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## **Hot For War: Jerry Pournelle and David Drake's Regendered Battlefield**

*We were asked to believe that the war had now ended.  
We laughed—for we were the war.  
—Ernst Junger, *Storm of Steel**

*I feel a sort of violence spreading from male bodies at all places of the planet I've been...  
—Klaus Theweleit, "The Bomb's Womb and the Genders of War."*

**D**rake and Pournelle's texts glow with heat generated by men hot for battle, hot for freedom, hot for their beliefs in militarist masculinity. Written between 1971 and 1991 by veterans of Korea (Pournelle), and Vietnam (Drake), Jerry Pournelle's *The Mercenary* (1977), and David Drake's *Hammer's Slammers* (1979), and *The Military Dimension* (1991) are about mercenaries who repeatedly rise above their hired-soldier status, fighting for their own and others' honor. I believe these texts perform the cultural task of reinforcing masculinity and militarism in post-Vietnam war science fiction, a project Susan Jeffords would call remasculinization. The American mission that collapsed in South East Asia is reconstructed and extended by these bellicose texts that reenact lost wars until they are won permanently. The discussion of gender and war in each text accomplishes two goals: it converts war stories into love stories that rest upon images of chivalry and gallantry; it naturalizes masculinism (all worthy traits are male ones). When they confuse sex and killing, the texts define what a human is (she or he will embrace war), folding the feminine into the masculine, incorporating and subsuming it. These popular stories have created an environment that has, I suggest, produced the many current series of military science fiction books that fantasize dangerously about an apparently egalitarian, benevolent military culture.

According to Jerry Pournelle, *The Mercenary* sold 200,000 copies in its first year of print (Elliot 16). Drake's stories of a mercenary tank unit called "Hammer's Slammers" followed Pournelle's stories' phenomenal success.

Both authors write about brilliant military Colonels (Pournelle about John Christian Falkenberg, Drake about Alois Hammer) who appear to be at the mercy of short-sighted or malicious civilian politicians ignorant of combat. Echoing American soldiers in Vietnam who felt betrayed by Washington, Pournelle's Marines march to their unofficial anthem: "The lands that we take, the Senate gives back, /rather more often than not" (31).<sup>1</sup> Pournelle's stories' popularity was aided by John W. Campbell's influential touch (Pournelle was the first winner of the Campbell award for best new writer [Martin 249]). Drake found his writing initially hard to place, something he attributes to cultural factors: "What was the problem with [selling] the military SF? I think it was the fact the Vietnam War was still going on....The outlets that did publish military SF couldn't use *my* brand of it, stories which indicated very graphically that war was a messy and utterly futile business" ("Comment" 23). Pournelle championed Drake's writing which eventually developed a following similar to Pournelle's: "To every one's surprise, there turned out to be a market for the new package. (It appears that there were a lot of veterans out there who knew exactly what I was saying—and agreed with me.)" (Drake "Comment" 23). Drake's position that his readers were veterans who agreed that war is "messy and utterly futile" collapses in the face of the texts about the Slammers. There are now four books in the Hammer's Slammers series, each with the same conclusion: to fight alongside Colonel Alois Hammer and his men means you are among the chosen, real men (even if they're gay, or have been castrated). While the fighting may be "messy" it certainly is not portrayed as futile.

Drake and Pournelle's writings are proleptic of texts "from Vietnam veterans that began to appear by the late 1980s, the war of twenty years ago was now selectively remembered, with resurgent bitterness, through a script that eliminated everything that happened in Vietnam itself and rewrote the war as the individual soldier's return home" (Boose 83). By personalizing the war's injuries, such fictions allowed its veterans to step away from moral and ethical questions the war raised. In the science fiction world Pournelle and Drake became point men for a squad of militarist authors (including David Feintuch, S. M. Stirling, Harry Turtledove, and David Weber, among others) who valorize war culture without questioning it. These authors privilege what Pournelle calls "the military virtues," where discipline, strictness, honor and loyalty overcome the terrors of battle ("Mercenaries" x). Susan Jeffords identifies the authors' collective cultural project as one where war "has been altered to produce, validate, and secure what I call here a 'remasculiniza-

tion'—a regeneration of the concepts, constructions, and definitions of masculinity in American culture and a restabilization of the gender system within and for which it is formulated" (57). Military romance (fictions that concentrate on the "military virtues" in action) also works to soothe civilians and soldiers facing the madness of 20<sup>th</sup> century industrial warfare that has, Alfred Kazin argues, "since Hiroshima defeated the most unreconstructed literary imagination" (91). Romance is a way around literary defeat, a way to hand personal power to those who feel helpless.

Joanna Bourke examines texts in which soldiers refuse "to narrate their war-stories in self-destructive ways. Despite the confusing anonymity of battle, combatants insisted upon myths of agency. It was precisely this ability to assert their own individuality and sense of personal responsibility even within the disorder of combat that gave meaning to the warring enterprise and to their lives" (369-370). Pournelle and Drake's stories perform a number of tasks: they refashion a war gone bad; they reset the cultural gender baseline to the masculine (important in the face of feminism in the late 1960s and early 1970s); they give agency to individuals who have little or none; they point a way out of post-Vietnam, postmodern angst. As James William Gibson pictures it "American men—lacking confidence in the government and the economy, troubled by the changing relations between the sexes, uncertain of their identity or their future—began to *dream*, to fantasize about the powers and features of another kind of man who could retake and reorder the world. And the hero of all these dreams was the paramilitary warrior. In the New War he fights this battle of Vietnam a thousand times, each time winning decisively" (11). Gibson's "paramilitary warriors" are Pournelle and Drake's mercenary armies that are neither ragtag mobs of self-serving desperate men nor cynical killers but believers in honor and chivalry.

Jerry Pournelle remembers a time when fighting men were honored, "when my uniform was sufficient for free entry into movie houses, the New York Museum of Modern Art, the New York Ballet, and as I recall, the Met (as well as other establishments catering to less cultural needs of soldiers)" ("Mercenaries" v-vi). Pournelle is wistful not only for a culture that values its soldiers, but one that knows how to treat them properly both above and below the belt. The rights Pournelle believes in belong to the soldier hero, the white knight. Pournelle and Drake's texts repeatedly assert that the hero counts, that one man in the right place at the right time can make a difference. The individual safeguards his own freedom first, then watches out for others: "Jerry Pournelle believes in peace. His peace, however, promotes the necessi-

ty for constant vigilance and firm defense....He regrets the reality of war but, even more, [that people are] vulnerable to war and tyranny” (Wolff 18). To protect the individual, Pournelle suggests all citizens study military history, be required to perform active military service, and learn about handguns. Pournelle explains what he taught his children as he trained them to use the handguns in his house: “There are four rules. All guns are always loaded. You must never put your finger on the trigger unless you’re prepared to fire it. You never point a gun at anything you don’t intend to shoot. And you never shoot anything you don’t intend to kill. Now, given these rules, how could anyone get hurt if you obey them?” (Platt 5). These rules imply a world without gray areas, error, rash acts due to terror or shame. Once you’ve put your finger on the trigger there’s no going back: you will fire and kill. The shooter has perfect knowledge of the situation—there are no warning or wounding shots, only assassination: when a gun is drawn, all crimes will be punished by death. Pournelle’s vision of peace is equally uncompromising: “We can piously hope that there will be no armies in the future. It is an unlikely hope; at least history is against it. On the evidence, peace is a purely theoretical state of affairs whose existence we deduce because there have been intervals between wars” (“Mercenaries” viii).<sup>2</sup> Between moments of peace, war is the reality for which we must train, around which we must create family: “We have no countries of origin among ourselves and no politics. Ever. The Fleet is our fatherland, and our only fatherland” (Pournelle *Mercenary* 21). With two doctorates (psychology, political science), Pournelle is too well-read to use a word like “fatherland” lightly. There is no mother country, but instead a patriarchal fatherland that, while powerful, must not threaten the individual’s supremacy.

Drake’s characters inhabit a similar world; a civilian leader hysterically attacks Hammer, “Curse it, man!...haven’t you taken a look around you recently? Lives are cheap, Colonel, lives are very cheap! You’ve got to have loyalty to something more than just men,” to which the Colonel responds, “No, ...with quiet certainty” (*Hammer* 24-5). The civilian, ignorant about the military community, is panicked by the deaths around him, but soldiers know people die all the time: in the face of that unreasonable reality it is loyalty and military *Gemeinschaft* that make existence possible. William Broyles, in his famous formulation about men and war, argues that “War is an escape from the everyday into a special world where the bonds that hold us to our duties in daily life—the bonds of family, community, work—disappear. In war, all bets are off. It’s the frontier beyond the last settlement, it’s Las Vegas” (71). New bonds are created when civilian ones are scorched off by the heat of

battle: the new loyalty is everything, generating for itself "archaic creation myths that glorify the violent struggles that precede the establishment or restoration of social order" (Gibson 31). The true social order (since peace is a "purely theoretical state of affairs") is a military one based on a logic of force that follows Pournelle's handgun code: pull a weapon (mobilize an army), use it only for kills (go to war and win).

Pournelle's description of Falkenberg's legion ("formed out of old military units. Foreign Legion, Highlanders" complete with tribal rituals, "a lot of men like the pipes. I'll confess I [Falkenberg] do myself" [*Mercenary* 85]) are precisely Gibson's "archaic creation myths." The bagpipes, part of a folk tradition, were a shepherd's tool that have become a military instrument whose sound carries across the battlefield. But there are no civilians or shepherds in Pournelle's world: the legion, now under its own command and answering to military, not civilian, authority, has more agency than ever. Drake's mercenaries exist in a similar culture of pure militarism with its chivalric overlay: "From the mast of Command Central, a flag popped unseen in the wind. It bore a red lion rampant on a field of gold, the emblem of Hammer's Slammers; the banner of the toughest regiment that ever killed for a dollar" (*Hammer* 45). The flag is "unseen" but not undescribed. The romance and nobility of the rampant lion are juxtaposed with the apparent callousness of men who "kill for a dollar." The killers appear to be guns for hire, but are actually a group of freelance knights travelling incognito, obeying a code of honor incomprehensible to civilians. In her study of close-order killing, Joanna Bourke finds that "The ability of combatants to imagine themselves as engaged in honourable combat not totally unlike that experienced by chivalrous knights of the past was crucial to their sense of pride and pleasure. Although modern slaughter was typically anonymous, dirty and banal, by conjuring up myths of chivalry, combatants were able to evoke feelings of respect and compassion for their enemy while still remaining committed to the killing enterprise" (67). Chivalry cools war fear, cloaks the moral nakedness and terrors of killing: mythologizing fear can rationalize it.

Pournelle is caught up by spectacular war events that, he argues, make for men's (and man's) greatness. Little seems to equal battlefield sacrifice: "To stand on the firing parapet and expose yourself to danger; to stand and fight a thousand miles from home when you're all alone and outnumbered and probably beaten; to spit on your hands and lower the pike; to stand fast over the body of Leonidas the King; to be rear guard at Kunu-ri; to stand and be still to the Birkenhead drill; these are not rational acts" ("Mercenaries" vii).

Pournelle moves in parallel rhetorical sweeps across time and cultures from the generic “firing parapet” (it could be a WW1 firestep or partly shielded archer’s breastwork), to the lost army, then to the pikeman who “spit[s] on his hands” to prepare for the labor of killing, to Thermopylae with Leonidas and the three hundred doomed Spartans at the pass, to the nerve-wracking retreat of the American 8<sup>th</sup> army stuck at Kunu-ri in Korea, and finally to the British ship *Birkenhead* where the “women and children first” code was established as 450 sailors drowned to save the women and children on board. These are mythopoeic moves that conflate all acts of heroism in war without regard for context. All are male acts performed in desperate situations. The archer or doughboy are made to exist in the same moment as the citizen soldiers at the Hot Gates, or the nearly frozen retreating units in Korea. The men on the *Birkenhead* close the passage (now almost a marching song: “to stand and be still/ To the Birkenhead drill/ These are not rational acts”) because they are a supreme example of what battlefield heroism is about: saving women and children. All the soldiers, the passage suggests, fight for home and for the women there. Pournelle admires battlefield heroism perhaps because it sharply separates the masculine from the feminine—yet he also includes women in his armies, which is why I wish to examine gender next.

Until recently, women have been excluded from the combat arms of North American forces. That has changed in part because of the Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services’ (DACOWITS) recommendation in the fall of 1976 “that laws now preventing women from serving their country in combat and combat related or support positions be repealed” (DACOWITS). DACOWITS’s recommendation immediately drew fire from the conservative military establishment, for whom Brian Mitchell argues: “The integration of women has also threatened the very values upon which all militaries depend. Civilized militaries are necessarily hierarchical, anti-egalitarian, and altruistic (in that they exist to serve not themselves but the state)”: in Mitchell’s view women are self-interested army careerists, putting themselves before the country’s welfare, sapping the armed forces’ strength (9). Brian Mitchell speaks for women and men who reject feminism, who feel that women in the military are a cultural obscenity: women are the “beautiful souls” protected by heroic male sacrifices at the parapet or Thermopylae.<sup>3</sup> Feminists who oppose Mitchell’s position fall roughly into two groups: the first believes that women’s presence in combat increases the culture’s gender equity; the second is convinced that women in combat or support are necessarily masculinized and colonized by the military. These con-

flicting viewpoints make the narrative of military women incessantly problematic: “The story of women in uniform is one about living on the edge of one’s gender. Military women are not men. They’re not women. This is a story about being a woman who’s a man. This is about the narrowest sort of sartorial, behavioral, sexual space between man and woman. This is about phallic women....At best, Army women are ‘threshold people’” (Billie Mitchell 41).

Into these hot gender waters wade Pournelle and Drake, using images of women at war to reinforce the importance of military men at war, and in the culture as a whole. Women, if they demonstrate certain qualities, are permitted to enter mercenary armies:

“some units take women, some don’t. We’ve got a few, damned few, because not many women have the guts for our line of work.”

Margritte’s smile flickered. “The hardness, you mean. The callousness” (Drake *Hammer* 156).

The above text appeared in 1978, when the chief question was still whether women could kill in hand to hand combat, as men have. Could they harden themselves, reject or set aside the nurturer, and become the callous killer? Margritte proves herself to be tougher than most men, becoming a valued combatant (note that Margritte is not a gunner or tank driver but a communications technician—an acceptably feminine military task [Drake *Hammer* 188]). Pournelle introduces Glenda Ruth Horton, a local military leader and “girl” of 26, who ultimately falls in love with Colonel Falkenberg: “She nodded coldly as if she did not care for the rebel minister, but she put out her hand to Falkenberg and shook his in a thoroughly masculine way. She had other masculine gestures, but even with her brown hair tucked neatly under a visored cap no one would mistake her for a man. She had a heart-shaped face and large green eyes, and her weathered tan might have been envied by the great ladies of the CoDominium” (*Mercenary* 164). Pournelle’s description points to gender and sexuality. Glenda Ruth is “thoroughly masculine” in her body language (her handshake, “other gestures”), but she cannot be “mistake[n]...for a man.” Women, defined as what men are not, must remain women, or at least when on the battlefield, be prevented from becoming men (Ehrenreich [129], Elshtain [166], Enloe [220], Herbert [10-11], Jeffords [39]). There’s too much power at stake in the definitions of men and women to permit their resignification. Pournelle reassures the reader that Glenda Ruth’s

“heart-shaped face and large green eyes” make her a lady equal to the women of court (women in social, not physically dangerous, situations). Glenda Ruth may be strong, she may be capable, she may even be a great leader; but she’s attractive to men—that is her salient feature. Glenda Ruth’s hair is hidden, but the fact that it is the passage’s linguistic pivot (“*but* even with her brown hair...”[my italics]), supports the idea it is a fetishized, sexual sign.

In 1977 as now, North American culture makes certain assumptions about women with short hair. Drake focuses on proven veteran Margritte DiManzo’s hair: “Pritchard’s commo tech was...a slender widow who cropped her lustrous hair short so that it would not interfere with the radio helmet she wore most of her waking hours”(*Hammer* 167). The “slender widow” has not put aside her sexuality by “cropp[ing] her lustrous hair short,” as the word “lustrous” signifies. The only other character about whom we receive such grooming detail is Joachim Steuben, Hammer’s deadly and apparently gay right hand man: “Steuben’s dress was identical in design to his colonel’s, but was in every other particular far superior. The khaki was unstained, the waist-belt genuine leather, polished to a rich chestnut sheen, and the coveralls themselves tapered to follow the lines of his boyish-slim figure. Perhaps it was the very beauty of the face smoothly framing Joachim’s liquid eyes that made the aide look not foppish, but softly feminine”(Drake *Hammer* 15-16). Apart from the women and the homosexual characters, the men are described in little detail.

Even in the heat of battle when sexual descriptors would seem inappropriate, Pournelle focuses on Glenda Ruth’s appearance: “The slender girl was not very pretty at the moment, with her coveralls streaked with mud and grease, her hair falling in strings from under her cap, but he’d rather have seen her just then than the current Miss Universe”(*Mercenary* 179). Assuming that there are such things as Miss Universe pageants in the late 21<sup>st</sup> century (the time of Pournelle’s novel), there are two diagnostic marks about this passage: the first is that a professional soldier under fire relieved by a fresh force considers that force in sexual terms; the second is that Pournelle frames the future in terms of the present. No values have really changed. Women are still “beautiful souls” who exist for the benefit of the controlling male gaze that reconfigures, sexualizes, and lessens the power of women on the battlefield. For Billie Mitchell, the powerful military woman is a deep threat to the masculine: “she excels at ‘manliness,’ that is, she is able to ‘win at games.’ This is too much of a challenge to gender roles. The male gaze on her—sight as an exercise of power—is also a form of surveillance....[H]er deliberate self-dis-

play could easily devolve into seduction" (Mitchell 52). Male sight denatures the power a combatant woman has amassed. If the current cultural definition of "man" is to remain, this non-man strong woman must be gazed upon, literally reviewed, and so remade into a sexual creature.

The ligatures between sexuality and war are powerful, culturally exciting ones. Billie Mitchell worries about "the sexiness of it all: a diminutive woman in men's clothes running around with a rifle is not news, but it's great footage" (41). What's memorable is the image—the "great footage" that is part of what Klaus Theweleit would call male fantasies, what James William Gibson would call warrior dreams: "Just as the war zone is full of violent male demons, so too is it filled with powerfully erotic female creatures" (Gibson 55). Women are not necessarily the castrating females Theweleit documents in the Freikorpsmen's novels, but they are certainly sexual. One of Hammer's men meets a local "advisor" (a loaded term from the Vietnam war) named Sonna, a young woman who "looked about seventeen, her hair an unreal cascade of beryl copper over one shoulder" (Drake *Hammer* 52). Once more, the sexual aspect of hair is the focus. That Sonna is an attractive young creature is confirmed when Colonel Slammer tells her "You're such an ornament to a firebase that I'm thinking of putting you on requisition for our next contract" (Drake *Hammer* 53). The "ornament" is a full military advisor, yet her true value is as a trophy, "a chattel... [who] contributes to the comfort or the good repute of her master" (Veblen 72). Her contract (larded with ownership) with the mercenaries seems to be based on the visual pleasure she provides them rather than on her military services. Drake dwells on her worth as an ornament, even when she is in the field: "She broke off, tossed her stunning hair. In the flat evening sunshine her garment had paled to translucence. The late rays licked her body red and orange" (*Hammer* 63). Her hair is only part of an overtly sexual passage where the sun strips off her clothes, then licks her body with hot colors. It's unlikely any male soldier would be described this way.

Nature, sexuality, and women are united once more when we see Margritte help a wounded soldier: "Standing, she far lacked the bulk of the sergeant beside her, but her frame gave no suggestion of weakness. Golden dust soiled the back and sides of her dress with butterfly scales" (*Hammer* 146). The "golden dust" defines her figure, but in the terms of a beautiful soul's delicate "butterfly scales." We're told repeatedly she's strong: "Margritte looked frail, but with her legs braced she stood like a rock. Her arm around Pritchard's back was as firm as a man's" (Drake *Hammer* 210). In each passage

apparent opposites are highlighted: a woman is usually weak, but can be strong even if physically small; a strong woman must be a sexual one: nature “lick[s]” and clings to them, lights up their hair. Sonna and Margritte embody reassuring binaries that masculine culture has created: strong, capable women in combat are really sexual trophies (they don’t engage in battlefield killing—they are “advisors” or communications technicians).

Combat-ready sexual women are the dreams of a masculine militarized culture—it is the fantasy aspect Cynthia Enloe wants destroyed: “Women militarized as soldiers are not exotic Amazonian warriors. They are women used by patriarchal military officials in ways that fit their presumed cultural roles as women. At the same time they are women feared by those military men as women” (159). Enloe reminds us, as Billie Mitchell says, that military women are perpetually liminal: they cannot be women or soldiers, and if they are soldiers, they must be sexualized; they cannot be men, but must also forfeit the culturally assigned role of nurturer. Having killed a soldier Margritte stands “gaunt, misted with blood as though sunburned. A woman who had blasted life away instead of suckling it. Della, a frightened mother, snarled at the killer who had been her friend” (Drake *Hammer* 160). Margritte is now acceptable only to an army that is itself liminal, one that “kill[s] for a dollar.” The mercenaries accept the non-woman (now other, although still touched by nature, “sunburned” by blood) who foregoes child care, and is rejected by another mother bear who “snarl[s] at the killer.” Klaus Theweleit argues that men take up certain positions when they assign others to women: “Men themselves were now split into a (female) interior and a (male) exterior—body armor. And as we know, the interior and exterior were mortal enemies” (*Male* 1:434). Women like Margritte reify the interior—the red, seething emotional self against which men have constructed dams—and cause it to emerge where it can be sexualized and controlled. Once combat is over, however, the woman must be reinternalized, swallowed by the male self: “Nurturing children is part of any revolution, particularly one that extends over many years. But interweaving the images of woman as combatant and mother so tightly suggests that as soon as the immediate threat recedes, as soon as the ‘war is over,’ [women]...will put down the rifle and help the baby” (Enloe 166). And indeed, Margritte ultimately leaves Hammer’s Slammers to marry and presumably start a family. Sexual military women serve two functions: they make the texts attractive to readers who understand women through masculinist filters, and they also dilute the cultural problem of women in combat. Sexualizing combatant women divests them of their

cultural positions, and heightens the war narrative's power for the culture that creates it.

Combatant women may be sexualized, but sex itself remains obscure. Paul Fussell argues that the front is an intensely asexual place (the men are "too scared, busy, hurting, tired, and demoralized to think about sex at all. Indeed, the front...was sexless" [*Wartime* 108]), but notes the sexual reaction to combat terror: "It is easy to understand if not, perhaps, to forgive the Norwegian pilots trained in Canada on their way to England on a transport, who lay in their bunks 'masturbating for all the world to see...' [or] the American soldiers in Lincoln Kirstein's poem 'Load.' Waiting in their cots for shells to arrive from a long-range German railway gun, they masturbate out of sheer anxiety" (*Wartime* 108). William Broyles argues that the war environment is a sexual place, and that "Most men who have been to war, and most women who have been around it, remember that never in their lives did they have so heightened a sexuality. War is, in short, a turn-on" (78). The overt connection between the gun and penis cannot be denied, especially by veterans like former ranger and paratrooper Lieutenant Colonel Dave Grossman: "Many men who have carried and fired a gun—especially a full automatic weapon—must confess in their hearts that the power and pleasure of explosively spewing a stream of bullets is akin to the emotions felt when explosively spewing a stream of semen" (136). Both Broyles and Grossman's discussions of the sexual aspect of weaponry and war are somewhat chaste, but Pournelle and Drake are not so shy.

Pournelle's hero John Christian Falkenberg discovers on the battlefield that Glenda Ruth is the woman for him. Acting as a forward artillery spotter, Glenda Ruth heatedly calls in a fire mission:

"Pour it on!" she shouted into the communicator. "On target!"

"Right. On the way."

She was sure it was Falkenberg himself at the other end.

(*Mercenary* 192-3)

The reason Pournelle puts the force's supreme commander in charge of an artillery fire mission is to show a male-female connection, albeit one soldered by high explosives. Glenda Ruth passionately exhorts Falkenberg who is "at the other end" to "pour it on," a scene of ardent sexual fervor. Compared to the hot artillery exchange, the love scenes between the two are bashful and

embarrassed: “he lifted her gently to her feet and pressed her close to him. Once again her doubts vanished but she knew they’d be back” (*Mercenary* 218). The lovers have already had sex on the battlefield; outside of combat, they live in a genteel world of romance.

Weapons seem to be able to restore lost masculinity, or give men sexual power they never had. One of Drake’s narrators is a teen courtier and eunuch who dreams of power. When the mercenary tanks roll inside the castle walls the eunuch immediately understands their strength; he may have been castrated, but the tanks are permanently erect: “My place was not [in court]. My place was with the tanks, now that there was no one to watch me dreaming as I caressed their iridium flanks” (Drake *Dimension* 213). When masculinity is threatened then the warrior has sex dreams about war, war dreams about sex. The eunuch “caress[es]” the tanks in a familiar way: “Men preparing for a trench raid would pass ‘caressing’ hands over their bayonets, all the while preparing for that gory moment of bliss when the blade would be ‘driven deep’ into another man’s chest ‘so that his heart’s blood spouts in a great jet on to the muzzle of the gun.’ It is no coincidence that men bragged most frequently about their bayoneting exploits to mothers, sisters and girlfriends, rather than to fathers, brothers and male comrades” (Bourke 54-55). Being intimate with a weapon makes sense if it is the only object that provides a terrified soldier with a sense of agency on the chaotic battlefield. But intimacy with tanks or bayonets transcends closeness and enters the sexual realm: the caressing hands, the penetration of the body, the exposure of the feminized interior which brings about an ejaculation of blood, combine male war and sex. The eunuch ultimately fires the tank’s gun, understanding his desire in terms of sexual pressure and release: “The need to assert myself had become unexpectedly pressing since Lord Curran had showed me the tank, and since I had experienced what a man could be” (Drake *Dimension* 228). “Experience[ing] what a man could be” refers to the eunuch assuming the tank’s destructive power: the newly sexualized man finds sex “unexpectedly pressing.” Conflations of sex and killing are not rare: “Killing was intrinsically ‘glamorous.’ It was like ‘getting screwed the first time’ and gave men ‘an ache as profound as the ache of orgasm.’ In the words of a black Muslim Marine, ‘I enjoyed the shooting and the killing. I was literally turned on when I saw a gook get shot’” (Bourke 32). The gun is flawless because it cannot be feminized. Metal weapons are far tougher to breach than the body’s feminized penetrable interior: “Guns have the capacity to do something of which the soldier is normally incapable: they can discharge and still remain

*whole*" (Theweleit *Male 2*: 179). The gun does not go limp, it does not stop ejaculating; it outperforms the penis because its penetrative powers (given sufficient ammunition) are far greater both in range and effect.

While the once impotent eunuch strokes his new tank penis, the castle's Baron discovers his wife in bed with one of the tankers and metes out justice: "The Baron's weapon chunked twice more. Lady Miriam flopped over the footboard and lay thrashing on the bare springs, spurting blood from narrow wounds that her clothing did not cover. Individual projectiles from the mob gun had little stopping power, but they bled out a victim's life like so many knife blades" (Drake *Dimension* 240-1). The "mob" gun seems to gang rape the woman, enacting a sexual murder ("thrashing," "flopped," "spurting") complete with the bloody ejaculate we have come to recognize. The wounds are specific—they are narrow, and not covered by her clothing. It's as if the male gun has created a series of vaginas on the woman's body that are then penetrated by metal. Drake continues to gaze on the woman's rape-murdered body: "Lady Miriam's breath whistled, and the bedsprings squeaked beneath her uncontrolled motions" (*Dimension* 241). Her dying body pants, thrashes, even makes the bedsprings squeak, all sexual tropes. The Baron completes the scene when he "fired once more, into the tank lord's groin" (*Dimension* 241). A number of warrior dreams are enjoyed here: the first is the fantasy of warrior penetration (metal in flesh); the second is that the gun (that discharges but remains hard) has multiple orgasms all of which penetrate the woman; the third is that the gun recreates the woman—she now has many "narrow wounds" instead of just one. In one shot the gun creates what was known in Vietnam as a "double veteran" (a soldier who rapes and kills a woman [Enloe 34]). The final fantasy is of castration. To overpower masculinity, a gun must be discharged right at the penis. The potent tank commander is emasculated while the eunuch finds his penis.<sup>4</sup> The result is that "Men are being extended, transformed, reborn through the use of a new technical media. The bomb [or gun] was a new medium, like television; it has become the ultimate medium of change through media: being (re)born without women" (Theweleit "Bomb's Womb" 295).

I have examined why sex occurs in conjunction with guns and killing—but what about love, that apparently courteously antique affair ("he lifted her gently to her feet and pressed her close to him" [Pournelle *Mercenary* 218])? Pournelle and Drake use military heroes to romanticize killing and love. Pournelle writes about "military professionals [who] have built up a specialized knowledge: how to induce men...to fight, aye, and to die" ("Mercenaries"

vii). “Aye” is the key word, a sign that we have left the rational world and have entered the rhetorical company of great warriors, from the pikemen to those who can “stand and be still to the Birkenhead drill.” For Pournelle, military virtue is shown most explicitly when soldiers fight until the last man is dead (“aye, and to die”).<sup>5</sup> The normally pragmatic Glenda Ruth dissolves before the hero’s chivalric masculinity: “What is there about this man that does this to me? He’s handsome enough, broad shoulders and thoroughly military—non-sense. I am damned if I’ll believe in some atavistic compulsion to fall in love with warriors, I don’t care what the anthropologists say” (*Mercenary* 209). Glenda Ruth tries to overcome her attraction for the “military virtues” (Pournelle “Mercenaries” x). She has been taught by rationalists not to fall for the species’ baser desires (“handsome,” “broad shoulders,” “military”), but after a moment, gives in with a sigh. Her protestations are unconvincing, revealing her to be a creation that exists for the express purpose of militarization. Pournelle believes Glenda Ruth is a rounded character: “Obviously, if you can create truly memorable characters, such as John Christian Falkenberg, it will only add to the appeal and success of the book. I would like to think that Falkenberg’s partner and lover, Glenda Ruth Horton, is equally memorable, but I don’t think she’s attained that status yet. To me, she’s just as important as Falkenberg. To my readers, however, she apparently lacks his power and believability” (Elliot 14). Perhaps Glenda Ruth lacks some of Falkenberg’s “power and believability” because she speaks not with her own voice, but with that of a militarized woman reading lines dictated to her by a militarized male author. Theweleit argues that soldier males are not interested in women as people in their own right—they must be constructed in relation to men: “But which man wants to lose a war to possibly win a woman? HE WAR still prefers rubber dolls wrapped up in flags” (“Bomb’s Womb” 288).

In Pournelle’s account, good women understand that war is more important than their desires or emotional lives: “She...laid her hand on his for a brief second. ‘Let’s go tell Governor Silana, John Christian. And let the little girl worry about her own emotions, will you? She knows what she’s doing,’” to which Falkenberg responds: “No, you don’t” (*Mercenary* 205). Glenda Ruth falls for the “atavistic” military alpha male who tells her she doesn’t know her own mind. By her own account she is not a woman, even though she’s been in combat with Falkenberg, but is a “little girl.” The image of the helpless little woman, an infantilized sexual toy, is a persistent and attractive one to a culture of military masculinism. Women may fight, even

kill, but they retain the remnants of sensitivity and nurturing:

“You do care about those villagers, don’t you?” Margritte asked Pritchard unexpectedly.

The captain looked down and found her eyes on him. They were the rich powder-blue of chicory flowers. “You’re probably the only person in the Regiment who thinks that,” he said bitterly. “Except for me. And maybe Colonel Hammer” (Drake *Hammer* 193).

Margritte, announced as usual by her looks, knows that the mercenaries are not rapist predators but white knights in dirty battle dress. She sees Pritchard’s sensitive side and later marries him because of it: Margritte may be a killer, but she remains a real woman.

Military women like Margritte and Glenda Ruth are romantic, sexual creatures, which renders them lesser than the men they fight beside. Gibson observes that “‘Good’ women exist all right; they are women who recognize the power and wonderfulness of the hero. Sometimes they even love him deeply and are ready to make their lives and careers secondary to his. The hero, in turn, may finally be touched by a woman’s loving grace and start to strip off his emotional armor. A ‘deep’ relationship looms. But something always happens to these women” (52). In most stories “these women” are killed, forcing the reluctant hero into violent acts of revenge and murder. In the case of Pournelle and Drake’s stories, such women’s fate is simpler: they disappear. A deep relationship means the character will be dropped from the narrative. Barbara Ehrenreich looks in frustration at the causal loop that links war and gender. She sees that war-defined masculinity relies on a definition of women as secondary, other. She hopes that “Someone...might notice the circular logic linking masculinity and war—that men make war in part because war makes them men—and conclude that men *could* stop” (131). For the circle to break, men would have to *want* to stop. Questioned about his romantic portrayals of war, Pournelle explodes: “If you are trying to tell me that I should not depict realistically the attractions of a properly run military outfit...you’re a fool. Because it can be damned attractive....Are you telling me that I shouldn’t tell people that there *is* a share of glory? It’s a damned attractive life; if it wasn’t why would so many people want it?” (Platt 3). Writers like Pournelle, who construct women in terms of men, would disagree that their writing perpetuates the “circular logic of masculinity and war.” Surely war

needs no advertisements when it is obvious that “there *is* a share of glory” that is “damned attractive.” Pournelle and Drake’s texts are part of a killer culture that creates men and women who see battle not only as an acceptable way of life, but a wholly desirable, valued way of death.

Pournelle and Drake’s stories signify the science fictional beginning of a recovery from Vietnam. The texts are part of what James Gibson identifies as the “New Order,” one where militarism reestablishes masculinity and, by default, femininity. Gibson believes that “The sheer intensity of the violence in these stories tends to make the warrior’s victories look like a definitive restoration of fallen America. It’s as if the end of gunfire must mean something good” (31). Gunfire signifies male ejaculation that strengthens the man, penetrates and feminizes the other, exposing its female interior. Gunfire may also lead to the recreation of a prelapsarian state. Pournelle admires great male commanders “who can lead men to Hell,” but also “might lead them to Paradise” (“Mercenaries” xi). The texts reveal a Manichean culture, hostile to anything other than Hell or Paradise (the former will presumably be stocked with castrated men, civilians, and women; the latter with men holding guns).

The path to Paradise is one of romance. Falkenberg, dizzy at the prospect of peace, says: “I’ve got a girl. A soldier’s girl, and I’m going to marry her. She’s leader of most of the rebel army,” to which his brother officer responds, “Marry the queen and become king, uh?” (Pournelle *Mercenary* 222). Pournelle’s Paradise bears a lot of resemblance to a fairy tale:

“King John I. What kind of government will you set up, anyway?”

“Hadn’t thought. Myths change. Maybe people are ready for monarchy again at that. We’ll think of something, Glenda Ruth and I” (Pournelle *Mercenary* 223).

Glenda Ruth is allowed into the corridors of power as long as they exist in the court of a fairy-tale castle (recall her “heart-shaped face and large green eyes, and her weathered tan might have been envied by the great ladies of the CoDominium” [*Mercenary* 164]). Remarkably, Drake comes to the same political conclusion. Colonel Hammer joins the powerful daughter of a local lord. She is no fool, as her body reveals:

Anneke Tromp touched him. Her glittering fingernails lay like knife-blades across the back of his hand. “We’re going to

put it in order," she said.

"We'll see," said Danny Pritchard" (Drake *Hammer* 274).

It's not clear what exactly "putting it in order" means to the wolfish Anneke Tromp, her nails like claws, but it certainly doesn't imply a democratic republic. Her gestures indicate her power and place (she knows the back of Hammer's hand), and threaten those who underestimate her:

Anneke Tromp extended her right hand. She had fine bones and skin as soft as the lining of a jewelry box. The fingernails looked metallic.

The Colonel knelt to kiss her hand, the gesture stiffened by his armor. "Well, Lady Tromp," he said, "are you ready?"

The woman smiled. Hammer became the commander again (Drake *Hammer* 271).

The woman is allowed to be powerful in a soft way ("the lining of a jewelry box"). She is the male interior reified. Her nails, apparently her most striking feature, are like sharpened steel—are they castrating? Hammer, who wears not only the male armor of the self against the interior female self, but actual physical armor that "stiffen[s]" him, submits to the Lady. Only when he has submitted and she has smiled, does he regain his masculinity and "become the commander again." Hammer's armor leads us into the next narrative about royalty (one picked up in 1977 by George Lucas's *Star Wars* texts), where the women graduate to the role of queen. Once the queens enter the texts as central characters, the stories are over. The narrative of restored masculinity has been successfully played out, and now it is time for a repeat performance with new actors and scenery (but no alteration in plot). The curtains are drawn when the mercenary becomes governor because "Victory over an enemy, any enemy, substitutes for the effort to establish a better society. Rambo and all his friends are fighting a death-filled holding action, and making that fight seem like the best of all possible worlds. It is truly a dark, tragic vision. Social stagnation masquerades as restoration and social progress. Psychological regression wears an armored suit of maturity. Undeveloped and emotionally dead personalities appear as the height of individualism. An aesthetic of sexual violence is presented as realism" (Gibson 117).

Since Pournelle and Drake's texts were published, the market for military science fiction has exploded. Some of the most popular and prolific

authors write military science fiction familiar to Pournelle and Drake's fans (such authors and texts include Lois McMaster Bujold's Vorkosigan books, David Feintuch's Seafort series, Robert Frezza's Vereshchagin books, Harry Turtledove's alternate war series, David Weber's Harrington books, and Drake and S. M. Stirling's collaborations). Whether about men or women in combat on the ground or in the navy, all valorize the military, all conclude the future is military, all understand successful military cultures to be masculine, all reinforce the current conservative, anti-feminist construction of the masculine. What we are telling ourselves with these stories, conservative, liberal or libertarian, is that the military makes people into better people while it solves current political and social chaos (usually created by misguided or willfully evil civilian politicians). The military, these texts inform us, not only acts for the good of others, but for the culture as a whole. Pournelle and Drake's books begin the process of naturalizing the military. They include gender in order to effect a remasculinization process that perpetrates acceptance of violence and war as masculine, necessary, and healthy. These are hot texts: hot for guns, hot for sex, hot for chivalry, but most of all, hot for war, war, and more war.

#### Notes

1. Pournelle is explicit that "the republic of South Viet Nam fell to an invasion—and was defeated by the Congress of the United States, which deliberately refused to allow the President to enforce the Geneva accords.... We tried to defeat hornets by swatting them hornet [sic] at a time; a tactic that cannot possibly work. You must either burn the nest or retire behind window screens....[It] may be that a rampdown invasion of North Viet Nam was politically undesirable; but certainly there would have been no great difficulty in building a barrier from the Mekong to the Sea" (*There Will Be War* 258).
2. Pournelle likes this formulation. He has borrowed it here from his earlier novel *The Mercenary* where the hero notes "war is the normal state of affairs, isn't it? Peace is the name of the ideal we deduce from the fact that there have been interludes between wars" (70).
3. The idea of the "beautiful soul" is Hegel's, but Jean Bethke Elshtain applies it to women at war very effectively (4).
4. Castration is a recurrent issue for Drake, who writes about a killing Margritte executes: "Margritte swung her weapon like a flail into a triple splash of red. Helmuth died with only a reflexive jerk, but Lanschein's speed came near to bringing his launcher to bear on Margritte. The stream of flechettes sawed across his throat. His torso dropped, headless, but still clutching his weapon" (Drake *Hammer* 159). The headless corpse, the "reflexive jerk" do some of the same sexual work that the Baron's killings do. The difference is that the latter gives the male gaze a leisurely look at its object.
5. Pournelle cites the case of heroic Calvaries like Camerone, a battle fought on 30 April 1863 by the French Foreign Legion in Mexico, where all but two Legionnaires were killed, and even those two never surrendered (*Mercenary* 82).

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