

Nation in Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front* and Eastwood's *Flags of Our Fathers*

Brent M. Smith-Casanueva
Stony Brook University

Follow this and additional works at: <http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb>



Part of the [Comparative Literature Commons](#), and the [Critical and Cultural Studies Commons](#)

Dedicated to the dissemination of scholarly and professional information, **Purdue University Press** selects, develops, and distributes quality resources in several key subject areas for which its parent university is famous, including business, technology, health, veterinary medicine, and other selected disciplines in the humanities and sciences.

CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture, the peer-reviewed, full-text, and open-access learned journal in the humanities and social sciences, publishes new scholarship following tenets of the discipline of comparative literature and the field of cultural studies designated as "comparative cultural studies." Publications in the journal are indexed in the Annual Bibliography of English Language and Literature (Chadwyck-Healey), the Arts and Humanities Citation Index (Thomson Reuters ISI), the Humanities Index (Wilson), Humanities International Complete (EBSCO), the International Bibliography of the Modern Language Association of America, and Scopus (Elsevier). The journal is affiliated with the Purdue University Press monograph series of Books in Comparative Cultural Studies. Contact: [<clcweb@purdue.edu>](mailto:clcweb@purdue.edu)

Recommended Citation

Smith-Casanueva, Brent M. "Nation in Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front* and Eastwood's *Flags of Our Fathers*." *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture* 14.1 (2012): [<http://dx.doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.1758>](http://dx.doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.1758)

This text has been double-blind peer reviewed by 2+1 experts in the field.

The above text, published by Purdue University Press ©Purdue University, has been downloaded 1968 times as of 03/02/15.

CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture, the peer-reviewed, full-text, and open-access learned journal in the humanities and social sciences, publishes new scholarship following tenets of the discipline of comparative literature and the field of cultural studies designated as "comparative cultural studies." In addition to the publication of articles, the journal publishes review articles of scholarly books and publishes research material in its *Library Series*. Publications in the journal are indexed in the Annual Bibliography of English Language and Literature (Chadwyck-Healey), the Arts and Humanities Citation Index (Thomson Reuters ISI), the Humanities Index (Wilson), Humanities International Complete (EBSCO), the International Bibliography of the Modern Language Association of America, and Scopus (Elsevier). The journal is affiliated with the Purdue University Press monograph series of Books in Comparative Cultural Studies. Contact: <clcweb@purdue.edu>

Volume 14 Issue 1 (March 2012) Article 9

Brent M. Smith-Casanueva

"Nation in Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front* and Eastwood's *Flags of Our Fathers*"

<<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol14/iss1/9>>

Contents of *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture* 14.1 (2012)

<<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol14/iss1/>>

Abstract: In his article "Nation in Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front* and Eastwood's *Flags of Our Fathers*" Brent M. Smith-Casanueva explores the commonalities between the antiwar narratives of Erich Maria Remarque's novel *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1929) and Clint Eastwood's film *Flags of our Fathers* (2006). Taking the position that narration of nation must be considered a site of hegemonic struggle, Smith-Casanueva argues that both texts employ a similar deconstructive logic to subvert the nationalist discourses and dominant war narratives of their respective nations and the national myths constructed through these narratives. In particular, both *All Quiet on the Western Front* and *Flags of our Fathers* destabilize narration of nation through challenging dominant war narratives' claim to a universality of national interests and the essentializing character of national myth, as well as through disrupting the linear temporality of narration of nation.

Brent M. SMITH-CASANUEVA

Nation in Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front* and Eastwood's *Flags of Our Fathers*

At first glance, Erich Maria Remarque's 1929 novel *All Quiet on the Western Front* and Clint Eastwood's 2006 film *Flags of our Fathers* may seem to have little in common, other than perhaps their general designation as antiwar texts. Remarque's novel, written and published in Weimar-era Germany, chronicles the experience of a German soldier during World War I while Eastwood's film focuses on the lives of three U.S. soldiers fighting in World War II immortalized in the classic picture of the Iwo Jima flag-raising. However, a closer look reveals significant commonalities between the texts, the first of which is the historical context of their production. *All Quiet* and *Flags* both emerged during periods of national insecurity and instability following a national crisis. For *All Quiet*, this national crisis was the German defeat in World War I and the preceding economic and political insecurity of the inter-war period and for *Flags* the crisis was the 9/11 terrorist attacks and the United States' inability to achieve definite military victories in Afghanistan and Iraq. Beyond this commonality in historical context, there is a more significant, although not unrelated, similarity between the texts, one that points to their importance as "resistant" products of culture. Both of these texts, I argue, employ a similar deconstructive logic to subvert the nationalist discourses and dominant war narratives of their respective nations and the national myths constructed through these narratives reproduced both through official discourse and cultural production. I address the ways in which *All Quiet* and *Flags* are able to subvert national imagery and dominant war narratives. I begin, then, by establishing a theoretical context, drawing on the work of Benedict Anderson and Ella Shohat and Robert Stam, and Antonio Gramsci, for both the significance of the novel and the film to national imagery and the potential for destabilizing narration of nation through these narrative forms. I then proceed to examine the importance of war narratives for national imagining and the specific ways in which these narratives function in order to explore how *All Quiet* and *Flags* challenge and subvert these narratives.

The novel and film as narrative forms have both become central to the imagining of nation. As Anderson argues, the emergence of the popular novel, along with that of the newspaper in eighteenth century Europe was connected to the development of nationalism. Anderson credits the development of print capitalism and the book as the "first modern-style mass-produced industrial commodity" (34) as central in the formation of national consciousness. The most significant aspect of the popular novel, in terms of the national imagery was its narrative temporality which allowed it to reproduce a sense of "homogenous, empty time" through narrating an individual's or community's movement through this time. As Anderson notes, this "idea of a sociological organism moving calendrically through homogeneous, empty time is a precise analogue of the idea of the nation, which also is conceived as a solid community moving steadily down (or up) history" (26). Thus, both the increased availability of the novel to a mass audience and its narrative temporality were inseparable from the development of national consciousness in modernity. In many ways, the emergence of cinema in the late nineteenth century represented a continuation in the developments that Anderson addresses. As Shohat and Stam note, the film "inherited the social role of the nineteenth-century realist novel in relation to national imaginaries", communicating the 'homogeneous, empty time' of the nation through arranging events and actions into a temporally linear narrative (102). To the temporal narrative logic of the novel, the film adds a gregarious consumption ritual that, unlike the private consumption of a novel, allows for the gathering of a community that "homologizes, in a sense, the symbolic gathering of the nation." The movie audience becomes a sort of "provisional 'nation' forged by spectatorship" (103). Furthermore, Shohat and Stam suggest, the film also overcame the obstacle of literacy that prevented literature from reaching a truly mass audience. The accessibility of cinema thus allowed for the fostering of national consciousness on a truly national scale.

If the novel and the film represent the privileged forms for narration of nation, then they also represent the terrain on which this narration can be challenged and subverted. This potential for resistance and subversion becomes a real possibility if we consider narration of nation as a manifestation of hegemonic power. In Gramsci's formulation, hegemony represents a kind of "compromise equilibrium" that "presupposes that account be taken of the interests and the tendencies of the groups over which hegemony is to be exercised" (86). Thus hegemony is not an absolute

imposition of the interests of the dominant on those of the subordinated. Rather, it is a process through which "previously germinated ideologies ... come into confrontation and conflict, until only one of them, or at least a single combination of them, tends to prevail, to gain the upper hand, to propagate itself throughout society – bringing about not only unison of economic and political aims, but also intellectual and moral unity, posing all the questions around which the struggle rages not on a corporate but on a 'universal plane', and thus creating the hegemony of a fundamental social group over a series of subordinate groups" (86). This process of negotiation, while never in equal measure and always with limits, opens up the dominant ideology to challenges which have the potential to shift the equilibrium. If we conceive of the nation as "a continuous process of formation and superseding of unstable equilibria ... between the interests of the fundamental group and those of the subordinate groups" (Gramsci 86), narration of nation becomes a necessarily indeterminate and contingent terrain. Thus, there is the possibility for what Homi Bhabha terms "minority discourses" which add to, without adding *up to*, the dominant discourse to destabilize the "compromise equilibrium" of narration of nation (222-23). I argue that *All Quiet* and *Flags* destabilize this equilibrium by resisting narration of nation through subverting dominant war narratives and structures of national mythology.

Wars play an essential role in the construction of national identity as nationalism is linked to warfare. As Gopal Balakrishnan points out, "the state possesses a historical purpose and collective meaning because it organizes a community into a sovereign polity ready for war. It is during war that the nation is imagined as a community embodying ultimate values" (qtd. in Hogan 216). Wars are also inseparable from the national historical imagination as they become one of the central rhetorical figures in narration of nation. Past conflicts become part of a mythical history that the nation returns to in times of struggle and insecurity to re-imagine the nation's present. The narration of present conflicts is no less essential to national imagination. As Kevin Foster demonstrates in his account of narratives emerging during and after the Falklands War, the arrangement of information and events into narrative form by the media, memoir writers, and others was more important in re-constructing British national identity than any "real" events of the war. These war narratives become produced and reproduced at various sites, constructed both in the official military/political discourse and in literary, cinematic, or media discourses. As mentioned above, the novel and the film represent particularly significant sites for the construction of national narratives. To understand the dominant war narratives that *All Quiet* and *Flags* challenge, we can look at Ernst Jünger's novel *Storm of Steel* and Steven Spielberg's film *Saving Private Ryan* as narratives representing the dominant national ideology of their respective nations and eras. Jünger's *Storm of Steel* presented the pro-war and nationalistic literary narrative of Germany's World War I experience through its glorification of combat and adherence to the prototypical hero narrative. *Saving Private Ryan* is constructed similarly as a narrative of the United States' involvement in World War II and that reproduced a legitimation of this involvement, as well as its involvement in following wars, and an affirmation of national identity. Particularly significant in both *Ryan* and *Flags* is the setting of the action in World War II. As David Martin-Jones points out, the return to World War II in film narratives often serves to legitimate present or recent conflicts, which in the case of *Ryan* meant the recently concluded Gulf War (122). This function rests on the position of World War II as a rhetorical topos of the mythical history of the nation. *Flags*, however, in destabilizing the dominant narrative of war, also challenges its articulation in the national historical narrative and thus its invoking to legitimate present conflicts (most significantly, the war in Iraq).

While there are always cultural particularities in war narratives, there are also significant cross-cultural similarities. Dominant war narratives tend to adhere to a certain prototype, what Patrick Hogan identifies as the "heroic tragicomedy" and Foster as the "romance quest." It is this heroic narrative, Hogan argues, that represents the fundamental prototype for narration of nation (216). The nationalistic functions of war narratives are accomplished through a structure that "creates an internal or secondary in-group/out-group division between loyalists and usurpers ...[and] also links rebellion with social suffering, thus providing an aversive model for our imagination of political change" (213). Thus, war narratives function to posit a unity of values and purpose within the national community as subnational divisions are subordinated to the national will. This unity becomes normalized and dissenters are categorized as being opposed to the nation. Here, the hegemonic function of the war narrative is clear — it asserts the interests of a particular group as the naturalized interests of the entire nation and, in this way, is central to the construction of national myth. I use "myth" here in a

sense similar to that in which Roland Barthes uses it to refer to a form of "depoliticized speech" that structures social consciousness and essentializes particular conditions and interests in a way that the values of a particular class are articulated as those of the entire nation.

All Quiet and *Flags*, however, subvert national myths through challenging the universality of national interests, primarily through a narrative identification with characters who illustrate a lack of congruence between national and particular interests. In *All Quiet*, the narrative identification with Paul Bäumer creates a dissonance between the dominant war narrative, constructed through the official discourse and reproduced by citizens safe from the conflict and the subjective experiences of Bäumer and his fellow soldiers. It is significant that Bäumer and his comrades are enlisted soldiers and not officers. As Foster points out, the romance quest, drawing on Homeric tradition, centers typically on heroes from distinguished classes (84). This tendency is clear in the nationalistic counterpart to *All Quiet*, Jünger's *Storm of Steel*, in which the hero is an officer, not an enlisted soldier. The dissonance between the official war narrative and the soldiers' experience first becomes evident as Bäumer recalls Kantorek, the schoolmaster, persuading the boys to join the army. Here, the myth of a unified national interest is challenged as Bäumer remarks on the divide between the older generation of authority figures, as embodied by Kantorek, who joyously supported the war effort and the young soldiers who fought and died in it: "While they continued to write and talk, we saw the wounded and dying. While they taught that duty to one's country is the greatest thing, we already know that death-throes are stronger" (*All Quiet* 13). Bäumer's realization of war as a procession of pain and death serves to destabilize the dominant war narrative of soldiers carrying out a heroic duty to the nation. Any sense of patriotism collapses upon the confrontation of the reality of war as experienced by the soldiers — the ever-present awareness of imminent mortality — as does any sense of national unity with those "thousands of Kantoreks ... convinced that they were acting for the best — in a way that cost them nothing" (12). The inequality in the price paid by those on the front lines and the authority figures at home thus negates the claim to a universality of interests among the members of the national community.

Kantorek remains a spectral figure — appearing only in Bäumer's memories and conversations with his comrades as a symbol of the authority figures whose fervent support for the war comes without a personal cost — until late in the novel, when Bäumer discovers that Kantorek has enlisted and is under the command of Bäumer's friend Mittelstaedt. Bäumer's description of Kantorek at his first appearance poignantly expresses the disintegration of the dominant narrative of war and its claims to national unity and patriotic service as it is confronted with the harsh realities of service: "Nothing could look more ludicrous than his forage-cap and his uniform. And this is the object before whom we used to stand in anguish as he sat up there enthroned at his desk, spearing at us with his pencil for our mistakes in those irregular French verbs with which afterwards we made so little headway in France. That is barely two years ago — and now here stands Territorial Kantorek, the spell quite broken, with bent knees, arms like pothooks, unpolished buttons and that ludicrous rig-out — an impossible soldier" (176). The authority that Kantorek the schoolmaster once possessed, staked on his appeals to "duty to one's country" has collapsed in his transition to territorial Kantorek. This transition highlights the incongruence between the experience of the soldier and that of the civilian authority figure and thus the impossibility of any unified national interest, an impossibility further asserted through Mittelstaedt's treatment of Kantorek. Mittelstaedt, who takes his command over Kantorek as an opportunity to exact revenge for the humiliation Kantorek caused him in school — as well as for encouraging the boys to enlist — subjects Kantorek to a brutal training exercise that leaves him defeated and humiliated, all the while taunting him with his own quotations from his schoolmaster days. Here, national myths of duty and service, embodied in the figure of Kantorek the schoolmaster, give way to the base and sadistic military hierarchy that Kantorek now finds himself subjected to, presenting nothing but a sort of nihilistic exercise of individual power. Thus, the national myths constructed through the dominant war narrative are destabilized by scenes exposing the real nature of war in the experiences of those who, encouraged by these mythic narratives, enlist to fight it.

All Quiet's deconstruction of national myths is perhaps most significantly displayed in the narration of the Kaiser's visit for an inspection of the troops. The inspection ceremony is significant as a national myth in that it represents the assertion of the national superiority of Germany in the cleanliness and discipline of the military and the Kaiser's personal involvement with the troops. The polished uniforms

and stiff formations serve as a representation of the military's invulnerability. Even in the face of enemy assaults, the soldiers maintain their decorum and discipline. Similarly, the Kaiser's distribution of medals to the men and his conversation with them assures, once again, that the interests of the soldiers and those of the government and its citizens — in short, the national community — are identical, that the nation is in fact united. The ceremony thus serves to communicate national strength and unity through a depoliticized and essentialized image of the war effort. However, narrated from Bäumer's point of view, the myth becomes subverted through a politicizing and de-essentializing of this image. In preparation for the visit, the soldiers are given all new uniforms and subjected to constant inspection for eight days prior to the Kaiser's arrival. The intensity of this preparation challenges the image's claim to be a natural representation; instead, it is revealed as a political construction, the product of careful orchestration on the part of those in charge. The response of the soldiers further foregrounds the constructed nature of the ceremony: "Everyone is peevish and touchy," Bäumer explains, "we do not take kindly to all this polishing, much less to the full-dress parades. Such things exasperate a soldier more than the front-line" (202). The exasperation experienced by the soldiers serves to intensify the dissonance between the dominant ceremonial myths of the war and the reality of combat on the front-line. The mythical nature of the ceremony is further challenged by Bäumer's observations on the physical presence of the Kaiser, a presence which is disappointing for Bäumer, who, "judging from his pictures," had "imagined [the Kaiser] to be bigger and more powerfully built, and above all to have a thundering voice" (202). The reference to pictures of the Kaiser is especially significant here as the mythical image of him preserved in pictures, an image subverted by the incongruence of this image with the soldiers' experience of his presence, is likely the only image that German civilians who proudly support the war will ever see. Thus, the destabilizing of the mythical image of the Kaiser in Bäumer's narration of his visit serves to further highlight the dissonance between the myths of the dominant narrative of the war presented to the German public and the actuality of the war as experienced by the soldiers. The mythical image of the inspection ceremony then collapses completely at the end of this passage as Bäumer reveals that the soldiers have to return their new uniforms. Here, the essentialized image of the inspection is entirely subverted, as it is revealed as nothing but a contingent and temporary political construction. The myth of national unity that the Kaiser's ceremonial visit attempts to assert is also challenged in the soldiers' conversation following the Kaiser's visit. Tjaden, in questioning the reasons for the war, comments that "almost all of us are simple folk. And in France, too, the majority of men are labourers, workmen, or poor clerks. Now just why would a French blacksmith or ... shoemaker want to attack us? No, it is merely the rulers" (205). Invoking the presence of economic inequality and class divisions here challenges the claim to a unified national interest, suggesting that the class positions of the soldiers are more likely to align them with the French soldiers than the national elite who make decisions regarding the war.

As in *All Quiet*, the narrative identification in *Flags* is with the soldiers — although it is decentered onto the three main characters instead of a single character and at times switches to one of the three soldiers' comrades — which similarly works to create a dissonance between the dominant narrative of World War II and the experience of the soldiers. While there are brief scenes of the families of the soldiers and political officials, the narrative identification remains with one of the soldiers throughout these scenes. In the opening sequence of the film, for example, when an advisor brings President Roosevelt the newspaper featuring the flag-raising image on the front page, the camera's focus remains on the image while the two men are talking and the conversation is edited with the elderly Captain Severance's voiceover. This narrative identification, along with a non-linear narrative structure, allows the film to destabilize the dominant war narrative through confronting it with the reality of death and suffering that it elides. Scenes from the bond tour are juxtaposed with the soldiers' flashbacks to the battles on Iwo Jima, conveying a dissonance between the triumphant narrative, constructed through the idolization of the men on the tour, and the gruesome death and pain on the battlefield. This process is evident in a scene where Bradley, at one of the stops on the bond tour, is served a cake in the shape of the flag-raising image. As the server pours strawberry sauce over the cake, Bradley's gaze focuses on the blood-red sauce running down the sides of the cake. There is a close-up of the cake before the film cuts to Bradley's flashback to the aftermath of the Iwo Jima beach storming, in which he walks past the bloody bodies of the dead and wounded before

the firing of a canon sparks another battle. The juxtaposition of the artificial blood on the cake and the real blood spilled on the battlefield challenges the dominant narrative's claim to authenticity, exposing the dissonance between the narrative and Bradley's experience of the war.

The myth of national unity is also destabilized in the film. Early in the film, as the platoon is on the ship heading towards Iwo Jima, one of the soldiers falls overboard while hanging off a rope and waving to a passing chopper. The soldiers rush to help him, but he is too far behind the ship to reach with the life rope. As the soldier fades away into the oncoming line of ships, Hank Hansen remarks solemnly that none of the ships will stop. Bradley, clearly disillusioned, responds, "so much for no man left behind." The claim of adherence to "no man left behind", significant in the war narrative both as an assertion of military camaraderie and a metaphor for national unity, is challenged here by the military's unwillingness to threaten the progress of the mission to save the life of an individual soldier. The myth of national unity is further challenged by the unequal treatment that Ira Hayes, as an American Indian soldier, receives in the film. The inclusion of heroic characters from diverse ethnic backgrounds in war narratives often serves, as Hogan notes, to assert national unity by diminishing the existence of subnational divisions within the nation (189). The discrimination and ignorance that Hayes faces, however, subverts this claim to a unity beyond ethnic and racial divisions. Hayes is constantly referred to, even by friends in his squad, as "chief," a designation that, even if not necessarily derogative, foregrounds the irreducible difference of Hayes from his fellow soldiers. While on the bond tour, Hayes is constantly confronted with the prevalence of degrading stereotypes in his interactions with government officials. Prior to the flag-raising ceremony at Soldier's Field, Hayes meets Senator Robson who attempts to speak to Hayes in what he assumes to be his native language. However, when it becomes clear that Hayes does not actually speak this language, the senator is indignant and responds, "boy, don't you know your own language." At a later stop on the tour, Hayes is greeted by another senator who remarks that he heard Hayes had killed several Japanese soldiers with a tomahawk. Hayes even faces outright discrimination in one scene where, after we see him drunk and wildly swinging a barstool in the middle of the street in front of a bar, we discover that the bar refused to serve him because he was Indian. The clearly unequal treatment that Hayes experiences in these scenes subverts the war narrative's claim to the erasure of racial and ethnic inequalities in the unity of the national community.

The predominant myth challenged by the film, however, is the image of the Iwo Jima flag-raising. This image served as an assertion of U.S. victory in Japan and of U.S. military superiority, naturalizing the U.S.'s position as both a global superpower and defender of freedom. In particular, this image functioned to legitimate the U.S. military's presence in Japan, not as a colonial presence, but as one necessary to the protection of freedom and the spread of democracy. This represents a unique aspect of U.S. nationalism in that, as Hogan notes, U.S. nationalism is predicated on an understanding of the U.S. as a global leader with a moral responsibility to "lead the rest of the world to freedom" (231). The image of the flag-raising, presented as an authentic representation of the war and assertion of the United States' victory, thus serves as a myth that essentializes and depoliticizes the triumphant position of the U.S. In the film, however, this myth is deconstructed as the image is presented as a political construction articulated within the triumphant war narrative. The image's claim to present a natural representation is first challenged in Severance's words to James Bradley in the opening sequence which foreground the process through which the image was selected and articulated as part of the war narrative. As we see Bradley and Severance talking, at first they are both encased in shadows as only the painting of the flag-raising image stands out in the dim room, and as the shot switches to focus on Severance's face, the image remains clearly visible over his shoulder. Severance tells Bradley, "there were plenty of other photos taken that day, but none anyone wanted to see," explaining that to make sense of the cruelty of war, "we need an easy to understand truth." Severance's monologue cuts off momentarily as the film cuts to a scene of two men developing photos in a darkroom. Just as the flag-raising image develops, the monologue continues and, as the film cuts again to workers in a newsroom handling the image, Severance notes, "the right picture can win or lose a war." The sequencing of the flag-raising image's presentation here, opening with the mythical image then transitioning to its creation and distribution by the media, juxtaposed with Severance's monologue, highlights the arbitrary nature of the image as a carefully selected image employed in the

construction of the dominant war narrative, emphasizing its subjectivity and contesting its claim to present an objective image of the war.

The essentialism of the flag-raising myth is further challenged in the revelation that the image actually represents the raising of the replacement flag and not that of the original flag. We first discover this information when Rene Gagnon confronts Hayes about his presence in the image. In addition to denying his presence, Hayes also tells Gagnon that Hansen — who Gagnon told Severance was in the photo — was part of the first flag-raising and thus was not in the photo; Harlon Block was actually the other soldier in the photo. This misidentification of the sixth soldier in the image becomes a recurring conflict throughout the film and a vehicle through which the construction of the image as myth is exposed and its claims to authenticity challenged. The return to this conflict throughout the film serves to foreground the process through which representation passes into reality and image becomes myth. When the three soldiers first meet with Bud Gerber, Hayes again explains that Hansen was part of the first flag-raising and that it is Block in the photo. Gerber appears unable to comprehend this and becomes visibly flustered by Hayes' assertion and the revelation that the flag-raising in the photo was not the "real" flag-raising, leading to the following exchange: "Gerber: Six guys, raising a flag over Iwo Jima. Victory is ours. You're three of them right? Bradley: This was the fifth day, sir. The battle went on for thirty-five more. Gerber: Well what'd you do? Raise a goddamn flag every time you stopped for lunch ... Hey, you know what? I don't give a shit. You're in the picture. You raised the flag. That's the story we're selling boys."

Gerber's understanding of the war is structured by the narrative he is charged with producing and thus this narrative becomes the only real truth of the war. The image of the flag-raising is an absolute assertion of victory. The instability of this assertion, however, is exposed in the dissonance between Gerber's understanding and that of the soldiers and in Gerber's frustration when the objectivity of the image is challenged. This scene also serves to connect the image with particular interests, specifically those of the U.S. government that needs the financial gain from the sale of war bonds to continue the war effort, contesting the image's claim to universality. This conflict over the misidentification of the sixth soldier once again emerges towards the end of the film when Hayes travels across the country to tell Harlon Block's father that Block was really the one in the photo. James Bradley comments in the voiceover that, "though the flag-raising meant nothing to [Hayes], he somehow seemed to know that it meant everything to [Block's parents]." This comment and the following emotional devastation of Hansen's family when they learn from the press that Hank was not the one in the photo calls attention to the way in which the image operates as myth in structuring knowledge of the war — the presence of Hansen or Block in the image is, for their families, the sole reality of their heroism and guarantee that they did not die in vain — while at the same time problematizing the image's essentialized representation through the incongruence of the soldiers' experience with the claims of the image.

Anderson's observation that the nation is narrated as linear movement through 'homogeneous, empty time' is particularly important to an understanding of how *All Quiet* and *Flags* destabilize narration of nation through deterritorializing its narrative temporality. As Hogan notes, national narratives function to organize events onto a linear timeline with an established origin and end point. This is especially true of war narratives, as noted above, since the nation's moral superiority is staked on situating the origin of the conflict in an action perpetrated by the enemy, thus eliding the causal relation of any previous events to this action. The identification of a definite conclusion is equally essential to the war narrative as it posits a decisive victory achieved through the actions of the hero(s) while ignoring any causal relations beyond this end point (181-188). Both *All Quiet* and *Flags* subvert this dominant linear temporality of the war narrative through employing narrative structures that challenge the arrangement of events into a progressive, ordered whole.

In *All Quiet*, the events of the novel, particularly the battles, seem to occur as a series of random and disconnected events without a sense of unity or linear progression. Bäumer and his comrades do not appear as heroes moving through time towards some decisive victory. Descriptions of geographic location and spatial movement are vague at best, thus creating a sense of spatio-temporal ambiguity as opposed to the clear depiction of the hero's spatio-temporal movement in the prototypical war narrative. The events of the novel also tend to focus just as heavily on the soldiers' daily struggles for survival as they do battle scenes — the soldiers' elaborate attempts to protect their supply of bread from marauding rats or to hunt down goose to feed themselves occupy a more significant place than

their movement into, or retreat from, enemy territory. The battle scenes are presented in a random procession of brutality and violence without a sense of progress towards any military objective. Here again, the dissonance between the official narrative and the experience of the soldiers is employed to destabilize the linearity of the dominant war narrative. In chapter 11, just pages before Kat's death, the rumors of armistice and peace in the summer of 1918 are juxtaposed to Bäumer's description of this summer as "the most bloody and ... terrible" (Remarque 284). The timing of Bäumer's death, and thus the end of the novel, is also particularly significant as his death comes before the end of the war, denying the decisive conclusion of the war narrative and refusing the hero's ability to propel himself through time. Instead of exhibiting mastery over time, as the hero in the dominant war narrative, Bäumer becomes a victim of a time he is unable to assert control over. As Richard Arthur Firda notes, "the flow of time at the novel's conclusion moves in the direction of death and the loss of both historical and subjective time" (56). The lack of linear progression and the denial of a decisive conclusion here function to subvert narration of nation through deterritorializing the 'homogenous, empty time' of the nation through which the hero of the dominant war narrative progresses.

Flags destabilizes similarly the dominant war narrative and narration of nation through subverting the dominant temporality of the "movement-image." The cinematic manifestation of the dominant linear narrative temporality takes the form of what Gilles Deleuze refers to as the "movement-image," the classic film narrative which presents time as a linear progression through the protagonist's movement through space and their ability to directly effect their situation through their actions. In the movement-image, time exists in a straight line; the present becomes the only real outcome of a chain of events in the past. This narrative temporality is problematized in what Deleuze calls the "time-image," a new type of film that emerged in Europe after World War II conveying a consciousness of time as labyrinthine rather than linear, with multiple virtual pasts, presents, and futures existing simultaneously. David Martin-Jones, drawing on Deleuze's work on the movement-image and time-image and Bhabha's notion of the double time of the nation, points to the connection between temporality in film narratives and the imagining of national identity, arguing that "jumbled, fragmented, multiplied or reversed film narrative then, can be interpreted as an expression of the difficulty of narrating national identity at a time of historical crisis or transformation" (1). For Martin-Jones, the hybrid movement-image/time-image films that result from this crisis in national identity involve a constant oscillation between the movement-image's plane of organization and the time-image's plane of consistency (26). Time in these films is to varying degrees deterritorialized into a labyrinthine form or reterritorialized into a linear narrative.

In *Flags*, the linear time of the nation is largely deterritorialized through a narrative structure that creates the sense of a past that remains alive, existing simultaneously with the present. Rather than the typical employment of flashbacks in the movement-image, in which a flashback structure is used that "begins with the end of the story and flashes back to the 'beginning', thereby establishing a teleological progression and a false origin from which the narrative stems" (Martin-Jones 28), in *Flags* the flashbacks of the soldiers to Iwo Jima punctuate the narrative progression throughout the film and suggest a past that is lived contemporaneously in the present. The past of pain and suffering on the battlefield refuses to be instrumentalized as an origin for the present, instead remaining alive for the characters who are unable to escape it and are thus refused the sensory-motor continuity of the hero in the movement-image who is able, through their actions, to propel him or her self through time. Even Bradley, who attempts to deny the events of his past, not even telling his children about his wartime experiences, is ultimately unable to move forward in time. In the opening scene of the film, we see the elderly Bradley's flashback to the barren, sulfuric battlefield of Iwo Jima just before he collapses from a heart attack and calls out "where is he?" which we later discover is a reference to Iggy Ignatowski, whose death during battle provided a particularly painful experience for Bradley. Bradley's inability to propel himself beyond the past, even at the end of his life, deterritorializes the linear temporality of narration of nation through a fracturing of time in which the past continues into the present and future. It is especially significant then that the film does not end in the present day but rather during the war. In the final scene of the film, we see the soldiers, in a rare moment of joy, swimming in the pacific after the flag-raising. Thus, the film's narrative refuses a reterritorialization of time with a closure in the form of a return to the present. Instead, it leaves us suspended in the past with the soldiers for whom that past persists in the present.

In conclusion, while the intensifying development of global communication networks in recent years has opened up the possibility for the formation of communities that transcend national boundaries, it would be naïve to imagine that nationalism has disappeared or even gone into decline. Although global power structures have shifted in a way that the nation state is no longer *the* central organizing principle of global society, it remains one of the organizing principles. And, as the recent wars in Iraq and Afghanistan demonstrate, war and nationalism remain intimately intertwined. Nevertheless, the significance of the destabilizing of narration of nation in texts like *All Quiet* and *Flags* is that it points to the possibility of developing global solidarities and re-imagining communities not constrained by national borders. *All Quiet*, which appeared during a period of intensifying internationalism and *Flags*, released in an era increasingly characterized by a "globalization" of social relations, are perhaps then most significant in that they struggle, not simply against the essentialist concept and practice of nation, but for a social vision of a global community beyond the narrow limits of the nation.

Works Cited

- Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. 1991. New York: Verso, 2006.
- Barthes, Roland. *Mythologies*. Trans. Annette Lavers. New York: Hill and Wang, 1972.
- Bhabha, Homi. *The Location of Culture*. London: Routledge, 2004.
- Deleuze, Gilles. *The Movement-Image*. Trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1986.
- Firda, Richard Arthur. *All Quiet on the Western Front: Literary Analysis and Cultural Context*. New York: Twayne, 1993.
- Flags of our Fathers*. Dir. Clint Eastwood. Hollywood: DreamWorks, 2006.
- Foster, Kevin. *Fighting Fictions: War, Narrative and National Identity*. London: Pluto P, 1999.
- Gramsci, Antonio. "Hegemony, Intellectuals, and the State." *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: A Reader*. Ed. John Storey. London: Pearson Education, 2006. 210-16.
- Hogan, Patrick Colm. *Understanding Nationalism: On Narrative, Cognitive Science, and Identity*. Columbus: Ohio State UP, 2009.
- Martin-Jones, David. *Deleuze, Cinema and National Identity: Narrative Time in National Contexts*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2006.
- Murdoch, Brian. "Innocent Killing: Erich Maria Remarque and the Weimar Anti-War Novels." *German Novelists of the Weimar Republic: Intersections of Literature and Politics*. Ed. Karl Leydecker. Rochester: Camden House, 2006. 141-68.
- Remarque, Erich Maria. *All Quiet on the Western Front*. 1929. Trans. A.W. Wheen. New York: Ballantine Books, 1982.
- Shohat, Ella, and Robert Stam. *Unthinking Eurocentrism: Multiculturalism and the Media*. London: Routledge, 1994.
- Author's profile: Brent Smith-Casanueva is working towards his Ph.D. in cultural studies at Stony Brook University. His fields of interests in research include film and television, new media, Marxist and postcolonial theory, globalization and transnationalism, and queer theory. Smith-Casanueva's publications include "Re-narrating Globalization: Hybridity and Resistance in *Amores Perros*, *Santitos* and *El Jardín del Edén*," *Rupkatha Journal: On Interdisciplinary Studies in the Humanities* (2010) and "Race, Space, and the (De)construction of Neocolonial Difference in the *Firefly/Serenity* 'Verse'," *Race, Ethnicity, and Nationality in the Works of Joss Whedon* (Ed. Mary Ellen Iatropoulos and Lowery Woodall, forthcoming). E-mail: <brent.smith-casanueva@stonybrook.edu>