

Feeling Across the Color Line: The Gentle Warrior and the Transformative Orphan in early Cold War U.S. Narratives

by Elizabeth Ramsey

This article investigates transformative cultural narratives in early Cold War United States to trace how the foreign racialized orphan-child figure alters and reconfigures American racist hegemonic ideologies. These ideologies that are culturally reimagined are embodied in a white American masculine narrative trope that I term, the Cold War Gentle Warrior. Race embedded in the child figure recasts patriarchal power and structures of feeling to reproduce, disrupt, and revise hegemonic relations. This essay is interested not in the actual living, breathing child, but the representations of children; and how these sacrosanct and sentimental representations encapsulate adult projections and cultural fantasies in a specific historical and sociopolitical moment. In the analysis of two Hollywood films and popular discourse around international adoption that follows, the amalgamation of race and child create an affecting and unexpected construct in the trajectory of race in film.

As Toni Morrison notes in her observation on “the way black people ignite critical moments of discovery or change or emphasis in literature not written by them,” race commonly functions as a transformative narrative strategy in Western culture.¹ In the same manner, race and child, I argue, are employed to reform white patriarchy and preserve hegemonic power systems in ideological narratives not about or written by the child or racial Other. I examine two Hollywood films, *Three Stripes in the Sun* (1955) and *Battle Hymn* (1957), whose narratives focus on an American military man saving Asian orphans, and popular historic discourse in the 1950s around postwar U.S. adoption to investigate how white masculinity, a stand-in for dominant power structures, is remade in relation to the shifting paradigms of social policies; how certain foreign children and paternal and familial love are an apparent antidote for American racism; and how these cultural discourses limn the outlines of the new Cold War Gentle Warrior, who will rule and guide the emanating interracial global and domestic “family.”

There is a significant amount of scholarly work on 1950s postwar masculinity and the perceived gender crisis in American culture and film of this time. Steven Cohan’s book *Masked Men*, for example, examines the normative yet multiple representations of (white) masculinity in fifties Hollywood film as an unstable “masquerade,” via Butler, and articulates why a hegemonic representation of masculinity, appearing as “the man in the gray flannel suit,” could dominate the culture’s standards yet also deviate in a period of a gender crisis. Cohan argues that Cold War politics created contradictory ideals for American manhood; they required “a hard masculinity as standard when defending the nation’s boundaries,” and a “soft masculinity as the foundation of the orderly responsible home life.”² On the domestic front, as Cohan argues, there was cultural concern on the decline of the (white) American male for a variety of different socio-historic reasons, but within the international context and beside the orphan-child, the Gentle Warrior figure is seemingly able to successfully embody and smoothly resolve conflicting masculine and national traits and imagine a cohesive global and domestic

home-front. The role of the racialized child, in these instances, becomes a cipher for white patriarchal anxieties, and a vehicle for hegemonic power to regenerate itself.

Residing in the historical background of these transformative narratives and Gentle Warrior trope is the concept of home, family, and the evolving position of the U.S. in the Cold War global world. Notions of home during the 1950s in the United States rely on containment and the maintenance of boundaries, with the dual logic of inclusion/exclusion of Others. In this period of “white flight”, the suburban home represents a bounded place, both geographical and representational, of security for the 1950’s (white) family. As the United States moved into a position of global leadership, increased political and international pressure built to address domestic racial policies of discrimination and segregation in the interest of forming alliances with foreign nations against the threat of Communism, and to justify the liberal, democratic, capitalist U.S. world order as a more open and humane society. Additionally the United States and world were experiencing a “racial shift.” A multitude of factors contributed to this “break,” Howard Winant argues, and directly connected antiracism to democratic political development and agendas.³ Many of the countries the U.S. pursued as allies were war-torn, impoverished and by Western standards in desperate need to be “rescued.” Reflective of this context, the foreign racialized orphan-child, who is prominently without home and family, in these cultural discourses champions the Gentle Cold War Warrior (white American patriarchy) as savior. The real children of these spaces became representational “mascots,” easily embraced by American citizens, to represent, as Klein would argue, imaginary collective human and family bonds.⁴ These foreign orphans (many who were offspring of American servicemen) in destitute furnished the average American denizen a method of assistance in the formation of the global family.⁵ It is no coincidence that organizations such as the Christian Children’s Fund and World Vision rapidly expanded during this time period, with aid and sponsorship primarily in Asia. The foreign orphan in this historical cultural context inspires American citizens to re-envision the family, home and racial paradigms. However, one question to inquire is why was there tremendous momentum to assist international children in need, while domestic children in American urban and rural impoverished areas, who were predominantly non-white, were more often than not perceived as societal burdens? As Henry Jenkins points out, the figure of the innocent child is regularly used as a “‘human shield’ against criticism” in the political battles of adults and hegemonic systems.⁶ The attribute of innocence and who is worthy of saving in relation to the child is not equivocally bestowed and is intricately wrapped up in the preservation of the status quo. In comparing the U.S. narratives of foreign children in relation to domestic racialized children, the contradictions of innocence, race, empathy and liberal democracy come to the forefront.

My work is complementary to Christina Klein’s *Cold War Orientalism: Asia in the Middlebrow Imagination, 1945-1961* in that it focuses on the interconnections between American culture and Cold War national identity, namely in respect to the sentimental narrative of familial love. While Klein identifies sentimental and familial love narratives in American middlebrow cultural practices and U.S.-Asian global policies to promote international integration in early Cold War global order, the focal point of this essay differs in privileging the function and relation of the racialized child

to American white hegemonic power both within global and primarily black domestic racial relations and cultural narratives. Cold War ideology, Klein argues, is translated into personal terms and instilled with sentiment that produces “emotionally rich relationships that Americans could inhabit imaginatively in their everyday lives.”⁷ Similarly, the story of the foreign orphan creates an emotional and humanitarian narrative that supports American Cold War national interests, the ideological formation of the global family, while fostering and deploying strategies of—real and imagined—racial sympathy, perhaps even empathy.⁸

Commonly missing from childhood cultural studies, and cultural studies in general, is the analysis and role of emotions in both maintaining and disrupting hegemonic power relations.⁹ The cultural case studies in this essay examine how dominant culture portrays society’s moral obligations through the Gentle Warrior personae and investigates what discourse provokes sympathetic and empathetic “structures of feeling” and agency for human rights in this historical period of early modern Civil Rights.¹⁰ A dilemma with human rights, cultural historian Lynn Hunt argues, is “their very existence depends on emotions (such as empathy) as much as reason.”¹¹ Borrowing from Benedict Anderson, Hunt terms “imagined empathy” as a foundation in the political struggle of human rights, and claims within Western history new kinds of popular cultural experiences--such as reading-- propagated personal and social practices of autonomy and empathy, resulting in re-imagined civil rights. There are limits to empathy and critics point to the role empathy, sympathy, and sentimentality play in securing hegemonic and colonizing power systems.¹² Children, in particular, act as culturally constructed symbols that evoke strong emotional reactions. Hunt’s argument of “imagined empathy,” however, is useful in questioning how cultural practices produce and circulate transracial compassion and empathy in these post World War II Cold War cultural discourses that inspired many American citizens to adopt and fiscally support foreign orphans. Arguments around empathy and civil rights point to intriguing discussions in relation to race, power structures and representations of children. Using Williams’ notion of structures of feeling and Grossberg’s affective economies, Harding and Pribram assert in their justification for the place of emotions in cultural studies that “emotions are forms of circulating power: forces that produce human relations, energies and activities;” emotions are simultaneously “structures of meaning and structures of power.”¹³ In their argument Harding and Pribram perceive Williams’ structures of feeling as “mediating concepts” with “specific deployments of emotion at specific historic junctures with particularized effects,” and are a social and cultural experience rather than a private personal experience.¹⁴ While approaching emotions as structures of feeling in this sense and with critical lens and understanding that these structures play a complicated and complex role as technologies of power, and form identities and subjectivities, this essay questions how do these representations of foreign orphan-children and the Gentle Warriors contribute to Cold War ideologies and circulation of power? Do these representations provoke “feelings” across the color line? Does this constructed compassion translate to imagined empathy and contribute to a development in political and social agency for human and racial rights, or did it reinforce status quo and imperialistic tendencies? The case studies that follow indicate

the latter but certainly suggest a shift in the American emotional landscape and attitude regarding race through the image of the child and the Gentle Warrior.

Three Stripes in the Sun

In the 1955 film *Three Stripes in the Sun*, American racism embodied in white masculinity is resolved through familial love and devoted affection for foreign orphans, which evolves to interracial romantic love and marriage.¹⁵ This film is one of many Hollywood creations from the 1950s that depicts American men, outside of home, striking up liaisons with Asian women.¹⁶ Based on a true account, *Three Stripes in the Sun* tells the story of Sergeant Hugh O'Reilly who overcomes his racism towards the Japanese through his interaction with Japanese orphans, and consequently falls in love and marries a Japanese interpreter.¹⁷ O'Reilly's "true story" offers a prototype to postwar American citizens and the world that historical and discreet personal racist ideologies can be resolved; although it should be remarked that racism, in this narrative, is assumed to be one universal type, even sympathetically rationalized, ignoring complex histories, feelings and systems of power and relations.

The romantic love between an Asian woman and a Western white man is not a unique narrative to American mainstream film. Gina Marchetti, in *Romance and the "Yellow Peril": Race, Sex, and Discursive Strategies in Hollywood Fiction*, traces the long history of this particular story-line throughout Hollywood film, and claims that these formulaic tales follow a "Madame Butterfly" narrative.¹⁸ I would argue that while *Three Stripes in the Sun* does fall into the Asian/American romance films and uses white/Asian relations to explore issues of domestic racism, the film differs in that crucial transformation of white masculinity occurs through the process of emotionally connecting with Asian children rather than tragic romance.

The film opens with establishing Hugh O'Reilly's (Aldo Ray) bias towards the Japanese people. O'Reilly is visibly uncomfortable walking down the sidewalk in the bustling nightlife of Tokyo, while his friend Corporal Neeby Muhlendorf (Dick York) and the other American servicemen throughout the film are captivated by the people, particularly the Japanese women. It is quickly revealed that O'Reilly's abhorrence at the Japanese people stems from his experience in World War II. The guiding voice of the nascent American moral consciousness of the Cold War Gentle Warrior in the film comes from the commanding Colonel in Osaka. The Colonel reprimands Neeby and O'Reilly for causing a ruckus in Tokyo and reminds them of their democratic mission:

Colonel: "You are supposed to represent the United States in a foreign country...You are part of a very small occupation force in a country of 80 million people. And when we leave this occupation, we would like to leave them as friendly allies. And while this may come as a surprise to you two rugged individualists, we can use friends and allies. Just keep in mind, the Japanese are about the same as anyone else in the world as far as Americans are concerned.

They've been told about us, read about us, heard good and bad propaganda. But they'll probably get their real feelings of America from the Americans they meet and observe in daily life. Right now that's you. So act accordingly!"

Neeby: "That's kinda like being ambassadors, huh sir?"

Besides garrison duty, the role of the American troops as an occupational force is to positively represent the United States and endorse a Japanese-U.S. partnership against Communist forces. The Colonel's speech to O'Reilly and Neeby discloses and denounces the outdated mode of American masculinity--the "rugged individualist" who is independent and self-reliant with no need for others. The Colonel's imperatives reflect the U.S.' postwar approach to the world and the consequential shift in American power represented by white masculinity.

The Colonel preaches postwar tolerance and a new American masculinity that is a masquerade; one that reconstructs the appearance of traditional white masculinity, while simultaneously maintaining the core of the American hero. O'Reilly exemplifies the traditional white male American hero (even actor Aldo Ray's appearance and demeanor personify the rugged individualist), yet he is lectured on the necessity to convert and perform a tolerant and friendly appearance. The continuation of the film is O'Reilly's metamorphosis as he interacts with the Japanese orphans and Yuko, the Japanese interpreter who will eventually become his wife. This Gentle Warrior narrative of O'Reilly parallels with what will become the emergence of covert racism not only in early Cold War global American politics but also post-Civil Rights American culture.

The rough rugged exterior of O'Reilly immediately abates when he first witnesses the orphanage. O'Reilly continues to thaw as he witnesses the orphans' plight. At dinner, Father Yoshido leads grace, the camera cuts to a lengthy shot of the children around the tables, bowing their heads and saying grace in Japanese. This scene positions the children not only as cute, for O'Reilly's and the audience's gaze, but as good, obedient and Christian citizens. The children, throughout the film, are displayed as adorable bodies in the backdrop of O'Reilly's conversion. They do not speak--even Chiyaki the central child character--except as a group in song, laughter or prayer; when they do speak, it is not English and it is not subtitled. Press around the film discussed how the Japanese orphans and Chiyaki play themselves in the film. The orphans, both within and outside the film space, reiterate Western ethnographic innocence while eating, bathing, playing and seen in need.¹⁹ The lines between fiction and reality are blurred as transracial compassion is generated for the children. These foreign children's bodies inspire a parental instinct, love and a desire to create a home and family for O'Reilly and the films' audience.

O'Reilly is humbled in his introduction to Chiyaki and the orphans, and it motivates him to convince the other servicemen--the Wolfhounds--to help. He collects money to fund a new orphanage and becomes project manager of the construction. As the Japanese government is unable to provide appropriately for the children, the well-being of the orphans relies on the compassion of the Holy Family organization and the American GIs, displacing paternal responsibility onto the U.S. servicemen. Through the process of harnessing his energy into producing a home for the orphans, O'Reilly's racism subsides, his compassion matures, and the relationship between Yuko and O'Reilly evolves to romantic love. The film ends with a reminder that the Wolfhounds still support the orphanage and O'Reilly and Yuko's story is still being lived out in West Point, New York, one of the few states that did not enact anti-miscegenation laws. O'Reilly's story portrays a "successful" American humanitarian and integration

narrative with the child as the agent of change and the Cold War Gentle Warrior ready to confront the challenges of integration at home.

As reflected in the film and press around *Three Stripes in the Sun*, the welfare of foreign orphans was a national discourse in the fifties. World War II and the Korean War orphaned many children, but what was also an all too common story were the children fathered by American soldiers--both black and white--and consequently unwanted in their native countries due to their mixed-race and illegitimacy.²⁰ *Three Stripes in the Sun* hints at this problem with Yuko's constant concern of O'Reilly being "like all the others." This is also conspicuously and awkwardly acknowledged in the film in a scene after the dedication ceremony of the new orphanage; Sister Genevieve asks the Colonel to come see something:

Sister Genevieve: "You must see this before you go, General."

Colonel: "I'd like to very much, Sister."

(They and the representatives of Osaka who conducted the ceremony walk over to a section of the orphanage. The Sister enters a room and returns with an infant in her arms.)

Colonel: "Well, get a load of him. Hi, Buster. He's not entirely Japanese, is he?"

Sister Genevieve: "No. His father was killed in Korea."

Colonel: "I see. Could I hold him?"

Sister Genevieve: "Surely."

Colonel: "Hi. Getcha-goo."

It is never stated directly, but it is postulated that the father is an American GI.

The American public would have been well versed in this alluded and problematic story of GI-fathered international orphan. While *Three Stripes in the Sun* reforms O'Reilly's racism, it also provides a warm-hearted solution of adoption for the children who are by-products of American participation in international war. Overall, U.S. media, welfare and religious organizations expressed much concern over international and domestic children and orphans who did not occupy nuclear heteronormal family space. The following section will briefly shift from filmic narratives to examine the dominant narratives in the American press around foreign adoption. The family founded on familial love (vs. romantic love) is based on, as Klein states, compassion, sympathy and commitment to others, essentially forming the ideal community, yet American familial love is discreetly and strategically dispensed within the context of these media reportings and filmic narratives.²¹ Two distinct stories surface in mainstream black and white press. In analyzing the media's "concern," it becomes apparent that black children still occupy a conflicted and devalued space as domestic black/white race relations are remapped onto the global terrain and international children.

Orphans and an Army of Compassion

In the January 1958 issue of *Parents Magazine*, a lengthy article entitled "The State of the Nation's Underprivileged Children" highlights the copious amount of

American children who are not benefitting from the postwar prosperity. According to the publication, these children suffer from emotional and economic stress due to problems within marriages or single parent households, or reside in foster homes and institutions because "no American family wants to adopt them." The only direct reference to race in the article appears in this context of unwantedness; "Some children, unfortunately, nobody seems to want. The hard-to-place children are usually non-white or of school age or handicapped. The non-white hard-to-place children alone number over 96,000 a year."²² The large number of non-white, particularly black, children in need of homes became an issue for social policy makers.²³

Ebony published several articles on the issue of black adoption. The July 1952 article, "Why Negroes Don't Adopt Children," declares "for every white baby offered for adoption, there are at least ten eager, prospective parents. The situation in regard to Negroes is just the reverse. For every ten homeless Negro children, there is scarcely one interested couple."²⁴ The article continues to question why black families--particularly at a historical moment of high-rate black homeownership--are disinclined to adopt children, and concludes, "misinformation concerning the adoption process, economic factors and deep-seated prejudices about taking 'other people's children'," are the primary reasons for the lack of adoptions. In attempts to encourage black families, *Ebony* regularly featured stories on black celebrity adoptions--such as Nat King Cole, Ella Fitzgerald, and Josephine Baker--and emphasized,

although many Negroes still attach a certain stigma to adoptions, still feel that going outside the family circle for a baby is an admission of sterility and therefore a reflection upon the sterility of the male, an increasing number of prominent and celebrated brown Americans are finding their way into courtrooms to make other people's children legally theirs.²⁵

Worth noting is the social stigma attached to adoption and black masculinity. Whereas popular cultural narratives, such as *Three Stripes in the Sun*, position the foreign orphan and paternal love as a means for white masculinity to redeem itself, black masculinity in these reports is framed in a conflicted cultural relationship to the parentless child. Furthermore, this discordant relationship precludes black masculinity from the ideological narrative of Cold War sentimentality and global family cohesiveness.

Home for foreign black children abroad is also difficult to reconcile.²⁶ In an *Ebony* June 1958 article, "Should White Parents Adopt Brown Babies?," author and activist Pearl S. Buck addresses the issue of not so much whether white families should adopt "brown" babies--referring to the half-black children of Asia and Europe--than making an urgent plea for American black families to adopt Asian children whose fathers were African-American G.I.s; "There will be enough homes for the half-white children but not for those who are half-Negro. And alas, the half-Negro children will have the most difficult time in the lands of their birth."²⁷ *Ebony* published several articles of white European families adopting "brown" babies, however very rarely did stories of white American families adopting "brown" babies appear. If accounts

materialize, oftentimes they are reports of a flawed adoption system in which a "brown" baby is accidentally adopted, nevertheless becoming a beloved member of the adoptive white family despite the "tragic" mistake.²⁸

In analyzing press accounts, anxiety exists in the postwar era over the children orphaned by the war or fathered by American GIs; this is most likely connected to U.S. efforts to better foreign relations with nations who were dealing with these numerous "unwanted" children. After World War II, American families' interest increased in international adoption. Approximately 300 children from European nations were brought over to the United States, while thousands of children from Japan and China were requested.²⁹ Historically, the Korean War marks the "next phase" of international adoption, and was initiated by evangelical good Samaritans, such as Oregon rancher Harry Holt, and new U.S. policies, specifically the 1953 Refugee Relief Act which made international adoption of children from war-torn countries much easier for American families to open their doors to foreign children.

American compassion and familial love represented in the Gentle Warrior and U.S. citizen's concern cannot be discussed without mention of the intricate and convoluted role of Christian morality in American culture. Familial love is a foundation for American Christian morality. Cultural scholar Arissa Oh identifies an undefined religion, Christian Americanism, as one of the central motivating factors of American families' adoption of Korean orphans in the 1950s. She argues,

The move to adoption was largely propelled by religious and humanitarian beliefs and a desire to "save" children from the effects of war, but it was also a manifestation of a peculiar kind of secular religion that arose in the United States in the 1950s...That undefined religion—which I call "Christian Americanism"—was a fusion of vaguely Christian principles with values identified as particularly "American"—specifically, a uniquely American sense of responsibility and the importance of family.³⁰

Oh identifies mainly white middle class devout Christians and Christian Americanists adopting Korean orphans in the mid-fifties, and connects Cold War ideologies of racial democracy, solidification of American-Asian global relations, and the mission of spreading Christian values as motivating cultural factors. In other words, adoption became a new form of Cold War missionary work and American duty for U.S. families. Compassion for Korean orphans combined with the Christian mission, ostensibly gave license to adoptive parents to seemingly transcend the historical "problem" of race.³¹ Oh attests,

mixed-race children (referring to Korean American children) were considered more adoptable than non-mixed-race Asian children. Whereas one drop of black blood made a person black in the United States, one drop of Asian blood did not seem to render a person Asian. Instead, in a reversal of the one-drop" rule, Korean-white children were thought to be whitened—redeemed—by the presence of "white" blood. Although other, they were tolerably so.³²

This tolerable acceptance and assimilation of Asian ethnic groups embodied by the Korean orphan into American society and whiteness, I would argue, reflects the shift of racial paradigms and structure of feeling of this particular time.

Contrary to the black press, narratives in the popular white press tell the "happy" stories of Asian children being adopted by a compassionate white family or even occasionally by a lone woman who saw a child's picture in a mainstream publication.³³ *Life* magazine printed "A Famous Orphan finds a Happy Home" in its May 14, 1956 issue, chronicling the successful tale of Ri Kang Yong, a Korean orphan, adopted by a widow in Los Angeles. Yong had become a brief celebrity in the American imagination as a poster child in advertisements for overseas relief in 1951 with the caption "The Little Boy Who Would Not Smile." The short article emphasizes that Kang "was happily learning about life in the US."³⁴ The photos accompanying the article display a smiling Kang in "American" clothes on a carousel, talking on the telephone and watching television. This became a common image. Several articles on adopted Korean orphans by white families showcase them enjoying television. Watching television, or being intrigued by some other technological contraption, attests to American audiences that these orphan children are adapting and assimilating into American life. Not only is television an American activity, but it also differentiates the U.S. landscape from the impoverished image of the war orphan in the setting of his/her native country. These pictures "prove" these foreign children are "better off," while simultaneously neatly suturing them into America's emerging commodity and leisure middle class culture. These images and happy adoption stories play into and perpetuate the model minority myth, reinforcing the new Cold War national and global narrative of liberal democracy and racial integration. Ri Kang Yong's and the many other stories that appeared in mainstream (white) media stress a narrative of the united white family and familial love of an international adopted child.

Furthermore the immense national interest and compassion invoked for the Korean War orphans by American citizens is fostered by the intimate public relationship between American GIs and the orphans during the Korean War.³⁵ American servicemen and women serving in the Korean War sent stories and pictures of these children to their families back home in the United States. The Korean War Children's Memorial organization explains this dynamic:

When the American servicemen and women saw the condition of the children that were victimized by the Korean War and sought to address those needs they wrote home calling for help. They asked for clothes, food, toys, medicines and whatever other help they could get, including money. They wrote to parents, relatives, neighbors, home town newspapers, schools they recently graduated from, former employers and whoever else they could think of. And the American public responded in force. Thousands of tons of aid for the children and their caregivers began arriving in small packages addressed to servicemen in Korea. Help came in boxes, then crates and then by the boatload.³⁶

One GI wrote to his wife,

These kids are just like our own, except that half of them will freeze or starve to death this winter, so here's what I'm asking you to do. Get our minister or some civic organization to collect food, clothes, shoes and so on. Anything to keep these kids going this winter. I'm enclosing a note from our chaplain about what we're trying to do. Try to get something in the paper if you can, honey, send it to Mom and Dad and have them do the same.³⁷

Not only did the stories of American troops coming to the orphans' aid generate an excellent humanitarian anecdote, but also highlights American altruism and morality in contrast to the brutality of the communist enemy. Stories of Chinese troops ignoring or throwing stones at the Korean children distinguished the good will of American troops and citizens as a powerful weapon against Communism. The same GI mentioned above wrote Michigan's *Free Press* thanking American citizens for their support and contribution to defy Communism: "The people at home...through their generosity have done more to thwart Communism in this area than all our bullets have done. For Communism cannot live where love, kindness and generosity exist."³⁸ Decades later, summarizing this massive American humanitarian support during the Korean War, William Ashbury, a former field director for the Christian Children's Fund, writes in the preface for the photo catalogue *GIs and the Kids—A Love Story: American Armed Forces and the children of Korea, 1950-1954*,

The GI was up to those needs. He and she took responsibility for individual kids. Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps and even Merchant Marine units "adopted" entire orphanages. American military forces became *an army of compassion*, perhaps as never before or since. Privates, corporals, sergeants, lieutenants and colonels sent home pictures of baby Kim or Lee or Shin and thus solicited enormous help from their stateside American families...Shall we discern in Korea in the early 1950's anything less than manifest and genuine family values? *Perhaps the difference between then and now is that the GI then defined "family" as a global entity, without ethnicity and not necessarily within the boundaries of his native America.*³⁹ [Italics my emphasis]

Ashbury's preface distinguishes the U.S. Cold War military as an "army of compassion" and notes the American GI, who is outside the boundaries of "his" homeland, recognizes his "'family' as a global entity." While both men and women served in Korea, images and stories of American male GIs bathing, feeding, and nurturing Korean orphans prevail in the press, and present a particular type of masculinity—the Gentle Warrior, who is able to fight for and protect American democracy, while also exuding paternal compassion and empathy for his global family. The images of the American male GI and the Korean orphan construct a narrative of a benevolent paternal force, highlighting the commonality and "best" traits of democratic humanity while veiling the power dynamics in operation.

The narrative of the 1957 film *Battle Hymn* exemplifies this American compassion in the figure of Dean Hess while resolving historic moral confliction and American guilt through Korean orphans. *Battle Hymn's* diegetic narrative of the rescue

of Korean orphans also becomes indirectly linked to the adoption of Korean orphans by American families, not only with public relations stories about the orphans, but with the history of the Christian Children's Fund (CCF).⁴⁰ The Cheju Island orphanage, to which Hess transported the children in 1950, became a sponsored CCF orphanage in 1951. Although Universal Pictures had no association with the Christian Children's Fund, the CCF perceives the film *Battle Hymn* as a 1956 public relations success. In *A Book about Children: Christian Children's Fund 1938-1991*, Larry E. Tise claims,

J. Calvitt Clarke's dream of an international child 'adoption' agency able to intervene in the war zones of the world achieved its greatest pinnacle of success in the late 1950's...The Universal-International Pictures release of *Battle Hymn* in 1956 telling the story of Colonel Dean Hess's dramatic rescue of CCF's Korean children touched hearts throughout the world.⁴¹

And indeed, CCF "adoptions" significantly increased; the annual revenues for CCF went from \$1,953,975 in the year 1955-1956 to \$3,577,755 in the year 1956-1957, which the CCF credits to the film.⁴²

***Battle Hymn*: "The Greatest Compassion Your Heart Can Feel"⁴³**

In February 1957 both *Life* and *Reader's Digest* feature articles on Colonel Dean Hess and the then upcoming Douglas Sirk film *Battle Hymn*, a melodrama based on the real journey of Col. Hess and his rescue of over four-hundred Korean orphans during the Korean War. *Life* magazine presented two stories related to Hess and the film. The first focuses on Hess, the living breathing man, and the second is a promotion of the film through the tale of Jung-Kyoo Pio, aka "Sam," the leading child character in the film and one of the actual orphans that Hess saved in Korea. Like Ri Kang Young, Jung-Kyoo "Sam" Pio through this article and the U.S. press becomes a Korean child whose image captures hearts and is adopted by a white American family. As *Life* states, "When Universal Pictures set out to make *Battle Hymn*, a haunting story of a gentle warrior, it imported 25 Korean orphans to Hollywood as extras--and thus America acquired Sam."⁴⁴

The visual "foreignness" of Jung-Kyoo "Sam" Pio and the Korean children endows them with a particular kind of appeal and innocence. The orphans in *Battle Hymn* play only a minor role, however the cuteness of the children is highlighted in the reviews of the film. The critic of the *New York Times* review writes, "it is noticeable that the starving orphans are remarkably neat and plumb. But that shouldn't affect the popularity of the picture. They are disarmingly cute."⁴⁵ The *Variety* film critic asserts, "Jung-Kyoo Pyo, one of the children brought over from Korea, captures the heart."⁴⁶ Jung-Kyoo is the only child who develops an individual personality in the film, and is the only child who displays his full naked body in a bath scene, exemplifying the sentiments of innocence and in need of rescue. Even Douglas Sirk, the director, has a special affection for the foreign child. In interviews with Jon Halliday, Sirk states on his use of children in his films; "I like young children a lot. I had wonderful children in *Take Me to Town*; they were really great. I did *Weekend with Father* only for the children.

And I loved the children on the Korean picture (*Battle Hymn*), may be because of their foreignness."⁴⁷ This foreignness allows the child to be removed from social complexities of the U.S. context, and encases the foreign orphan-child in adult projections, and is devoid of family, home, personal history.

While *Three Stripes in the Sun* presents a story of white masculinity overcoming xenophobia and racism through Asian orphans, *Battle Hymn* is the narrative of white masculinity overcoming historical guilt and redemption through Asian orphans. Hess (Rock Hudson), unable to resolve his existential angst at home, gains resolution and transformation through the rescue of the Korean orphans, his experience in a foreign space and encounters with racial Others. Like O'Reilly, Hess' conversion is one into the Cold War Gentle Warrior that is only offered to white masculinity. And although the narrative positions Hess' guilt around his actions in World War II, the film imagines his atonement through a larger racial lens, with his Cold War Gentle Warrior figure emerging as the white postwar-liberal Civil Rights leader.

As in *Three Stripes in the Sun's* narrative and structure, *Battle Hymn* combines true story and fiction. The film opens with establishing the story and military artifacts as "real" and authentic with General Earle E. Partridge of the United States Air Force inspecting a Korean fighter plane, and then moving to address the camera. He states,

During the war in Korea, I was in command of the 5th Air Force operating under the United Nations command. This plane was just one of the many involved in our operations. Its pilot I shall never forget. I am pleased to have been asked to introduce this motion picture, which is based on the actual experiences of this pilot Colonel Dean Hess of the United States Air Force. The remarkable story of Colonel Hess is poignant and often secret struggle with a problem peculiarly his own. His courage, resourcefulness and sacrifice have long been a source of inspiration to me and the fighting men who have known him. But the story of Colonel Hess is more than a dramatic demonstration of one man's capacity for good; *it is an affirmation of the essential goodness of the human spirit.* For this reason I am happy it is told. [italics my emphasis]

This opening introduction, with the General as a source of sanctioned authority, authenticates the story's official truth. Hess' "secret" problem of guilt is individualized rather than correlated to a larger social pathos yet his altruistic actions are recognized as a model of the "essential goodness" in American people.

Guilt is established as Hess' quintessential problem. Through a flashback sequence, the audience learns Hess accidentally bombs a church and an orphanage during a World War II mission in Germany. He suffers from extreme remorse over the deaths of the orphans, which the film defines as his motivating force to become a Reverend. However, this new spiritual occupation and way of life does not absolve him. Unable to cope with his guilt in the small town and home with his wife Mary, he decides to volunteer for the Air Force for the Korean War; as he tells Mary, "Don't look for any sense in this Mary, you won't find it. One doesn't always have to have a clear reason for the things he does. Just how I feel that's all. Mary, this is what I have to do." Unlike Aldo Ray's macho Master Sergeant Hugh O'Reilly, Rock Hudson's Dean Hess is a

sensitive man overrun with deep existential and emotional issues, a reflection of the melodrama genre. Home for Hess is an impotent and restricting space. Absent of the domestic (white) nuclear family in foreign space, action, strength, and order reign, allowing room for metamorphosis through interaction with difference.

In Korea, Hess postures as a leader, yet privately is emotionally conflicted with guilt, his faith and the necessary killing in war. Hess' masculinity is not the (white) hero that existed during World War II, which is embodied by Hess' colleague Skidmore. In a confrontation with Hess, noting that he is not the "Killer Hess" that existed in World War II, Skidmore claims, "once I thought you knew what war was about, but not any more. Just keep this one thing in mind. All that counts is who wins. Not how nice a guy you are. You win or you die. You go soft, and you're one step from being dead." Yet as with O'Reilly, Hess' salvation is not this rugged masculinity of the World War II hero; it is a softer and kinder version, without shame of the past, that still maintains power, respect and control.

In addition to the Korean orphans, a vital auxiliary person in Hess' redemption is Lieutenant Maples, an African American. In a training exercise with Skidmore, Maples and Skidmore encounter and fire on North Korean enemy ground troops. Skidmore spots a truck moving away from the line of military vehicles and orders Maples to take it out. Maples realizes, only after firing on them, that the truck is full of women and children. After landing, Maples is in visible distress, and Hess, not knowing about the attack, interrogates him. Maples replies, rather dramatically, "Those kids. Those poor little kids," and runs off. This instantly conjoins Maples and Hess emotionally and morally together. With intent to comfort, Hess visits Maples in his tent in which he finds Maples reading the Bible:

Hess: "Just wanted to tell you to try to forget it as soon as you can."

Maples: "Thank you sir. I'm sorry I lost control out there. I'm alright now. I'm better now."

Hess: "I had a similar experience once. Something I've never been able to completely shake. So I'm not exactly the one to give you advice, but I..."

Maples: "Sir, it's the way of things, I guess. I figure it's all God's making and will. Doesn't the book say it—'No sparrow shall fall to the earth unless He first gives His nod.' Well, He must have given His nod to what happened out there today too. He must have. He's the Almighty, isn't he? No, we have to trust Him, sir. How can we live out there?"

Hess: (stands up, clearly moved and inspired by Maples) "Go on, Maples."

Maples: (standing up now; *The Battle Hymn of the Republic* begins to play in the background) "Well, you see Colonel, I've come to the conclusion God and all His reasons are invisible to the eyes of man. So I guess we have to be satisfied if He even gives us light enough to take our next step. Do our next chore."

Hess: "Thank you, Maples. Thank you."

This scene is a critical juncture in Hess' redemption. Although he looks in on Maples as his commander to provide him sage advice, it is Maples who restores Hess' faith in God and begins Hess' reconciliation with his guilt. Within the context of the

early Civil Rights movement, domestic racial relations are displaced onto Hess and Maples.⁴⁸ Yet, the history and struggles of African Americans is erased in the narrative. While the film seems inclined to promote racial tolerance, Maples' inspiring speech is devoid of political action and instead privileges a passive stance in Christian rhetoric, and leaves domestic racial dynamics unchallenged.

Like O'Reilly, Hess' ultimate redemption emanates from his act of saving the Korean orphans and experience of familial love of the Other. Hess establishes a makeshift orphanage with the help of Maples, Herman (a white American soldier), Lun-Wa (an elderly Korean man) and En Soon Yang (a local Korean woman who volunteers to oversee the children).⁴⁹ Transformation is not through his own family or biological child; it is through these Others—Maples, En Soon Yang and Lun-Wa-- and principally the Korean children. Once these adult Others fulfill their supporting role to Hess and the rescue of the orphans, they vanish from the narrative. In the closing scene of *Mary*, Hess and Herman's visit to the Cheju orphanage, Mary comments to Hess, "Darling, you look as happy as the children." Hess replies, "It's always been the children." The concluding scene favors the Korean orphans with white familial love and patriotism, and the Gentle Warrior is left standing triumph, overlooking his juvenile global family.

Outside the filmic narrative, Dean Hess, the actual man, and his wife Mary had a son before he left for the Korean War that is rewritten in the film to be born while Hess is in Korea. According to the *Reader's Digest* article, it is Hess' own son that inspired his actions to aid the orphans:

Hess looked at all these homeless kids and he felt helpless; there were so many of them. One evening as he watched the sea of small faces the features of one boy suddenly came into sharp focus, and Hess found himself gripped with a strange fancy: Suppose this were his own six year-old son, Alan. For a moment Hess the pilot, who had flown more than 300 combat missions in two wars, was replaced by Hess the spiritual leader. He found himself praying that something more than just fistfuls of beans could be provided for these pitiful waifs. And the he made a vow that, so long as he lived, *he would do what he could.* [sic]⁵⁰

By removing Hess' son from the film, the relationship between Hess and the Korean children becomes even more pivotal. The film *Battle Hymn* takes great liberties to the actual story of Dean Hess and the events of the evacuation. The character of Dean Hess in the *Reader's Digest* article and in Hess' own book *Battle Hymn*, on which the film is based, is a dedicated family man, military man and American citizen. He does not have the spiritual crisis or the paralyzing guilt of Sirk's melodrama.⁵¹ Sirk's portrayal of Hess fashions a new white masculinity that regains his strength from Others and reestablishes himself as the paternal force that can protect the international and domestic "innocent." The Cold War Gentle Warrior narrative and the media accounts on (white) adoption construct a narrative through the figure of the racialized child that address cultural anxieties around race, nation, and power, and allows white hegemonic power to transform and adapt to fluctuating social forces under the guise of liberal democracy and compassion.

Conclusion

In hindsight, it is ironic that *Battle Hymn* was nominated and won the 1957 Golden Globe award for “Best Film Promoting International Understanding” if we are to translate “Understanding” as thoughtful comprehension of an international community.⁵² The story of the Gentle Warrior and the transformative foreign orphan play a larger and intimate role in early Cold War American culture as a narrative strategy in the transformation of hegemonic power structures and managing “dominant” adult anxieties around shifting racial, gender, and socio-political paradigms. The case studies in this essay have focused on the representations of children, however personal lives of real children were entangled in these transformative narratives and affected through adoption and feelings of compassion. These children, now adults, are beginning to construct a narrative of their own experience and emotions to tell stories that complicate and contradict these compassionate tales.⁵³ In light of recent events, we are also reminded, again, that the black child occupies a devalued and “problematic” space in the systems we live in, are embedded within, support, challenge and oppose.⁵⁴ Ultimately, the narratives in this article highlight how our culture deploys the child to do a particular work that has little to do with the actual child.

Notes

¹ Morrison viii.

² Cohan xii.

³ Winant contributes the following factors to the racial paradigm shift: anti-colonialism, antiapartheid, worldwide revulsion at fascism, US civil rights movement, and US-USSR competition (Winant xiii).

⁴ For American servicemen in Korea during the Korean War, the war orphans were often referred to as “mascots.”

⁵ See Klein.

⁶ Jenkins 2.

⁷ Klein 8.

⁸ Empathy is a relatively new concept in the English language. It was translated in 1909 by American psychologist E.B. Tichener. Empathy denotes a more active relationship between self and other, verse the more passive concept of sympathy.

⁹See works of Harding and Pribram.

¹⁰ Feagin 254.

¹¹ Hunt 26.

¹² See Berlant.

¹³ Harding and Pribram, “Losing Our Cool” 871, 882.

¹⁴ Ibid 870-871.

¹⁵ Many thanks to Bob Proctor and Don Devaney for providing me with a copy of the film.

¹⁶ For example, *Japanese War Bride* (1952), *Love is a Many Splendid Thing* (1955), *The House of Bamboo* (1955), *Sayonara* (1957), *China Doll* (1958), and *The World of Suzie Wong* (1960).

¹⁷ Based on a *New Yorker* article entitled “The Gentle Wolfhound.” See Kahn.

¹⁸ Marchetti groups *Three Stripes in the Sun* (and mistakenly distinguishes *The Gentle Wolfhound* as a separate film, which in fact is the UK title for *Three Stripes in the Sun*) within these narratives.

¹⁹ See Higonnet.

²⁰ Publicity around Harry Holt and World Vision brought particular light to the GI babies, as there called, to the orphans of the Korea War, but this was also a “problem” that was highlighted in the aftermath of WWII. See “The Babies They Left Behind” 41; “How to Adopt Korean Babies” 31; Bauer 3; “Korean Orphans Arrive and Meet New Parents” 1; Moxness 67-70; Martin 10; Norman A2; “Negro Families Open Homes to Korea’s Brown Babies” 82; “Adoption by Picture” 51.

²¹ Klein 150.

²² Hecht 32.

²³ See Solinger.

²⁴ “Why Negroes Don’t Adopt Children” 31.

²⁵ Ibid. 32.

²⁶ See “Adoption Agencies Say Thousands of Mixed Children...” 65; “Army Captain Adopts Korea Orphan” 25; “How to Adopt Korean Babies” 31; “Korean Baby

Lift” 79; “Negro Families Open Homes...” 82; “War More than Game for Him” 26; “Why Negroes Don’t Adopt Children” 31.

²⁷ Buck 27.

²⁸ Lissner 36.

²⁹ See Freundlich 89, and "Adoption agencies say thousands..." 65.

³⁰ Oh 162.

³¹ Ibid.176.

³² Ibid. 178.

³³ For example, *McCall's* January 1958 issue featured an article "Adoption by Picture" relaying the story of a white family's adoption of a young Korean girl whose photo they saw in *McCall's*. "Adoption by Picture" 51.

³⁴ "A Famous Orphan..." 129.

³⁵ See Oh.

³⁶ “Help from Home.”

³⁷ “Better than Bullets.”

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ See Drake and Zimmerman.

⁴⁰ There is now controversy that Hess had little participation in the operation Kiddie Car and that it was actually U.S. Air Force Chaplain Russell Blaisdell who is responsible for saving the orphans.

⁴¹ While this quote states the film was released in 1956, it was actually produced in 1956 and released in early 1957 (Tise 60).

⁴² Insert reference to Tise and numbers

⁴³ Tagline in trailer for *Battle Hymn*.

⁴⁴ "A Saga of Sam and a Colonel" 137.

⁴⁵ "Battle Hymn" *The New York Times* 14:1.

⁴⁶ "Battle Hymn" *Variety*.

⁴⁷ Halliday 120.

⁴⁸ The film hints at the theme of equality with the use of music. *The Battle Hymn of the Republic*, a Civil War abolitionist song and Maples’ singing *Swing Low Sweet Chariot*, a song with origins during slavery and is associated with the Underground Railroad. Both songs were popular during Civil Rights.

⁴⁹ The character of En Soon Yang is fictionalized for the filmic narrative to provide a feminine presence and romantic tension in the narrative; she is a modified version of the Madame Butterfly character. En Soon Yang and Hess do not act upon any romantic feelings, which allows emphasis to be placed on familial love for the orphans, who stand in the place of the “Madame Butterfly” child.

⁵⁰ Reynolds 200.

⁵¹ In his book *Battle Hymn*, Hess explains “a writer in *Air Force Times* conjectured that guilt stemming from this incident may have been partially responsible for the aid I rendered Korean orphans in the airlift that became known as Operation Kiddy Car. I do not know” (Hess 2).

⁵² “Best Film Promoting International Understanding” was a Golden Globe award given out between the years 1946-1964, essentially the years after World War II until the mid modern Civil Rights era.

⁵³ For example see works of Ellen Lee, Kristi Brian, Jodi Kim, and Eleana Kim.

⁵⁴This refers to the recent acquittal of George Zimmerman for the murder of Trayvon Martin.

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