“Fat Man Walking”: Masculinity and Racial Geographies in James Mangold’s *Copland*

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In *Hard Bodies*, Susan Jeffords argues that the Reagan era was characterized by an uncommonly close link between the Presidency and the narratives, stars, and iconography of Hollywood film. The action film, with its polarized moral universe and individualist “hard bodied” male hero, was the genre that most appropriately dramatized the bellicose nationalism of the Reagan regime. If a chain of phantasmatic connections between the Presidency, masculinity, and national identity must be renegotiated with each new head of state, Jeffords predicted in 1994 that “it is highly likely that [Clinton’s] administration, like those before him, will contribute to yet another redefinition of the masculine, which will be seen in Hollywood films of the next few years, and that his administration and those films will propose yet another phase in the extended narrative of ‘American Identity.’” In keeping with Jeffords’s prognosis, the Clinton White House has not only utilized the rhetoric and imagery of Hollywood cinema, but the Clintons themselves were the subjects of Mike Nichols’s 1997 film *Primary Colors*, a thinly-fictionalized narrative about the Presidential campaign of 1992. A far cry from the hard bodies of the Reagan Revolution, *Primary Colors* stars John Travolta as a charismatic Presidential candidate with a decidedly soft body, a man who eats Krispy Kreme donuts and barbecued ribs, cries in public, and regularly assaults “family values” by committing various acts of marital infidelity. The virtuous, militaristic hard body of the Reagan and Bush eras, *Primary Colors* suggests, has become a squeezably soft body, a body that eats and emits, whose boundaries open capaciousely onto the surrounding world. In the spirit of Nichols’s filmic depiction, Linda Kauffman remarks that the Clinton campaign was characterized by orality: “the media compiled a montage of him on the campaign trail scarfing down hamburgers, ice cream, hot dogs, etc. all over America. Washingtonians considered posting signs along the inauguration parade route: ‘Please don’t feed the President.’” With electoral victories in 1992 and 1996, this fleshy Presidential corpus promised to usher in widespread policy changes by replacing antagonistic foreign policy with partnership and cooperation,
and attending to domestic concerns such as civil rights, the environment, public education, and health care.

If *Primary Colors* takes the Presidency as its subject matter, its promotion of a gentler and more physically expansive masculinity is not unique, for a host of Hollywood films of the Clinton Era have featured less conventionally manly stars that challenge the primacy of the hard-bodied action hero. But this shift is nowhere more dramatically emphasized than in the vertiginous transformation of Sylvester Stallone, the crown prince of action cinema, into the stoop shoulders, paunchy Freddy Heflin in James Mangold's 1997 *Copland*. “Copland” is the moniker for the suburb of Garrison, New Jersey, populated almost entirely by NYPD officers and their families, who have used mob connections to buy homes outside of the district they patrol. Freddy is the shy, gentle sheriff of Garrison who longs to be a member of the NYPD but is barred from the force by a disability, a hearing loss incurred when, as a teenager, he saved a girl (Liz Randone, played by Annabella Sciorra) whose car had plunged into the river. Since the accident, Freddy has harbored an unrequited love for Liz despite the fact that she is married to young, handsome NYPD officer, Joey Randone (Peter Berg).

The extensive media coverage surrounding the release of *Copland* touted the film as a harbinger of new cinematic hybrids and new forms of masculinity, both of which were linked to Stallone’s widely-publicized weight gain. The star’s expanded waistline was viewed as evidence of his commitment to a more serious acting career, a claim advanced by the film’s lineup of such heavy-hitting co-stars as Harvey Keitel, Ray Liotta, and Robert DeNiro. If this constellation of stars was seen as a long-awaited fusion of action and drama, the meeting of film and politics was confirmed when Stallone visited with Bill Clinton at the White House, where the two men “talked seriously about weight loss and gain . . . They agreed—it ain’t easy to be lean.” With this weighty summit, the former action hero joined the President in the feminized terrain of public dieting alongside such luminaries as Oprah Winfrey, Rosanne Barr, and Elizabeth Taylor.

What remained unacknowledged in the furor over Stallone’s new body image was the link between *Copland’s* racialized landscape and the racial politics of the current Presidency. From the beginning, the Clinton White House announced a concern with race-based economic and social inequalities, and the generation of a national dialogue on race. The President’s ties to various African-American communities have been solidified by long-standing, publicly visible bi-racial friendships. Nonetheless, the Clinton Presidency has witnessed highly pub-
licized incidents of racially-motivated police brutality, as well as the voter-mandated defeat of Affirmative Action at the state level in California and Washington. Despite the witty observation of comedian Chris Rock (echoed by Toni Morrison) that “Clinton is our first black president,” the Presidential body, whether lean or paunchy, has also always been a white body. The new, more generous masculinity is no more capable, it seems, of generating a solution to the nation’s ongoing racial unrest, than was the hard body of the Reagan and Bush eras. Likewise, the soft bodies of Copland are unmistakably marked as white: if these cops are less vigilant about their own corporeal boundaries, they exhibit a hysterical insistence on maintaining the racial boundaries of the place where they make their homes. The NYPD corruption exposed during the course of the film stems from a desire to demarcate a territory where the white family values of the Reagan era can be preserved. Since these cops work in an environment where they perceive their bodies as ever vulnerable to assault, domestic space is the final frontier where the besieged white male can assert his privilege and authority. In Copland, the ironic relationship between the corporeal and geographical politics of the Clinton Presidency is revealed, for the film dramatizes the strenuous effort of the fleshy white male body to protect its terrain from the stain of racial difference, a dynamic that is figured spatially as the relation between suburb and city.

Stallone’s Two Bodies

In Copland, the spatialization of racial relations marked out in the distance between city and suburbs is intimately linked to the film’s concern with mapping the geography of an expansive white male body. By a “geography of the body” I mean that the camera approaches the male physique topographically, tilting slowly from head to foot and pausing on certain key features: gently protruding bellies, clumsy feet, spreading rear ends, sweaty faces. The signs of an untended body, these features contrast dramatically with the action film’s conventional topography of the male form, which has been described by Paul Smith in his discussion of the Don Siegel/Clint Eastwood films:

‘under-the-chin shots,’ where the heroized male figure, shot most often from the waist up, seems to loom above the spectator’s eyeline; heavily backlit shots, in which either the details of the hero’s whole body or his face are more or less obscured while the general shape is in silhouette; a preponderance of facial close-ups, in which the actor’s gaze is directed
These kinds of shots, which monumentalize the hero’s body and his actions, are almost entirely absent from Copland, in which the camera zooms in on the swelling guts and rounded backsides of protagonists who are depicted not as idealized, statuesque figures but as appropriately proportioned to their very average surroundings.

The men of Copland are frequently in the bathroom; they eat cereal, drink coffee in convenience stores, vomit, swill beer, sniff cocaine, and bleed. Unlike the action film’s fetishization of the hero’s exquisitely muscled, bare chest, these men are always fully clothed in garments that conceal, rather than accentuate, the male form. Close-ups provide intimate views of ordinary men of different ages, not the smooth, chiseled visage of the action hero. As Mangold put it, “I wanted to shoot a close-up of [Stallone’s] face and feel Lays potato chips, feel McDonald’s. I wanted to feel a normal American face.” With Stallone—grown weighty, disabled, vulnerable—as its star, it is impossible not to view Copland as a commentary on the action genre; the fleshy body of its star is haunted by the specters of Rocky Balboa, John Rambo, and Judge Dredd. The ghostly presence of these more manly heroes serves as a reminder that within the Hollywood system, the star cannot play a role without the invocation of past roles, sutured to the iconography and legendry built up around the media creation that is “Sylvester Stallone.” If you are what you eat, then linking “Stallone” to Lays and McDonald’s heralds the metamorphosis of the heroic outsider he so frequently plays into the embodiment of America’s fast-food consumer culture. As one reviewer put it, Stallone in Copland “looks like a normal American male in his middle years whose main physical activity is eating doughnuts while driving.”

In the figure of Freddy Heflin, Mangold contaminates the steely, impermeable body of the action hero. Stallone plays the retiring, stoop-shouldered Heflin with uncharacteristic restraint. His distance from the heroics of the action genre is highlighted near the beginning of the film, which finds Heflin drunk in the local Four Aces Tavern playing a video game called “Lethal Weapon.” Distracted by a conversation between NYPD officers Figs (Ray Liotta) and Berta (Edie Falco) at a nearby table, Freddy’s mind wanders from the game and his man is destroyed. As the image of the video screen flashing, “GAME OVER” fills the film screen, it is clear that the action genre has been reduced to the status of a game in a seedy bar, and that its former king has become such a loser that he cannot even play it with
skill. Rather than preventing crime, the Sheriff stumbles into the parking lot to raid a parking meter for more quarters; as the coins spill out onto the gravel of the dark parking lot he fumbles for them on the ground and the camera lingers on his feet, which appear white and vulnerable in a pair of worn rubber thongs. This downward shot is the obverse of the glorifying "under-the-chin" shot of the action film for it is the gaze of a hanging head with eyes trained on the ground.

According to Mangold, a shot of Freddy rolling over in bed to expose his protruding, naked gut caused such an uproar in preview audiences conditioned to seeing the star as a chiseled hard body that it had to be cut from the final version: "It became a moment that wasn't about the movie, it was about a superstar gaining weight." Despite the omission of this sequence, a viewing experience that is entirely "about the movie" is a virtual impossibility in a film so dominated by star personae that must inevitably exceed its narrative frame. As Graeme Turner puts it, "the star in a film has a signifying function which may be separate or different from the written character within the film script." The response of preview audiences is evidence that Freddy is shadowed by the complex of meanings that are sutured to the celebrity persona of "Stallone."

While never overtly mentioning Freddy's girth, the film nonetheless works in numerous ways to draw attention to his heavy-set, cumbersome physique: if the body of action cinema is the vehicle for extreme acts of physical heroism, the body of _Copland_ is an obstacle to performing everyday activities with dignity. The bulk of this figure speaks not the iron solidity of countless hours at the gym, but an inattention that has allowed it to grow soft and slack. In uniform, Freddy's belly bulges beneath his shirt; his pants, which are too short and tight, accentuate the curves of his rear and his shambling gait. When off the job, he dresses in thongs and an untucked T-shirt that makes his stomach appear even larger. In an early sequence, the camera slowly tilts down his body to rest for a moment on his protruding midsection. Freddy's weighty vulnerability is particularly apparent in a scene in which he dozes on his couch wearing his rumpled sheriff's uniform, his mouth open, cheek pressed against the pillows at an odd angle. In keeping with his general softness, for most of the film Freddy is almost completely bereft of the phallic iconography of guns and nightsticks that are carried by the NYPD cops. Like the Clinton Presidency, Freddy polices his world with friendly diplomacy rather than brute force.

Freddy's is not the only male body in Garrison that bulges and curves. Officers Ray Donlan (Harvey Keitel) and Figs, and IAB
(Internal Affairs Bureau) investigator Moe Tilden (Robert DeNiro), are each represented in ways that emphasize the fleshly accumulation of middle age. Donlan is most commonly dressed in unflattering, pallid suits of matching leisure wear that range in color from gray to powder blue. Tilden, who sports the bad haircut and thin mustache of a used car salesman, has a small but protuberant gut, and Figs’s meaty, unkempt appearance is exacerbated by an oversized shirt, habitually worn untucked. In one sequence, Tilden’s authority as head of the IAB is undercut by the fact that he is eating an overstuffed deli sandwich as he talks to Freddy about the investigation. As mayonnaise drips onto his files he demands a napkin, and finally wipes his fingers and soiled mustache with a wad of Kleenex tissues pulled from a box on his desk. If these male bodies tend towards excess, the cast of Copland does include two young, firm, and conventionally handsome male stars, Peter Berg and Michael Rappaport. However, the film does nothing to situate the male body as an object of erotic interest. The well-toned Joey Randone—whose muscular physique is revealed when, wearing only his underclothes, he is locked out of the house by his wife Liz during a fight over his infidelity—plunges to his death from a rooftop. Limp and unmanned as a rag doll, we last see Randone with arms and legs twisted at awkward angles as a pool of blood spreads around him. The purportedly heroic young cop nicknamed Superboy (Rappaport) is so often hysterical that it would be difficult to characterize him as either manly or attractive.

In keeping with its refusal to fetishize the male body, Copland is almost entirely devoid of erotic content. The one romantic sequence in the film is a tender, but decidedly unsexy encounter between Liz and Freddy. After Joey fails to come home on the night they are supposed to have “a big talk,” Liz shows up at Freddy’s house. They sit on the couch together, talk about the past, embrace, and then shyly begin to kiss each other, their bodies far apart. After a moment she breaks away, saying, “This is crazy.” The next shot decisively ends the encounter by cutting to Liz walking out to her parked car. We may conclude that Freddy is a good natured loser in love as well as work. Other relations between men and women are charged with conflict, not eroticism. Figs’s girlfriend Monica (Mel Gorham) is more concerned with ensuring her regular doses of methadone than going to bed, Joey and Liz fight during the rare time they spend together, Rose (Cathy Moriarty) discusses her affair with Joey in terms of garbage and soiled sheets, and her marriage to Ray seems to be devoid of sex. In short, the all-white inhabitants of Copland are a decidedly unerotic, sterile bunch. Whiteness, as it is figured here, is simply not sexy, and a community
as homogenous and exclusionary as Garrison, NJ can provide little in the way of erotic pleasures for or between its inhabitants.

Accordingly, the ordinary, sagging bodies of the men in Copland not only revise the hard masculinity of the action hero, but offer a commentary on his whiteness, for the hard body is invariably a white body. As Richard Dyer points out, the work of bodybuilding that produces the action hero has been a traditionally white activity, and its aesthetic is rooted in classic Greco-Roman ideals. The built body, with its sharply defined muscles and attention to proportion, aspires to look like a statue, invulnerable to and independent of any reliance on the surrounding world. Dyer writes of the Rambo films, “the built white body is not the body that white men are born with; it is the body made possible by their natural mental superiority. The point after all is that it is built, a product of the application of thought and planning, and achievement. It is this sense of the mind at work behind the production of this body that most defines its whiteness.”

If the hard white body is the product of carefully managed, sustained labor, the flabby white body is created by the thoughtless ingestion of beer, bar food, convenience store snacks, and greasy deli sandwiches that characterize the consumptive habits of the men in Copland. Their white bodies are not hard nor impermeable to the populations they police; they are not bodies that inspire confidence or bespeak the superiority over all that is non-white, as does the figure of the action film hero. It is precisely the vulnerability of these white bodies, the sense that they are victimized and open to invasion, that is reterritorialized geographically in the space of their community, which must be protected at all costs from contamination by outsiders.

The primacy of the white male body is threatened not only by its expanding boundaries, but by the disability of the man whose job it is to police the domain of family and domesticity. Freddy’s hearing loss gives him an air of stupidity, as it causes him to speak in a slow, atonal voice and frequently ask people to repeat themselves, cocking his head to the side while gesturing vaguely towards his ear. His deafness is a deliberate deviation from the masochistic wounding that is a hallmark of the action hero, whose physical damage is always visible on the surface of the body, but without permanent disabling consequences. In the formulaic iconography of the action genre, the superficial wound is a necessary component of the dramatic conflict that precedes the protagonist’s climactic mastery over his opponents. In contrast, Freddy bears the burden of a lifelong disability that is not visibly apparent. His deafness is the trace of past heroism, but it is also the obstacle to a more manly position on the NYPD. The action hero’s capacity to endure extreme physical pain is here transformed
into the more muted form of bravery required to face persistent difficulties of communication and exclusion from the career he most desires. Freddy's deafness was brought about through violent contact with a window. Accordingly, windows are a recurrent visual motif in the film to indicate his ability to look at, but not make contact with, his surroundings. A hidden disability, deafness is figured visually in the film as the panes of glass that allow Freddy to see, but not hear, the citizens of Garrison.

After Superboy feigns death to escape accountability for an incident of racial violence (which I will discuss in greater detail below), Freddy glimpses him peering out of the back window of Donlan's car, wearing a bandage identical to the one on Freddy's face as a result of his own minor car crash the night before. Separated by a window, Freddy glimpses his ego-ideal, the manly, active, heroic self that he might have been if the accident had never happened. Throughout much of the film, Freddy looks out of the windows of the Sheriff's office at the activities of the officers in town. When Moe Tilden expresses his concern that "half the men I watch live beyond that bridge—where no one is watching," Freddy responds calmly, "I'm watching." This is not a gaze in which the power of vision is connected to mastery; nor is it voyeuristic, for Freddy receives no apparent pleasure from watching others. Rather, the window, like Freddy's deafness, signifies an impotent kind of looking; a boundary between insiders and outsiders, the window offers the illusion of transparency while in fact operating as a firm, and very real, barrier. In the final sequence, Freddy's newfound willingness to take action is accompanied by the literal shattering of the picture window of Ray Donlan's idyllic suburban home, broken by the exchange of gunfire between Freddy and the corrupt NYPD.

One of the most noteworthy scenes in *Copland* involves the use of subjective sound to recreate the alienating experience of deafness. Just before the climactic showdown between Freddy and Donlan, Freddy is completely deafened by a gunshot next to his good ear. After being painfully assaulted by Rucker (Robert Patrick) and Lagonda (Arthur J. Nascarella) in the parking lot of the police station, Freddy staggers to his feet to pursue the corrupt pair, who have kidnapped Superboy and intend to take him to Donlan's house, where eventually they will murder him. As Freddy staggers up the hill bleeding profusely through his ear, we see—and hear—the world through his perspective. The ordinariness of Garrison is transformed by the absence of sound (which is not really an absence but a dizzying series of hums and whooshes) into an uncanny suburban landscape: a dog barks silently from behind a gate, men shout, and finally, after Freddy has delivered a lethal
wound to Ray, who curses at him, he replies with finality, "I can't hear you Ray." Subjective sound allows the audience to understand that Freddy's bravery is derived not from macho aggression, but impotence; his inability to hear makes him unaware of how much danger he is in. These are not dramatic gestures of bravery but acts enabled by the ignorance wrought from sensory deprivation. In contrast to the more traditionally chivalric rescue of a drowning woman, a different kind of masculine heroism and a different kind of male body must be mobilized against the covert corruption of the inhabitants of Copland. This heroism does not involve feats of extreme strength or agility, but rather patience, endurance, and, in the end, a touch of stupidity.  

Racial Geographies, or, The Bridge to The Twenty-first Century May Be A Toll Bridge

The media's fixation on Stallone's expansive waistline and muted performance tended to eclipse the fact that Copland is a film intent on mapping the dynamics of spatial/racial segregation, and specifically the problem of law enforcement officers who separate their private lives from the constituencies they are meant to serve. The white male body, grown ordinary, paunchy, unregulated, must thus be conceived in relation to the film's depiction of spatial politics, in which the whiteness of the suburb defines itself against the messy racial heterogeneity of the city, a concern Mangold linked to the demographic circumstances of his own youth:

I grew up in the Hudson Valley of New York where a lot of cops and firemen from New York City had bought one-acre plots. It was during the seventies, when there was this 'white flight' from the city. Many friends I went to school with were children of civil servants in New York City, so I was exposed to a lot of this anger about the Brooklyn and Queens neighborhoods that had changed—gone ethnic—and the city that had betrayed them—gone liberal—and how these changes had caused them to set out and make a new home for themselves and their families.  

The conservative, middle-class white men of Mangold's childhood have become the citizens of Copland, who view the city as a polluted space populated by degenerate non-white inhabitants. Panicked at the possibility that the city's deviance might contaminate their private lives, they have attempted to erect a barricade between the non-white communities where they work and the communities where they buy houses and raise families. While initially the film underscores the differences between suburb and city, ultimately it reveals that the suburb is shot
through with the corruption and hypocrisy that at first seemed the provenance only of the city. As the fleshy white male body opens to and merges with its surroundings, so does the white suburb emerge as a space that cannot remain segregated from the outside world on which it depends.

Set in New York and New Jersey, *Copland* draws from the ethics and aesthetics of the Western, which are intimately linked to geography insofar as conflicts between good and evil are typically figured as conflicts between frontier and civilization. According to Mangold, “as I would tell people about this odd population of my home town, it always occurred to me that there were certain parallels with the issues of the frontier and the Old West. A new land, a fresh start for some gun-toting men and their families, a sense of community—being with others of like minds and similar anger—and a uniting fear of what they had escaped catching up with them.”

Copland deliberately undermines this fantasy by revealing that the moral polarities implied by the distinction between frontier and city are never as clear-cut as they first appear. The desire for geographical borders stems in part from the fearful knowledge that those borders are always vulnerable to infiltration.

In *Copland*, where the spatial iconography of the Western is transposed onto the urban geography of New York and New Jersey, the polarity between city and suburb is introduced through a chain of related binary oppositions between man and woman, public and private, work space and domestic space, white and non-white, morality and degeneracy. A voice-over at the beginning of the film explains that although the NYPD are legally mandated to live within the jurisdiction they police, a loophole enabled some officers to buy property and establish a suburban community outside of New York City by having themselves declared employees of the transit division. Garrison, NJ is a quiet suburb of comfortable, middle-class houses with clipped lawns, clean streets, and a small business district. The officers who live there are all married white men whose wives appear not to work or perform any other meaningful function within the community besides caring for the home. In this, the film depicts the gendered division of labor more commonly associated with suburban living of the post-World War II era than with the more typical two-career family of the 1990s.

A postwar social order free of the racial and gender conflicts that would plague later decades is the imaginary past evoked by the family values of the hard-bodied Reagan era. The social structure of Garrison reflects the nostalgia of its male inhabitants for an age when America was whiter, manhood more clearly defined, and moral dilemmas more easily resolved.
The idyllic peace of Garrison presents a distinct contrast to the messy corruption of Manhattan, where the officers work. New York, as it is depicted in the film, is a space of dangerous racial diversity, where violent crime is rampant and police officers risk their lives on the job. There are only two sequences that follow the officers into the city: in the first they attend a bachelor party at a sleazy bar where they drink and flirt with scantily-clad women; in the second two officers are killed on the job as they pursue a menacing black criminal. The latter scene is particularly significant, as it takes place in a housing project where black criminality is linked to the squalid, anonymous architecture of the inner city. Writing of the racial dimension of urban landscapes, David Theo Goldberg observes that housing projects “present a generic image without identity: the place of crime; of social disorder, dirt and disease; of teenage pregnancy, prostitution, pimps and drug dependency; workless and shiftless, disciplined internally, if at all, only by social welfare workers. The marginal are centralized in this faceless space, peripheral at the social center.”

Unlike earlier models of urban development, the postwar American city consolidates poverty at its core, surrounded by an affluent suburban periphery accessible only by car. The degeneracy of the inner city is encapsulated structurally by the unavoidable, looming presence of the housing project. Yet, ironically, it is not the black male criminal emerging out of those projects who allows Randone to plunge to his death from a rooftop, but one of his fellow officers, Ray Donlan. This sequence belies the figuration of the suburbs as a site of moral and geographical purity set apart from the corruption of the inner city. As the film continues, and the hypocrisy of the Garrison NYPD contingent is gradually revealed, the qualitative difference between the two spaces becomes increasingly difficult to maintain.

The distance between suburb and city is spanned by the George Washington Bridge, and the camera returns to it repeatedly to indicate that these distinct places are both separated from and inextricably linked to one another, for the quiet prosperity of Garrison depends on the corruption of Manhattan to provide a livelihood for its inhabitants. Bridges are structures that enable movement between spaces that would otherwise be inaccessible to one another. As such, they are an architectural reminder of the connection between and the separation of the land mass on either side. In Copland the bridge is a crucial visual motif, a shorthand to describe an urban geography where suburbs are removed from, but reliant upon, the city against which they are defined. At the same time, Copland demonstrates that although bridges appear to be equalizing structures that link one space to another, they may also create a hierarchical relationship between the places that they
Passage across the George Washington Bridge is restricted, for the white inhabitants of Garrison, NJ have the privilege of moving back and forth from city to suburb while the racially mixed populations of Manhattan are prevented from leaving the city, if not by law, by the strong-arm tactics of its enforcers. As Rucker tells newcomer Garrison Deputy Cindy Betts (Jeanine Garofalo) when she pulls him over for speeding, "The problem with this town ain't the people who live here, honey ... it's the element that visits." In keeping with this mentality, the officers do what they can to ensure that their town is free from the racial taint of the city. For example, Freddy looks on complacently as his Deputy, Bill, gives a ticket to a black couple parked under the bridge to watch the sunset. As they protest loudly, he stares off into space, day dreaming about the past, a detachment that implies that such efforts to drive "the element that visits" from Garrison are commonplace.

Since the bridge functions as a metaphorical as well as a literal signifier of racial division, it is fitting that the racial incident that propels the narrative forward takes place as Superboy—a young cop lauded for saving three black babies from a burning building—crosses from New York to New Jersey. Leaving a bachelor party drunk, Superboy is approaching the bridge on-ramp when his car is side-swiped by two black male teenagers out for a joyride. Furious, Superboy pulls up alongside the swerving car and waves his NYPD badge at the boys, instructing them to pull over. Instead of obeying his command, they laugh and one of them brandishes an object that looks like a gun. Superboy, who has unwittingly driven over a bottle on his way out of the parking lot, mistakes the sound of his exploding tire for gunfire and shoots wildly at the boys in the car, killing them both. When Donlan, his uncle, arrives on the scene accompanied by Rucker, they discover that what appeared to be a firearm was in fact a steering wheel lock. To save Superboy from a criminal investigation, they try to frame the teenagers by planting a gun and drugs in the car. As Superboy panics, Detective Crasky (John Spencer) reassures him by detailing the worthlessness of the boys he has murdered: "You fucked up and you wasted a pair of shitbags who aren't worth the hair in the crack of your ass. So cool it with the patty cake morality." Their attempt to plant evidence on the dead boys is muddled, however, when they are observed by a black and a hispanic medic who have arrived on the scene, and a fistfight ensues. The conflict is interrupted by Donlan’s frantic cry that Superboy, distraught over the accident, has jumped from the bridge. The bridge is thus a borderline where the racism of white cops comes to a fatal crisis. Despite the fact that he has saved black babies in the past, Superboy’s assumptions about
blackness are exposed in his immediate perception that the object the teenagers were holding was a gun. In their willingness to plant false evidence on the boys, Donlan and Rucker reveal their belief that the stereotype of drug dealing, gun toting young black men will easily substitute for any significant investigation of the incident. The tension that erupts between white cops and the black and hispanic medics, interrupted by Superboy’s timely leap, pits evidence against such stereotypes.

The film cuts from this fatal incident to a shot of a melancholic Freddy, who watches the sounds and lights on the bridge from the dark banks of the Garrison side of the Hudson. Driving home, Freddy’s mind wanders and he is surprised to see a stag in the road directly in front of the car. He swerves to avoid hitting it, and the Sheriff’s car plunges into the underbrush. As I have argued, the parallelism between Freddy’s accident and Superboy’s establishes a connection between the two white men, one of whom is young, handsome, and full of potential, the other middle-aged, paunchy, and disabled. This parallelism also points to Freddy’s ambivalent relationship towards the bridge: as a white man and a sheriff, he shares the privilege to cross back and forth with Superboy and the other NYPD officers; as a disabled person, as he is constantly reminded by the officers who live in Garrison, he is not man enough for the city. In this, Freddy serves as a foil against which the NYPD officers test their own masculinity: while only white persons may inhabit Garrison, only real men may pass back and forth between city and suburb. As Sheriff, Freddy is responsible for situations such as breaking up a fight between neighborhood boys, returning a stuffed animal that dropped into the street after it was accidentally left on the roof of a mini-van, and investigating the inappropriate dumping of neighborhood garbage. When Donlan finds Freddy leaving his house after questioning his wife about the mismanagement of her trash bags, he responds condescendingly, “Oh, a felony.” This is one of many instances in which the NYPD officers dismiss Freddy and the work that he does to police Garrison. Ironically, the city that they seek to avoid in their private lives also produces the labor that defines their masculinity; unable to perform that labor, Freddy is merely “a boy” who stares passively and longingly at the lights across the water that illuminate the place where he too could assert his manhood.

Despite Donlan’s implication that Freddy’s labor is less valid because the crimes he deals with are less serious, each of the incidents described above is linked to a moral, if not a legal, infraction: the conflict between the boys involves the cruel scapegoating of one member of the group, the stuffed animal has been abandoned by Liz Randone, who is herself abandoned and emotionally abused by her
husband Joey, and the garbage has been dumped in front of the Randone household by Rose Donlan, who is sleeping with Joey, and tells Freddy curtly, “This is not a law problem . . . you tell Joey Randone that if he doesn’t like my garbage he should stop soiling my sheets.” Yet Copland reveals that, more than isolated personal conflicts, these incidents are in fact linked to more pervasive “law problems” and that those problems are tied to the town’s spatial politics.

As I have suggested, one of the most persistent of these problems is the racism of Garrison, NJ. Not only do its inhabitants police the town’s borders to remove unwelcome (non-white) elements, but their everyday language is replete with racist commentary. Copland opens with a conversation between Figs and the only female NYPD cop in the film, Berta. Over beer in the local bar, Berta recalls an incident involving an Armenian who sent a suspicious box to his lover. When cautiously opened by the Bomb Squad, the box contained not an explosive device but a goat’s head. This, she explains, is because the Armenian comes from “a backward culture.” Denigration of the “backward” constituency she serves is a strategy for the female cop to incorporate herself into the masculinist culture of the NYPD. Figs’s own girlfriend, Monica, is a Puerto Rican heroine addict, who he is forced to defend one night in a bar when Rucker taunts him, “Least I’m not shacking up with no ‘Rican whore . . . you’re supposed to fuck ‘em, Gary, not open a methadone clinic.”

It is no accident that Figs is criticized for “shacking up” with a Puerto Rican woman, for while the male inhabitants of Garrison seem to have no qualms about non-conjugal fucking, when non-white bodies invade the sanctity of domestic space they are perceived as threatening. In fact, the ethos of Garrison is premised on keeping Armenians, Puerto Ricans, African Americans, and other people of color out of its city limits. As Ray Donlan explains to Freddy: “I invited men—cops—good men to live here—in this town. And these men—to make a living—they cross that bridge every day—to a place where everything is upside down—where the cop is the perp and the perp is the victim. But they play by the rules . . . The only thing they ever did was get their families out—before it got to them. We built homes—across the river—we made a place where things make sense and you can walk across the street—without fear.” Donlan’s logic transforms the white male into a victim and Garrison into a sheltered space where patriarchy can be preserved in the face of a rapidly changing world where “everything is upside down.” In the world upside-down, white police officers become “perps,” held accountable for violence against people of color. Those who were once seen as
aggressors simply by virtue of their appearance may now claim to be victims of police brutality. Donlan’s sense that he has founded a community apart, outside of time and governed by its own moral codes, is revealed by his sarcastic comment to Moe Tilden, the IAB officer who arrives to investigate Superboy’s death, “What are we—like the Amish, now?” Beneath his derisive tone is a more deeply felt conviction, for in this figuration besieged white manhood becomes an ethnicity with practices and beliefs of its own. As a group “like the Amish,” the citizens of Garrison legitimate their separatist politics through the perception that they are a persecuted minority.28

Despite the desire to live “like the Amish,” severing all ties with the surrounding world, Garrison cannot escape the ubiquitous presence of the media, which surfaces as a persistent barrage of TV news coverage, radio reports, and newspaper articles. Scenes are frequently linked by sound bridges in which the voices of reporters provide updates on the Superboy incident. Television brings the protests of black community leaders over the murder of the two boys into the Four Aces Tavern where the white cops gather to unwind or drink a beer before work. With shouts of disdain, the drinkers attempt to drown out the voices of resistance who claim that Superboy’s death has drawn public attention away from the real crime, the shooting of two innocent teenagers. Thus, although the officers believe in the bridge as an architectural structure that can separate them from the city that they police, the media, which refuses such geographical boundaries, pervades Garrison, bringing news of corruption and conflict into its homes and places of business.

Gradually the film reveals that Garrison itself is built on corrupt foundations, for Donlan has used his mob connections to secure real estate deals for his NYPD cronies. Moreover, the community is haunted by a similar, racially-charged incident that occurred two years earlier when Officer Glen Tunney shot a black boy holding a water gun, which he mistook for a real weapon. Before his case could be heard by a Grand Jury, Tunney mysteriously committed suicide in his jail cell, and his death is implicitly attributed to Donlan. Donlan’s ruthlessness becomes apparent as the investigation into Superboy’s disappearance proceeds and no body emerges. Aware that the discovery of his involvement may lead to the revelation of an entire network of corruption, Donlan concludes that he must really kill Superboy. Promising his nephew a new identity and a fresh start, Donlan throws him a going-away party, then tries to drown him in his backyard Jacuzzi. This betrayal reveals that not only the corruption, but the murderous violence associated with the inner city, exists within Garrison, NJ as well. When Joey Randone surprises the murderers by arriving unexpectedly at Donlan’s house
(presumably for a tumble with Rose), Superboy escapes into the woods. Shocked at the scene he has witnessed, Randone refuses to go along with Donlan’s plan, and a few nights later Donlan allows him to plunge to his death off the roof of the very inner city projects they are all trying to escape. In the end even Figs, who seems genuinely to care for Monica and is the only NYPD officer who treats Freddy with respect, is implicated in the corruption of Garrison. A cocaine addict who wants to get out of town, Figs schemes to burn his own house down, collect the insurance money, and move away. What he does not bargain for is that Monica has returned home unexpectedly and is fatally injured in the fire. Burned almost beyond recognition, her body, previously singled out for its racial difference, is now literally blackened. In the perverse economy of Copland, Monica’s dead body takes the place of Superboy’s missing corpse, for the bodies of women and people of color are the price for preserving the sanctity of this suburban white community.

Although Monica cannot be brought back to life, Figs is ultimately redeemed within the film’s moral universe when he returns to Garrison to help Freddy save Superboy by defeating Donlan and his accomplices. In a Western-style shoot-out, Freddy kills the antagonists and brings Superboy to justice. Freddy’s accomplishment is signaled by the fact that, for the first time in the film, he drives into Manhattan (on an earlier visit to the IAB he took the PATH train), becoming an agent in his own symbolically weighty transportation across the bridge. At Police Plaza, a crowd of NYPD officers parts to allow him to pass so that Moe Tilden can at last welcome him inside. Corporeal and spatial geographies come together as the hero’s bruised and bloody body traverses the bridge to arrive at the site of justice, which is located within the city and not the suburban frontier. His bloodied figure, which has functioned as the embodiment of Garrison, now bears the stain that has marred its idyllic separatism. Cutting away from Freddy’s heroic reception, a helicopter shot moves high above Manhattan as a voice-over gravely intones the film’s moral, that “no man is above the law.”

Copland does not end in the city, however, but back in Garrison, where Freddy continues to gaze at the expanse of the George Washington Bridge and the high rise buildings on the other side. As he stands looking out over the water, Bill drives up to report that he needs Freddy’s help with a jackknifed truck in the road. Life goes on as usual. The film leaves Freddy where we found him, but with the additional sense that this act of heroism has confirmed his manhood. It does not matter if Freddy continues to work in Garrison, for he has made the journey into the city, where his bravery has been acknowledged by the official figures of lawful authority.
The ease of this conclusion, with its firm endorsement of a clear-cut moral order, fails to provide satisfying answers to the questions the film raises about the relationship between urban geographies, race, and the politics of a softer, gentler masculinity. Despite its valorization of the unlikely hero, that heroic figure is still a white man whose masculinity is restored through the search for justice. While it upholds a form of masculinity quite different from that of the hard-bodied action hero, *Copland* is nonetheless heavily invested in masculine heroics. The bodies of women and people of color that are so emphatically contained by the film’s spatial geography are not liberated by this conclusion. The act of bringing Superboy to justice cannot bring Monica or the dead teenagers back to life; yet the film abandons these problems once Freddy’s courage has been confirmed. Thus rather than shifting its focus away from masculine primacy, *Copland* tells us something of the suppleness and variability of white masculinity, which has the ability to expand and contract, grow hard or soft, while remaining the focus of narrative attention. As Andrew Ross has argued, new forms of masculinity are not necessarily harbingers of more progressive social change, for “patriarchy is constantly reforming masculinity, minute by minute, day by day. Indeed, the reason why patriarchy remains so powerful is due less to its entrenched traditions than to its versatile capacity to shape-change and morph the contours of masculinity to fit with shifts in the social climate.”

If the softer, more expansive male body is indeed the hallmark of the Clinton era, as the filmic narrative and publicity surrounding *Copland* suggest, then this body demands increasing vigilance to the elements that it excludes more subtly, but no less insistently than the obvious symbolic economy of the hard body. Cheryl Lavin, a reporter for the *Chicago Tribune*, was so taken with Stallone’s new fleshiness that she wrote her article in the form of a love letter, which enthused, “With 40 extra pounds, you are attainable. You’re not some fantasy; you’re not Fabio anymore. Women are practical creatures, and in “Cop Land” you look like the kind of guy a woman thinks she could actually have a shot at. That’s sexy.” Yet it would be a mistake to see in Stallone’s poundage an increased proximity to realness, to assume that the heroism of the shy, fleshy outsider is any less a fantasy of white masculine power than that of the more conventional action hero. It is the very plasticity of that fantasy that has been the source of its tremendous longevity. The same questions apply to the transition from the trim body of a President who eats jelly beans to one who eats Krispy Kreme doughnuts. What is at stake in this analysis are those populations whose interests continue to be elided in the excited rhetoric about a more receptive, pliable manhood that claims
to exert itself on their behalf. If, in the narrative economy of *Copland*, bridges allow the newly heroic soft body the freedom to cross back and forth from center to periphery while giving no indication that that access has improved for others, then, this film suggests, passage across the bridge to the twenty-first century may be a bumpy ride indeed.

Coda

Events that have transpired since this article was first written necessitate an extension of its discussion of the relationship between the symbolic logic of *Copland*, the Presidential body, and local racialized geographies. On a national level, the attention of both houses of Congress and the mainstream news media were consumed by the scandalous revelation of the Presidential affair with White House intern Monica Lewinsky. Unlike *Copland*’s desexualization of the expansive white male body, in the world of national politics the fleshy Presidential body was portrayed as driven by excessive and uncontrollable passions. Despite his opponents’ repeated invocation of such high crimes and misdemeanors as perjury and obstruction of justice, the press focused almost exclusively on issues of moral depravity. Giving new meaning to the President’s nickname, “the comeback kid,” the *Starr Report*’s fixation on the pornographic details of oral sex, unlit cigars, and a stained blue dress reinforced the impression that this case had more to do with sexual impropriety than legal infractions. While certainly not the first time the media had revealed a politician guilty of marital infidelity, Zippergate coverage was distinctive in casting Bill Clinton in the role of the fallen woman. The President, whose voluptuous thighs, eating habits, and tears had already been topics of public conversation, appeared simultaneously unable to master his erotic appetites and tormented by guilt over his moral slippage.31 As Virginia Vitzhum put it in a *Salon* Magazine article entitled, “Femme Fatale: President Clinton’s Just a Girl Who Can’t Say No,” “in his affair, Clinton played the old girl game of Technical Virginity—staying good by doing ‘everything but.’ Who knows what exactly drove his refusal to come, but it’s generally women who associate orgasm with trust.”32

In the meantime, on a local level real bodies were at stake. In New York city, the racial geography mapped out in *Copland* was dramatically animated on the evening of 4 February 1999 when four white officers of the NYPD’s elite Crime-Fighting Unit shot unarmed African immigrant Amadou Diallo forty-one times, clinging they mistook him for a suspected rapist. The Diallo shooting immediately galvanized
public protest, which heightened in response to the refusal of Mayor Rudolph Giuliani to acknowledge long-standing problems of poor training and racial insensitivity within the NYPD.\textsuperscript{33} Community outcry revealed a widespread sentiment among people of color that police were sources of violence and terror rather than protection. They argued that rather than an isolated accident, this extreme case made visible the pervasiveness of racialized conflict between police officers and the constituencies they were meant to serve.\textsuperscript{34}

The juxtaposition of these events in 1999 brings a number of issues sharply into focus. The expansive, desiring Presidential body encourages new discourses about masculinity as it becomes the subject of public conversation in ways that were formerly reserved for women. As this fin-de-siècle man appropriates the feminized gestures of tears and physical intimacy, dieting, exercise, and fashion, he also becomes vulnerable to a moral condemnation his predecessors were spared. As I have already noted, during the recent White House scandal, Toni Morrison referred to Clinton as the first black president.\textsuperscript{35} Indeed, large numbers of African Americans and women staunchly supported the President during the Impeachment trial, for these are populations that have historically been victimized in the name of morality. Yet while the new Presidential masculinity has appropriated the attributes of women and people of color, there is little evidence that the reverse is true. In other words, it does not appear to be the case that the President’s assumption of conventionally black or feminine characteristics relieves those groups from the burden of stereotypes that accrue around the visibly non-white, non-male body; nor that Clinton’s metamorphoses help to bring disenfranchised groups any closer to the institutional power he continues to enjoy. The Clinton Presidency, and many recent Hollywood films, have indeed brought us a softer, gentler white man, but these new heroes do not necessarily portend the breakdown of oppressive racial and gender norms. For there is little evidence that these men, after encompassing the attributes of blackness and femininity, are willing, in return, to share the privileges of a supple and capacious white masculinity.

NOTES

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4. As Stallone described this meeting in an interview, “I’d been looking forward to this for twenty years, because [De Niro and I] basically started out the same. All of a sudden there was an extraordinary amount of executives on the set. It was like, Okay, genre number one, meet genre number two. Can action blend with drama? Will Stallone pull out a machine gun?” John Clark, “Babes in ‘Cop Land,’” *Premiere* 10 (1997): 59–61.


6. Laura Kipnis has argued that contemporary cultural discourses about fat may be divided along predictably gendered lines into a feminine, maternal softness and a solid, patriarchal gigantism. The rhetoric surrounding Clinton’s body is interesting because it evokes the imagery of womanly excess. See Kipnis, “Fat and Culture,” in *Near Ruins: Cultural Theory at the End of the Century*, ed. Nicholas B. Dirks (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1998) 199–220.


9. In this, *Copland* refigures the more conventionally gendered dynamic of classic Hollywood cinema in which the female body becomes a spectacle beholden to the camera’s gaze. Instead, *Copland*’s women
(there are four of them) are of no apparent interest to the camera, which trains its eye exclusively on the male body.


15. Turner 102.

16. Significantly, although the flabby body is supposed to reflect the character's lack of concern with diet and exercise, Stallone’s weight gain was represented as itself a kind of labor, involving concerted exertion and physical suffering akin to body building. According to one account: “there were entire blueberry cheesecakes, stacks of French toast covered with quarts of whipped cream, peanut butter and oatmeal cookies—all washed down with a half-quart of chocolate milk. And that was just for breakfast. It was heaven at first, Stallone says. But he soon learned that the road to stardom tastes like the road to hell. His cholesterol level soared, his heart started palpitating, and his veins felt as if they were corroding. In time, he had to force himself to choke down an entire pizza,” Lynda Gorov, “Sly Remakes Himself,” Boston Globe 10 August 1997: N1.

17. Of course this film was made before the bombing of a pharmaceutical plant in the Sudan, and military production and storage sites in Iraq and Kosovo, events which may call for further analysis of the plasticity of Clintonian masculinity.

18. Despite past acts of heroism revealed by expositional dialogue as the film unfolds, it is hard to believe that Superboy has done anything to deserve his name. In the script, a scene cut from the final version of the film attributes his nickname not to the fact that he has done anything “super,” but to his taste for Campbell's soup (“souper”). The identification with Campbell's soup associates the young cop with boyish immaturity rather than the youthful heroism that the homonym “super” connotes.
19. Richard Dyer, *White* (New York: Routledge, 1997) 164–165. In light of this point, it is interesting that in the trajectory of Stallone’s career from such early films as *Paradise Alley*, *The Italian Stallion*, and *Rocky I* and *II* his characters become increasingly non-ethnic, his working-class Italian identity transformed into a generic whiteness as his body becomes more muscular and chiseled. Linda Boose argues that Stallone’s metamorphosis from the vulnerable, working class protagonist of *Rocky I* to the impervious, muscular John Rambo is also linked historically to shifting political affinities in the US, from a populist criticism of neo-imperialist warfare in the Vietnam era to an endorsement of intervention in the Gulf War. See Boose, “Techno-Muscularity and the ‘Boy Eternal,’” *Cultures of United States Imperialism*, ed. Amy Kaplan and Donald Pease (Durham: Duke UP, 1993) 581–616.

20. Whether deafness constitutes a disability remains a matter of some debate. According to Lennard Davis, while the Deaf are often reluctant to categorize their difference as a disability, it is important to describe it as such for the purposes of political activism. Accordingly, Hefflin’s deafness, which is an obstacle to the career he has chosen and the cause of social discrimination, functions as a disability within the film. See Davis, *Enforcing Normalcy: Deafness, Disability, and the Body* (New York: Verso, 1995). On the representation of deafness and other disabilities in Hollywood film see Martin Norden, *The Cinema of Isolation: A History of Physical Disability in the Movies* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers UP, 1994).

21. Nonetheless, *Copland* is not prepared to relinquish completely the conventions of action cinema: Freddy’s total deafness is made visible by a surface wound to the side of his head, which bleeds profusely, and later, by a gunshot wound in the shoulder. By staining the exterior of the body with blood and gore the film capitulates to generic constraints, which dictate that suffering must be visible in order to heighten the climactic moment of bravery.


23. Lippy xxi.

24. See Roger Silverstone on the difference between suburban living for men and women in the introduction to *Visions of Suburbia* (New York: Routledge, 1997). In the same collection, Lynne Spigel has written about the role of the media in this gendered dynamic; see her “From Theatre to Space Ship: Metaphors of Suburban Domesticity in Postwar America” 217–239. Of course the suburbs are also the spatial origin of “the problem with no name” that Betty Freidan articulated in *The Feminine Mystique* (1963). While *Copland* depicts the gendering of city
and suburb, it does not follow up on the attendant frustrations of the white women banished to the urban periphery.


26. Goldberg describes the white flight to the suburbs in terms of a shifting dynamic of inside and outside. "The openness of the urban outside," he writes, "pressed in on confined racial ghettos. Outer was projected as the locus of desire, the terminus of (upward) mobility; inner was painted as the bleak, anarchic margin to be avoided, as degenerate space" (47). Robert Fishman also argues that the design of the suburb is based on principles of exclusion reflected in changing demographic configurations. The decentralization of the new city has had disastrous effects on poor, urban populations, for "it has resegregated American society into an affluent outer city and an indigent inner city, while erecting even higher barriers that prevent the poor from sharing in the jobs and housing of the technoburbs," Fishman, *Bourgeois Utopias: The Rise and Fall of Suburbia* (New York: Basic Books, 1987) 198. For a historical perspective on such patterns of urban decay in Detroit, see Thomas J. Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1996).

27. Mangold commented on the geographic importance of the bridge and its status as a visual icon in the film: "I wanted to put the movie in New Jersey so I could see the city across the river, because I was thinking about the importance of geography in the Western . . . I was talking to Lester Cohen the Production Designer, and I told him that if this were a book, the endpages would feature a map of the world it depicts: The Town on one side, The City on the other and The Bridge spanning the two. . . . The men in the town commute across the bridge every day into this city they hate, wondering if they'll make it home alive to this new frontier, this suburbia they've established. To see that compression of geography—have it just be 'there' all the time—was really important" (Lippy xxiv–xxv).

28. This position represents a significant shift from the early decades of the twentieth century, in which a monolithic whiteness came to replace a range of European ethnicities. Whereas once whiteness signaled the privileges of disembodied citizenship, at the close of the twentieth century the men of Copland perceive it as a threatened and no longer transparent category. On the history of this transformation, see Noel Ignatiev, *How the Irish became White* (New York: Routledge, 1995), and, on the link between the rise of whiteness and class identity, see David Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (London and New York: Verso, 1991).


31. Similarly, recent participants in a panel on the Clinton affair noted the homoerotic dimensions of the investigations: Mandy Merck, “FUCKFACE: Displacement and Desire in the Oval Office,” and Michael Davis, “The Interpretability of Dreams: Freud’s Hermeneutic Circle of 69, or, Exegesis and Excess: Oration, Fellation and Back Again with a Closing Commentary on Bill Clinton,” unpublished conference papers, Oral Fixations Conference, George Washington University, 3 April 1999.


33. In a side note to this bizarre tale of the marriage between Hollywood and racial politics, at the height of community outrage around the Diallo shooting, Police Commissioner Howard Safir was spotted at the Academy Awards ceremony in Los Angeles after claiming that he was unable to attend a City Council hearing on the tactics of the Street Crime Unit because of “scheduling conflicts.”

34. Another recent, highly-publicized event involving similar racial tensions in New York City was the case of Abner Louima, a Haitian immigrant allegedly beaten and sodomized with a toilet plunger while in the custody of white NYPD officers. The parallels with *Copland*’s fictional narrative were suggested by a headline in the *Village Voice* that read, “Copland: Unrepentant, Pale-Faced, All-American Manhood at the Louima Trial,” 25 May 1999: 21. Thanks to Baz Dreisinger for this reference.

35. Writing in defense of the President at the height of the impeachment trial, Morrison claims that African-American men possessed a unique understanding of Clinton’s persecution: “when virtually all the African-American Clinton appointees began, one by one, to disappear, when the President’s body, his privacy, his unpoliced sexuality became the focus of the persecution, when he was metaphorically seized and body searched, who could gainsay these black men who knew whereof they spoke?” “Talk of the Town,” 32. Morrison generously proposes that because he embodies many of the “trope[s] of blackness,” Clinton bore the burden of prejudice typically aimed at black men. However, her language also suggests an argument closer to my own: that Clinton’s insatiable appetites allowed him to incorporate the blackness of his appointees, and, ultimately, to survive threats to his dignity as well as his public office.