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**FIGHTING WORDS: TRAUMA AND RE-COVERY
IN/AND THE DISCOURSES OF PUGILISM**

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Abstract

This thesis applies trauma theory to three boxing genres: autobiography, fiction, and film, respectively. I examine boxing, a sport that puts the male body on display, as being constitutionally split between sadism and masochism, masculinity and femininity. I argue that boxing culture, as well as the culture beyond the ring, attempts to overcome the fragmentation, the trauma, that results from this division by identifying with the winning, not the losing, boxer, thereby reentrenching the myth of male presence; however, by examining David Savran's and Kaja Silverman's theories of male subjectivity as well as Joyce Carol Oates's On Boxing, I demonstrate that what we call "male presence" is really a cover for "male absence." In the conclusion, therefore, I argue that Muhammad Ali, rather than asserting a re-recovery from trauma, attests to the trauma at the heart of male subjectivity, thereby undermining male presence, what Kaja Silverman calls the "dominant fiction."

To My Mother.

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Introduction

Muhammad Ali biographer David Remnick writes that "the history of fighters is the history of men who end up damaged" and that "boxing has come to represent an utter lack of opportunity, not opportunity itself" (King 43, 299). Boxing is also the history of male subjects damaged by their pasts. As the novelist George Garrett argues, "most of the fighters I knew of were wounded people who felt a deep, powerful urge to wound others at real risk to themselves" (qtd. in Oates, On Boxing 28); but, according to Joyce Carol Oates, they "fight one another because the legitimate objects of their anger are not accessible to them" (On Boxing 63). These quotations suggest that men who box are traumatized in the root sense of that word: from the Greek, meaning "wound" (Caruth, Unclaimed 3). As Cathy Caruth argues, "the term *trauma* is understood as a wound inflicted not upon the body but upon the mind. . . . The wound of the mind -- the breach in the mind's experience of time, self, and world -- is not, like the wound of the body, a simple and healable event, but rather an event that . . . is experienced too soon, too unexpectedly, to be fully known and is therefore not available to consciousness until it imposes itself again, repeatedly, in the nightmares and repetitive actions of the survivor" (Caruth, Unclaimed 3-4). Similarly, Thomas Hauser writes, "a more difficult aspect of [the boxers'] trade is developing the ability to master themselves. No athlete spends [himself] emotionally

like a fighter. His life is one intimidating situation after another, and to succeed he must be emotionally disciplined in the ring. That means learning to curb anger, making the right mental moves at the right time, and above all conquering fear" (Black Lights 18). So, when Joyce Carol Oates asks, "for what possible atonement is the fight waged if it must shortly be waged again . . . and again?" (On Boxing 21), the answer is found in the boxers' "compulsion to *encircle* again and again the site of the lost *thing*, to *mark* [his trauma] in its very impossibility" (Zizek 272) because trauma cannot be solved but only re-solved and re-covered; hence, the pun in the title of my thesis.

Traumas are both revisitations and potentially new or future traumas since they refuse to be simply located. As Lynne Layton writes in response to Judith Butler, "we need a 'typology of fragmentations', so that we can distinguish between the kind of fragmentation caused by oppression . . . and the kind of fragmentation lauded in postmodern theory, the kind that is meant to challenge the equally oppressive drive of Western culture towards silencing the diversity between us and around us" (116). When talking about "trauma," then, I want to be clear that with that word I mean both an originary absence or lack in male identity as well as new trauma, whether the latter simply reshapes the original trauma, or becomes a new trauma in the case of a boxer who tries to maintain what Jacques Lacan describes as "the illusion of autonomy" (6). Accordingly, a boxer may lose a sense of presence through the oppression of a childhood trauma

that revisits the subject, or through a loss of belief in Western male-identity or, what Kaja Silverman calls the "dominant fiction." The "dominant fiction," Silverman writes, "functions to construct and sustain sexual difference" and "solicits our faith in . . . the adequacy of the male subject" (8, 15-16). The loss of belief in the "dominant fiction" can be similar to "postmodern" fragmentation if the male subject accepts his fragmentation rather than resists it. Since boxing continues as a sport for those who are "wounded" or traumatized, and as a sport for representations of idealized masculinity that reflect the "dominant fiction" -- both types of trauma will be explored throughout this thesis.

Thom Jones's story "The Pugilist at Rest" illustrates how both types of trauma, the one caused by oppression and the other glorified by postmodernists, can appear at once, causing the line between them to blur. In this story, a Marine -- a "true believer" (5) in the American cause -- is beginning a tour of duty in Vietnam. Caught isolated from his platoon in a demilitarized-zone while Vietcong soldiers drop mortar shells on his platoon, he sees his platoon destroyed by the enemy. After calling in an air-strike, he runs away to avoid being hit with napalm. Because of these actions and after inflating the number of Vietcong he killed, he wins military medals. Having completed three tours in Vietnam, he returns to America. One night while half-drunk, he participates in a "boxing smoker" (20). He takes some heavy punches at the beginning of the fight, but "my buddies

were watching, and I had to give them a good show. While I was afraid, I was also exhilarated; I had not felt this alive since Vietnam" (21). He manages to win a decision in this fight by exhibiting superior boxing skills. After the fight, however, he has a headache and starts to question his role in Vietnam: "why had I killed my fellowmen in war, without any feeling, remorse, or regret?" (21-22). He believes that like Dostoevsky he is "a hysterical epileptic," experiencing "grave psychological trauma" (23) and becomes socially dysfunctional. He lives in his apartment and confesses that "to avoid falling injuries, I always wear my old boxer's headgear, and I always carry my mouthpiece" (24).

In this story, we see how trauma refuses to be precisely placed. Does Jones take part in this boxing match against someone who outweighs him by fifteen pounds to assuage the guilt of killing men and/or women in Vietnam, to revisit the trauma of Vietnam? Freud has argued that this type of behaviour is "repetition compulsion" (qtd. in Herman 41). This compulsion does not have "any adaptive, life-affirming" quality but reflects "the concept of a 'death instinct'" (Herman 41). Although Jones feels as though he is in Vietnam, reexperiencing its impact, in fact, the beating in the ring is a new trauma. Lynne Layton argues that if more than one trauma is present, "splitting is intensified, fragmentation guaranteed" (113). Since Jones is wearing boxing headgear at home, it is not clear whether he is traumatized by the boxing match, Vietnam, or both. Nonetheless,

by staying at home, he shows a symptom of trauma as "an attempt to create some sense of safety and to control [his] pervasive fear" (Herman 46). This story shows that a fundamental trauma, the trauma of Vietnam, leads a character to participate self-destructively in an event like boxing for which he is not prepared and which only traumatizes him further.

The ex-Marine's representation of his epilepsy illustrates both desirable and undesirable fragmentation. He talks about "the split second before his [epileptic] fit" (23) as a moment when he "experience[s] a sense of felicity, of ecstatic well-being unlike anything an ordinary mortal could hope to imagine" (23). This feeling makes him perceive that "Yes, God exists" (23). By giving up the idea of presenting himself as the strong sadistic male subject, of giving his buddies "a good show," he frees himself from oppressive constraints. Although he withdraws from traditional male power, this deviation is problematic and conceivably traumatic. Slavoj Žižek writes, "enjoyment is the 'surplus' that comes from our knowledge that our pleasure involves the thrill of entering a forbidden domain -- that is to say, that our pleasure involves a certain *displeasure*" (239). By letting go of the belief that he is a complete male subject, the Vietnam veteran protagonist enters a "forbidden domain," a potentially traumatic situation, therefore.

Jones's trauma is not only the postmodern "enjoyable" fragmentation, however. He also has "the typical epileptic aura, which is that of terror and impending doom" (24). Given this

two-sided trauma, the ex-soldier's "choices boil down to complete despair or joyous celebration, choices symptomatic of the black and white thinking that is a product of fragmentation" (Layton 111). The ex-soldier's feeling of calm while experiencing the "sacred disease" (24) reflects his resistance to losing what Lacan calls the "illusion of autonomy" (6), a forfeiture of his imaginary identification. It also suggests what Judith Herman describes as "constriction": an "altered state of consciousness [that] might be regarded as one of nature's small mercies, a protection against unbearable pain" (43). However, when Jones feels terror and says, "I can't do anything. I wanted to give my buddies a good show! What a goddam fool. I am a goddam fool!" (25), he asserts that the boxing smoker breaks his "illusion of autonomy," his sense of completeness as a male subject in the symbolic world.

To avoid using the term "trauma" so loosely that it begins to apply to such a breadth of human experience that everything becomes trauma, I must contextualize each trauma in turn. By placing each trauma in a framework, we avoid invoking this term to such an extent that its meaning disappears to a vanishing point. No two traumas are the same, and, as Cathy Caruth writes, "the difficulty of listening and responding to traumatic stories in a way that does not lose their impact, that does not reduce them to clichés or turn them all into versions of the same story, is a problem that remains central to the task of therapists, literary critics, neurobiologists, and filmmakers alike" (Preface

vii). This thesis, then, will not only identify similarities among the traumas experienced by prize-fighters but also differentiate among them, especially in the way these traumas are resisted -- or "re-covered" -- by the boxers represented in the discrete "genres" of autobiography, fiction, and film.

This thesis will argue that boxing may be represented as the "manly" art, but it will also reveal boxing to be a sport that can give the appearance of consolidation of male identity and furnish boxers with nothing beyond the illusion of wholeness as Thom Jones's "The Pugilist at Rest" illustrates. This thesis will look at how traumas and male subjects in boxing literature, film, and autobiography are framed. Almost without exception, in these genres, the boxer must find a way to disavow symbolic castration, maintain the "illusion of autonomy" or be cast out from boxing and then by society. In the Introduction to this thesis, I will examine the three stages of trauma for a pugilist: his initial traumatic life which leads him to enter the ring, his life as a boxer which is ruled by managers who manipulate his trauma for financial ends, and, finally, his inevitable return to the traumatic life from which the boxer comes -- a life in the streets where he has to live with his boxing trauma on top of his original trauma. These three periods in a fighter's life will reveal that boxing is not "play" but an endless sequence of try-outs of male identity, none of which ever brings the fragments of a traumatized subject's personality together in any absolute sense. Although it might seem overly ambitious to deal with

these three stages in the Introduction, their articulation will serve to supply us with a better idea of how they are mediated or represented in the three genres to be discussed in subsequent chapters -- namely, autobiography, fiction, and film. This thesis, therefore, will explore this tripartite staging of trauma, and its correspondent triple representation in boxing autobiographies, fictional boxing narratives, and boxing films, that is more generally to say, in both "literary" and in "life" writing.

To examine the idea of male presence or the "illusion of autonomy," I use Kaja Silverman's idea of "dominant fiction," a term Silverman deploys to explain the male subject's belief in wholeness and self-sufficiency. To explain how the male subject (re)gains a sense of presence, a feeling of untainted masculinity in spite of trauma, I further use David Savran's account of male subjectivity in his book Taking It Like a Man. There, he argues that the male subject can achieve something "like" presence by taking pain, being masochistic, until male presence becomes approximate, and the man -- the sadist -- is born. The male subject, then, reflects a fundamental split and oscillates between masculinity and femininity without ever grasping one term absolutely. To account for the male subject's anxiety upon the loss of this "dominant fiction" through trauma, I additionally invoke Freud's "Mourning and Melancholia," arguing that the melancholic male subject is for all intents and purposes a traumatic subject.

Boxing is a sport of the oppressed, of the "wounded," of those who "have been raped by society . . . [and] brutalized physically and psychologically" (Hauser, Black Lights 13). For those who turn to pugilism, boxing is a means to contain the trauma potentially inherent in their lives. As trainer Ray Arcel says, "the important part of boxing is not that youngsters realize their dreams, but that they can dream. Every day in the gym they're somebody special. They're a fighter" (qtd. in Hauser, Black Lights 14, emphasis added). Burying a trauma beneath an identity like "fighter" helps a boxer overcome the pain of fragmentation. Lynne Layton writes, "some experiences of a cohesive 'I,' of a sense of sameness that unites even the most disparate fragments, seems to be necessary to relieve [traumatic] suffering" (118). Boxing acts as an extreme form of covering over of trauma and is a sport that often takes over the lives of the practitioners. As former middleweight champion Marvin Hagler says, "if they cut my bald head open, they will find one big boxing glove. That's all I am. I live it" (qtd. in Oates, On Boxing 113). Ironically, although these traumas may be covered over and contained through boxing, boxing itself is a method both to reenact the original trauma and to impose a new and perhaps even deadlier trauma whose effects the fighter does not see until after his ring career has finished.

Boxers may be fundamentally different from other athletes because, unlike football and basketball, "many young men are athletically gifted, and relatively few turn to boxing" (Hauser,

Black Lights 13). In fact, if a ghetto boy is a boxer, he earns "informal neutrality" in the neighbourhood gang and drug wars (Sugden 65). This point shows that there is something other than sport going on in boxing, that "rather than being a strategy for escaping from urban deprivation, learning to box, in complex ways, is a means of coping with life in the ghetto" (Sugden 56, emphasis added). In fact, many writers deny the possibility of play in boxing entirely. As Joyce Carol Oates argues, "there is nothing fundamentally playful about [boxing]; nothing that seems to belong to daylight, to pleasure. . . . One *plays* football, one doesn't *play* boxing" (On Boxing 18-19). Boxing remains divorced from play, because, as Robert E. Neale argues, "play is psychologically defined as any activity not motivated by the need to resolve inner conflict" (qtd. in Berman 99). Boxing functions as a means to "solve" and to re-cover the male subject's fragmentation -- his trauma -- as he learns "to master" himself (Hauser, Black Lights 18).

The boxer's manager and trainer insulate and protect the boxer, attempting to protect him from problems that interfere with his boxing career. John Sugden argues that trainers want to save the boxer's body from corruption, from physical trauma, but want his "heart and mind in the ghetto" (84). As Joyce Carol Oates writes, boxers largely "constitute the disenfranchised of our affluent society, they are the sons of impoverished ghetto neighborhoods in which anger, if not fury, is appropriate" (On Boxing 63). To avoid this anger, this traumatized mental

landscape, "a boxer 'is' his body, and is totally identified with it" (Oates, On Boxing 5). Budd Schulberg describes the perfectly trained boxer in bodily terms: "the man intact, this reservoir of bone and flesh and nerve and blood, is ready to release full-force its damned-up excitations" ("The Death" 132, emphasis added). This quotation reflects Silverman's argument that "conventional masculinity . . . reli[es] upon anatomy as a safeguard against castration" (43). Unfortunately, as mentioned earlier, the boxer often fails to confront his mental world which is the site of his trauma and which, if it is a product of, for example, the ghetto, is an asset in the ring. This inner world which is helpful for a prize-fighter harbours a killer instinct or a willingness to win despite the risk to the boxer's health.

If, as Roland Barthes argues, boxing tells a story and is, therefore, teleological (19), we must, then, read the boxer's "'triumph' as merely temporary and provisional. Only the defeat is permanent" (Oates, On Boxing 61). Nonetheless, when the destined loss arrives, the boxer experiences it as an unbelievable moment, since his illusion of wholeness is shattered. The male ego, which according to the "dominant fiction" is whole and self-contained, is unprepared for it. In fact, boxing parlance reinscribes the unity of the winning male subject at the expense of the losing one by insisting that "you cannot be knocked out if you see the blow coming, and if you will yourself not to be knocked out. . . . [Therefore] nothing that happens to the boxer in the ring . . . is not of his own will or

failure of will" (Oates, On Boxing 13). This loss being the result of a "failure of will" is similar to the trauma victim who "freezes" when attacked by something disempowering and overwhelming and who enters "a state of surrender" (Herman 42). Muhammad Ali talks about those punches that knock a boxer out:

Once I heard [former heavyweight champions] Jersey Joe Walcott and Joe Louis, who could knock down mules, talk of blows that had knocked them down, and Jersey Joe said, "When one comes out of the blue, you can get over it quick. No hangover. But the one you see coming, but still can't get away from, goes down on tape and you play it back at funny times. When you're dreaming. Or just walking down the street." (292)

This quotation shows how "traumatic memories . . . are encoded in the form of vivid sensations and images" (Herman 38). Former lightweight champion Ad Wolgast, for example, lived until his death in a mental hospital preparing for a fight that "was always scheduled 'tomorrow'" (qtd. in Sammons 246). Further, Floyd Patterson, a former heavyweight champion knocked out twice by the late Sonny Liston in a combined time of five minutes, and who is now over sixty, says, "'I think about [Liston] even now and I figure I'll find a way to win. That's funny, isn't it?'" (Remnick, King 4). For both of these boxers, the trauma of the ring could not be left behind even when they were no longer

fighting.

Boxers are certainly not cured of their original traumas, and they have to contend with the ring trauma as well. Like Wolgast and Patterson or like On the Waterfront's Terry Malloy who "could've been a contender," many boxers end up mulling over what could have been and inevitably return to boxing -- a recuperative act that can only repeat the original ring trauma, since "the shape of individual lives, the history of the traumatized individual, is nothing other than the determined repetition of the event of destruction" (Unclaimed 63). We only have to consider the repeated comebacks of Roberto Duran, Sugar Ray Leonard, Thomas Hearn, and Jerry Quarry to understand how this repetition works. These boxers are fighting again to repeat the physical "event of destruction" -- which is traumatic -- when they find out that their boxing skills have diminished. With these boxers who make repeated comebacks, the cliché of the knocked out fighter asking "what happened?" becomes all too real and ontological. They do not understand the loss of their skills or invincibility. Like Thom Jones's ex-soldier who boxes only to come face to face with the traumatic impact of his experience in Vietnam as well as his lack as a male subject, these boxers return to face the trauma of having lost their skills. As one of Joyce Carol Oates characters says in You Must Remember This, boxers never think of losing, "they don't think along those lines, those people. They're always going to win" (24, emphasis added). As Caruth writes, trauma "is experienced too soon, too

unexpectedly, to be fully known and is therefore not available to consciousness until it imposes itself again, repeatedly, in the nightmares and repetitive actions of the survivor" (Unclaimed 4). Paradoxically, this repetition, to quote Joe Frazier who made a comeback in 1981, will make the boxer feel "alive again" (qtd. in Sammons 243).

Generally, even if a fighter earns enough money from promoters, managers, endorsements, and, perhaps, the criminal underworld to take him away from his original social situation, he will usually spend the money and/or give it away (Sammons 236-245). As former heavyweight champion Larry Holmes says, a retired fighter with money is "the rarest of things" (Holmes v). Such extravagance leads the boxer to a return to his original social world with the knowledge that the best years of his life, financially, physically, and emotionally, are behind him (Sammons 242). Moreover, few boxers actually make enough money to retire or change their social circumstances. In his remarkable book, Beyond the Ring, Jeffrey T. Sammons calls the end of a boxer's career "readjustment trauma" (245), a term implying a return to origins, to the trauma which brought the fighter to boxing in the first place. As Cathy Caruth writes, "the repetition at the heart of catastrophe -- the experience that Freud will call 'traumatic neurosis' -- emerges as the unwitting reenactment of an event that one cannot simply leave behind" (Unclaimed 2). Boxing, then, does not lead to a recovery from trauma but only covers it over until the boxer is too old to box. At this point,

the power of the boxer's pre-pugilist life, as Dori Laub attests, reasserts itself through "an uncanny repetition of events that duplicate -- in structure and in impact -- the traumatic past" (65). In many instances, the mental -- not the social -- world is the boxers' problem. Indeed, boxers who cannot escape the mental trauma of what goes on in the ring are the norm rather than the exception. This revisitation of the oppressed traumatic material is exactly what Ad Wolgast is enacting in the nursing home and Patterson is talking about when he says he still thinks he can beat Liston. These examples reveal how "to be traumatized is precisely to be possessed by an image or event" (Caruth, Introduction 4-5).

Although these statements may appear to conflate epochs, classes, races, and genders, there are uncanny continuities between periods in the history of boxing. Historically those who turn to boxing are traumatized by cultures that have extreme class and race divisions and a capitalist ethos (Sugden 40) and that have vested interests in creating Others against which white male masculinity can define itself (Burstyn 87). Kevin White writes that "the popularity of boxing grew beyond the underworld as John L. Sullivan became the first folk hero of the sport, and helped make popular with a mass audience the Irish male style of aggressiveness" (qtd. in Burstyn 101). Rather than diminishing aggressiveness through the rationalization of sport, "the hypermasculinist dimensions of sport and sport culture grew over the course of the twentieth century" (Burstyn 103). As the

economy becomes more globally oriented, we just have to consider the virtual disappearance of boxing in a socialist country such as Sweden, and the predominance of African-American, Hispanic, and East-Asian persons in prize-fighting to see how economic competition and disparity promote violent sports like boxing (Sugden 195-96).

Boxers reflect not only economic conditions but also have cultural symbols imposed upon their bodies. Larger cultural issues have often been forced upon boxers. Budd Schulberg has written, "boxing is not the cause but the lightning rod for all the bolts of destruction ripping up the skies of paranoid nations" ("White" 42). In the era of "great white hopes," Jack Johnson was forced to contend with issues of racial supremacy. Jack Dempsey, an ex-hobo and arguably a draft-dodger, represented, in his fight against French war-hero Carpentier, the "slacker" as well as American economic growth in the 1920s. When he knocked out Max Schmelling in one round in 1936, Joe Louis represented American democracy defeating the doctrine of Aryan supremacy. The Liston-Patterson fights symbolized a battle between "the bad negro" and the integrated "negro." Muhammad Ali used these imposed symbols to expose racial hypocrisy in his fights against Floyd Patterson and the American government. Because fighters, unlike other athletes such as football and hockey players, spend so much time not competing, the media uses a lot of newspaper space not covering fights but developing a personality for the fighter and imposing cultural masks on him

(Mead 52). Boxing has always had these explosive symbols grafted onto it during periods of turmoil and when male identity and the "dominant fiction" have been destabilized. A male subject needs the "dominant fiction" to consolidate his identity (54).

Silverman further observes that "at those historical moments when the prototypical male subject is unable to recognize 'himself' within the conjuration of masculine sufficiency our society suffers from a profound sense of 'ideological fatigue'" (16). As we shall see later, especially in the discussion of Silverman and Savran, these "historical moments" are always-already present.

Boxing has remained almost exclusively a male preserve. Joyce Carol Oates writes that "boxing is for men, and is about men, and is men. A celebration of the lost religion of masculinity [made] all the more trenchant for its being lost" (On Boxing 72). Žizek, however, argues, "the crucial step that has to be taken here is to get rid of this nostalgic longing for the lost closed universe by recognizing that *we never had what we have lost*; the idyll was false from the very beginning, society was always-already ridden with fierce antagonisms" (168). When Oates speaks of a "lost" masculinity, then, we should understand it as a "lack" in male identity itself. Similarly, when we speak of a boxer who loses a boxing match, we should read this as a cover for coming into the presence of something that was always-already lost. As Joyce Carol Oates writes, for a boxer, "the defeat is permanent" and the victory is fleeting (Oates, On Boxing 61). If this "religion of masculinity" has been "lost"

from the very beginning, then the construction of masculinity through boxing becomes more obvious precisely through -- not the "loss" of -- but the fundamental lack in masculine identity brought to light through a lost fight.

Kaja Silverman's text Male Subjectivity at the Margins certainly emphasizes this male world of lack. Kaja Silverman writes, "lack of being is the irreducible condition of subjectivity" (4). Silverman's idea of "historical trauma" surely adds to this idea of a fundamental lack in male identity. She writes that "by 'historical trauma' I mean a historically precipitated but psychoanalytically specific disruption, with ramifications extending far beyond the individual psyche. . . . [This event] brings a large group of male subjects into such an intimate relation with lack that they are at least for the moment unable to sustain an imaginary relation with the phallus, and so withdraw their belief from the dominant fiction" of a unified male identity (55). This trauma causes the subject to be "thus robbed of the illusion of presence [and to be] brought into a profoundly unpleasurable contact with lack" (61). This traumatic encounter will not be finished when the event is over, however, but will repeat itself continually in the boxer's life. Harry Crews's novel The Knockout Artist reflects this continual repetition. Here, the protagonist, an ex-boxer whose dreams of pugilistic greatness are shattered by his weak chin, hires himself out to knock himself out in public, thereby repeating the trauma of his physical destruction in the ring over and over

again. He is obsessed with the end of his boxing career and declares that the repetition of his trauma is "the only thing he had left" (1).

If repetition destroys the illusion of presence, of a whole ego, then this effect, Silverman suggests, "must be attributed to an excess rather than a diminution of excitation, and characterized as a 'shattering' rather than a release" (61). Silverman argues that "it is not surprising, then, that when the male subject is brought into a traumatic encounter with lack, as in the situation of war, he often experiences it as the impairment of his anatomical masculinity. What is really at issue, though, is a *psychic* disintegration -- the disintegration, that is, of a bound and armored ego, predicated upon the illusion of coherence and control" (62). When the inevitable loss comes, then, the boxer, like Crews's protagonist, experiences it as a "shattering," since boxers identify fully with their bodies. If they lose, they have been beaten and also lose their "reliance upon anatomy as a safeguard against castration" (Silverman 43). They lose possession of what Silverman calls the "dominant fiction" that "calls upon the male subject to see himself . . . only through the mediation of images of an unimpaired masculinity" (42).

Given this reliance on anatomy to safe-guard themselves against psychological trauma, boxers are notorious for trying to maintain their bodily purity and unity. Norman Mailer writes about George Foreman's refusal to shake hands with anyone (The

Fight 37). Muhammad Ali's trainer, Drew Bundini Brown, used to say of training, "you got to get the hard-on, and then you got to keep it. You want to be careful not to lose the hard-on, and cautious not to come" (The Fight 105). The boxer's training camp has usually been a purely male preserve. This site of training certainly reflects "the delusory nature of conventional masculinity -- its reliance upon anatomy as a safeguard against castration" (Silverman 43) as well as the "dominant fiction" urging both men and women to believe in the "commensurability of the penis and phallus" (Silverman 42). The phallus, then, in boxing parlance, "is" the penis: it is anatomy. To lose a fight, is to lose this anatomy, this wholeness, the "hard-on." It is to be castrated, to come upon the lack in the "dominant fiction," and to be brought into traumatic knowledge of one's own lack.

As Oates argues above, the boxer, a firm believer in his talents and future triumphs, is culpable for his defeat in the ring and, given Silverman's arguments, is traumatized by it. As Oates writes, "nothing that happens to the boxer in the ring, including death -- 'his' death -- is not of his own will or failure of will" (On Boxing 13). She continues: "the referee's dramatic count of ten constitutes a metaphysical parenthesis of a kind through which the fallen boxer must penetrate if he hopes to continue in Time" (15). Furthermore, "there are in a sense two dimensions of Time abruptly operant: while the standing boxer is *in time* the fallen boxer is *out of time*. Counted out, he is counted 'dead'" (15). As Walcott's memories are of the knock out

punch, of being counted symbolically dead, these involuntary memories hold what Robert Jay Lifton calls a "death imprint" (qtd. in Herman 39). These remembrances echo trauma being not just a wound to the body but also one to the mind, "a break in the mind's experience of time" (Caruth, Unclaimed 61) in which the traumatized individual, like the knocked out boxer, is "out of time" (On Boxing 15). By being knocked out, the boxer loses his illusion of presence in the ring and can be viewed as symbolically dead, castrated.

Like Silverman (and, in many instances, responding to Silverman), David Savran in Taking It Like a Man argues that male identity is not *a priori* self-contained but abides as a social construction. "The phallus -- and patriarchy, of which it is a prop -- is a historical construction, a fiction of sorts, which retains its power only insofar as it denies its own historicity" (8). A male subject who takes on a gendered identity, then, assumes a point zero, an "originary" moment of gender; however, this starting point does not exist in any absolute sense, and the subject is forced to be "an imitation of an imitation" of the ideal of a gender identity (8). The absolute male identity -- whatever that is -- is a continually deferred presence. In fact, the male subject is torn between competing gender roles. This split is related in Savran's study to "what Freud calls reflexive sadomasochism, a condition in which the ego is ingeniously split between a sadistic (or masculinized) half and a masochistic (or feminized) half so that the subject, torturing himself, can prove

himself a man" (33).

This idea of torture being a means to becoming a "man" is fundamental in boxing. Adolf Hitler writing on boxing says, "the young and healthy boy has to learn to be beaten" (qtd. in Early, "Grace" 163). One of the greatest examples of the need to take punishment to prove oneself a "man" is in Mailer's essay "Ten Thousand Words a Minute" about the death of welterweight champion Benny Paret at the hands of Emile Griffith in 1962:

In the middle of the eighth round, after a clubbing punch had turned his back to Griffith, Paret walked three disgusted steps away, showing his hindquarters. For a champion, he took much too long to turn back around. It was the first hint of weakness Paret had ever shown, and it must have inspired a particular shame, because he fought the rest of the fight as if he were seeking to demonstrate that he could take more punishment than any man alive. (244)

This quotation exemplifies the losing proposition inherent in "taking it like a man" to prove oneself a man. One can never be "as" a man but only "like" a man -- no matter how much punishment one takes. In Savran's formulation, a "man" would be what Slavoj Zizek would call a "limit": "what the object ought to (although it never actually can) become" (110). However, "boundary," like Silverman's "dominant fiction," is "the external limitation of an

object, its qualitative confines which confer upon it identity" (Zizek 110). To avoid the thought of the "limit" and to return to the "boundary" or the "dominant fiction," the male subject must find a new object that will consolidate his identity.

The way in which male boxing fans identify with the winning boxer illustrates how faith in the "boundary" or "dominant fiction" is maintained. The male fans, Oates argues, "if they have favored one boxer over the other, and that boxer is losing, . . . can shift their loyalty to the winner -- or, rather, 'loyalty' shifts, apart from conscious volition" (On Boxing 73). The way the allegiance switches in Oates's quotation reflects Silverman's "dominant fiction" being a "belief [which] is less an effect of consciousness than of identification and fantasy" (42). In this way, the boxing fan can continually pass the torch of wholeness to the new victor. Accordingly, the boxer, whose symbolic mandate is that of the champion, experiences a moment "when the subject's being seems to coincide without remainder with his symbolic mandate" (Zizek 156, emphasis added). As A.J. Liebling writes, "a boxer's fame [his championship], like a knight's armour, becomes the property of the fellow who licks him" ("Poet" 168). To avoid his own fundamental lack, the boxing fan will identify with a fetish object, the boxer's "fame" or championship, rather than the boxer himself to "disavow castration" (Zizek 249).

Varda Burstyn argues in The Rites of Men that our culture's homophobia insures that we will identify with the winning

athlete, who, by his victory, is signified as masculine and sadistic (Burstyn 97-98), as untouched by lack. The losing boxer, on the other hand, is signified as feminine and masochistic, as lack. Applying this idea to Mailer's argument about Benny Paret above, we see that by turning his back, Paret symbolically feminizes himself and spends the rest of the fight trying to overcome this act. Burstyn writes, "a culture can accommodate homoerotic sexual behaviour -- especially active, penetrative behaviour -- and hold homophobic ideas at the same time. . . . In the homosocial, homoerotic, and homophobic culture of sport and military life, there are long-standing traditions in which homosexual penetration signifies mastery over those penetrated" (99-100). By shifting our loyalties to the winning, the penetrating, boxer, we will not have to confront the lack and fundamental split in our identities between masculinity and femininity, between sadism and masochism.

For a boxer to maintain the illusion of presence, he often relies on his trainer. The trainer represents the one who constantly reassures the boxer that he is unbeatable, a war-machine, untouched by lack. He also monitors a boxer's training, diet, and life-style in order to ensure that the boxer's body maintains its wholeness. When the boxer loses, however, instead of reinvoking the "dominant fiction" to re-solve the boxer's shattered identity and, quite often, his body, the trainer may abandon and thus further traumatize the boxer. This rejection occurs in Harry Crews's The Knockout Artist. After seeing his

fighter lose a fight by a knock out, the boxer's manager, who treated his fighter like a son, tells his fighter, Eugene, "you're so fucking bad . . . that . . . that . . . you could knock your own self out!" (35). Because of this abandonment coupled with the boxer's loss of invincibility, the boxer is traumatized and hires himself out to knock himself out. This estrangement from his manager reflects Layton's argument that "the self fragments when not properly mirrored or when traumatically disappointed by an idealized other" (108). An unsavory boxing joke illustrates this point more plainly. A. J. Liebling, in his classic book of boxing essays, The Sweet Science, describes boxing manager Max Kearns: "most managers say 'we' will lick So-and-So when they mean their man will try to, but Kearns does not allow his fighter even a share in the pronoun" (69). The win, then, is a shared victory between the manager and fighter (unless the manager is Kearns) because the boxer "mirrors" himself as unbeatable. However, when Kearns's fighter Joey Maxim lost his light heavyweight title to "the Mongoose" Archie Moore, "Dr. Kearns did not say after the bout, 'Moore licked me.' He said, 'Moore licked Maxim'" (80). The loss in the ring belongs to the boxer; the lack in male subjectivity belongs to the boxer -- not to the manager. Like the male viewer of boxing, the manager can turn his eyes to a "whole" new boxer, leaving the old boxer to deal with the trauma of improper "mirroring" and with being abandoned by a father figure.

For the winning boxer, onto whom invincibility has been grafted, the fundamental split within the male subject between the extremes of masculinity and femininity riddles the subject with anxiety. For the male subject cannot be a man but can only be "like," an approximation of, a man (Savran 38). The male subject seeks out pain to become a man; but he splits his personality so as to feminize himself by offering himself as an object of violence to become a "man" -- the sadist, who conquers others. Hence, "the masochist . . . suffers from a disturbance of the ego in which he alternates between feeling omnipotent and impotent, masculinized and feminized, phallicized and castrated" (Savran 75). Boxing reflects this oscillation in the ring, for a boxer must take a lot of punishment in sparring sessions to learn poise and the ability to recover after receiving a hard punch.

Joyce Carol Oates writes, "Boxing is about being hit rather more than it is about hitting, just as it is about feeling pain . . . more than it is about winning." In a sense, then, these boxers invite this injury. "One sees clearly from the 'tragic' careers of any number of boxers that the boxer prefers physical pain in the ring to the absence of pain that is ideally the condition of ordinary life" (Oates, On Boxing 25). As in the case of the trauma victim who invites injury, "self-injury is intended not to kill but rather to relieve unbearable emotional pain, and many survivors regard it, paradoxically, as a form of self-preservation" (Herman 109). If traumatized individuals are "wounded," we cannot help but wonder whether perhaps "physical

pain is much preferable to the emotional pain that it replaces" (Herman 109). As Floyd Patterson told Gay Talese about his technical knock out loss to Muhammad Ali in 1965,

A happiness feeling came over me. . . . And as Clay began to land these punches, I was feeling groggy and happy. But then the referee stepped in to break us up, to stop Clay's punches. And you may remember, if you saw the fight in the films, seeing me turn to the referee, shaking my head, 'No, no!' Many people thought I was protesting his decision to stop the fight. I really was protesting his stopping those punches. (qtd. in Remnick, King 282)

Patterson's reaction to being knocked out is not uncommon among boxers. Like the protagonist in "The Pugilist at Rest," after this moment of peace, of "ecstatic well-being," Patterson feels the pain of the trauma. We will see this more clearly with regard to Patterson in the next chapter's discussion of his autobiography. If we consider Patterson's account, we can begin to think of boxing as not simply the "manly art" or, as Oates argues, a purely masculine sport. On the contrary, boxers swing between masochism and sadism, between masculinity and femininity. They are by no means unified, whole, and self-contained.

The boxer often focuses on an object to consolidate his identity, to mend the split between sadism and masochism. This

object can be the fatherly trainer, the abstraction of a self-contained male identity, or boxing as a grail that will solve a boxer's social and personal predicaments. However, as Žižek argues, "as soon as we enter the symbolic order, the 'thing' is more present in the word that designates it than in its immediate presence" (134). If this object is always-already lost, as Žižek's quotation suggests, and boxers, like Patterson and Wolgast, have trouble letting go of their belief in the object of lack, they may become melancholic and, as Freud argues in his essay "Mourning and Melancholia," make war upon their own egos.

Freud's essay outlines the way that the ego punishes itself due to the "open wound" (253), the trauma, that results from the traumatic loss of an other. Freud writes, melancholia is "the reaction to the loss of a loved person, or to the loss of some abstraction," or a loss "of a more ideal kind" (243). What is lost is not immediately available to consciousness as the subject "cannot perceive what he has lost either" (245) since it remains hidden in his unconscious. The melancholic individual refuses the public display of mourning; hence, "we cannot see what it is that is absorbing him so entirely" (246). Rather than withdrawing his emotional investment from this object and placing it onto a new one as in mourning, this individual identifies the object with his own ego. As a result, "an object-loss [is] transformed into an ego-loss" (249). What the subject loses is not the object -- but the illusion of presence. Since we can never own anything absolutely -- even our own identities --

boxers are threatened by melancholia if they are unable to deal with the fact that they cannot own a male identity, let alone a boxing championship, absolutely. They can end up like Thom Jones's ex-soldier. He came upon the fundamental lack in his male subjectivity through a boxing match that he, ironically, won but that caused him to lose the sense of presence and wholeness he felt as a Marine and a survivor in three tours of Vietnam.

According to Freud, the main difference between mourning and melancholia is that the former does not contain a loss of "self-regard" (244). In melancholia, the ego tries "to incorporate this object into itself" and "wants to do so by devouring it" (249-250), thereby cannibalizing the ego. This aspect of melancholia reflects both Oates's argument that boxing is a sport that "consumes the very excellence it displays" (On Boxing 16) and Gerald Early's assertion that boxing is "so self-centred yet so self-annihilating that it can be considered only evil" ("Grace" 161). Paradoxically, then, boxing functions both as the object, the "ideal" (Freud 245), that consolidates identity and the means by which the boxer loses a sense of presence and comes to "know" his fundamental lack.

Freud argues that "the self-tormenting in melancholia, which is without doubt enjoyable, signifies . . . a satisfaction of trends of sadism and hate which relate to an object, and which have been turned round upon the subject's own self" (251). Ring Lardner's "Champion" tells the story of a despicable boxer who hurts anyone who is foolish enough to assist him. Although he

appears to be sadistic, there are hints that he is, in fact, hurting himself through the acts of firing managers, abandoning his family, and jilting girlfriends and wives, since these are the people who created him and, hence, are a part of him. A brother of one of his managers says, "he must hate himself" to which the manager responds, "I never seen a good one that didn't" (115). To be a "champion," then, a boxer must have a low self-regard and, to some degree, exhibit self-loathing. As a result of this process, "the ego can kill itself" if the object is "more powerful than the ego itself" (252). The melancholic "reproaches himself, vilifies himself and expects to be cast out and punished" (246). Freud does not think that these reproaches are not true, but only that they are unjustified. Freud writes, "we only wonder why a man has to be ill before he can be accessible to a truth of this kind" (246). The truth, given the discussion of Silverman and Zizek above, may be a confrontation with the male subject's fundamental lack, the fact that he never absolutely owned the object -- a cohesive male identity -- in the first place.

Freud suggests that ambivalence can allow the melancholic to overcome his link to the lost object. Ambivalence causes "self-reproaches to the effect that the mourner himself is to blame for the loss of the loved object, i.e. that he has willed it" (251). Furthermore, "each single struggle of ambivalence loosen[s] the fixation of the libido to the object by disparaging it, denigrating it and even as it were killing it" (257).

Ambivalence may activate "other repressed material about the lost object" (257). It allows the unconscious activity of melancholia to come to an end if the object is "abandoned as valueless" (257). A boxer who disowns boxing as a means to define himself especially after his career is over will more successfully overcome the trauma of what went on in the ring. We shall see this occur in Chapter Two when I discuss Budd Schulberg's novel Waterfront.

Whereas this general introduction examines boxing trauma in a theoretical context, the first chapter will explore the main avenue of witness for boxers after their careers in the ring are finished: autobiographies. Boxers do write autobiographies in order to make sense of their trauma both in and out of the ring. But mostly they write personal narratives to justify themselves and their actions and to make excuses for their failures. Nonetheless, there are differences in the way boxers choose or are able to represent their traumas in their autobiographies. To show these differences I propose to examine the autobiographies of George Foreman, Floyd Patterson, and Jake La Motta.

This first chapter, then, will examine the paradoxical combination of justification, witness, and slanted truth in these autobiographies which, in the end, usually fail to bear witness to and try to erase the boxer's traumas, hence the pun once again on "re-covery" in my sub-title. Nonetheless, these ex-fighters do resist their traumas through their attempt to articulate their

subjective experiences to an audience. As Cathy Caruth writes in Trauma: Explorations in Memory, "the history of trauma, in its inherent belatedness [and inherent incomprehensibility], can only take place through the listening of another" (Introduction 11). The prize-fighters' failure, then, to proclaim their trauma lies in thinking their trauma can be overcome and plainly located in "life"-writing. This phenomenon will be made especially clear in the case of Patterson's autobiography. The fact, however, that such overwhelming experiences cannot be so readily penetrated, only goes to show, as Cathy Caruth argues, that "a history [of trauma] can be grasped only in the very inaccessibility of its occurrence" (Introduction 8).

Whereas the first chapter examines the boxer's failure to locate his trauma in autobiography, the second chapter will explore boxing fiction, focusing on the uses the writers of these narratives make of the boxer's trauma. Writers of boxing fiction, such as Nelson Algren, Ernest Hemingway, Budd Schulberg, and Leonard Gardner (among others), reveal how managers, trainers, and fight promoters exploit a boxer's trauma for their own monetary ends. The boxer, who is "unbeatable" as long as he is useful to his manager, becomes trapped in an ideal of himself that is impossible to fulfil but that, nevertheless, he thinks, will ultimately arrive. In this second chapter I will look at Leonard Gardner's Fat City, Nelson Algren's Never Come Morning, and Budd Schulberg's Waterfront. By applying trauma theory to these texts, we shall see the different ways a fighter defines

himself in relation to his boxing career and relies on this career for an identity in the social world. In particular, I will use Freud's essay "Mourning and Melancholia" to show that the boxer who loses his career, his boxing skills, makes himself into a traumatic subject, pining for a "lost" object that he had been lacking to begin with.

Whilst in the second chapter I focus on boxing fiction, in the third and final chapter, I shall show that boxing films, which are the most accessible popular boxing genre, tend to work more with the themes of fiction and autobiography by emphasizing the corruption and exploitation boxers experience, yet also, by using various Hollywood filmic tropes, give the boxer a moral victory of sorts. Such ambivalent "victories" are seen again and again in films such as Requiem for a Heavyweight and From Here to Eternity both of which will be discussed in detail in this final chapter.

I will argue that this trend in film has serious repercussions for the real-life boxer who cannot recover from his initial trauma produced by, for example, the ghetto, but who has Hollywood expectations imposed upon him. The real-life downfall of Mike Tyson, who captured the world's attention like no other boxer since Muhammad Ali, certainly emphasizes this point as his ghetto trauma was exploited in the ring by trainers, managers, and an excited public. No one close to him attempted to change his ghetto attitude, since it made him an exciting boxer as well as a box-office draw. But after he was convicted of rape, the

public condemned him as immoral, brutal, and ferocious and, as Michael Awkward argues, failed to examine its own complicity in a patriarchal world that implicitly condones violent sexual acts such as Tyson's (Awkward 112-13). In sum, Tyson failed to live up to the Hollywood boxing myth which insists that, if he truly represents what is often no more than the myth of American social mobility, the boxer will give up his Caliban identity for that of Horatio Alger.

Tyson's downfall is related to the current state of race relations in America. The boxing fan is unwilling to examine Tyson's "saviour," the white Cus D'Amato, who "froze the 'ghetto' experience in Tyson's consciousness and was able to trigger its thaw in the ring" (Sugden 184). Instead, the fan may blame Don King for Tyson's behaviour, as if Don King, the only high profile black boxing promoter, is the only exploiter of fighters in boxing (Sammons 223). In a more general sense, therefore, this final chapter will examine how the Hollywood genre has in part produced today's casual boxing fan. This fan will pay to watch Tyson but will ignore other struggling fighters, making it difficult for them to make a living. In the words of former Tyson trainer Teddy Atlas, "[these fans] want to have the benefit of comfort, security, safety, respect, and at the same time the privilege of watching something out of control -- even promote it [as] being out of control -- as long as we're secure that we're not accountable for it" (qtd. in Remnick, "Kid" 49). Or these fans will thrust unrealistic middle-class expectations onto a

boxer such as Tyson who has grown up but, mentally at least, still lives in a ghetto. When he fails in the ring or as a person, he will be traumatically thrown back into the social world from which he came, whether it is the ghetto or, as we learned on February 5 of this year, jail. My "traumatic" analysis will thus lead me back to the issues of public complicity in the boxers' misfortunes once again. This complicity will be seen most obviously in my analysis of the Rocky series which is about the overcoming of another black man, Muhammad Ali. The actor Sylvester Stallone's pugilist, Rocky Balboa, who is an icon for, I would argue, most casual boxing fans, asserts a racist attitude towards Others. This point will be reiterated in my conclusion, which argues that Muhammad Ali is boxing's representative of a postmodern traumatic presence and was (and perhaps continues to be) a threat to the white patriarchal power structure.

Chapter One

The Pugilist at Desk: Trauma and the Boxing Autobiography

In his article "Kid Dynamite Blows Up," David Remnick, interviewing Mike Tyson, "witness[ed] the power of a ghetto kid's fatalism" as Tyson "had no friends, he trusted no one. And who could doubt him?" (50). Exhibiting the lack of trust common among trauma victims (Herman 51-52), Tyson is not an atypical prize-fighter except in terms of his remarkable successes and failures both in and out of the ring. As a result, the media has characterized Tyson as a brute who is fundamentally different from other boxers. His story has not lived up to the Horatio Alger rags-to-riches legend. By contrast, Sugar Ray Leonard, welcomed as the successor to Muhammad Ali in the late 1970s and the 1980s, has, by his own admission, abused drugs and beaten his wife, although the media has only reported the former to any large extent (Messner 57-58). These media representations strongly suggest that the boxer's story is always-already predetermined. While the press vilifies Tyson, Leonard's image will be cleaned up by a willing media. Simply, Tyson is bad while Leonard is good.

When we examine boxers's autobiographies, we see an avenue of witness which is different from media representations. In autobiographies, boxers' lives, even those of respected public figures such as George Foreman and Floyd Patterson and, especially, of hated individuals such as Jake La Motta, appear to

be neither as black and white nor as simple as their media representations. As is the case with the discussion of boxing fiction in chapter two, each of these three boxers shows a different way of dealing with trauma.

Unlike the mediocre boxers discussed in Chapter Two, George Foreman, Floyd Patterson, and Jake La Motta initially believe that they can resolve their identities, cover over what Kaja Silverman calls the fundamental lack, or castration, in male identity by winning a boxing championship. Only after winning the championship (and in the case of La Motta, before he wins it) do they realize that such winning, in fact, does not resolve their traumas. After attaining the championship belt, they realize that the weight of the championship, to paraphrase Žižek, is more conspicuous when we pronounce the word "championship" than when a real championship is attained (Žižek 134). For these boxers, it is only through the constant promise of this heavy word, "championship," that the "illusion of [male] presence" can be maintained (Silverman 61). Nonetheless, each of these three boxers shows a different way of dealing with trauma. As explained in the Introduction, by trauma, I mean both a primordial lack and an event that ushers the male subject into the presence of his fundamental fragmentation. In this chapter, I will examine how a traumatic event can cause these boxers to repeat and reexperience trauma that they seemed to have recovered from through winning the championship.

In By George (1995), George Foreman simply fails to realize

that his loss to Muhammad Ali is a trauma at all. By refusing to bear witness to this event as a trauma, he, in fact, gives us an unmediated view into trauma. On the other hand, in Victory over Myself (1962), Floyd Patterson knows his childhood was traumatic but argues that boxing helped him achieve a victory over himself, over his traumas, although after each loss he experiences a repetition of his childhood traumas nonetheless. Boxing, also, causes other traumas for him as his responses to ring defeats make clear; hence, he may be more traumatized through boxing than he was before his ring career even started. In Raging Bull (1970), unlike the other two fighters, Jake La Motta neither apologizes for nor triumphs over his trauma but thrusts it on his audience. His autobiography leads us to ring and personal triumphs -- moments of re-recovery from trauma in other autobiographies -- only to subvert them as he asserts the traumatic nature of his victories, thereby underscoring their inability to cover over his fundamental symbolic castration.

Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson, in their introduction to the book Getting a Life: Everyday Uses of Autobiography, examine the ideological use of autobiography. They map out how writers employ autobiography as a means of attaining a "true" self, that is to say, a self which is not essential but reflects a culturally available model of identity. Smith and Watson write, "personal histories -- in all their varieties -- serve as individualized testimonies to getting a 'successful' life together . . . and/or to the failure of self-remaking in terms of

the dream" (6). They continue by arguing that "the myth of autobiography is that the story is singularly formative, that the gesture is coherent and monologic, that the subject is articulate and the story articulable, and that the narrative lies there waiting to be spoken" (9). If the subject's story is not immediately available as a whole, s/he must graft its fragments onto a form that already exists. Hence, "in telling their stories, narrators take up models of identity that are culturally available" (9).

These models have already been predetermined. As Mary McElroy writes, "it is not through [the real athletes'] failure, but through their ultimate successes, that the reader comes to appreciate [the athletes'] sacrifice, perseverance, and sometimes courage" (172). Boxing autobiographies, then, are usually stories about the ghetto boy who found fame, fortune, and social and mental stability through boxing; they demonstrate the Horatio Alger rags-to-riches myth. The writer's life is always set against a template, that is to say, against a story which others have already written. Boxers, who come from the lower strata of society, often need to feel as if they belong to something (Hauser, Black Lights 16), and are attempting to escape the ghetto with which, even when they are physically removed, they are always "coping" (Sugden 56). These autobiographies, then, are "nothing but so many endeavours to integrate [a past life] into the present, synchronous symbolic network, to confer meaning upon it and thus to contain its traumatic impact" (Žižek 202).

Smith and Watson ask, "in getting a life, then, whose life are we getting?" (10). The boxer is "getting" a cultural myth, since "only certain kinds of stories become intelligible as they fit the managed framework, the imposed system. The recitation is, in effect, prepackaged, prerecited" (11). The only "intelligible" boxing story is the successful one. A boxing autobiography, then, is a "frame-up" (11). It usually encloses boxers in a success story although most of the time boxing is the story of "men who end up damaged" (Remnick, King 43). The boxer becomes trapped in a discourse which will not listen to the story of the ruined boxer.

Criticizing this myth, John Sugden writes, "the 'fighting a way out of the ghetto' thesis is an oversimplification" (Sugden 24) because the story of a prize fighter is usually one of an individual who comes from a lower stratum of society and returns there after his career is over. Furthermore, as Ellis Cashmore writes, "many [boxers] fight their way out [of poverty], only to return to indigence; but they're not to know that as they're striving for [social] improvement" (89). The boxer cannot have a "successful" autobiography if he resists representing his life as one of both material and emotional success. In this way, boxing autobiographies fail to "speak of the unspeakable," the trauma which cannot be integrated into the symbolic universe (Herman 175).

The fight that has defined George Foreman in the culture at large is the one he lost to Muhammad Ali in Zaire in 1974. By

looking at Foreman's fragmented memory of this fight in both his autobiography and Thomas Hauser's biography of Ali, we see that Foreman has been unable to understand the loss, that he fails to integrate his memory fragments of it into the symbolic world. Foreman's loss to Ali reflects Caruth's argument that trauma is "the breach in the mind's experience of time, self, and the world" and "the way that the experience of a trauma repeats itself, exactly and unremittingly, through the unknowing acts of the survivor against his very will" (Unclaimed 4, 2).

Foreman is unable to reconcile his loss to Ali with his idea of himself in relation to the world. Both he and the media thought Foreman was "going to knock [Ali] out in a hurry" (Foreman 104). Given this conviction, it is not surprising that in his autobiography, Foreman insists that he did not lose the fight to Ali. He asserts that he was a victim of foul play. He thinks his trainer, Dick Saddler, "slipped him a mickey" (110), thereby drugging him. Foreman insists that, in the first round, Ali was throwing jabs although video evidence proves that Ali was throwing right-hand leads. In fact, Norman Mailer's book on the Foreman-Ali battle, The Fight, has one chapter called "Right-Hand Leads." Foreman insists that Ali's defense against the rope was not a tactic but a necessity if he were to survive. He also says that Ali did little talking and playing during the fight (113). Foreman also contends that he was a victim of a quick count at the hands of referee Zack Clayton. He says that when he was knocked down, he was not hurt and, although rising when Clayton

counted ten, was going to knock out Ali imminently (114).

Foreman's own testimony given to Thomas Hauser subverts the version of the fight he presents in his autobiography. As we shall see, the fact that his accounts of the fight are so dissimilar emphasizes the traumatic nature of his loss to Ali. Judith Herman writes that traumatized people "often tell their stories in a highly emotional, contradictory, and fragmented manner which undermines their credibility and thereby serves the twin imperatives of truth-telling and secrecy" (Herman 1). First, in Thomas Hauser's biography of Ali, Muhammad Ali: His Life and Times, published four years before Foreman's memoir, Foreman says Ali just beat him: "Muhammad amazed me; I'll admit it. He outthought me; he outfought me. That night, he was just the better man in the ring." Foreman admits that, after being knocked down, "even if I'd gotten up, that night I think he would have won" (278). He sums up the fight by saying, "after the fight, for a while I was bitter. I had all sorts of excuses. The ring ropes were loose. The referee counted too fast. . . . I was drugged. I should have just said the best man won" (278).

These contradictions between his autobiography and Hauser's biography do not indicate that Foreman is misrepresenting the fight in either book. What his inconsistencies do show, however, is that he is bearing witness to the trauma of being knocked out by someone whom he thought he had been picked to destroy; hence, borrowing from Cathy Caruth, Foreman's notions of "time, self, and the world" are disrupted. In 1991, Foreman, talking to

writer Budd Schulberg, sets his loss to Ali in terms that resemble fears of male castration, of being the feminized object:

I felt deshelled in Zaire. Like a fish being cleaned. Ali taking the whole deal. It's like having your backbone removed. Back in the dressing room it came down on me. Hey, I lost my heavyweight title. Like being raped. I couldn't adjust to it. Devastated. ("The Second" 227)

This traumatic loss in the ring causes Foreman to be "thus robbed of the illusion of presence [and] . . . brought into a profoundly unpleasurable contact with lack" (Silverman 61). He is symbolically castrated and instead of being the sadistic male with the enormous punch, is relegated to being the penetrated male (Burstyn 97-102). As Foreman says in Hauser's biography, "I'd never lost before so I didn't know how to lose" (Muhammad Ali 278). Ali himself said as much, arguing that George Foreman's "excuses started comin' as soon as George began to realize he lost" (Ali, "Playboy" 138).

Ali's quotation suggests that a boxer needs time before he even knows that he has lost a fight. Judith Herman writes that for trauma victims "far too often secrecy prevails, and the story of the traumatic event surfaces not as a verbal narrative but as a symptom" because they "have been cut off from the knowledge of [their] past" (1, 2). Foreman's "contradictory" story is the

result of being symbolically "drugged," stupefied, and stunned, since the media made him believe he was unbeatable against an aging Ali. He did not and, as his autobiography makes clear, still does not know he lost the fight. Given this problem of knowing, it is not surprising that after the fight, Foreman talks like a champion. As Norman Mailer writes in a passage that echoes traumatic theory,

He was still talking as the winner. There is all the temporary insanity of loss. One knows that there is a reality to which one can return, at least the odds are great that it will still be there, but reality does not feel real. It is too insubstantial. Reality has become a theory introduced into one's head by other people. It does not seem as natural as what one feels. George Foreman still felt like the champion.

(The Fight 175)

In this perceptive analysis, Mailer almost anticipates Foreman's twenty-five year attempt to "know" what happened in his fight with Ali.

In public testimony, George Foreman may say glibly that he lost fair and square, but, in his autobiography, he is bearing witness to trauma's inaccessibility, to "its refusal to be simply located" (Caruth, Trauma 9). He is, as David Jarraway argues about a character from Tim O'Brien's The Things They Carried,

"the ideal witness to trauma" because he knows "just enough to understand practically nothing about himself" (706). As Zizek writes,

The point is *not* to remember the past trauma as exactly as possible: such "documentation" is a priori false, it transforms the trauma into a neutral, objective fact, whereas the essence of the trauma is precisely that it is too horrible to be remembered, to be integrated into our symbolic universe. All we have to do is to mark repeatedly the trauma as such, in its very "impossibility", in its non-integrated horror, by means of some "empty" symbolic gesture. (272)

Foreman, who says he has "fought that fight over in my head a thousand times" (Hauser, Muhammad Ali 278), "marks" its "impossibility." Foreman's attempts at reliving the fight suggest that "the shape of individual lives, the history of the traumatized individual, is nothing other than the determined repetition of the event of destruction" (Caruth, Unclaimed 63). Foreman, "the ideal witness to trauma," however, will never understand or know he lost.

What Mailer calls Foreman's "temporary insanity" is the result of the event that happened too soon to be known. As Foreman himself ironically tells Mailer almost immediately after the fight, "I imagine . . . that the punch that knocks a man down

he doesn't really see. I suspect he doesn't know about it" (The Fight 175). This punch is the trauma, it is one of "the intrusions of some traumatic Real which entail a 'loss of reality'" (Zizek 154). The "reality" is the glib account Foreman gives to Ali's biographers although, given what he says about the fight in his autobiography, he does not believe this "reality" -- he "lacks" this "reality." This account, which fits neatly into record books, does not make sense to Foreman because, for the ex-heavyweight champion Foreman, there is something missing in these things: the trauma which can never be articulated. To paraphrase Dori Laub, Foreman in his autobiography is testifying not to the empirical loss in the eighth round but to the breakage by Ali of the frame of his indestructibility (62). In the fight, we are seeing a traumatized, fragmented Foreman who confronts his fundamental lack. He is "the Champion in sections" (The Fight 169), experiencing "a 'shattering' [of his ego] rather than a release" (Silverman 61). Foreman, as we have seen by examining his autobiography, has never been able to put the pieces together.

Floyd Patterson, heavyweight champion between 1956 and 1959 and 1960 and 1962 and nicknamed "Freud Patterson" (Remnick, King 5) for his confessional style of giving interviews, renounces the effects of the trauma of being a black, timid, and poor child in America. When we compare Patterson's autobiography to his reaction to losing to Sonny Liston within a year of the publication of Victory over Myself in 1962, we see that

Patterson, in fact, did not score a "victory over himself." He continued to show his faintheartedness by running away from embarrassing situations such as his first loss to Sonny Liston in 1962. As Budd Schulberg argues, referring to Patterson's escape from a boxing arena in disguise, Patterson faced a scary "ordeal with a false-beard psychology" ("The Death" 135). When he lost a fight, it was as if his "sense of self shattered" (Herman 61) because his traumas "of childhood and adolescence . . . are suddenly reopened" (Herman 52). Patterson, then, does not eliminate the childhood trauma of growing up poor and timid. He covers it with an autobiographical template, that is to say, by invoking the myth of the poor shy boy who becomes fearless and successful and who escapes the ghetto through boxing.

To emphasize his re-recovery from trauma, Patterson bookends his autobiography with the story of how he became the first boxer to regain the heavyweight championship. He did this by knocking out Ingemar Johansson who had knocked out Patterson one year earlier. When Patterson sees his fallen foe before him, "it struck me then how much of my life I have been frightened by one thing or another. As a child I was never at ease at home or in school or in the streets. I was embarrassed most of the time, shamed at other times, smothered in a feeling of inadequacy. In school I was too frightened to speak. I had a fear of being inferior. . . . I had few friends, no interests, nothing of which I could be proud, no clothes, no real talent except for making myself miserable. I was one of 'The Lost Ones'" (6).

Here, Patterson, recounting his childhood, shows how "traumatized people feel utterly abandoned, utterly alone, cast out of the human and divine systems of care and protection that sustain life" (Herman 52) and the "helplessness and isolation [that] are the core experiences of psychological trauma" (Herman 197).

The trauma victim's isolation can lead to a suicidal outlook on life. In his autobiography, Patterson, echoing a traumatic subject's need for isolation and protection, writes, "I guess maybe that's how I got to like the darkness. There was safety in the darkness for me" (9). He hides in a subway locker which represents "my cave, my hideaway -- a safe hole in the wall away from the bitterness of the world. I'd spread papers on the floor and I'd go to sleep and find peace" (10). However, this attempt to avoid his trauma only "results in a narrowing of consciousness, a withdrawal from engagement with others, and an impoverished life" (Herman 42). It reflects a desire for self-extinction.

Although re-recovery from trauma "begins by focusing on control of the body" (Herman 160), boxing trainers want to keep the boxer's "heart and mind in the ghetto" (Sugden 84) since the ghetto experience is an asset in the ring. As John Sugden writes, "in the long term the ghetto and the consciousness it engenders may be the best reference point for the cultivation of boxing talent" (85, emphasis added). Patterson writes, "until [I started boxing] it had been almost as though I was locked in a box and there was no way out wherever I turned" (32). Patterson

gives up his locker for the ring. He writes, "my interests, you could say, were narrow -- work, worry and running" (49). In a sense, then, boxing isolates him just as much as his childhood trauma, and is another version of hiding in a locker. He is, symbolically, still "locked in a box".

According to Judith Herman, after giving safety to the traumatized person's body, the individual needs a safe environment (162). In boxing, however, safety and security are fleeting. In an essay about then heavyweight champion Patterson, A. J. Liebling writes, "the historic process of [a champion's] decay [begins] when he dethrone[s] his predecessor" ("The Morest" 189); hence, Patterson's position as champion, as a boxer, is never absolutely secure. Ironically, Patterson never "dethroned his predecessor," since he won the championship in an elimination bout against light heavyweight champion Archie Moore in 1956 after the retirement of Rocky Marciano. Not surprisingly, writers deride him as "a poor representative as a champion" (159) not just because he fails to beat, let alone fight, the former-heavyweight champion, Marciano, but also because he does not fight top contenders. These writers undermine his feeling that once he achieves the championship, he would have "nothing but complete happiness, acceptance and, I must admit, some adulation" (142, emphasis added).

Rather than being a means of piecing together the fragments of his identity, of making it "complete," winning the championship only reinforces Patterson's feeling of lack because

there is always someone challenging his position as the champion. He must always experience "reflexive masochism, a condition in which the ego is ingeniously split between a sadistic (or masculinized) half and a masochistic (or feminized) half so that the subject, torturing himself, can prove himself a man" (Savran 33). Patterson will never have peace because he always has to prove his manhood and piece himself together again and again by defeating new challengers.

Unlike Foreman, Patterson recounts how he had to redefine himself after losing the championship to Ingemar Johansson in 1959. When knocked down by Johansson, Patterson "never saw the big punch come at me, which is what usually happens when you get hit hard" (185). A punch a boxer does not see is one for which he cannot prepare himself. As like the trauma victim (Caruth, Introduction 7), Patterson is not fully conscious during the punch itself. Getting up, Patterson "assumed I had knocked Ingemar down. I didn't remember going down or getting up, so it had to be me who put him down" (186). (In fact, out of habit, Patterson removes his mouthpiece and starts walking to a neutral corner. And Johansson runs up to the groggy Patterson and knocks him down again.) Patterson writes that when the fight ends, he "sensed" his loss more than "knew it" (186). Like the trauma victim who, instead of "knowing" the trauma, finds "a void, a hole" where it should be (Caruth, Introduction 6), he does not understand what has happened: "It was like my mind was a page of writing and somebody had cut a piece right out of the middle of

it" (187); he feels a "blankness within me" (187). These quotations echo Cathy Caruth. She argues, "trauma is not locatable in the simple violent or original event in an individual's past, but rather in the way that its very unassimilated nature -- the way it was precisely *not known* in the first instance -- returns to haunt the survivor later on" (Unclaimed 4).

After losing the championship, Patterson is not only haunted by his loss to Johansson but also revisited by his childhood traumas. Patterson begins to behave like the male subject who, like George Foreman in the face of a traumatic event, is "robbed of the illusion of presence [and] is brought into a profoundly unpleasurable contact with lack" (Silverman 61). However, unlike Foreman, Patterson admits that he loses the fight. When reconstructing the event, Patterson thinks "Ingemar smashed all my plans" (189). Although he knows he lost, he does not understand what has happened in an ontological sense and feels like he is "mourning a death" (192). Having been knocked out by Johansson, "he is counted 'dead'" (Oates, On Boxing 15). He has lost the heavyweight championship which not only gave him an identity but also kept his childhood traumas from consuming him.

After losing to Johansson, Patterson's feeling is "like being back hiding in the hole in the wall in the subway again. All the confidence, conviction and certainty was flowing out of me like blood from a wound in my soul" (193-94). In a sense, then, in losing to Johansson, Patterson loses his centre, his

identity in boxing, through the "wound," the trauma in his "soul." As Patterson writes, "if ever I was in danger of becoming the mixed-up kind of person again that I used to be as a kid, that was the point" (4). By losing the object that "completes" (142) his identity, the championship, which, given Liebling's statement above, he never possessed in the first place, Patterson moves back to his traumatic beginnings without the armour of boxing to protect him. His desire to move back to the dark, his desire for extinction, emphasizes that when it comes to trauma "survival itself . . . can be a crisis" (Caruth, Introduction 9).

Although he feels that "somebody had cut a piece right out of the middle of [my mind]" (187), Patterson insists he re-covers from his trauma. In his autobiography, Patterson puts a positive spin on the loss, insisting it helps him overcome his childhood trauma, saying Johansson "made me think for myself. That's an awfully painful thing, especially for somebody who always had somebody else to do his thinking for him" (207). Despite the fact that he reverts to his childhood personality after the loss, he "realized how far I had come from the scared youngster who would hide in the dark" (231). He finally feels like someone who has proceeded through steps of traumatic re-recovery, "from control of the body . . . to control of the environment" (Herman 162). Nonetheless, Patterson admits his traumas "still haunt me now and then" (239), indicating that re-recovery from trauma is never absolute and that "to some degree everyone is a prisoner of the

past" (Herman 235).

When we examine Patterson's boxing career following the publication of his autobiography in 1962, we see how Patterson imposes closure on his book. That is to say, Patterson is still unable to handle failure even after his book is published and, therefore, is ultimately not victorious over himself. In the fall of 1962, after losing to Liston the first time, Patterson returns to darkness, obliterates his identity, by making "his escape [from the boxing arena] wearing a false beard and moustache" (Liebling, "Starting" 230) which he had ordered at least a week before the fight (Conrad 150). Here, as in the act of melancholy, Patterson's "object-loss [is] transformed into an ego-loss" (Freud, "Mourning" 249). Patterson actually feels better as someone else as he escapes to Europe for almost a week, wearing a disguise to make him look like an old person. Patterson tells Gay Talese, "I began to actually think I was somebody else. I began to believe it. And it is nice, every once in a while, being somebody else" (Talese 115), reflecting that traumatic moments "shatter the construction of the self . . . and cast the victim into a state of existential crisis" (Herman 51). These extreme moments of trauma, of self-dissolution, permanently scar him, which is why even today Patterson, who is now over sixty, says, "I think about [Liston] even now and I figure I'll find a way to win. That's funny, isn't it?" (Remnick, King 4).

Summing up, then, Patterson has not escaped his losses to

Liston because he is still experiencing them in their full traumatic impact.¹ As Cathy Caruth writes, "to be traumatized is to be possessed by an image or event" (Introduction 5).

However, Patterson's desire to face Liston once again may be a symptom of his ring trauma, his childhood trauma, or both, because of "the unlocatability of any particular traumatic experience: [what appears to be a new trauma] could always be merely a repetition of an earlier one" (Caruth, Unclaimed n.134). In the end, Patterson has been traumatized by both his childhood and his boxing career. Likewise, Norman Mailer, as with his account of Foreman's loss to Ali, is able to "reconstruct" Patterson's traumatic history through "present symptoms" (Herman 3). Mailer writes, "when Patterson was bad he was unbelievably bad, he was Chaplinesque, simple, sheepish, eloquent in his clumsiness, sad like a clown, his knees looked literally to droop. He would seem precisely the sort of shy, stunned, somewhat dreamy Negro kid who never knew the answer in class" ("Ten" 225). Given Mailer's quotation, we see that Patterson's post-autobiography boxing defeats only reinforce and reveal that he never did overcome his childhood traumas.

Raging Bull, the autobiography of Jake La Motta, middleweight champion between 1949 and 1951, has been called "an anomaly of boxing literature" (Tosches vii). Unlike such boxing

¹Patterson, nicknamed "the Rabbit" by Muhammad Ali because he literally froze in front of Sonny Liston's onslaught, was a victim of punches he could see. This echoes the experience of the trauma victim who "freezes" when attacked by something in the face of which s/he feels impotent and overwhelmed (Herman 42).

autobiographies as Rocky Graziano's Somebody up There Likes Me, Gene Tunney's A Man Must Fight, and Barney Ross's No Man Stands Alone, as well as those by Foreman and Patterson discussed above, La Motta's does not graft a happy ending onto his story. Unlike Foreman, he is not ignorant of what has happened to him, but unlike Patterson, he is not asserting trauma and re-recovery. As Gerald Early writes about La Motta's ring career, "he bestowed nothing upon the audience except his own enormous experience of trauma. In his way, he showered the audience with deafening yet silent, barbaric curses" ("The Romance" 93). Whereas Foreman fails to know anything about his trauma and Patterson asserts "knowledge" and re-recovery, La Motta, in his autobiography, emphasizes his inability to escape from trauma. As Jan Philipp Reemtsma writes, "victories reveal continuity in a personality; defeats necessitate discontinuity" (55). The subject of La Motta's autobiography is one long personal defeat, nothing but discontinuities, fragments, and gaps.

La Motta's fundamental trauma is his failure to own the phallus, his lack and symbolic castration. However, unlike Foreman and Patterson, he is very alert to this lack. This awareness leads to his failure to encapsulate his past in a nutshell as so many other boxer-autobiographers do:

Now, sometimes, at night, when I think back, I feel like I'm looking at an old black-and-white movie of myself. Why it should be black-and-white I don't know,

but it is. Not a good movie, either, jerky, with gaps in it, a string of poorly lit sequences, some of them with no beginning and some with no end. No musical score, just sometimes the sound of a police siren or a pistol shot. And almost all of it happens at night, as if I lived my whole life at night. (2)

He cannot piece things together. He feels like a broken man whose life has been made up of a series of wounds or traumas. His life story is one of fragmentations and, as Reemtsma argues above, discontinuities.

La Motta's autobiography begins with a childhood anecdote that points to his knowledge of his fundamental lack. La Motta recounts an incident when he is beaten up by a group of children and, afterwards, tells his father about it. "My father came over to me, hit me a vicious slap across the face and slapped an icepick in my hand. He yelled at me, . . . 'Hit 'em with it, hit 'em first, and hit 'em hard.' . . . That phrase . . . was the only good thing I ever got from my father, and later it always seemed to push the right triggers at the right time in my brain" (4). La Motta writes, "until the icepick, I was always the kid getting it in the ass" (4). His experience of "taking it" and "giving it" echoes David Savran's argument that in the later twentieth century, the male subject, caught between masochism and sadism, "takes it like a man" to prove himself a man (33). Nonetheless, this icepick and his father's phrase do not prop up

his identity as a male subject in an absolute sense.

Pointing to his fundamental lack in male subjectivity, La Motta tells a story about robbing a bookie named Harry Gordon:

He was bent over and moaning and I thought I'd hit him hard enough to flatten him, but no, he started to turn.

And then I got so mad at him because he was still on his feet, I lost my head. I wanted to kill him I was so mad that he was still up, and I began to hit him again and again. And finally he collapsed. (7)

La Motta is unable to destroy Gordon and consolidate his identity as a male sadist; consequently, he responds with frustration and finally fury over his fundamental lack, over his failure to be a man. He can only be "like" a man (Savran 38).

La Motta continues to try to resolve his identity, to fill his fundamental lack. Once, he believes that guns are the answer. La Motta writes, "all you had to do was look at those guns -- and I kept staring at them . . . -- to know you had power in your hands. With one of those, if you told a guy to do something, he'd do it" (17). The power in this object is obvious, as it helps re-solve Jake's identity as a sadistic male subject much as his ice-pick did earlier. As La Motta writes, "that's what it's about, a gun. With a gun, you're the man" (22, emphasis added).

If he can consolidate himself, fill his lack with an object

or a fetish to "disavow castration" (Zizek 249), he feels that he will not have to fight everyone because he will be a complete male subject. However, dreams of cohesiveness, given Silverman's arguments summarized previously, are illusions. Consequently, none of these objects helps him totally. Realizing this failure to attain presence, he responds like traumatized people who "have come to feel that they have lost a natural immunity to misfortune and that something awful is almost bound to happen" (Erikson 194). Jake expects his world to fall apart. In fact, again like the trauma victim who has "an elevated baseline of arousal; . . . [and who is] always on the alert for danger" (Herman 36), this feeling is normal for La Motta: "I was beginning to feel better and tenser at the same time" (23). This feeling of tension is his way of maintaining psychological equilibrium. Like Bicek in Never Come Morning, as we shall see, when La Motta is arrested for a crime in which he is only indirectly involved, his guilt is assuaged: "what made me feel so good was that I wasn't getting away completely with what I had done to Harry Gordon" (32). Jake can only feel comfortable with failure and anxiety brought about through his knowledge of his fundamental lack and symbolic castration.

Nonetheless, La Motta continues to maintain the illusion of wholeness despite his assertion of fragmentation. This contradiction is "symptomatic of the black and white thinking that is a product of fragmentation" (Layton 111). His desire for wholeness causes him to put friendly repartee into the context of

a battle. In a juvenile hall, a sympathetic priest asks La Motta for his name. La Motta tells him, "Jake," figuring "you couldn't spend every moment of your waking hours fighting" (46). Like Bicek in Never Come Morning and Terry Malloy in Waterfront, Jake is "not used to being nice or even honest" (70) and "can't trust anybody" (71). When confronted with the priest's friendliness, Jake starts "breaking" (55). Memories from his past surface in a way that threaten him physically, as he feels his "whole body shake" (55). His responses reflect a "kind of fragmentation, whereby trauma tears apart a complex system of self-protection that normally functions in an integrated fashion" (Herman 34). As a result, Jake "approaches all relationships as though questions of life and death are at stake" (Herman 93), feeling if he gives anything of himself away to others, he will shatter and fragment.

After being released from the reformatory, Jake turns to professional boxing. Later in his career, after being forced to take a dive to Billy Fox for a shot at the middleweight championship, Jake considers retiring from boxing. Here, he responds to what Silverman calls the loss of "a bound and armored ego, predicated upon the illusion of coherence and control" (Silverman 62), since owning the boxing championship does not say anything essential about him but, rather, says something about his construction as a fragmented subject in the symbolic world. As his life is one of trauma, fragmentation, loss, and castration, the knowledge that the championship is not absolute

and will not consolidate his identity puts him in familiar psychological territory. Realizing the flighty nature of the championship, "all of a sudden I began to feel savage and better at the same time" (160, emphasis added). Unlike Foreman and Patterson, then, La Motta willfully seeks out lack and trauma because, like the traumatized subject, he functions best without "any baseline state of physical calm or comfort" (Herman 86).

La Motta's story emphasizes the fact that the trauma of poverty, of being a minority, and of being a male subject does not simply resolve itself through boxing. Two fundamental contradictions inherent in boxing and in his identity, both of which La Motta is aware, make this point: his relationships with women and, touched on briefly above, his experience as the middleweight champion. The first is reflected in his nickname "the Raging Bull." The bull, the cliché goes, conquers anything in its path, is unappeasable both physically and sexually, and is absolutely the inverse of the feminine. However, as Gerald Early argues, the bull is also a symbol in both the sun and moon cults; it can be both tame and wild; and "its fecundating wetness is that of both the male and the female" (Early, "The Romance" 99). Furthermore, like a boxer's championship, a bull's masculinity is always in question. In the animal world, if a bull happens to defeat the strongest bull, he gets to copulate with the cows; but the defeated bull has a chance to rest, to come back, and to challenge the champion bull; however, the champion bull is probably weakened with frequent mounting and loss of semen

(Hunter 558-59). The only way for the victorious bull to remain strong is to forego his prize, the cows.

Jake's reliance on this name betrays an insecurity on his part, reflecting a desire to possess a masculinity which he can never own, since it is always in doubt, always troubled by lack. In his autobiography, he writes as much, reflecting upon a date he had with a woman: "The bull . . . is the symbol of sexual prowess. . . . And here was me, the raging Bull of the Bronx, not able to make it with a very willing teenage chick" because "[I was] impotent" (76-77). Furthermore, Jake's fists, objects of sadistic violence used to overcome his opponents, are, in fact, split between masculinity and femininity. The sculptor Gabrielle Barnett, who hand-casted Jake La Motta said, "Jake's hands don't show violence I hate to say this, but they're almost feminine. They're very smooth and very delicate. It's remarkable that those fists were able to do so much damage" (Tosches x). Rather than being a one-track sadistic killer, La Motta is split between potency and impotency, between masculinity and femininity.

Like his masculinity, La Motta's championship is not absolute either. Jake La Motta was a middleweight champion, that is to say, he fought at a weight of 160 pounds or less. Although an adequate light heavyweight (175 pounds or less), he was not by any means a heavyweight, although New York Times columnist Arthur Daley described him as having "the build of a heavyweight who'd been hit on the noggin by a mallet and flattened down to

middleweight proportions" (36). At one point in his autobiography, talking to his friend Pete, La Motta begins to question his identity. "Suddenly I started crying" (88) because he realized he would never fight the best boxer of his generation, the heavyweight champion, Joe Louis. He is at least twice removed from the phallus. He is once removed from Louis and further removed from the ideal championship which neither Louis, Patterson, nor Foreman ever possessed.

La Motta's feelings of inadequacy brought about through trauma are related to his self-loathing. After his career, he admitted that he "fought like I didn't deserve to live" (Heller 300). He would take enormous amounts of punishment from the likes of Sugar Ray Robinson and say, "you can't do it, you black bastard, . . . you can't put me on the deck" (qtd. in Robinson 185), thereby proving he could take it "like" a man. Boxing, a sport in which the participants fight a double of themselves, reflects this split between sadism and masochism. La Motta writes of an early opponent named Jimmy Reeves: "it was like Reeves suddenly became me or the part of me that I hated and was always afraid of, the part that I could never control" (89). Jake manages to knock him out only to see Reeves being saved by the bell in the final round at the count of nine. This ring loss points to his fundamental lack and emphasizes that La Motta will never completely overcome his fragmentation.

La Motta's knock out record also accentuates his split between masculinity and femininity. Ex-boxer Roger Donoghue, the

man who trained Marlon Brando for his role as an ex-boxer in On the Waterfront, called La Motta a "cruel" fighter because "he'd carry a guy and torture him, keep him around for a while" instead of knocking him out quickly which is considered the more "humane" way of disposing of an opponent (Plimpton 308). La Motta had only thirty knock outs in over one hundred fights which is an amazingly small number for a middleweight champion who is counted as one of the best boxers of all time. If boxers are fighting their double in the ring (Oates, On Boxing 12), La Motta was very rarely able or, considering Donoghue's comment, willing to overcome himself. As a result, he does not assert something like Patterson's "victory over [him]self." After he wins the title, discovering that Harry Gordon is alive after all, he says as much: "I thought, Christ, is this the way it's going to be forever? Can't I ever get out of this? I've just won the title, Harry Gordon is alive, so there ain't no murder rap against me, there never was one" (172). Once again, he sees that he cannot knock Gordon down and is reminded that he does not hold the phallus, that he manifests lack instead.

Given that La Motta fails to overcome himself completely in the ring or to hold complete control over his destiny, it is not surprising that, after he loses his middleweight championship to Sugar Ray Robinson, "I didn't know it then, but that was really the end of my [boxing] career" (186). La Motta reflects the fact that ghetto kids who are promised riches and glory experience "readjustment trauma" (Sammons 245) when their careers come to a

sudden end. As La Motta says, "I think my highs and lows were higher and lower than most people's." In fact, they create "a short trip through hell" (189). La Motta writes, "while I was a fighter I had some control over myself, but after . . . [my last fight] I seemed to lose everything" (190, emphasis added). He is, again, a man without a centre.

La Motta tries to fill the void left after his boxing career by being a ladies' man, only to be arrested on a vice charge. He finds himself in solitary confinement. Screaming and smashing his fists against the wall, he realizes he "had always been afraid of everything in life" (208). The irony, though, is that although "at that moment I also knew that there wasn't anything for me to ever be afraid of again" (208), he has nothing now. He is, to quote from Tennessee Williams's boxing story "One Arm," "a personality without a centre who throws up a wall and lives in a state of siege" (181-82). As Dori Laub writes, "in the centre of this massive, dedicated effort [to cover over a trauma] remains a danger, a nightmare, a fragility, a woundedness that defies all healing. Around and against this woundedness survivors keep amassing fortunes, keep erecting castles" (Laub 73). The castle of boxing is transformed into a prison. By banging against the wall he only reaffirms his decentredness, his trauma. Nonetheless, because he feels "better and tenser" (23) and "savage and better" (160) with trauma and lack, with the "black curtain being rung down over my life" (206), and with "the shadow of the [lost] object [falling] upon [his] ego" (Freud, "Mourning"

249), he refuses to overcome his fragmentation.

La Motta, unlike Patterson and Foreman, does not disown his trauma. As Robert de Niro, who played Jake La Motta in the film Raging Bull, says,

I would pick his brain. . . . I admired the fact that he was at least willing to question himself and his actions. But what's he going to do? Should he be like a college professor and try to say, "Well, I think the reason that I did that was because . . ." He would protect himself sometimes, but then he would say, "Aah, I was a son-of-a-bitch." (qtd. in Kelly 126)

Unlike the unknowing George Foreman and the "college professor" Floyd Patterson, La Motta does not fit his story into the larger cultural stereotype of "fighting his way out of the ghetto." As Gerald Early says, Jake La Motta only asserts trauma.

Chapter Two

The Melancholic "Wound" in Boxing Fiction

Neil Berman has written that "works [of fiction] which use boxing at their narrative centre are not only emphatically realistic in style and technique, but also, and more crucial from a critical perspective, deny even the possibility of play" (95). In On Boxing, Joyce Carol Oates argues that "there is nothing fundamentally playful about it; nothing that seems to belong to daylight, to pleasure. . . . One plays football, one doesn't play boxing" (18-19). Quoting Robert E. Neale, Berman argues that "play is psychologically defined as any activity not motivated by the need to resolve inner conflict" (99). Play is absent from boxing fiction precisely because the protagonists, the boxers themselves, must re-solve inner conflict each time they fight. As Joyce Carol Oates writes, "for what possible atonement is the fight waged if it must shortly be waged again . . . and again?" (On Boxing 21).

Boxing is just too immoderate an experience to be put under the general rubric of play. Norman Mailer writes, "a man turns to boxing because he discovers it is the best experience of his life. If he is a good fighter, his life in the centre of the ring is more intense than it can be anywhere else, his mind is more exceptional than at any other time, his body has become a live part of his brain" ("Ten Thousand" 255). If a boxer experiences such an extreme form of masculinity and consolidation

of identity in the ring, one should not be surprised that he still holds onto boxing to re-solve his identity and that he is, in fact, haunted by it when his career is over. For example, Kasia Boddy argues that in Joyce Carol Oates's novel You Must Remember This, the ex-boxer Felix Stevick is "a man whose most intense physical moments have come in the ring rather than in bed." As a result, he searches for relationships that give him these potent moments. When he has an affair with his niece Enid, he finds that it is "commensurate with the experience of the ring" (Boddy 209). Here, Felix marks trauma as an extreme event that is never completely conquered, known, or overcome -- but is relived again and again.

By looking at Joyce Carol Oates's On Boxing, Freud's essay "Mourning and Melancholia," and theories of male subjectivity (particularly those of Kaja Silverman and David Savran), we will see that the boxer in pugilistic fiction (re)turns to boxing in an attempt to re-solve inner conflict, to re-cover from trauma. This (re)turn, however, will ultimately fail. Boxing, then, is not "play," but an endless sequence of try-outs of male identity and subjectivity with which the boxer attempts to create what Lacan calls the "illusion of autonomy" (4). In this second chapter, I shall show how the boxer protagonists in Leonard Gardner's Fat City (1969), Nelson Algren's Never Come Morning (1942), and Budd Schulberg's Waterfront (1955) fail to free themselves from or resist the idea of boxing as a means of resolving their male identities, of creating the "illusion of

autonomy," and of covering over the trauma at the heart of male subjectivity. I shall further disclose how these failures and resistances will have a direct effect upon their ability to function as social beings in the symbolic world after their ring careers grind to a halt. In Fat City, Billy Tully is traumatized by the loss of both his boxing career and his wife, but nonetheless, feels he can regain both by returning to the ring. As a result, he experiences a traumatic repetition that ends with his almost destroying himself. In Never Come Morning, Bruno Bicek believes he can conquer and re-cover from the trauma of standing immobile while his girlfriend is gang raped by his friends. Months later, he attempts this re-recovery through an act of will in the boxing ring. In Waterfront, Terry Malloy most successfully re-covers from his trauma by remaining ambivalent in the face of it and thereby letting go of his ring career.

In Leonard Gardner's Fat City, Billy Tully, a boxer, fails to recover from his trauma and, specifically, melancholia, by allowing the lost object, represented together by his boxing career and his wife, to destroy his life. He believes he can fill his lack with this object, thereby re-trenching the "dominant fiction" of a whole and complete male identity. The fact that both physical and sexual virility are tied together in this boxing novel is no accident. Joyce Carol Oates calls this combination "a fairy-tale proposition": "the most feared, the most manly" boxer is paired with "the fairy-tale princess whom the mirrors declare the fairest woman on earth" (On Boxing 70).

Tully faces the power of his trauma, then, outside of the ring through a masculine discourse that equates sexual conquest with physical valour. His trauma resembles a loss "of the illusion of presence" and a confrontation with lack. Tully is the traumatized male subject who must survive despite the loss of the "dominant fiction". As Cathy Caruth argues, "it is not the moment of the [traumatic] event, but of the passing out of it that is traumatic; that survival itself, in other words, can be a crisis" (Caruth, Trauma 9). This novel displays this traumatic crisis.

Like Freud's melancholic who withdraws from others to destroy his ego, Tully, after losing his boxing career and his wife, becomes alcoholic, lives in the appropriately named "Hotel Coma" (3), and feels that "his life was coming to a close" (10). He, in effect, calls a halt to his life as "Tully has not had a bout since his wife left him" (4). His inability to locate his trauma and his uncertainty as to the real moment of this loss cripples his ability to locate the object of lack; consequently, he picks and fixes a moment "for the sake of convenience" (111). Even after a successful comeback bout that he wins by knockout, Tully still fumbles with his melancholic feelings because he wrongly assumes that his male identity can be consolidated by winning a fight and having, as Kasia Boddy argues, the "female gaze [which] . . . is a crucial component of the fight itself" (208) acknowledge his "rites of virility" (Fat City 12). Tully's fall results from both his declining ability in the ring and his

reliance on this "indefinable endorsement" (11) from a woman which "could give him back that newly-wed wholeness and ease" (12). Tully fails to see that male identity is not a matter of "wholeness" and "ease" but of lack. To be male, to be the strong boxer, is to be, as David Savran argues, an imitation of an imitation, to be constitutively split between masculinity and femininity, sadism and masochism.

Tully's collapse from the pinnacle of his boxing success surprises both himself and his manager. As Cathy Caruth writes, "for history to be a history of trauma means that it is referential precisely to the extent that it is not fully perceived as it occurs; or to put it somewhat differently, that a history can be grasped only in the very inaccessibility of its occurrence" (Unclaimed 18).¹ Echoing Caruth, Tully, contemplating the high point of his boxing career, feels "that period had been the peak of his life, though he had not realized it then. It had gone by without time for reflection, ending while he was still thinking things were going to get better." Furthermore, "he had not realized . . . nor had his manager realized" (11) this was all the fame he was ever going to have. His traumatic fall from the "peak" comes like the knock out punch the boxer fails to see (Oates, On Boxing 13).

¹Dori Laub makes a similar argument. He writes, "the traumatic event, although real, took place outside the parameters of 'normal' reality, such as causality, sequence, place and time. The trauma is thus an event that has no beginning, no ending, no before, no during and no after" (Laub 69).

Instead of letting go of the lost object, his boxing career, Tully repeats the trauma of losing it by returning to the ring: "Yearning for struggle and release, he felt he had to fight" (109). To return to the ring, though, he has to believe that he can still fight and that he is wrong thinking "he had lost his reflexes" (10). Instead, he feels his manager has betrayed him. He recalls a fight that occurred in Panama and to which he was sent without his manager. According to Tully, he dominated his Panamanian opponent for six rounds, but, before the seventh round, his corner men cut his eyes. In the ensuing round, the referee stops the fight due to the blood flowing from Tully's wounds. Tully "viewed now, for the sake of convenience, [this moment] as the pivotal event" of his boxing career (111, emphasis added). To shore up this fiction, he forgets that "the knowledge [of his declining skills] had been mercilessly pounded into Tully in a half dozen bouts" (11). Tully's error here is thinking that he can precisely locate the moment of his trauma despite "the very inaccessibility of its occurrence" (Caruth, Unclaimed 18).

Tully's cut eyes reflect Freud's arguments concerning castration in his essay "The Uncanny." As Freud writes, "a study of dreams, phantasies and myths has taught us that anxiety about one's eyes, the fear of going blind, is often enough a substitute for the dread of being castrated" (231). Tully's experience in the ring here is in fact a symbolic castration, an exposure of his fundamental lack. Picking this moment for the "sake of convenience" is worthwhile since it is the vision of fear for the

boxer, the moment when he is castrated and exposed in the ring. It is a dream of castration from which Tully cannot awake.

Tully becomes obsessed with finding the lost moment or object to assuage his melancholic feelings. Fat City reflects the idea of melancholy being a disposition prompted by the loss of an object. Tully who feels the "abeyant melancholy of the evening . . . sat with his shoulders slumped under the oppression of the room, under the impasse that was his blood and bones and flesh. Afraid of a crisis beyond his capacity, he held himself in, his body absolutely still" (61, emphasis added). Like the "cathectic energies" being drawn to the "open wound" of melancholia, Tully is holding "himself in" (Freud "Mourning" 253). He shows how his melancholy is paralyzing. Earlier, Tully braves one of his "melancholy nights when he felt that only reconciliation [with his wife] could salvage his life" (12). Here, the return of his wife would solve his melancholy and reconfigure his identity, since his wife and his boxing career are the same thing: "now that his wife was gone . . . his career was over" (75). He is thus torn between what is fact and fiction, reality and myth. To attain the woman means he has to perform as a boxer. But to perform as a boxer means to deny the woman sexual gratification, since a boxer must focus his sado-sexual energies on his opponent. It is this contradiction between having and not having the object of desire that makes Tully an "ironic" character. Tully muses, "now that his wife was gone and his [boxing] career was over . . . he felt his existence

had come to a halt, with no way open to him anywhere" (75). He was trapped in the beginning within what Joyce Carol Oates calls "a fairy-tale proposition" (On Boxing 70).

Even when Tully attempts to master these feelings of lack and self-persecution, he only repeats his traumatic moment of waste. At a bar, Tully realizes that a woman named Oma, to whom he is attracted, fails to live up to the image of his wife. This knowledge results in "a pleasurably melancholy sense of fidelity" for his wife (99-100). He continues to talk to her, and, when she drunkenly accuses him of abusing her, he believes "his wife were [sic] again berating him" and tries "to mollify her, to keep her with him by his penitential pose." Repeating the traumatic moment of rejection of his wife, he is "caught where he had been so many times before" (103).

This scene echoes Silverman's gloss of traumatic repetition wherein trauma causes "a 'shattering' rather than a release" (61) as Tully commits a masochistic act. Like the melancholic who expects and enjoys abuse (Freud 251), he smashes his head against the bar and "regained his authority" (104) by "taking it like a man." As a result, he leaves with the woman who acknowledges his "rites of virility." Leaving the bar with his prize and feeling that "from now on everything would be different" (106), Tully ironically asserts that "everything would be" the same, since he is only exhibiting a symptom of mania which is but a "suspension" of melancholia (Freud 254). He has not overcome his melancholia by rejecting the lost object, but has covered it over by leaving

with Oma who stands in for the object of his lost wife, thus repeating those acts which allowed him to believe in the "dominant fiction" to begin with. This faith in the "dominant fiction" is emphasized when he leaves Oma after living with her for a time. Fleeing the apartment, "Tully experienced a moment of communion with his wife." Once again, trying to unify himself, he turns to boxing by calling his manager Ruben Luna, and exclaiming that Oma is "destroying me" (133). He repeats the traumatic loss of self only to reconstruct his ego around the object of his wife and/or boxing.

Tully, nonetheless, continues to search for the lost object even after winning his comeback fight. After turning against his manager whom he berates because of the fight in Panama, Tully, believing himself to be "whole, self-sufficient, felt his life had at last opened up and that now nothing stood between him and the future's infinite possibilities" (151). Leaving his manager and walking the streets, he sees a picture of a stripper whose navel "was an exact replica of his wife's" (151). Although expecting his "rites of virility" to be affirmed by the stripper, he, upon seeing her, realizes "there was nothing about [her navel] to remind Tully of his wife" (152-53). Unable to find his lost object here, he returns to Oma who is now living with a previous boyfriend. Now, "he knew absolutely that he was lost" (156), since there is no immediate object to shore up his identity. As Joyce Carol Oates succinctly puts it, "it is a measure of the novel's irony that victory [in the ring] . . . is

hardly to be distinguished from failure" (On Boxing 56).

Tully falls into an alcoholic spiral and behaves like he did at the beginning of the novel. He tells us, "the strange thing about that melancholy time was that he did not think of his wife. It was as if in losing Oma he had lost his love for Lynn. . . . [Now] he yearned for Oma" (157). With the new object (although, with her lover, she is presently indisposed) he is able to admit that "I don't even know where [my wife] is" (159). Whereas before his life was over without his wife, now "without Oma he felt incapable of anything" (160). This shows that the "real" object of lack is not a woman but an ideal that his boxing career was unable to grant him precisely because, as Oates reminds us, it is a "fairy-tale proposition" (On Boxing 70). It is, then, not something lost but rather something he "lacks" more primordially. When the male subject who believes in the "dominant fiction" and the wholeness of male subjectivity comes into contact with this lack, he may believe it is, on the contrary, a "loss." It is no wonder that the last word on Tully is that "he drifted in the darkness with his loss" (168), since, "in the darkness," he cannot see that what he has "lost" (Freud 245). Tully, relying on the promise of unity through the female gaze, loses the chance to master and, to some degree, to escape from his spiral of traumatic repetition.

In Never Come Morning by Nelson Algren, the boxer Bruno "Lefty" Bicek, one of many social misfits living in a Polish ghetto, betrays his girl-friend, Steffi, by allowing her to be

raped by a group of boys from his neighbourhood. The boys, then, turn her over to the Barber. The barber serves as both Bruno's manager and the neighbourhood pimp. Functioning as the latter, he transforms Steffi into a prostitute. This is a traumatic moment not just for Steffi but also for Bruno as he stands immobilized despite his desire to help her and eventually hears her giggles and her requests for the "Next!" boy to have sex with her (74). The remainder of the novel becomes a series of haunting and "frozen moments" (Giles, Confronting 49) for Bruno, of flashes that reenact the moment in which he betrayed Steffi and in which he did nothing, pointing to a fundamental lack in male subjectivity since he was not strong enough to save her. As a result of this feeling, he takes out his frustrations on a "Greek" who waits in line for a chance to have sex with Steffi. Brutally beating him and breaking his neck, Bruno is ironically arrested for a murder of which he is innocent but which occurred when he and his mates botched a hold-up. After getting out of jail, resuming his boxing career, and becoming a "white hope," Bruno is arrested after his manager, from whom he tried to steal Steffi, tells the police that Bruno killed the "Greek".

Melancholia, which appears explicitly in Leonard Gardner's novel Fat City as we have seen, thus also emerges in Nelson Algren's novels. George Bluestone perceptively observes that "in Algren's central vision, self-destruction becomes operative only after the destruction of some loved object. The moment a central character becomes responsible for such ruin, he is irrevocably

doomed. That 'irrational destructive force' then, is the impulse to destroy love which is tantamount to death" (qtd. in Cox 105, emphasis added). This self-destruction in Algren's fiction suggests Freud's idea of ambivalence. Ambivalence causes "self-reproaches to the effect that the mourner himself is to blame for the loss of the loved object, i.e., that he has willed it" (251). Like Freud's melancholic, Algren's Bruno Bicek in Never Come Morning loses the loved object and wages war on himself, on his own ego, thereby in the end destroying himself with guilt and self-hatred.

The difference between Freud's theory and Algren's "central vision," however, lies in how the object is lost. In Algren's Never Come Morning, Bruno, through an act of violence, divulges his torn loyalties between an amoral community and a sense of propriety which belongs to the world beyond the ghetto. After destroying the object of desire, Steffi, he turns on himself later in the narrative. Freud does not ascribe blame to the subject who loses the object. But Algren lays the blame on the character himself, since, in Never Come Morning, Bruno Bicek, acting like Richard Wright's Bigger Thomas, destroys the object through some kind of inner compulsion built upon a fear and rage he cannot control, and instigated by the fundamental tear in his identity. His name certainly emphasizes this tear: he is both "Lefty" and "Bi"-cek; a split male subject.

Bruno, like Billy Tully in Fat City, concerns himself with what Silverman calls "the unpleasurable contact with lack" (61).

He tortures himself with the thought that it is impossible to fulfil himself completely, that is to say, that it is impossible to be "straight" (133). Bruno's "life was a ceaseless series of lusts: for tobacco so good he could eat it like meat; for meat, for coffee, for bread, for sleep, for whisky, for women, for dice games and ball games and personal triumphs in public places. Day and night, one or all of these rode him, and was never fully satisfied even for a while; they could no more be satisfied than they could be evaded" (31). This desire for fulfilment is inevitably doomed to fail, and is really a desire for extinction. Bruno's frustration with satisfying his desires reflects "the notion that in inanimate matter the [death] drive originated as a defense, and specifically as a defense against the traumatic imposition of life; that life began as a struggle to return to death" (Caruth, Trauma 9). It is not surprising then that Bruno "retained a wistful longing for the warmth and security of the womb; . . . he could not recall a time when he had not preferred silence and darkness to daylight and struggle" (31).

Bruno anchors his identity by attaching himself to other neighbourhood boys. When they begin to pressure Bruno into allowing them to rape Steffi, Bruno reflects upon what would be the proper thing to do given his cultural context, that is to say, his position as a subject within a Polish ghetto in Chicago. "What kind of a man would they think him if he admitted he was [in love]? He wouldn't be able to show his face at the barber's, that was sure. . . . What kind of a contender was it who still

scribbled with chalk on billboards, 'I love Steffi R.?' (68-69). He lives in a neighbourhood and practices a profession that denies the possibility of love, trust, and affection. As Budd Schulberg writes in his boxing novel The Harder They Fall, if "[horse] racing is the sport of kings, boxing is the vocation of the slum-dwellers who must fight to exist" (190). Bruno represents the irresolute "slum-dweller," aching for fulfilment and stasis but living in a world which he wishes he could change. This oscillation between psychological and social trauma emphasizes the tension between postmodern and modern trauma respectively and the difficulty of differentiating between the two (Layton 116-17). It is enough to say that Bruno's existence in the Polish ghetto gives his psychological trauma, his postmodern trauma, a particular shape, "demonstrate[s] that fragmentation is not merely an existential given, but rather that it is inflicted relationally" (Layton 120).

Given his doubts about the ghetto, Bruno experiences a great deal of guilt because of what he did to Steffi. James R. Giles writes that Algren's characters "lash out in desperation at personifications of their own weaknesses; [they] need to destroy some physical representation of their inner fear and guilt" (Confronting 49). In this case, Bruno lashes out at a "Greek" who has joined the line of Polish boys from the neighbourhood who are waiting to rape Steffi. Bruno unfairly sucker punches this man and then kicks him in the head, breaking his neck and killing him. The "Greek" represents a threatening outsider attempting to

break into the neighbourhood and its definite ties of loyalty. But he also represents Bruno as the outsider. Bruno embodies the characteristics of an outsider within the ghetto precisely because he allows emotions, self-awareness, and morality to tamper with the amorality that his neighbourhood breeds and condones.

Bruno himself is aware, given the morality of his neighbourhood, that the only way he can be punished for what he did to Steffi is to be punished for something else by the powers which exist in the world beyond the ghetto, since Bruno's neighbourhood does not consider his (in)action a crime. These powers, represented almost exclusively by the police in this novel, are "waiting to reach out, if necessary, and crush [Algren's] young Polish-American hoodlums" (Giles, Confronting 46). In jail, reflecting upon another murder of which he is accused by the police but did not commit, Bruno thinks: "for whether that old man [whom Bruno is accused of killing] was dead or alive, he knew at last that he had killed. He had killed Steffi in his heart" (132).

Although he admits to his guilt, in the neighbourhood there is no witness to his destruction of Steffi: "there was no way of paying for Steffi. There was no charge against him for that, there was nothing definite he could be accused of by her. . . . He had been straight with the boys, he had been regular. . . . And to be regular was all he had ever been schooled to accomplish" (133). At this point in the novel, his

neighbourhood, rather than some kind of universal morality or culture, continues to constitute his identity.

To save himself from the thought of what he did to Steffi and to give himself some kind of centre to hold onto, Bruno relies increasingly on his identity as a boxer. This identity allows him to lose his emotional investment in the neighbourhood and to move beyond its confines. After a string of ring triumphs, Bruno is no longer a Polish fighter but "he's a white hope. The paper said" (242). Bruno is defined by a culture outside his ghetto rather than by his corrupt and exploitive manager, the Barber. This attention gives Bruno confidence. Bruno, planning to buy Steffi out of prostitution and working as a bouncer in the very brothel at which she works, "looked down at her solemnly, to tell her something he thought that, perhaps, she didn't yet know. 'I can lick anybody, Steff,' he assured her with no shade of doubt in his mind, as though he were telling her his name" (256). Bruno overcomes his series of lusts by equating his name, his subjectivity, in a one-to-one ratio, to that of someone who could beat anyone, who would be untouched by trauma or lack.

Ironically, this constructed identity falls apart when Bruno is boxing. As discussed in the Introduction to this thesis, boxing reflects both masculinity and femininity. It is masculine in its aggression but feminine in its offering up the body as an object to be pummelled. This paradox reflects David Savran's argument in Taking It Like a Man that male subjectivity is

dependent both on femininity (masochism) and masculinity (sadism) to create itself. It also puts into question Bruno's assertion that he can "lick anybody," since he is beaten severely before he wins. Joyce Carol Oates writes that a boxer's "triumph" is "merely temporary and provisional" (On Boxing 61). We see the provisional aspect of victories in most boxing fictions, for during fights, boxers, even those who win, view the world through fragments: for Bruno, "the ring posts wavered, like four small tethered flames; and along the upper rope lay a cord of rainbow-colored light" (276). In Fat City, when Tully is knocked down,

the whole scene shattered by a zigzag diagonal line, like a crack in a window. . . . The zigzag line cut the ropes. . . .

"How you feel?" The referee, with the jagged line pulsing in his face and his chin out of alignment, was scrutinizing him. (145)

This quotation suggests that a boxer who wins cannot simply "lick anybody." On the contrary, a victory comes at an enormous personal and physical cost for the boxer.

When he is boxing, Bruno experiences the guilt of what he did to Steffi most powerfully. In jail, Bruno constructs a fantasy for himself in which he is a boxer who "wasn't one to take advantage of man, woman or child" and who "had no intention, his manner said, of hitting a man who didn't have his hands up"

(91). Nevertheless, he loses control of this dream when he "began to feel that the ref must have a scar going from lip to cheekbone" (94) just like the Greek he killed (73). Joyce Carol Oates writes in On Boxing that the referee represents society's "conscience" (47). The referee then in Bruno's fantasy portrays his conscience returning in a traumatic repetition. This resurgence of guilt reflects the rupture in his identity: his inability to stand up for Steffi leads to the destruction of the "Greek." The fact that the "Greek" is the referee, the arbiter in the ring, indicates that Bruno identifies not with the immoral world of his neighbourhood but with the world beyond his ghetto. The referee is simply the father figure who re-solves Bruno's fundamental lack and helps him re-cover from trauma.

The novel ends with a stunning description of a prizefight between Bruno Bicek and Honeyboy Tucker. In this fight, Bruno's identity as boxer is disrupted in much the same way it was in his fantasy in prison. "When he stepped back he felt Tucker sag, for one moment, then come in to stop that left into his liver. Something began going around in the back of Bruno's brain: 'You got blood out of him, Bunny. It's awright, you got blood out of him.' He backpedaled, trying to remember better: why had she called 'Next! Next!' like that?" (270). Bicek's moment of near triumph is disrupted by repetitions of words spoken by Steffi after they had sex for the first time and when she was being raped. These phrases are the intrusion of his conscience, of his trauma. This trauma freezes him and Tucker comes back and knocks

Bicek down. While on the floor, Bicek again relives his trauma:

There was something he had to hear: a bell, or someone calling "Next!" He listened hard, to hear her again, and saw the shadow of Spector's hand across the canvas, and Spector's voice calling from behind a partition down an endless hall.

"Nine."

The shadow mustn't come again. He used both knees this time, got both feet under him, and fell sidewise against the top strand. Now it was all right. He'd done it. (274)

The referee represents his trauma, his conscience, and society's conscience appearing before Bruno (Oates, On Boxing 47). Like the one in Bruno's fantasy in jail, this referee represents the world beyond the ghetto, with the word "CHICAGO" (275) written on the back of his sweater. He is a "shadow," a "ghostly presence" (Oates, On Boxing 47) as the name "Spector" suggests. Like the "wound" of melancholia, the referee represents "the shadow of the [lost] object [that] [falls] upon the ego" (Freud 249). The referee, then, is revealing Bicek's trauma. Bruno tries to listen to it, but he realizes that "the shadow mustn't come again" because it will kill him, it will count ten, symbolically ending his life in the ring, knocking him "out of time" (Oates, On Boxing 15). If Tucker knocks out Bruno, Bruno has allowed his

trauma to overwhelm him. By getting up, he refuses to allow his conscience, his trauma, to take over his life.

Bruno, in fact, resists his trauma of living in a poor ghetto, being too weak to stop the gang rape of Steffi, and the doubt surrounding his assertion that he can "lick anybody" by winning this fight. Two fights frame the novel: a fight that Casey, one of the Barber's fighters, throws and the last one, featuring Bruno against Tucker. These fights emphasize Bruno's resistance to trauma, since the other boxer succumbs to the Barber's system while Bruno believes in something beyond the narrow confines of the ghetto. By turning down the Barber's management, Bruno breaks away from a man who has "never stopped seeing his [boxer] sprawled cold beneath the lights" (9) and who has forced his boxers to take dives and little money for fighting.

After winning his fight against Tucker and returning to his dressing room, Bruno faces Detective Tenczara who arrests him for the murder of the "Greek". Bruno's ex-manager, the Barber, told the police about the murder because Bruno had given up his management. This moment ironically shows how Bruno, despite the fact that he overcomes his trauma in the ring, will always be confronted and ultimately ruined by his trauma, since he cannot leave it behind in the ring. Bruno's last words are, "knew I'd never get t'be twenty-one anyhow," and he hears "the bell" (284) which is the cry of his conscience, of Steffi crying "Next!," of the winner existing "in time" and of the loser existing "out of

time" (Oates, On Boxing 15). By not allowing his protagonist to reach twenty-one years of age, Algren suggests that Bruno never achieves a unified male identity, that he never becomes, as Savran suggests, a man. Bruno, then, has been symbolically knocked-out and has come, once again, face to face with his trauma. He cannot escape his trauma but can only cover it over during discrete moments in the ring. The novel ends, then, with a reflection of Freud's idea that trauma is "the successive movement from an event to its repression to its return" (Caruth, Trauma 7). Bruno can construct an identity of boxer and refuse to let the trauma cross his path one more time after the count of nine; however, the repressed trauma always returns, emphasizing Oates's idea that a boxing victory is temporary while a "defeat is permanent" (On Boxing 61).

Unlike Billy Tully in Fat City and Bruno Bicek in Never Come Morning, ex-fighter Terry Malloy in Waterfront is able to overcome his ties to the lost object, his boxing career, through ambivalence. Terry Malloy is an ex-prizefighter who is now working as "muscle" for the waterfront mob run by Johnny Friendly. Friendly's right-hand-man is Terry's brother Charley. One night Terry, instructed by Charley, calls onto a roof-top Joey Doyle who is about to testify in court against Friendly's mob. Joey is thrown off the roof and dies. Terry is upset because he was not told about the plan to murder Joey Doyle beforehand. Terry's uncertainty sets off a moral struggle in him, resulting in his friendly testimony for the waterfront

commission. Writing about the film On the Waterfront upon which the novel Waterfront was based, Kenneth R. Hey argues, "individuals are frequently casualties of the conflict between right and wrong in society and that the individual's response to the clash of absolute moral standards is ambivalent" (161). In the novel Waterfront, Terry Malloy, unlike the protagonists of the two novels discussed above, overcomes the trauma of being betrayed by his managers who ruined his boxing career by coercing him to throw fights. He is able to do overcome his trauma, his lost boxing career, through ambivalence.

Freud writes that "each single struggle of ambivalence loosen[s] the fixation of the libido to the object by disparaging it, denigrating it and even as it were killing it" ("Mourning" 257). By the end of the novel, Terry Malloy testifies against his former manager in a hearing, thereby removing himself from the lost object haunting him, namely, his boxing career. By testifying against the mob, Terry bears witness to his destroyed boxing career. His fighting career is ruined because he had to take dives for Friendly, who, like the Barber in Never Come Morning, concerns himself more with the money that he can make with his boxer than with helping Terry or Terry's boxing career. After breaking ties with Johnny Friendly and testifying, Terry is found murdered.

Like Bruno Bicek, Terry does not gain any legitimate power or authority through his boxing career, nor does he hold much significance in his neighbourhood. Despite his success in the

ring, despite the fact that once "he was the Pride o' Bohegan," he is "only accepted by the big men in the neighbourhood because he had the good fortune to be the brother of Charley the Gent" (19). He is considered a half man, "a grown man already who never quite grew up" (19). When Terry asks why the gangsters failed to tell him they were going to kill Joey Doyle, Charley explains his brother's question away, calling it the result of "too much Marquis of Queensbury" (53). Charley, here, hints that Terry must be punch-drunk if he has the gall to question Johnny Friendly, the moral centre of the waterfront community. Terry is never considered a person, only an object. Terry's role as an object for Johnny Friendly is emphasized when he explains to Joey's sister, Katie Doyle, that "Johnny bought a piece of me" (190). Later, Johnny, angered by Terry's growing apprehension about his role in the waterfront mob, discounts Terry's success in the ring, saying "I guess once a bum, always a bum. Same reason he never made a great fighter" (208). Terry fails to receive any credit for what he accomplished in the ring, showing how, as Judith Herman says, "traumatic events overwhelm the ordinary systems of care that give people a sense of control, connection, and meaning" (33) and how "they shatter the construction of the self" (51). In Terry's world, if he is no longer a boxer, he is nothing, a bum, a boxer whose "defeat is permanent" (On Boxing 61).

Judith Herman's statements above suggest that without "connection and meaning" (33), a person cannot stop "believing in

nothing and nobody" (Waterfront 141). Terry, even when succeeding, displays ambivalence about his boxing career: "when it seemed for a short time as if he might have a chance of breaking into the big time, he had acted as if none of that mattered" (141). Terry's attitude here suggests what Freud calls the melancholic "disturbance of self-regard" ("Mourning" 244). Terry still acquits himself as if his boxing career does not matter; however, images from it haunt and possess him. In his mind, Terry sees his verbal confrontations with others as a boxing match: "he couldn't get up" (56); he walked "as a beaten fighter" (58); "he shook his head as if he was clearing it after a bad round" (128); Johnny is "jabbing him silly with words" (203); and he held "the back of his hand in the defensive gesture of a boxer" (238). As Cathy Caruth writes, trauma "is not assimilated or experienced fully at the time, but only belatedly, in its repeated possession of the one who experiences it. To be traumatized is precisely to be possessed by an image or event" (Trauma 5). These passages from the novel reveal that Terry does not simply leave his boxing career behind, but that he is in fact still living with his ring trauma in his day-to-day relationships with others.²

²This idea of being possessed by boxing appears often in boxing fiction. The protagonist in Harry Crew's The Knockout Artist "shook his head violently, as if to clear it after taking a punch" (56). During ex-boxer Felix Stevick's first sexual encounter with (or rape of) his niece in Oates's You Must Remember This, he feels "his first orgasm like a blow to the pit of the belly leaving him weak-kneed sucking for breath" (152). Judith Herman writes, "the traumatic moment becomes encoded in an abnormal form of memory,

The betrayal of Joey Doyle is perhaps that event which precipitates Terry's testimony against Johnny Friendly. When asked to call Joey Doyle onto the roof-top, "Terry ran his fingers rapidly backward across his upper lip and against his nose, a vestigial gesture from his boxing days when the blood used to gush into his nostrils and his glove had to serve for a handkerchief" (23-24). After Joey falls "he felt something like a bellyache in his head, the way his head had buzzed and felt heavy and big when an opponent had scored with a combination" (37). Terry's physical response to this act of violence suggests that Joey's death is a traumatic repetition of Terry's trauma in the ring. Like Joey, Terry goes down for the count for the mob, symbolically dying in the ring. Although Terry tries to forget what he did to Joey Doyle, "it was merely pushed back and buried in the dense undergrowth of forgotten or half-understood impressions that lay entangled in Terry's mind" (30). This incident, then, is repressed but still present in his mind, waiting to leap out and disrupt him much as its occurrence brings out boxing traumas. Judith Herman argues, fighting off the trauma only "further aggravates the post-traumatic syndrome" (42). What happens to Joey will return in a more explosive form, for it both repeats a trauma and adds to the trauma which is already in Terry's unconscious.

which breaks spontaneously into consciousness, both as flashbacks during waking states and as traumatic nightmares during sleep. Small, seemingly insignificant reminders can also evoke these memories, which often return with all the vividness and emotional force of the original event" (37).

Terry's character reflects the problem of articulating trauma. Dori Laub asserts that "for the testimonial process to take place, there needs to be a bonding, the intimate and total presence of an other -- in the position of one who hears" (70). Terry, though, "didn't know what to say, much less how to say it" (52). He also cannot articulate his trauma to Johnny Friendly and Charley (at least initially) because they, like the Barber in Never Come Morning, have a monetary rather than an emotional interest in Terry. Later, when Katie Doyle gets through "the defensive toughness like the scar tissue over [Terry's] wounded eyes" (189), Terry begins to tell his story but stops, realizing that "he never talked about dives," and defensively dismisses her as a "fruitcake" for wanting to hear his story (191). Like Bruno who thinks that he must be "regular," Terry reflects the idea that to be masculine, one cannot express moments of fragmentation and trauma. Terry is still unwilling to testify to his fragmentation, so he interrupts his testimony.

As I have argued above, the trauma victim does not control trauma but it possesses him. When Terry confronts and confesses his trauma to his brother, the trauma, not Terry, is active: "the past and all the abuses it had stored up in his seemed to cry out" (265) as if, as Caruth argues, it has taken "possession" of him (Trauma 5). The trauma reaches out unexpectedly here. He recounts to his brother the fateful night when he threw a fight to a boxer named Wilson who went on to a championship bout while Terry went to "Palookaville" (265). Terry regrets losing that

opportunity for a title shot: "I could've had class. I could've been a contender. I could've been somebody." Charley, "fighting himself for a decision," validates Terry's trauma by granting him an equivocal affirmation, saying "Okay, okay . . . " (266).³

Since the story of trauma is often one of survival, the trauma victim must not eat himself alive with the memory of the "lost" object. In the same way, Terry must disown his relationship with the object represented by Johnny Friendly and the corrupt world that he both inhabits and controls. After testifying against Johnny Friendly, Terry Malloy confronts him in the street: "I know you think you're the last of the tough guys, but you know what you are? You're a cheap, lousy, dirty, stinkin', mother-lovin' bastard and I'm glad what I done to you" (308). After Friendly threatens to kill him, Terry thinks "this [confrontation], even more than his hour on the stand, had cut him free from Johnny Friendly" (308). As Freud writes about the melancholic breaking free from the lost object by denigrating it, "the ego may enjoy in this the satisfaction of knowing itself as the better of the two, as superior to the object" ("Mourning" 257). By moving away from the gangsters and declaring his moral superiority, Terry Malloy overcomes his trauma through an act of

³By comparing Terry to other Waterfront union members who have testified, the Chief Counsel of the investigation into Waterfront corruption indicates that Terry, like Bruno Bicek, has left his ghetto morality and entered into the larger world: "I want to thank you for your forthright statements. I might say they offer something of a contrast to some others this afternoon" (300).

mourning.⁴

As mentioned above, Terry is murdered. He is unable, then, to move himself away physically from those who represent his trauma. Similarly, Bruno Bicek cannot escape the call of the larger world which accuses him of killing the "Greek". I am inclined to suggest, however, that Terry is the only one among the three characters examined in this chapter who truly re-covers from his trauma. I make this argument because he does not allow his trauma to eat him alive. When Tully loses his boxing career, he lives in a figurative "coma." Bicek, however, becomes overwhelmed by guilt which results from his passivity in the face of his girlfriend's rape. The protagonists in these three novels, however, represent three different ways of dealing with trauma. Tully is the traumatized individual who refuses to let go of the lost object and believes it can be found again through acts in the ring. By contrast, Bicek believes he can have the object, represented by Steffi and the larger world of Chicago, by destroying his trauma. Terry, however, represents the most extreme case because he is the one who can resist his trauma by just not caring about it, by remaining ambivalent in the face of it. Terry -- the only one of the three who does not return to

⁴The film On the Waterfront emphasizes this break from Friendly in terms of the ego or the subject grasping onto a new object. Johnny says, "you ratted on us, Terry." Terry responds by stating, "from where you stand, maybe. But I'm standing over here now" (132). Terry was with Friendly, but, now, he is identifying with a new object, with the exploited dock-workers and, like Bicek, the world beyond them.

the ring -- most successfully dissolves his tie to the object of trauma. Terry, unlike the other two fighters, appears to have found an "answer" to the following question: "for what possible atonement is the fight waged if it must shortly be waged again . . . and again?" (On Boxing 21). The "atonement" is found by not fighting at all.

Chapter Three

To Roll Back the Rock(y): Male-Absence in the Boxing Film

On September 23, 1926, Jack Dempsey defended his heavyweight title for the first time in three years. His opponent for this fight was Gene Tunney. Dempsey biographer Randy Roberts writes "Dempsey and Tunney represented two different visions of America. Dempsey was a fighter; he disliked the term boxer. From the rural West, his virtues and strengths were those of a frontiersman -- individualism, straightforwardness, and, above all, brute strength and determination. . . . Tunney was from the urban East. . . . He was organized; he planned, studied, analyzed, rehearsed, pondered, and practiced. His style was synthetic, the result of careful planning and practicing. . . . In short, boxing was a business for Tunney. Fighting was a way of life for Dempsey" (Jack 226). Although he lost this fight as well as the rematch the following year, Dempsey remained far more popular than Tunney. Dempsey had a "killer instinct" (Oates, On Boxing 86), and "the swiftness of his attack, his disdain for strategies of defense, endeared him to greatly aroused crowds" (Oates, On Boxing 87, emphasis added). Dempsey, with his disregard for avoiding an opponent's punches, then, exemplifies what David Savran, borrowing from Freud, calls "reflexive sadomasochism, a condition in which the ego is ingeniously split between a sadistic (or masculinized) half and a masochistic (or feminized) half so that the subject, torturing himself, can prove

himself a man" (33). Dempsey represents the straight-ahead masculine ideal that takes an immense amount of punishment to "be" a man. He is a precursor to later ring heroes such as Rocky Marciano, Joe Frazier, George Foreman, and Mike Tyson. To the casual boxing fan and for the symbol hunter, he is a pure force, representing masculinity under pressure rather than the art of pugilism. This slugging boxer has always been popular because he appears not to complicate his ring style with the science of boxing. As Carlo Rotella writes, "there are plenty of boxing fans who ignore technique in men's boxing . . . (a group overrepresented by Mike Tyson fans), and who watch just to see muscular men hurt one another" (592).

Boxing films appear to cater to the fan who watches only boxers like Tyson and Dempsey. The protagonist boxers of Body and Soul, Raging Bull, Rocky, The Set-Up, among others, find their precursors in boxers like Dempsey and, today, Tyson. Prizefighting films rarely depict a boxer who is a stylish practitioner like Muhammad Ali or Sugar Ray Robinson. Although boxing has been a subject of film more often than any other sport (Baker 161), critics of this genre have failed to move much beyond interpreting the boxer as a Dempsey-figure, "as a singular, heroic figure of tested masculinity in a fallen universe," as "an involuntary secular saint, ringed by black and white moral situations" (Mellor 81). If we accept the simple idea that the filmic boxer exists in a black and white world and conducts his life in the same way that he carries himself in the

ring, he becomes, then, to quote Wyndham Lewis's analysis of Hemingway's characters, a "dumb ox" (40) or Dostoevsky's natural man from Notes from Underground who "simply rushes toward his goal like an enraged bull with lowered horns; only a wall can stop him" (7).

If the above dichotomy of a black and white world is accepted, we would not expect the boxer to respond to a dilemma with anything more than a simple but absolute choice. However, as Aaron Baker has rightly argued about Depression era boxing films, "while fight films celebrate the ideal of self-sufficiency, . . . [they] also question the sport's underlying myth of omnipotent individualism" (Baker 161). That is to say, the boxer, often symbolizing the toughest man in the world, is neither physically omnipotent, socially impotent, nor a "dumb ox". He is Savran's (and Freud's) "reflexive masochist," a male subject who splits himself, taking pain to prove himself a man. The boxer dealing with the ideal of self-sufficiency comes into contact with his lack by seeing that his acts both in and out of the boxing ring are insufficient. As Kaja Silverman writes, the male subject is traumatized and "thus robbed of the illusion of presence [and] brought into a profoundly unpleasurable contact with lack" (Silverman 61). As discussed in the Introduction, by trauma, I mean both a primordial lack and an "event" that inaugurates this lack for the male consciousness. Only through the covering over of lack through the presence of a woman, a career, a championship, or money will the male subject once again

find a place in what I describe in the Introduction as the "dominant fiction" (Silverman 2), that is to say, the ideological "reality" which "solicits our faith in . . . the adequacy of the male subject" (15-16).

Baker's argument, I feel, applies to prize-fighting films made in the Depression and to those being made today. Almost without exception, the boxers in these films have had to deal with the fact that boxing cannot absolutely consolidate their identities, that something always escapes their grasp. As Michael Stephens writes, "the best fights are not Stallone-like pushes and pulls of right and wrong, good and evil . . . but rather, in the best cases, two rights colliding, or a right and a left, and so on, until the cumulative effects of choices unmask one opponent. In drama it is called the recognition scene; in boxing it is called the telling round" (Stephens 261). The boxer, then, only wears a mask, assumes the identity of boxer. As Slavoj Žižek writes, "there is more truth in the mask, in the symbolic form, than in what is hidden behind it, than in its bearer. If we 'tear away the mask' we will not encounter the hidden truth; on the contrary, we will lose the invisible 'truth' which dwells in the mask" (247). Without the mask, the boxer cannot pretend he is untouched by lack. This lack is the trauma that boxing films attempt to cover over, thereby reaffirming the myth of male self-sufficiency and wholeness.

In boxing films, the boxer is a character wearing a mask. When the mask slips aside, he tries to put the mask back on, for

it leaves him naked, exposes his trauma of not having a stable identity behind the mask, outside of boxing. We only have to consider Jake La Motta in the film Raging Bull, a film whose "fragmented structure can be attributed to La Motta's own incoherence" (Wood 266, emphasis added), to see how this works. After his ring career is over, Jake bumbles as a stand-up comic, ladies' man, and host in his night-club. His jokes are another form of fighting for they only abuse his audience. (At one point in the film, he tells his audience, "it's great to be standing before you wonderful people. . . . And you're all full of shit!") He allows two young girls into his club because they are good kissers. He is so involved with playing the ladies' man that he fails to realize that if he lets them into his club, he may have legal problems. As Edward J. Recchia argues about La Motta, "technically, he was jailed for procuring a teenage prostitute; in reality, he was locked away because society would not allow the atavism that it celebrated . . . in the ring to violate the sanctity of the social codes in the world outside" (24). We see that without the "mask" of boxer, Jake La Motta ceases to exist in society, in the symbolic world, and must be put in jail.

The boxing mask, rather than the "comic" mask, served Jake La Motta well. As Joyce Carol Oates argues, "boxers fight one another because the legitimate objects of their anger are not accessible to them" (On Boxing 63). Boxing, then, stands in for their trauma, covers it like a mask, allowing the boxer such as

Jake La Motta to maintain the illusion of presence by attacking other men who, like him, are also "wounded" or traumatized (Oates, On Boxing 28). This taming of trauma through a mask, this integrating of trauma into our symbolic universe by the means of boxing "transforms the trauma into a neutral, objective fact, whereas the essence of the trauma is that it is too horrible to be remembered, to be integrated into our symbolic universe" (Zizek 272). Like La Motta above, boxers in film are attempting to live with the mask of boxer after the illusion of wholeness has been disrupted by a traumatic event that has put their careers into question. That is to say, the trauma that they have covered up through boxing has reappeared through boxing itself. Without boxing, they do not have an object standing in for their trauma that they can fight. As Recchia argues, a boxer had better find something new to resolve his identity or he will become a social discard.

Pam Cook has written that boxing films present "the powerful male body as an object of desire and identification, but moving towards the loss of male power. This loss activates the desire to call it up once more" (qtd. in James 119). When we look at Requiem for a Heavyweight (1955), From Here to Eternity (1953), and the Rocky series (1975-1990), we see that Cook's comment is partially right, for the male subject oscillates between feelings of power and impotence; however, instead of a "loss" of power, considering Zizek's comments above, it would be better to say a traumatic coming into an awareness of one's own fundamental lack.

In the films cited above, the trauma of male absence becomes male presence not by "activating the desire" for male power but by putting on a new mask that covers over the instability inherent in the boxer's identity.

Requiem for a Heavyweight, originally a television play which was made into a motion picture in 1962, depicts the fall of one-time number six heavyweight contender, Harlan "Mountain" McClintock. Mountain is threatened with blindness if he continues to fight. Forced to retire, he spends a few days wondering what he will do with his life. Torn between choosing a wrestling career and a life as a bar-fly among other boxers who recount past ring battles in a region of a saloon called the graveyard, Mountain is influenced by an employment agency worker named Grace. In the television version of the play, Mountain returns to Tennessee, the state of his childhood, giving the audience every indication that he will work with children and recover from his trauma. In the 1962 film version, however, Mountain becomes a professional wrestler. Both the television play and the film present a man who has lost his identity because the world at large will not value his ring career. In both versions, Mountain reestablishes his identity, either as a teacher or as a wrestler. If he fails to gain a new identity, he will become a social discard like the men who live in the "graveyard".

As with noir films such as Robert Wise's The Setup, Robert Rossen's Body and Soul, and Mark Robson's Champion, the ring

neither protects nor consolidates Mountain's identity. The boxing rings "provide visual metaphors of enclosure and entrapment" (Hirsch 85). Additionally, "the beating [the boxer] gets within the tight, fixed 'frame' of the ring reflects the kind of battering that is doled out to him in the outside world" (Hirsch 86). The ring in Requiem for a Heavyweight only points to Mountain's fundamental castration. Frank Ardolino writes, "when the play opens, Mountain is carried from the place of his crucifixion by his loyal trainer Army; Mountain is the battered and victimized boxer as crucified Christ trying to achieve a resurrection from the brutalizing fight game" ("Raging" 59). Threatened with blindness if he continues to box, he quits. This points to Freud's argument that "anxiety about one's eyes, the fear of going blind, is often enough a substitute for the dread of being castrated" ("The Uncanny" 231). Since there is something "uncanny" (230) about this fear, it points to the fact that the male subject, unlike Cook's assertions to the contrary, does not lose power but is brought into an awareness of lack. This lack, like the uncanny, was already there but was kept out of sight. Similarly, Mountain's cut eyes are not a one time accident but occurred throughout his career and became "wider and wider" (Serling 119).

As Mountain comes into consciousness of his lack, of his inability to box, he identifies himself as a boxer, in some ways, more than ever. Zizek writes, "for an object to 'coincide' with its empty place, we must in advance 'abstract' it from its place

-- only in this way are we able to perceive the place without the object" (142). After he quits boxing, Mountain reflects this idea when he mentions what he really desires for the only time in the film: "I don't want much. Just . . . the heavyweight championship of the world" (Serling 144). This quotation suggests my discussion of Zizek's notion of "boundary" and "limit" in the Introduction. By "abstracting" himself from his place within boxing culture, Mountain no longer sees the identity of "boxer" or "heavyweight champion" as a "limit," "what the object *ought to* (although it never actually can) become" (Zizek 110). It is now a "boundary," the "external limitation of an object" (Zizek 110, emphasis added) or what Kaja Silverman calls the "dominant fiction." As the "boundary" emerges, Mountain, then, sees his role as a "boxer" or the "heavyweight champion" as a unity. This view is possible only if he removes himself from the boxing world, if he fails "to include his own gaze in the picture" (Zizek 107). If he remembers to include his "gaze" inside the "boundary," he will realize that his desire for the championship cannot be retained in any absolute sense because there are always new challengers vying for the title. That is to say, "every boundary proves itself a limit" (Zizek 110). Alluding to Mountain's quest for the championship, the trainer, Army, says Mountain has "been chasing a ghost too long now" (Serling 165). To paraphrase Zizek, the weight of the championship is more conspicuous when we pronounce the word "championship" than when a real championship is won (Zizek 134).

This distinction reflects A.J. Liebling. He writes, "the historic process of decay [begins] when [the champion] dethrone[s] his predecessor" ("The Morest" 189). If a boxer wins the championship, "the ghost," then, he comes upon a "limit," loses presence, and becomes fragmented, as my discussion of Floyd Patterson's struggle with the heavyweight championship showed in Chapter One.

Mountain not only wants the championship now, but he also feels punches from past fights. He tells Grace that only after his career has ended do the punches he received in the ring really start to hurt: "When you go for so long, the hurt piles up and you don't even feel them. . . . [When] you're over the hill and there aren't going to be any more -- then suddenly you do start to hurt. The punches you got fourteen years ago" (Serling 144).¹ Here, the punches show their traumatic nature. As Zizek writes, "something which was at first perceived as a meaningless, neutral event changes retroactively, after the advent of a new symbolic network that determines the subject's place of enunciation, into a trauma that cannot be integrated into this network" (222). Since Mountain has moved from the world of boxing, wherein punches are expected and appreciated, to a world

¹This idea is similar to Jersey Joe Walcott's comment quoted in the Introduction. The ex-heavyweight champion insists that "the [punch] you see coming, but still can't get away from, goes down on tape and you play it back at funny times. When you're dreaming. Or just walking down the street" (qtd. in Ali, The Greatest 292). As Judith Herman writes, "the traumatic moment becomes encoded in an abnormal form of memory, which breaks spontaneously into consciousness, both as flashbacks during waking states and as traumatic nightmares during sleep" (37).

beyond the ring, wherein the ability to absorb punches is not a means of achieving employment, the punches he received in the ring are now no longer meaningless in a traumatic sense. If, as Zizek argues, "an event is experienced as 'traumatic' afterwards, with the advent of a symbolic space within which it cannot be fully integrated" (222), the jobless ex-boxer Mountain experiences the trauma of the punches now -- not in the ring. Similarly, Judith Herman writes, "traumatized people feel and act as though their nervous systems have been disconnected from the present," as though they are possessed by their pasts (Herman 35). As long as Mountain's new world fails to bestow value on his past ring experiences, the latter will continue to be traumatic.

This idea of past fights living on in the present occurs again and again in boxing films. The fight becomes something which the boxer cannot simply leave behind. As Cathy Caruth writes, "the repetition at the heart of catastrophe -- the experience that Freud will call 'traumatic neurosis' -- emerges as the unwitting reenactment of an event that one cannot simply leave behind" (Unclaimed 2). In Body and Soul, the director, Robert Rossen, uses the filmic technique of the flashback. The boxer Charley Davis recalls his entire boxing career while waiting to be called out of his dressing room for a championship fight he is expected to lose on purpose. The event which precipitates Charley's flashback occurred the night before when the champ he defeated to gain the championship he currently

holds, Ben Chaplin, relived the trauma of his loss to Davis in the present. This traumatic flashback further traumatizes Ben. Like Mountain, Ben says, "[I've] been fighting my head all the time." Later, he literally reenacts a fight as a champion, screaming "I'm the champ. I can take him." In his frenzy, he trips over the ring ropes and dies.

Mountain McClintock is haunted by his lost boxing career. He knows that his boxing career has no value outside the ring. Mountain tells Grace, "I don't fit in any of the holes" (Serling 142). As Judith Herman writes, "helplessness and isolation are core experiences of psychological trauma. Empowerment and reconnection are the core experiences of recovery" (197). Only by finding a place in the world outside of boxing can Mountain once again consolidate his identity. As long as he fails to do so, he will continually be haunted by his lost boxing career.

Mountain will experience trauma outside the ring unless there is something or someone who will give meaning to his boxing career, since "fragmentation is not merely an existential given, but rather . . . it is inflicted relationally" by "a racist, sexist, heterosexist culture" (Layton 120). Boxing is not excepted from this intolerance. Both boxers and their sport are discriminated against in our culture (Sammons 244). As Judith Herman writes, "public acknowledgment and justice are the central preoccupation of survivors" (72) and that "traumatized people feel utterly abandoned, utterly alone, cast out of the human and divine systems of care and protection that sustain life" (53).

Mountain's first confrontation with Grace in the employment agency is a battle in which he is looking for some kind of acknowledgement: "This isn't just a punk. This was a guy who was almost the *heavyweight champion of the world*" (Serling 143). Like Terry Malloy in On the Waterfront, Mountain needs his past certified, wants to feel as if he belongs to the world, that his physical and mental sacrifices were worthwhile. Mountain needs to find a place in the symbolic universe.

In Requiem for a Heavyweight, the only place where boxers are able to articulate their boxing career is in the corner of a bar. This corner is called, appropriately, "the graveyard." All the ex-boxers go there to recount their boxing matches again and again, arguing over details because none of them ever gets them right. This graveyard is a place of symbolic deaths. As Mountain says, "those guys spend their time dying in here. Fighting their lives away inside their heads" (Serling 149). These "reminiscences" constitute, in fact, a wish for extinction, an acting out of the "death instinct". As Kaja Silverman writes, "if we read those symptoms [of reminiscence] as part of the 'ruination' of the subject by an indwelling death drive, we begin to understand that the nothingness to which it threatens to reduce the subject bears less upon the body than the psyche" (60). The reason that these boxers remain unsuccessful in overcoming their traumas is that they do not change their memories. They only repeat them. Herman argues, "the trauma is resolved only when the survivor develops a new mental 'schema'

for understanding what has happened" (41), and moves beyond a hurtful repetition of his/her trauma.

Mountain, though, refuses the "graveyard" by "forgetting" his stories. When asked to recount one of his fights, he says, "I don't remember it. I'm sorry but I don't remember it" (Serling 164). For Mountain to remove himself from "the graveyard," he must let go of his ring career by becoming ambivalent about his lost career, his lost object (Freud "Mourning" 257) and find a new object with which he can consolidate his identity. If he fails to do this, he may, like Freud's melancholic who is overcoming an "open wound" or trauma ("Mourning" 253), destroy his own ego and fight his life away ("Mourning" 252). A great scene illustrates Mountain's need to find a new object. We see a boxer recounting his story in the bar. The camera pans to include Mountain looking at the boxer who is telling a story about a lost fight. This camera shot emphasizes that Mountain is on the verge of entering "the graveyard." Finally, the camera pans again to include Grace, who, by her presence, shows that Mountain can belong to a world beyond the bar and its graveyard. She, by her presence, represents the outside world waiting to receive Mountain.

The world of reminiscence is not the only world threatening Mountain. The other one is a world of pure signification: the world of professional wrestling. As Roland Barthes writes, "in wrestling, nothing exists except in the absolute. . . . Leaving nothing in the shade, each action discards all parasitic meaning

and ceremonially offers to the public a pure and full signification, rounded like nature" (29). Mountain's manager wants the ex-boxer to enter this world of "full signification," by wrestling as "the Mountaineer" (Serling 155). If wrestling is "a pure and full signification," it offers Mountain a chance to resolve his identity. However, as pure signification, it becomes a parody of signification, since it is a "Void" (Zizek 52), making its practitioner a "clown" (Serling 160). Although it allows Mountain to consolidate his identity, allows him "to look as if he's giving up the ghost" (Serling 158), reaching for male power again as Cook would argue, he is really only making it appear that way for the sake of the audience. As Zizek writes, the "pure signifier . . . [is] the signifier 'without signified', the signifier which does not designate any positive properties of the object since it refers only to its pure notional Unity brought about performatively by this signifier itself" (52). Given this quotation, wrestling, then, will only point to Mountain's castration, his fragmentation, since if he wrestles he can be sold "on the market by the pound" (Serling 157). His manager Maish tries to soothe Mountain's feelings by saying "we'll do this one with our eyes closed" (Serling 156). Ironically, this statement reminds us that Mountain's career ended because of the threat of blindness, of castration. Maish, then, insists Mountain castrate himself symbolically. By wrestling with his eyes shut, he is re-enacting the trauma of losing his career due to the threat of blindness. By participating in wrestling, an

activity of pure signification, Mountain points once again to his trauma.

Because Mountain resists the call to the bar and to the world of wrestling, he refuses to close himself off within a story which never ends and never changes. He refuses to become the cliché of a lost fighter. Rod Serling reflects his boxer's noncompliance in his commentary on his screenplay Requiem for a Heavyweight:

I wanted to analyze a human being who fought for a living but who was nonetheless a human being. I wanted a guy who would act, react, feel, and think without sounding like the stereotyped, cauliflower-eared, punchy human wreck who has now become so familiar that he is funny. (qtd. in Mayerle 61)

Nonetheless, television executives pressured Serling to change the ending of the film from one of ambivalence to one of reattachment. Because the play was changed, the boxer's trauma of losing his boxing career is erased.

The new ending contends that Mountain must find a new object onto which to attach himself to resolve his identity. He decides, at the prompting of Grace, to return to his childhood home in Tennessee. Žižek writes, "the compulsion to encircle again and again the site of the lost Thing, to mark it in its very impossibility" (272) is the means by which we can come to

"know" trauma. One does not merely, like Mountain, board a train and drive straight through and away from one's trauma. Using the appropriately phallic symbol of a train, Serling's revised ending suggests that Mountain's phallic integrity has been resolved, reconstructed as the fragments of his identity have been gathered up. A train, a forward moving object, suggests that for the moment he is the split male subject who, through suffering, proved himself a man (Savran 33). On the train, a little boy, recognizing Mountain's beaten face, asks him about boxing. Mountain starts to teach him the fundamentals of the sport. The audience is left with the impression that Mountain has found his future career as a teacher or coach for children. He has found a place in the symbolic order by avoiding the "graveyard" and attaching himself to an object other than his boxing career. He fills a hole that makes him feel whole.

This forced ending was unsatisfactory to the play's author Rod Serling. He felt that the train scene at the end took away from Mountain as a character: "I always had qualms about [the train] scene but was willing to let it go in the hope it would play better than it read" (qtd. in Mayerle 63). He tacked this scene on in response to pressure from the television network which wanted a happy ending (Mayerle 63). The director of the television drama, Ralph Nelson, echoing Recchia above, argues,

The world [Mountain] knows and has served faithfully
has no room for him any more. His world is further

embarrassed by his continuing presence. Either he must wash up . . . or preferably he must go ahead and die.

(qtd. in Mayerle 63)

To end the film with the impression that Mountain can just leave his boxing career and simply pick up a new life after a few days of rumination is simplistic and dehumanizing.

In 1962, a movie version of Requiem for a Heavyweight was released. This movie, rather than having Mountain escape the clutches of his conniving manager, is one of "total victimization" (Ardolino, "Raging" 61) because Mountain becomes an Indian chief wrestler. In the film, "he accepts his degradation, but is ashamed of it" (Ramirez 503). The film version of Serling's television play is far more convincing in the way it depicts a boxer who is traumatized by losing his fighting career and fails simply to leave it behind when it is over.

Unlike Mountain in Requiem for a Heavyweight who is trying to find a new object after being rejected as a boxer, Private Robert E. Lee Prewitt in From Here to Eternity tries to resolve his male identity by quitting boxing altogether because he views this sport as a "pose." However, like the television version of Serling's play, the endless struggle of attaining the presence of male identity whether as a boxer or as a soldier is covered over in the film. The "hole" in male identity is covered up.

In the novel From Here to Eternity upon which the film of

the same name is based, Prewitt, unlike Mountain, is, to some extent, aware of the idea of masculinity being a social construction. Receiving punishment from Captain Holmes, his sadistic company commander, for refusing to fight for the boxing team, he thinks about the moment he decided not to box: "for what reason was he here, posing as a fighter" (34). Craig Owens, writing about sexuality in contemporary art, advances an interesting gloss on the word pose:

If these artists all regard sexuality as a pose, it is not in the sense of position or posture, but of imposition, imposture; . . . Imposition: sexuality comes not from within, but from without, imposed upon the child from the world of adults. Imposture: Sexuality is a function that imitates another function that is inherently nonsexual. (202)

Prewitt experiences the "imposition" of normative pressures trying to force him to box although he has no inclination to do so. He also responds against the "imposture" of masculinity in the army wherein men do not receive promotions for merit but for playing politics. If he played the politics of the boxer in Holmes's company, he would not have to participate in general soldier duty. This system of merit reflects Savran's argument in Taking It Like a Man about the fundamental split in and performance of male subjectivity, since, one would think, the

army is the bastion of masculinity. Prewitt's failure lies in thinking that army life is not a pose as well and that if he plays the masochist he will become a man. In the film, this sense of "pose" to a large extent has been discarded, as masculinity is reconsolidated by the army. After the army forces Holmes to resign in the film version, the audience is left with the feeling that masculinity has been reconstructed and (re)essentialized.

The above quotation from the novel compels us to consider that we are not complete in ourselves but rely on others to give us an identity. Our identities are, as Craig Owens insists, impositions, "poses", since we are fundamentally castrated (Owens 214). This castration or, as Silverman would say, lack, is presented to Prewitt when he blinds Dixie Wells in a sparring match. Wells, expected to be a top fighter after his stint in the army, is knocked out by Prewitt and never regains his sight. In his essay "The Uncanny," Freud argues that "the fear of going blind, is often enough a substitute for the dread of being castrated" (231). If there is something "uncanny" about this fear, there is also something familiar about it. Freud writes, "on the one hand [uncanny] means what is familiar and agreeable, and on the other, what is concealed and kept out of sight" (224-25). As it is familiar to us, we all are castrated but the knowledge of this lack is kept from ourselves for the sake of maintaining the "dominant fiction". If all male subjects are symbolically castrated, then, "when the male subject is brought

into a traumatic encounter with lack, . . . he often experiences it as the impairment of his anatomical masculinity. What is really at issue, though, is a *psychic* disintegration -- the disintegration, that is, of a bound and armored ego, predicated upon the illusion of coherence and control" (Silverman 62). When Prewitt blinds Wells, he is brought into the presence of not just Wells's fundamental lack, Wells's castration but also his own. As Joyce Carol Oates writes, in boxing "you and your opponent [are] so evenly matched it's impossible not to see that your opponent *is* you" (On Boxing 4). Prewitt's opponent is "a dream-distortion of himself" (On Boxing 12). Prewitt quits boxing precisely because it fails to completely consolidate his sense of self. By seeing Wells, his double, go blind, he sees himself go blind. The reason that Prewitt quit boxing, then, has to do with the pose of masculinity. He sees the double for himself go blind and realizes in this presence of absence that he, too, is symbolically castrated.

In the film From Here To Eternity, after blinding his friend Dixie Wells in a sparring match, Prewitt sees "boxer" as an inauthentic identity and attempts to discard it. But by turning away from boxing because he blinded his friend, Prewitt becomes only more clearly identified with boxing as it continues to haunt him. He is pursued by a sadistic company commander who gives him extra punishment. Other boxers in the company help with the punishment as they want him to join the boxing team, too. They hope this "treatment" will cause him to yield and that he will

attach himself to the boxing team. Eventually, he is forced to take part in a bare-knuckle boxing match, a far more dangerous sport than Marquis of Queensbury boxing. Prewitt, in fact, welcomes the extra punishment as a form of Savran's "reflexive masochism" although, as with the bare-knuckle fight, it only reenacts the trauma of seeing his friend go blind. Unlike James Jones's novel upon which it is based, the film attempts to reassert the "dominant fiction" which "solicits our faith in . . . the adequacy of the male subject" (Silverman 15-16). The film tries but fails to reassert male self-sufficiency by removing Captain Holmes from the army through his forced resignation. Holmes, then, is a scapegoat because he is not the only soldier who emphasizes the split between masochism and sadism at the heart of male subjectivity. All male subjects in the film, not just Captain Holmes, are torn between the extremes of masochism and sadism. As in the television version of Requiem for a Heavyweight, the trauma of the split at the heart of male subjectivity, then, is not absolutely solved but only covered over in the film From Here to Eternity.

To be an expressive and sadistic male, Savran argues, the male must undergo proofs of his strength and endurance via masochism. Prewitt is the masochistic subject, receiving what Holmes's company calls the "treatment," and, as a result, cannot express himself as a male subject (Savran 17). Having come into the presence of lack and accepting his "pose" as a male subject, he cannot play his bugle. Prewitt, it is said, is the best

bugler in his company but is not allowed to play it. Like Clifford Odets's Joe Bonaparte in Golden Boy, Prewitt struggles between knowledge represented by music and waste and consumerism represented by boxing (Shuman 81). Although fighting "consumes the very excellence it displays" (Oates, On Boxing 16), music only promises a knowledge that cannot be represented symbolically in an absolute sense. As Gabriel Miller writes, in Golden Boy, Joe's "transcendent impulse [via music] seems linked, in Odets's world, with a movement towards renunciation and death" ("Odets and Tragedy" 179). In Odets's play (which became a film in 1939), Joe Bonaparte is torn between boxing and his violin. A scientific fighter, unwilling to throw a hard punch to preserve his subtle hands, he finally breaks his hand. As Wells's blinding pointed to Prewitt's lack, this broken hand "constitutes only one of the many 'splittings' or castrations upon which [male] subjectivity is shown to depend" (Silverman 102). At this point, "Joe has become a fighter" (Odets 303) but has lost the ability to play the violin. In the same way, Prewitt, through seeing Wells's blinding, has come into the presence of lack and castration, of the uncanny, which "ought to have remained secret and hidden but has come to light" (Freud 225, emphasis added). As his blinding of Wells and loss of first-bugler status suggest, to be symbolically castrated is to lose a sense of presence.²

²Tennessee Williams's short story "One Arm" plays on the idea of castration. The main character in this story is a boxer whose career ended after losing an arm in a car accident. The film Raging Bull plays on the same motif after Jake La Motta's loses to Sugar Ray Robinson. In the dressing room, the camera focuses

By coming into the presence of lack, the boxer attains a knowledge that no one wants to hear about and that he is unable to express because it denies the "dominant fiction". In the novel, Prewitt is thrown into the stockade and, eventually, into the "hole." He is placed in the hole for the same reason that Jake La Motta is: both men signify the pose that is male identity. Prewitt cannot play his bugle because it is impossible to articulate trauma, to be anything except "like" a man unless one subscribes to the "dominant fiction". As Zizek writes, "this kernel of the Real [trauma] encircled by failed attempts to symbolize-totalize it is radically *non-historical*: history itself is nothing but a succession of failed attempts to grasp, conceive, specify this strange kernel" (101). Whereas Jones's novel, like Zizek, subverts the "dominant fiction" of male presence, the movie attempts to solicit "our faith in . . . the adequacy of the male subject" (Silverman 15-16) by allowing Prewitt to express himself by playing the bugle. The film From Here to Eternity has a scene wherein Prewitt plays the last post for his dead friend Maggio, who, like Prewitt, is a victim of sadomasochistic punishment. Although Prewitt plays the bugle, his knowledge of trauma is still inadequate. As mentioned earlier, music only promises knowledge and does not give us truth but only variations on the theme of trauma; it allows us only "to *encircle* again and again the site of the lost Thing, to *mark* it

on Jake's fist soaking in ice-water, directing our attention to his deficiency. His fist, a symbol for the phallus, is impotent because it failed to knock out Robinson.

in its very impossibility" (Zizek 272).³

In From Here to Eternity, Prewitt welcomes additional punishment and duties with a smirk, relishing the pain that comes with these duties. The omnipresent punishment indicates that he is unable to leave behind the castration that appears before him in the ring. By leaving the ring, he brings the baggage of the trauma with him as he still experiences it and allows it to repeat itself in his day-to-day activities. In fact, he is forced to take part in a bare-knuckle boxing match. This type of fight is more traumatic, less tamed in our symbolic universe, than Marquis of Queensbury fights since the protocols of three-minute rounds, one-minute breaks between rounds, gloves, and the allowance of ten seconds for a boxer to rise after being knocked down are all absent. This lawlessness is further emphasized by the absence of a referee in Prewitt's fight. As Oates writes, the referee "is our moral conscience extracted from us as spectators" (On Boxing 47). The fact that Prewitt raises the masochistic stakes in the movie shows not only "the reality of the violent [and traumatic] event but also the reality of the way that its violence has not yet been fully known" (Unclaimed 6).

³As with From Here to Eternity, we can think of The Harder They Fall and Raging Bull in terms of blindness. The film The Harder They Fall is based upon Budd Schulberg's novel of the same name. The novel's epigraph is from Milton's Samson Agonistes, paralleling the fate of the South American boxer Toro Molina with that of Samson. The film Raging Bull ends with a quotation from Chapter Nine of the Book of John which states, "whereas I was blind, now I can see" (9:25). Ironically, however, although Jake can now symbolically see, he is left at the end talking to shadows in an empty dressing room. This vacant room emphasizes that there is no one to whom he can recount his vision.

The violence is intensified precisely because boxing did not make him a man but only "like" a man. By removing himself from the trauma within the ring, Prewitt only makes his trauma all the more powerful in his life outside of boxing.

Except for Raging Bull and the Rocky series, there has been arguably no film that depicts a boxer welcoming pain as much as Prewitt in From Here to Eternity. Prewitt's masochism is reflected in his scrubbing floors, washing dishes, climbing hills in full gear, among other things, while the theme of military incompetence and femininity on the eve of Pearl Harbour floats throughout the film. The fact that Prewitt is killed before he can take part in the war reflects that he never becomes a man. He does not subscribe to the "dominant fiction." He is like Jake La Motta's first wife in Raging Bull. In the film, she ex-poses her husband's macho male pose, accusing her boxer husband and his brother of having a sexual affair. She screams "suck him, baby! Suck him!" at Jake La Motta, only to be discarded from the film without a word. Prewitt realizes that all identity is a mask, that femininity is not a mask but that the mask is feminine. As Lacan argues, "the masquerade [is] compensation, not for the possession of masculinity, but for its lack" (Owens 212-13). Given Lacan's idea, the male subject is constitutively split between masculinity and femininity, between sadism and masochism. The illusion of wholeness and the presence of masculinity is nothing but a pose since not only male subjects but also female subjects are symbolically castrated (Owens 213-214). As Robin

Wood argues, Raging Bull "established black-and-white as its 'reality'" (267). This quotation reminds us that "*black and white thinking . . . is a product of fragmentation*" (Layton 111), of symbolic castration. As long as the protagonist remains unaware of this split, he is safe; however, like Prewitt, once he attains the presence of his absence, of his split, then he has to be killed and/or discarded.

James Jones was disappointed that the film version of his novel "has 'Dynamite' Holmes relieved of his command in disgrace, rather than promoted" as in the novel (Giles, James Jones 28). The filmmakers, by making this change, seem to imply that male-subjectivity can achieve unity if the one who imposes a masochistic program is eliminated. By removing Holmes at the end of the film, the filmmakers appear to want to make the male members of the audience feel whole and self contained. As Lynne Layton says about Laura Mulvey's essay "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," "film and other apparatuses of culture conspire to allow a male subject to fantasize that he is not essentially fragmented, allow him to take an imaginary unified ego for the whole of his being. While maintaining this fantasy guarantees that he not have to face his pain, the price of his unity and sovereignty is paid by women and other Others, whose subjectivity goes unrecognized" (107). As discussed earlier, both the television version of Requiem for a Heavyweight and the film From Here to Eternity eliminate ambiguous elements that call attention to the male subject's fundamental fragmentation. The

ambiguity inherent in trauma becomes simplified when a text is no longer literary but filmic. I shall now discuss this dumbing-down of trauma in boxing films in relation to the Rocky series, which is not based on a literary text, and its use of Others to piece together the white male subject. These films are perhaps the best example of how film attempts but ultimately fails to cover over the fragmentation inherent in male identity.

Whereas Requiem for a Heavyweight and From Here to Eternity fail to overcome the trauma of the absence of male identity, the Rocky series consolidates white male identity as one of absence by asserting the phenomenon of "the white male as victim" (Savran 4). Sylvester Stallone's Rocky and Rambo series, Stephen LeSueur and Dean Rehberger write, "rely upon the audience's understanding of popular formulas and symbols" (30, emphasis added).

Explaining that these symbols are similar to post-World War I Germany's search for the "'irresistible leader' who would revive Germany's national glory" (30), LeSueur and Rehberger insinuate that Rocky himself is contemporary America's version of this leader. In many ways, we shall see below that Rocky's "leadership" allows him to overcome the black man who has proved his athletic "superiority" in the boxing ring. Given this "leadership," Rocky becomes a symbol for all white male subjects, as he regains the American white man's glory in the boxing ring.

Ever since Jack London importuned the retired ex-heavyweight champion Jim Jeffries to "emerge from his alfalfa farm and remove that golden smile from [the first black heavyweight champion]

Jack Johnson's face" (qtd. in Roberts, Papa Jack 61), the problem of race and the search for "the great white hope" has been central in boxing and the collective imagination. There have been many "white hopes" since Jeffries, including, since the 1970s, Jerry Quarry, Jerry Cooney, and Tommy Morrison (who, in fact, starred in Rocky V as the white hope to replace the newly retired Rocky). There have even been "white hopes" with black skin such as Floyd Patterson, the pre-Muslim Cassius Clay, and many of Muhammad Ali's opponents onto whom "the Greatest" threw the title of "white hope".

The one boxer who really succeeded as a "white hope" was Rocky Marciano, the only heavyweight champion to retire undefeated, a fighter who took enormous amounts of punishment before knocking out his opponent. He, however, was a disappointment for those expecting him to assert his skin colour: Marciano refused to use his skin colour to set himself apart from his black opponents. His legacy as a great fighter is a disappointment, too, as critics consistently fail to rate Marciano highly among other heavyweights, ranking him behind many black fighters including Muhammad Ali, Joe Louis, Evander Holyfield, George Foreman, and Larry Holmes due to the relatively weak competition he faced during his ring career (Fleischer 69-71, "The Fifty" 28-30). In fact, the next great heavyweight champion, Muhammad Ali, was such an overwhelming presence for the next twenty years, both in skills and personality, that the memory of Marciano was diminished after the 1970s.

Sylvester Stallone was inspired to make Rocky after watching the 1969 computerized fight between Rocky Marciano and Muhammad Ali in which Marciano knocked out Ali in the thirteenth round and after viewing the 1975 Ali-Chuck Wepner fight. Wepner, like Marciano in the computer fight and throughout his career, took a massive beating but, unlike Marciano, was unable to defeat -- let alone challenge -- Ali. Stallone used Wepner as a model for Rocky but used Marciano's Christian name. Stallone created a series in which Rocky defeats and eventually, as Jan Philipp Reemtsma argues, becomes Apollo Creed/Muhammad Ali. As Rocky becomes Muhammad Ali, he also wipes out the legacy of "the Greatest." We shall see this by looking at the Muhammad Ali/Apollo Creed equivalence and the way the Rocky saga overcomes the American traumas of Vietnam, of the African-American presence, and of the Civil Rights movement.

Gerald Early writes, "Ali had been the lightning rod for the culture's irrationality" (Introduction viii). Ali exposes the fact that "the traumatic knowledge of reality remains outside the Symbolic," outside ideology, outside what Silverman calls the "dominant fiction" (Zizek 241-42). Muhammad Ali, through his stance on Vietnam, his membership in the Black Muslims, his exposure of how race-wars are constructed in the boxing ring, "like the Marxist or the deconstructionist, . . . made ideology self-evident where it had once been invisible" (Early, Introduction xii). Rocky Balboa of the Rocky movies, on the other hand, reentrenches the ideology of the white patriarchal

authority who experienced the Civil Rights movement, Vietnam, and other cultural movements of the 1960s and 1970s as trauma, as an undermining of the "dominant fiction".

The Rocky series has the following storyline. In Rocky, Rocky Balboa is chosen at random to fight champion Apollo Creed on the day of the American bicentennial. Although putting up a good fight, Rocky loses a split decision to Creed. In Rocky II, Rocky, needing the money and responding to Creed's goading, returns to the ring in a rematch against the champion. In the final round, both fall to the canvas at the same time, but only Rocky rises, thereby, winning the championship. In Rocky III, Rocky is content to fight unskilled fighters, winning easy matches and receiving a lot of money. After taking the rising fighter Clubber Lang's challenge, Rocky is beaten and loses his championship to this challenger. Now being trained by Apollo Creed, Rocky gains boxing skills that he never had before and that served Creed well in both their fights. Using Creed's skills alongside his own will to win, Rocky knocks out Clubber Lang. In Rocky IV, a Soviet fighter named Ivan Drago beats and kills Apollo Creed. Rocky goes to the Soviet Union, beats Drago, and wins the support of the Soviet people. Finally, in Rocky V, Rocky retires from boxing and is reminded of the heavyweight legacy which passes from Rocky Marciano directly to him when his trainer Mickey gives him a cuff-link that belonged to Marciano. The absence of Creed and Lang from this heritage is notable since the ideological function of Rocky appears to be white-supremacist

as symbolized by the reclaimed cuff-link.

Apollo Creed is a Muhammad Ali figure. He is, as Stallone says, "a thinly disguised impersonation of Ali" (Hauser, Muhammad Ali 301). He is outspoken, confident, and swaggering. Also, like Ali, he is a stylish boxer with a good jab and a propensity to throw verbal taunts at his opponent in the ring. His first fight with Rocky occurs on the bicentennial of America, giving an epic quality to their fight much as Ali did when he designated his fight against Foreman as "the rumble in the jungle" and his third fight against Frazier as "the thrilla in Manilla." Later, Apollo Creed loses to Ivan Drago in Rocky IV, taking an enormous beating in his "hubristic final appearance" (Mellor 84). He dies as a result of this fight. Could Stallone have had in mind for this fight Muhammad Ali's last significant fight, the one in which he was destroyed by Larry Holmes for ten rounds and about which Stallone said it was "like watching an autopsy on a man who's still alive" (qtd. in Hauser, Muhammad Ali 412)? As we see in Rocky V, unlike Apollo Creed and Muhammad Ali, Rocky, like Rocky Marciano, knows best to retire before he gets hurt. In this way, Rocky has a victory over Creed, who dies, and over Muhammad Ali, who has Parkinson's syndrome. Unlike Rocky, they both fought well past their primes.

Stallone has said that Ali was "a manchild . . . , taking on the icons that have been set before us, toppling old values and trying to replace them with new ones" (qtd. in Hauser, Muhammad Ali 301, emphasis added). In effect, the Rocky series is an

exercise in overcoming the presence and legacy of Muhammad Ali and filling it with a white presence. Henry Louis Gates Jr. in The Signifying Monkey looks at the problem of signifying "black" as either lack, as absence or as presence. He argues, "the vast and terrible Text of Blackness . . . has no essence; rather, it is signified into being by a signifier" (237). That is, "blackness" gains signification only through the signifier "whiteness." To argue, on the contrary, that "blackness" is presence is to make the same mistake: "[Ralph] Ellison and [Ishmael] Reed . . . critique the received idea of blackness as a negative essence, as a natural, transcendent signified; but implicit in such a critique is an equally thorough critique of blackness as a presence, which is merely another transcendent signified" (237). Here, Gates echoes trauma theory, insisting that racial categories are not out there to be discovered in some imaginary wholeness, but are constructed through language. As Gates writes, "Blackness exists, but 'only' as a function of its signifiers" (237).

Echoing Gates's argument, critics have argued that Apollo Creed's death resulted from his "empty rhetoric" (LeSueur 28), from his absence. Did Stallone object to Ali's rhetoric? When the referee was giving Foreman and Ali instructions before the first round of their fight, Ali told Foreman, "you have heard of me since you were young. You've been following me since you were a little boy. Now, you must meet me, your master!" (qtd. in Mailer, The Fight 144). Consider, the end of Rocky IV, the only

one in the series to have its major fight set overseas. After an exhausted and battered Rocky knocks out Ivan Drago, Rocky tells the Soviet people that it is possible for the Soviets and Americans to live in peace if they are willing to change. As for Ali's first major overseas fight in which he beat George Foreman in Zaire, he told Norman Mailer, "I know that beating George Foreman and conquering the world with my fists does not bring freedom to my people" (Mailer, The Fight 182). Whereas Rocky, and by extension the whole white race puts enormous symbolic value on the heavyweight championship to reconsolidate the "dominant fiction" of white-male supremacy, Ali rejects this by both taking the political repercussions of his victory lightly in terms of causing any absolute change. Instead, he concerns himself with "[his] people," not with white but with black America. Stallone, then, once again sets Rocky apart from Ali.

In interviews, Stallone indirectly objects to Ali's stance on Vietnam and, thereby, places his character in direct opposition to Ali. Ali challenged his draft-status, refused to go to Vietnam, and was suspended from boxing for three years. Stallone effectively opposes Rocky and Ali when he says, "I stand for ordinary Americans. . . . Their country tells them to fight in Vietnam? They fight" (LeSueur 30). Rocky is, thus, a figure who does not question authority and who succeeds because he has a strong "belief in the [American] system" (Ardolino, "Rocky" 155), in the "dominant fiction," while Ali exposes the hypocrisies of the system.

Rocky overcomes not only the trauma of Vietnam, but also the trauma of the Civil Rights movement, black athletic dominance, and the presence of the "bad nigger" (Gilmore 12). As Frank Ardolino writes, "Rocky, the man and boxer, carries on his broad back the fate of the Republic; he is America personified as a fighter recovering from a prolonged slump and achieving unprecedented success" ("Rocky" 148). As a symbol of America, Rocky, in every one of the five films, does battle against an Other: the black boxers Apollo Creed (twice) and Clubber Lang, the Soviet Ivan Drago, and the black promoter, George Washington Duke. For America to regain its glory, the Rocky series argues, the Other must be destroyed.

Even though the five Rocky films imply that "in the United States regeneration comes through violence against other races" (Martin 133), the other races are absolutely never overcome since the same film has been remade four times, thereby "mark[ing] repeatedly the trauma as such, in its very 'impossibility'" (Zizek 272). LeSueur and Rehberger write, "the movies take the hero -- and, symbolically, the audience -- through a predictable series of plot and character developments that . . . enable him to defeat . . . the villain" (29). Writing about Norman Mailer's depiction of the black boxer, Gerald Early suggests, "any black male who is estranged from bourgeois culture for whatever reason . . . is, for Mailer, the same outcast, the same uninhibited, uncivilized self, the same untraumatized noble savage" ("'I Only'" 138); he is the "id" ("'I Only'" 139). If we invert this,

then, the black male is the "white man's" trauma because he is the "id," neither touched by the super-ego, the "dominant fiction," nor "mortified by the symbolic network" (Zizek 221). He is Other; he is beyond discourse. As Rocky becomes Ali, the audience feels he destroys the Other; however, the trauma returns, creating a new film. To paraphrase Zizek's commentary on vampire films, we, thinking Rocky has defeated the trauma in the previous film, scream "It's alive" when we come upon the pure-Id force of Clubber Lang in Rocky III or Ivan Drago in Rocky IV (Zizek 220), and watch the new film, knowing that Rocky will destroy that new monster.

In the essay "Redeeming America: Rocky as Ritual Race Drama," Joel W. Martin suggests that the film is an anti-Civil Rights film. We have suggested this idea in the context of the Ali-Creed connection above. Martin also makes a point about Creed's other alter ego. He suggests that a sign reading "Creed is King" is meant to invoke the memory of Martin Luther King (132). If Stallone conflates Martin Luther King's integrationist policies with Muhammad Ali's Black-Muslim separatist beliefs, we see how it is the colour of the skin rather than the beliefs of the subject which constructs him/her. As Franz Fanon writes, "as colour is the most obvious outward manifestation of race it has been made the criterion by which men are judged, irrespective of their social or educational attainments" (118), irrespective, that is, of their individual beliefs. The black male subject, as in Mailer's formulation above, is only an untraumatized black

"id". This conflation of black movements into one mass threat to America reflects the fact that trauma is "a catastrophic knowledge that one cannot communicate to others" (Caruth and Keenan 256) because Rocky equates the Black Muslims with Martin Luther King, failing to distinguish their defining characteristics, refusing to take either one seriously. Because they are black, they both amount to the same thing: they are Other.

Rocky III is the turning point in terms of Rocky's becoming Muhammad Ali. After beating some easy opponents, Rocky loses to the incredibly racist stereotype of Clubber Lang who is a fictional conglomeration of other feared black champions like Sonny Liston and George Foreman. He is also, like Jack Johnson, the "bad nigger," a sexual threat to white women. Lang threatens to have sex with Rocky's wife, thereby proving that he is the "real man". After Rocky loses to Lang, the now retired Apollo Creed tells Rocky that if he regains his natural advantage, his will, his drive to win, and couples it with Creed's skill, he could easily beat Clubber Lang. Creed's advice reflects almost exactly what Jack London wrote about Tommy Burns after he lost to Jack Johnson: "if grit and gameness should win by decree or natural law then Burns, I dare to say, would have won on Saturday, and in a thousand additional fights with Johnson he would win" (259). The theory, then, is that if Rocky, given his will, can obtain the skills of Apollo Creed, he will be unbeatable. Stallone himself said that when he viewed Ali

against Marciano, he responded to "the juxtaposition of [boxing] styles" (qtd. in Hauser, Muhammad Ali 300). Sure enough, after gaining the skills, Rocky outboxes Clubber Lang by doing what Ali did against George Foreman in Zaire. He goes against the ropes and allows Lang to pummel him. When Lang is too tired to punch anymore, Rocky knocks him out. Rocky, using this strategy, has become Ali. Here, there seems to be an integration of feminine and masculine attributes as Rocky uses the "masquerade" of boxing styles, skills, and strategy rather than straight-ahead masculine sadism, which is Marciano's trademark, to beat Clubber Lang. The "adequacy of the male subject" (Silverman 15-16), then, is disrupted by the femininity of the "masquerade".

It is not enough for Rocky to be a synthesis of Marciano and Ali, however. Rocky V reveals that Rocky's true alliance is with Marciano. Through this alliance, the Rocky series discards Ali as an aberration, retaining the stereotype that "blacks lacked strategy, intelligence, courage, and skill" in contrast to whites such as Marciano who is the real thing (Sammons 36). Rocky's identification with Marciano comes about through the fetishistic object of a cuff-link shaped like a boxing glove which Marciano gives to Rocky's trainer, Mickey. This object is not given to the other heavyweight champions such as Apollo Creed/Muhammad Ali and Clubber Lang. The fetish, Zizek tells us, is a means of "disavowing castration" (249) or trauma. By holding this object, Rocky can "forget" that he is a person like Others, like Muhammad Ali, like Cassius Clay, and believe he is a person made of

"special stuff" (Zizek 251-252). As Jeffrey T. Sammons writes, "since prizefighting has been characterized by some as a true test of skill, courage, intelligence, and manhood, boxing champions have traditionally stood as symbols of national and racial superiority" (31). Although boxers such as Creed, Ali, and Lang may be heavyweight champion for a time, they do not uphold the phallus, the boxing glove-shaped cuff-link, what Ardolino calls a representation of "patriarchal might" ("Rocky" 159). These boxers are aberrations: they have nothing to hold on to and, hence, are examples of "the reviled individual the community uses as a sacrificial victim in a rite of purgation" (Martin 132).

In Requiem for a Heavyweight, From Here to Eternity, and the Rocky series, we see boxers who are "sacrificial victims." In Requiem for a Heavyweight, Mountain has lost any sense of belonging in the world and only realizes his identity as a boxer when it is gone. That is to say, he gains an identity only by making a "boundary" of a "limit." The television and movie versions of this play show different ways of resolving an identity. The television play asserts that male identity can be reconstructed through simply grasping a new identity, while the film argues that only by clutching a pure signifier, which for Zizek is really a "Void," can the trauma, the hole at the heart of male subjectivity, be covered over. The novel From Here to Eternity asserts the pose that is male identity while the film attempts to cover it over by dismissing the masochistic male

subject in hopes of disavowing male symbolic castration. The Rocky series, however, argues for the white male subject who is under pressure from Others, represented by African-Americans presence, the Civil Rights movement, and Muhammad Ali; however, the film acknowledges that white-male identity can never be reconstructed absolutely since the sequels to Rocky rely upon the Other for their very existence. For these Stallone films to exist, we need to believe that "the white male [is] [a] victim" of the Other (Savran 4) and that only by smashing the Other can this victimhood be overcome.

Conclusion

"I'm Pretty! I'm a bad man!"

A ghostly presence floating in and out of this thesis has been Muhammad Ali. Although he appears fleetingly in each chapter, here, in the conclusion, he will sting us with his presence. Ali's unique presence in the boxing ring resembles Roland Barthes's notion of "pure signification." Barthes argues that "in wrestling, nothing exists except in the absolute, there is no symbol, no allusion, everything is presented exhaustively. Leaving nothing in the shade, each action discards all parasitic meanings and ceremonially offers to the public a pure and full signification, rounded like nature" (29). As mentioned in the previous chapter, this "pure signification" is really a "Void" (Žižek 52). Ali, then, by bringing ideological issues to bear in the boxing ring and then subverting them, glorying in the freedom that this "play" allows, and becoming "a lightning rod for the culture's irrationality" (Early, Introduction viii) is the boxer who boxes for trauma. Ali is the boxer of "pure signification" who "used [the public] to create great dramas of his fights, dragon/slaying heroics, extraordinary crises of our social order" (Early, Introduction xii).

Muhammad Ali's boxing career spanned two decades, beginning in the early 1960s. The then named Cassius Clay, after winning a Gold medal in the light-heavyweight division in the Rome Olympics in 1960, won the heavyweight world championship in 1964 from

Sonny Liston. Soon after, Clay became Muhammad Ali, a Black Muslim, rejecting his slave name. This conversion, coupled with his refusal to take the traditional "step forward" for induction into the armed services because he had "no quarrel with them Vietcong" who "never called me nigger" (qtd. in Farred 154), made him, perhaps, the most controversial figure in America. After being suspended for three and a half years, giving up his athletic youth, Ali returned to boxing in 1970. On March 8, 1971, Ali lost to Joe Frazier in what is generally thought to be the biggest fight of the century. In the fall of 1974, Ali regained the title from the seemingly invincible George Foreman in an eighth-round knock-out. Ali quit boxing in 1978 only to return against Larry Holmes in 1980. The heavyweight champion Holmes defeated the older ex-champion in a brutally one-sided fight. Since then, and after one more fight, Ali's health has deteriorated, and he is said to be suffering from Parkinson's syndrome brought on by his ring career. Nonetheless, many still believe that Ali is the most famous person in the world today (Burstyn 3).

As mentioned above, Ali's entertainment reflects Barthes's idea of "pure signification". Ali borrowed his confrontational style from Gorgeous George, a wrestler. Gorgeous George was flamboyant, coming into the ring wearing curlers and bringing assistants who would spray the ring with perfume. Ali copied George's style, saying things that had never been said by a boxer before. Ali would predict the round he would knock out his

opponent and was often correct. He also gave his opponents nicknames reflecting their style of fighting. For example, he called Floyd Patterson "the Rabbit" for his self-destructive habit of freezing in front of heavy punchers. Ali even once predicted that he would hit the heavily favoured Sonny Liston so hard that he would rise out of the ring and cause "a total eclipse of the Sonny" (Remnick 149).

Ali's ring style reflects the trauma at the heart of boxing. Muhammad Ali's most effective weapon was a left-jab which has proven to be faster even than that of the great welterweight-middleweight Sugar Ray Robinson. Ali would constantly circle clockwise, popping a cutting jab to his opponent's head. As former junior welterweight champion Lonnie Smith tells an interviewer, boxing is a "game of control, and . . . this control can radiate in circles *from* the center, or in circles *toward* the center . . . The entire action of a fight goes in a circle; it can be little circles in the middle of the ring or big circles along the ropes, but always a circle. The man who wins is the man who controls the action of the circle" (qtd. in Oates, On Boxing 78). If Ali is perhaps the best at controlling this circle (Oates, On Boxing 78) and if, as the discussion on the Rocky movies in the previous chapter indicates, boxing is an exercise of displaying trauma, Ali may be the boxing subject who controls his trauma in such a way that he accepts the impossibility of ever knowing it. That is, the "inner conflict" at the heart of a boxer mentioned in the introduction becomes a

world of "play" in the hands of Muhammad Ali (Miller, Tao 80). As Slavoj Zizek writes, one can never "know" trauma but one can exercise "the compulsion to *encircle* again and again the site of the lost Thing, to *mark* it in its very impossibility" (272). Ali's movements in the ring were his way of marking the site of trauma.

Ali boxed for trauma, exposing the workings of hypocritical ideologies. Rather than boxers such as Patterson and Foreman who assert re-recovery from and ignorance of trauma, respectively, Ali allowed trauma to assert itself and, in fact, felt empowered by moments of facing what Lacan calls the Real. Instead of disavowing the mind for the body like other boxers, as explained in the Introduction, Ali became "the first psychologist of the body" (Mailer, "King" 8), allowing trauma to speak through his movement in the ring. As Grant Farred writes, Ali used "the pretence of the black body's vulnerability in order to fatigue opponents and set them up for punishing counterattacks" (153) and, in this way, had "the confidence to announce, in full view of the world, the presence of the black body" (166). Fighting George Foreman, he experienced "the black-lights of unconsciousness," a moment when a boxer is out on his feet when fighting an opponent:

I've been here before.

I say to myself: I've been hit. I've been hit.

I fight to open the door and go in the room. . . .

I've been here before. I know about it. When I see the masks and the actor's clothes hanging on the walls, the lizards playing saxophones and the bats blowing trumpets, I don't panic and run out. I put on actor's clothes. (Ali, The Greatest 407)

Ali turns physical pain and near-unconsciousness into an advantage here. Fighting Foreman, Ali spent nearly eight rounds against the ropes, allowing his opponent to pound his body and his head until his opponent was tired. In fact, the trainer's in Ali's corner, seeing him do this, would yell "Don't play with the sucker, don't play" (qtd. in Foreman 113, emphasis added) as if to remind him "one doesn't play boxing" (Oates, On Boxing 19). Norman Mailer writes that Ali, by going against the ropes, "is turning the pockets of the boxing world inside out. He is demonstrating that what for other fighters is a weakness can be for him a strength" (The Fight 155).

The fact that Ali can still fight when he is "unconscious" shows that unlike Patterson, who is "seduced" by "the black-lights" as shown in the Introduction, Ali can still be the sadistic male. Wearing these "actor's clothes," Ali is able to knock Foreman out:

George will later protest that he was the victim of a short count, and I can understand why. In the half-dream room time seems to stretch out slow, like rubber,

and unless you've been there before, you'll never know how fast it goes by. (Ali, The Greatest 413)

If trauma is "the breach in the mind's experience of time, self, and the world" (Caruth, Unclaimed 4) during which one's "time sense may be altered, with a sense of slow motion" (Herman 43), then, Ali has shown how male subjects might live with trauma, this sense of loss of self within temporality, by acting out a part, by circling the cite of trauma rather than covering it over. As Norman Mailer, responding to Ali's verbal and physical "plays," writes, Ali is "like a six-foot parrot, he keeps screaming at you that he is the center of the stage. 'Come here and get me, fool,' he says. 'You can't, 'cause you don't know who I am. You don't know where I am. I'm human intelligence and you don't even know if I'm good or evil'" ("King" 3-4). Ali disowns stability -- the myth of a unified male identity -- for unknowability, for an absent presence, for postmodern performativity.

Ali was not only an innovator, he was also a "lightning rod" for politics in the 1960s. Ali refused to ignore the larger cultural issues that have always been brought to bear on boxing matches, such as issues of race, religion, and war. He allowed the problems associated with each issue to reveal themselves although these issues are often covered over by the media as my discussion about Sugar Ray Leonard at the beginning of Chapter One emphasized. Similarly, Ali tagged his arch-rival, Joe

Frazier, with the moniker "the white-hope" and the stereotypically racist "gorilla" -- making both himself and Frazier white hopes and black hopes at the same time, revealing that racial types are a social construction rather than an essential part of an individual. Similarly, he refused to be interpellated by his slave name, "Cassius Clay," or by the war in Vietnam. As Grant Farred writes, "the transformation of Cassius Clay to Muhammad Ali . . . is symptomatic of the struggle for a distinctive, nonpejorative black identity in U.S. society" (157). When fighting Ernie Terrell, who refused to call Ali by his Muslim name, Ali punctuated his punches by asking a beaten Terrell, "what's my name?" In this way, Ali shows something similar to Lynne Layton's argument that the trauma of "fragmentation is not merely an existential given, but . . . is inflicted relationally" (120), in the way we are interpellated by institutions. Ali seems to realize that traumas of race, class, sexuality, and gender exist in the boxing ring but are covered over for the sake of promoting a traditional white male ideology.

Ali, in fact, may have freed many from what Varda Burstyn has called the homophobia at the heart of sport. As argued in the previous chapter, the most popular boxers have usually been the aggressive straight-ahead brawlers like Sullivan, Dempsey, and Tyson. Ali, however, became popular in spite of being the antithesis of this type. Instead of moving straight ahead, he circled the ring. In addition, he always described himself in feminine terms. He was "pretty," and he would "float like a

butterfly." Norman Mailer has written that "the essence of [Ali's] art . . . was to make the other fighter fall secretly, helplessly, in love with him" ("King" 18). If we identify with the brawling fighter who has fallen in love with Ali, then, by extension we too fall in love with him. When Ali went against the ropes to tire Foreman -- to beat Foreman precisely by not throwing punches -- he refused the traditional sadistic male role as the only one that can lead to victory. Ali, then, inverts traditional gender types of the sadist being the penetrator and the masochist being the penetrated. The active/passive binary is inverted as the masochist becomes the sadist. (Or, considering Mailer's quote from The Fight above, the inward "pockets" as penetrated may now be turned outwards as penetrators.) We, in love with Ali, wait for more of his punches like Floyd Patterson who, as discussed in the Introduction, felt pleasure in them.

As Mailer says, Ali "was the first psychologist of the body" ("King" 8). That is to say, he wrote himself, his people's traumas, through his actions in the ring. Henry Louis Gates Jr. writes, "what was at stake for the earliest black authors was nothing less than the implicit testimony to their humanity which they sought to demonstrate through the very writing of a text of an ex-slave's life" (171). This thesis has shown that the issue of "blackness," of Otherness, has always existed in boxing at least symbolically. However, black fighters have not been given the opportunity to write themselves in the ring. Gerald Early has remarked on the propensity of white writers such as Ernest

Hemingway, Norman Mailer, and George Plimpton to write about and to spar with black fighters ("James Baldwin's" 187). (A.J. Liebling calls this sparring "a laying-on of hands" [qtd. in Early "James Baldwin's" 187], implying that the white media can shape and control the story of the black fighter.) On the other hand, black writers, such as James Baldwin, write little about the sport. As Joyce Carol Oates writes, "ringside announcers give to the wordless spectacle a narrative unity, yet boxing as performance is more clearly akin to dance or music than narrative" (On Boxing 11). As a result, boxers, until the arrival of Ali, had been at the mercy of white writers when it came to self-representations.

Nonetheless, boxers do write stories in the ring. Joyce Carol Oates calls a boxing match a "wayward story," "a story without words." "This doesn't mean that it has no text or no language, that it is somehow 'brute,' 'primitive,' 'inarticulate,' only that the text is improvised in action" (Oates, On Boxing 11). Ali was the first boxer to make this writing explicit. Ali showed us this circular script, how nothing is as it seems, and how "you'll see what your eyes allow you to see" (Miller, Tao 120). Ali, to some extent, solved the problem of "the 'finding of the voice' of the speaking subject in a language in which blackness is the cardinal sign of absence" (Gates n.40). He gave a voice to the black boxer, taking power away from white writers who could only represent black athletes as lack by listening to their managers rather than to the

athletes themselves.

An example of this occurs in Ali's first exhibition after he had been suspended for three and a half years. While boxing, Ali hears the voice of his trainer Drew Bundini Brown:

"Dance, Champ! Dance for the little children in orphanages don't nobody want! Fight for them, Champ! You the boss! Dance for po' people with no jobs, who got rent to pay! Dance for 'em, Champ! Stick that sucker! Dance for them winos sleepin' in the gutter! For them people in hospitals who got TB, cancer, for them prisoners locked in jails and ain't got not bail! Dance for 'em, Champ! Dance for them dope addicts everybody's given up on! Dance for little pregnant girls who got no husbands! Dance for 'em, Champ! Fight for 'em!" (Ali, The Greatest 283)

Ali's boxing was a show of trauma for those subaltern groups dispossessed by America. He fought for "the unprotected people, [for] the victims" (Ali, The Greatest 345), allowed their voices to speak in the ring by means of a voice "paradoxically released through the wound" (Caruth, Unclaimed 2). That is the story he wrote in the ring. As former heavyweight champion Larry Holmes says, "in the ring I was in touch with my deepest instincts. . . . I guess you could say that was how I expressed myself" (Holmes 139). Boxing, then, is a sport that allows those in the ring to

write themselves, to testify to their traumas; nonetheless, it took a boxer like Ali to show this and give the power of writing, of expression, to the black boxer.

By listening to and reading boxers as they fight, write autobiographies, and see their lives presented in film and fiction, we see that cultural studies of the kind demonstrated in this thesis are not just "nonrigorous engagements with a mass culture that is all too available for reading" and a representations of "sexy but tinny intellectual work" (Berlant 106, 112). Opening up to new areas of study and interest is almost always worthwhile. Consider Ali's career for a moment. In 1964, when boxing was at its nadir (Hauser, Black Lights 63), Ali not only brought fans back to the sport but intellectuals as well. Writers as diverse as Ishmael Reed, Hunter S. Thompson, Norman Mailer, Joyce Carol Oates, Budd Schulberg, Tom Wolfe and Irwin Shaw have all written about Ali, bringing issues of gender, class, and race to bear on his career -- by reading Ali's actions, Ali's writing, in and out of the ring.

This thesis is a critique of those English departments that insist that the literary canon remain closed to outsiders, to books that have not generally been included in traditional courses of study. This thesis is for those who are willing to use critical theory to explore the culture that is out there, thus resisting, "the impulse to assume that knowledges we would not want to have or to save are not worth having, saving, or disseminating" (Berlant 110). Just because this is not a thesis

on Shakespeare, Dickens, or Faulkner does not mean that I feel this thesis is more important than others. However, I do feel that with a topic like this, one that examines the (re)construction(s) of male identity, I for one feel liberated from having once again to "act out" and pay homage to the traditional white North American male canon. This thesis attempts to give voice to those who have not often been listened to, to validate their specific traumas (Layton 111). One "genre" that has been excluded is the boxer's body and its writing both in and out of the ring precisely because, if an individual reads the boxer, s/he will have to look at his/her own investment in a culture that allows racism, classism, and misogyny to thrive. It is much easier, and less traumatic, for an individual to pretend these things do not exist. As Varda Burstyn writes, "most people use words such as 'games,' 'fun,' or 'entertainment' to describe sport, and consider sports to be apolitical. As a society we give little thought to the ideological valences of sport and its culture" (7). This thesis constantly dismantles the "acting-out" of male autonomy by looking at the trauma and re-recovery in the discourses of pugilism and the way they can perhaps now hold up one boxer in particular as their exemplar, as their boxing Bard: Muhammad Ali.

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