compliment" (Turan, 2005, para. 2).

[3] If films can be read as the collective dreaming of a people, then *War of the Worlds* can also be described as a nightmare registering the fears of a polis besieged by "terrorists" less than six years ago (Rushing & Frentz, 1995, p. 47).

[4] Owing to the undeniable Spielberg "brand" and my remarks about intention, some readers may be tempted to dismiss the following analysis as a variation of auteur theory. As I go on to argue, however, the affective economy of the film is largely an unconscious production; Spielberg would probably bridle at the suggestion that *War of the World*s supports or reflects the post-Nine-eleven popularity of the Bush administration.

[5] My repeated references to "policemen" instead of "police officers" are deliberate, as this reflects not only what is seen on screen, but also the masculine coding of authority throughout the film.

[6] More technically, the "real father" is the individual who is said to be the father, not necessarily the biological father, which implies that even the real father is a symbolic subject.

[7] In the stories of Oedipus and the primal horde, the father's transgressions are punished by death (Oedipus, one recalls, blinds himself and wanders in darkness when he realizes his violation of the law of exogamy). The lesson here is that no-one can be the law, and neither can s/he fully represent the law. Furthermore, Lacan eventually argues that even the law or symbolic itself contains a perversion or "gap" that indicates that we "can no longer rely on the Father's guarantee" (Lacan, 1992, p. 100; see Shepherdson, 2000, pp. 115–121).

[8] Again, this theoretical point is more technical but space does not permit a full explanation. The function of the "paternal metaphor" here is to provide a new object choice for the child, and thereby an escape for the narcissism of primary identification (see Shepherdson, 2000, pp. 121–140).

[9] For Lacan, then, the symbolic father is really nothing more than a metaphor for the institution of what he calls the symbolic order, the world of language and representation. This order is often contrasted with the "imaginary" and the "real"; however, space prevents a thorough account of Lacan's three registers.

[10] I should note that at times Lacan refers to the symbolic father as the "Name-of-the-Father" in order to emphasize that it is a function, and not a person. Extending an example first described by Fink (1997, p. 80), the present discussion of Lacan's theory of the father is a good example of the theory: throughout this section I have invoked the name of Lacan as a signifier of authority, not the flesh-and-blood human being of Lacan (who is, in fact, a real dead daddy); his name turns on some and turns off others, but it is the appeal to the name

itself that rhetorically communicates authority. The Name-of-the-Father is another term for what rhetoricians term "appeals to authority."

[11] The Oedipal themes central to his films are numerous:

> Indiana Jones, for example, was estranged from his Holy Grail-chasing father in *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*. Cruise's futuristic investigator in *Minority Report* is haunted by his failure to protect a dead son. The robot boy in *A.I. Artificial Intelligence* was searching for a connection with his creator "father." And a fussy grown-up Peter Pan in *Hook* neglected his children until they were snatched away to Never Land, where he rediscovers his better nature. (Breznican, 2005, p. 1A; also see Stephens, 1997)

[12] Most recently this "crisis" has been centered on the absent father in the African American community; however, rhetoric about the perils of the absent father has been steadily building in over the past century in Europe and the United States.

[13] *Prima facie*, the reason for State failure in *War of the Worlds* has to do with its explicit ideological message: the film is a call to parental duty in the wake of a disaster or crisis, a theme discernable in many of Spielberg's family-oriented films, such as *E.T.*, *The Goonies*, and *Poltergeist*. In addition to its commentary on the decline of father figures in the United States, the movie also intones: "When your government can no longer protect you, a (broken) family can!" In this respect, *War of the Worlds* is arguably a resurrection of the bourgeois concept of family as the only viable protection from capitalism or catastrophe (see Engels, 1999; Zaretsky, 1986).

[14] For an overview of the many different types of sovereignty, see the entry on the concept in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/sovereignty/).

[15] Hardt and Negri, for example, argue that the sovereign, wed to the nation state, is functionally a single, transcendent power that has been (or is being) liquidated by capitalism, which operates on a plane of immanence; its contemporary replacement is an emerging "empire" (see Hardt & Negri, 2000, pp. 235–348).

[16] My thanks to Kenneth Rufo for stressing the importance of distinguishing Schmitt's concern with the legal from Agamben's concern with the social.

[17] I am thinking in particular of Jean-Louis Baudry's theory of the "cinematic apparatus" (see de Lauretis & Heath, 1980).

[18] From an interview with David Koepp:

> "[A]s long as everything's pretty much copasetic, we're okay. But as soon as we get scared, or threatened, or something's being taken from us"—DK: "Yeah—we get ugly. . . . We were in a story meeting one day, when I was maybe halfway though the *War of the Worlds* script. I had show the first have to Steven [Spielberg] and he said: 'I want you to remember, though, that in times of great disaster . . . it does tend to bring out the best in people. . . . I said, 'Yes, you're absolutely right,' and went home and wrote the carjacking scene, where it's as ugly as ugly gets. In part, because I'm still a teenager and I have to rebel against Dad, but also because [I am not optimistic like Spielberg]." (Friedmann & Koepp, 2005, p. 150)

[19] So, too, is my work on Huey Pierce Long; this essay is intended as its counterpart (see Gunn, 2007).

[20] Moreover, Alan Wolfe argues, " Schmitt's way of thinking about politics pervades the contemporary zeitgeist in which Republican conservatism has flourished, often in ways so prescient as to be eerie" (Wolfe, 2004, para. 7).

[21] The many legal transgressions of the United States government are detailed in the most recent report issued by the United Nations (2006).

[22] For a good overview of the answers given, see James E. Campbell's study (2005, pp. 219–241).

[23] Arguably, another reason is because, after numerous controversial statements and appearances promoting the film, in the public eye Tom Cruise is a hopelessly misguided Scientologist.

## References

43rd president of the United States. (2004, Nov. 19). *Canadian Broadcasting Company Online.* Retrieved May 29, 2007 from http://www.cbc.ca/news/background/bush/

Agamben, G. (n.d.). *The state of emergency.* Paper presented at the Centre Roland-Barthes at the University of Paris VII, Denis-Diderot. Retrieved February 11, 2006 from http://www.generation-online.org/p/fpagambenschmitt.htm

Agamben, G. (2000). *Means without end: Notes on politics* (V. Binetti & C. Casarino, Trans.). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Agamben, G. (2005). *State of exception* (K. Attell, Trans.). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Benjamin, W. (2003). On the concept of history (E. Jephcott, Trans.). In H. Eiland & M. W. Jennings (Eds.), *Walter Benjamin: Selected writings, Volume 4, 1938–1940* (pp. 389–400). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Biesecker, B. (2002). Remembering World War II: The rhetoric and politics of national commemoration at the turn of the 21st century. *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, *88*, 393–410.

Breznican, A. (2005, June 24). Spielberg's family values. *USA Today*, p. 1A.

Browning, C. (1999). Crisis of fatherhood. *Christian Century*, *116*, 796–797.

Bush, G. W. (2001). *President Bush speaks at the Fourth National Summit on Fatherhood (text of speech)*. Retrieved October 23, 2006 from http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/06/20010607-3.html

Campbell, J. E. (2005). Why Bush won the presidential election of 2004: Incumbency, ideology, terrorism, and turnout. *Political Science Quarterly*, *120*, 219–241.

Copjec, J. (1994). *Read my desire: Lacan against the historicists.* Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

de Lauretis, T., & Heath, S. (Eds.). (1980). *The cinematic apparatus.* New York: St. Martin's Press.

Edmundson, M. (2006, April 30). Freud and the fundamentalist urge. *The New York Times.* Retrieved April 30, 2006, from http://http://www.nytimes.com/2006/04/30/magazine/30wwln_lede.html

Edwards, T. (2006). *Cultures of masculinity.* New York: Routledge.

Engels, F. (1999). *Origin of the family, private property and the state.* New York: Pathfinder Press.

Evans, D. (1997). *An introductory dictionary of psychoanalysis.* New York: Routledge.

Fink, B. (1995). *The Lacanian subject: Between jouissance and language.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Fink, B. (1997). *A clinical introduction to Lacanian psychoanalysis: Theory and technique.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Freud, S. (1959). *Group psychology and the analysis of the ego* (J. Strachey, Trans.). New York: W.W. Norton.

Freud, S. (1961). *New introductory lectures on psycho-analysis* (J. Strachey, Trans.). New York: W.W. Norton.

Freud, S. (1989a). The dissolution of the Oedipus complex (J. Strachey, Trans.). In P. Gay (Ed.), *The Freud reader* (pp. 661–65). New York: W.W. Norton.

Freud, S. (1989b). *The Freud reader* (P. Gay, Ed.). New York: W.W. Norton.

Friedmann, J., & Koepp, D. (2005). *War of the Worlds: The shooting script.* New York: Newmarket Press.

Glover, J. (2006, November 3). British believe Bush is more dangerous than Kim Jong-il. *The Guardian.* Retrieved November 4, 2006, from http://www.guardian.co.uk/usa/story/0,,1938434,00.html

Gunn, J. (2007). Hystericizing Huey: Emotional appeal, desire, and the psychodynamics of demagoguery. *Western Journal of Communication*, *71*, 1–27.

Hardt, M., & Negri, A. (2000). *Empire*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Hobbes, T. (1651). *The leviathan*. Retrieved February 18, 2006, from http://oregonstate.edu/instruct/phl302/texts/hobbes/leviathan-c.html#chapterxiii

Keane, S. (2001). *Disaster movies: The cinema of catastrophe*. London: Wallflower.

Klawans, S. (2005, August 8). Alien Nation. *The Nation*, *281*, 41–44.

Lacan, J. (1992). *The seminar of Jacques Lacan, book VII: The ethics of psychoanalysis, 1959–1960* (D. Porter, Trans.). New York: W.W. Norton.

Lacan, J. (1993). *The seminar of Jacques Lacan, book III: The psychoses, 1955–1956* (J.-A. Miller, Trans.). New York: W.W. Norton.

Lacan, J. (2004). *Écrits: A selection* (B. Fink, Trans.). New York: W.W. Norton.

Morrissey, S. (1987). Ask [Recorded by The Smiths]. On *Louder Than Bombs* [CD]. New York: Warner Brothers.

Rawls, J. (1999). *A theory of justice* (rev. ed.). Cambridge, MA: Belknap/Harvard.

Rickels, L. A. (1999). *The vampire lectures*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Rousseau, J.-J. (1988). *The social contract* (G.D.H. Cole, Trans.). Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books.

Rushing, J. H., & Frentz, T. S. (1995). *Projecting the shadow: The cyborg hero in American film*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Schmitt, C. (2005). *Political theology: Four chapters on the concept of sovereignty* (G. Schwab, Trans.). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Shepherdson, C. (2000). *Vital signs: Nature, culture, psychoanalysis*. New York: Routledge.

Silverman, K. (1983). *The subject of semiotics*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Silverstein, L. B., & Auerbach, C. F. (2001). The myth of the 'normal family'. *USA Today Magazine*, *129*, 30–32.

Stephens, C. (1997). The lost world. *Film Comment*, *33*, 12–15.

Turan, K. (2005, June 29). *War of the Worlds*. *Los Angeles Times*. Retrieved February 11, 2006, from http://www.calendarlive.com/movies/turan/cl-et-world29jun29,0,1011790.story

Tyler, J. (2005). *War of the Worlds*. *Cinemablend.com*. Retrieved February 4, 2006, from http://www.cinemablend.com/review.php?id=1024

United Nations Economic and Social Council, Commission on Human Rights. (2006). *Situation of detainees at Guantanamo Bay* (62 sess., doc. E.CN.4.2006.120).

Wenner, J. S. (2004). "Why Bush won: A look at the numbers, what they really mean and what happens next." *Rolling Stone*. Retrieved January 13, 2008, from http://www.rollingstone.com/politics/story/6635544/why_bush_won/

Wirt, J. (2005). *War of the Worlds* a summer spectacular. *The Advocate*. Retrieved February 2, 2006, from http://www.2theadvocate.com/entertainment/movies/reviews/1787416.html

Wolfe, A. (2004, April 2). A fascist philosopher helps us understand contemporary politics. *The Chronicle Review*. Retrieved February 18, 2006 from http://chronicle.com/free/v50/i30/30b01601.htm

Zaretsky, E. (1986). *Capitalism, the family, and personal life* (rev. ed.). New York: Harper & Row.