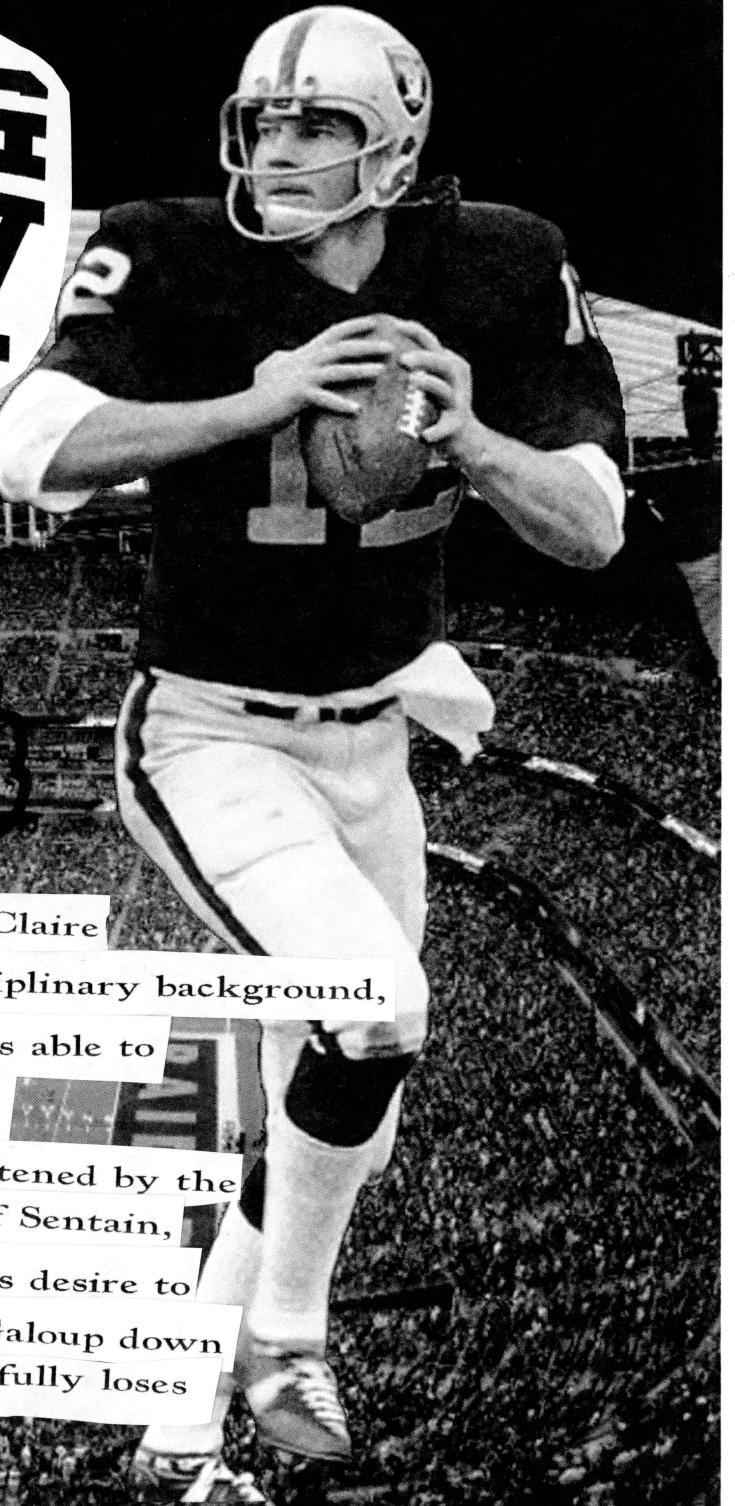


AMERICANA & DISCIPLINARY GENDER



The film from this class that resonated with me the most was Claire Denis's Beau Travail (1999).

As someone from a somewhat disciplinary background, having played American football, I really admired how Denis was able to visualize the suppression that comes with performative masculinity.

In Beau Travail, Galoup, the chief of the legionnaires' ego is threatened by the emergence of a new legionnaire, Gilles Sentain. Galoup is envious of Sentain, for he demands more attention from the legion's commandant. This desire to be the manliest man, likely a mechanism to armor the closet, leads Galoup down a path of utter self-destruction and the murder of Sentain. He rightfully loses

his job in the Legion and commits suicide soon thereafter. His afterlife is represented by him freeform dancing to “The Rhythm of the Night” by Corona at a discotheque near where he was stationed at Djibouti.

The movie made me think about aspects of my American upbringing, as opposed to the unapologetic Frenchness of the film, that are constructed by hypermasculinity, like our sports culture (Sidebar: I don't think I've seen anything apologetically French). For one, any training sequence in Beau Travail could easily be substituted with the myriad of oddly intimate football drills I've done since 5th grade. The drill where the legionnaires bump shoulders with one another and the one where they wrap each other are pop drills and tackling drills respectively. Like the legionnaires' day-to-day, football practice is a bunch of muscle-driven, sweaty boys preparing for a game of sheer violence.



Downward sloping hood

Advantages:

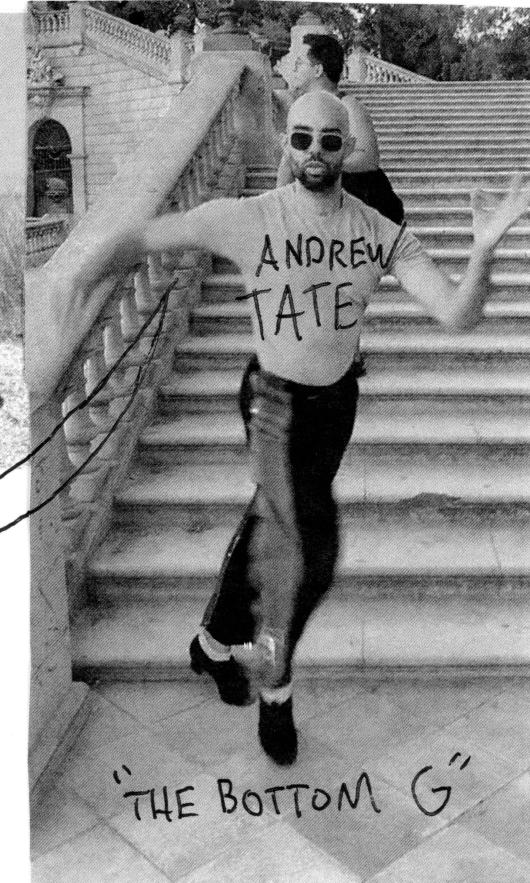
- More aerodynamic, letting you go faster and spend less on gas
- Gives better visibility of the road, so you can see children walking in front of you or obstacles in the road
- Less deadly if you do hit a pedestrian since they will fall onto the hood rather than being knocked down onto the road
- Lower lights don't impede vision of other drivers



High front hood

Advantages:

- Lets you feel really tough, like a big boy



Outside of participation in the game, the spectation of football is often one that's even more riddled with performative gender, particularly at southern schools. Home crowds calling the opposing team a bunch of homophobic slurs, a homogenous and standardized dress code for the game, drunken dickheads throwing their empty beer cups down the stands at strangers to showcase how the madly impressive bad boy lifestyle they lead.

Moreover, there's a young, football-adjacent culture that's rising and unfortunately affirmed with the popularity of platforms like Barstool Sports, the Nek Boys, and the Tate manosphere: the frat. Obviously, there are countless records of fraternity members raping women and getting away with it since the dawn of frats, but what's newly dangerous about fraternities is that social media has now to some degree aestheticized being a fratboy and combined that perceived lifestyle with other American horrors. Walk into any frat tailgate (at your own risk) and spot me more than 10 guys without a backwards baseball hat, oddly tight shorts, and a polo. You can't.

Now what other subculture does this look like? That's right: the yuppies. Instagram reels of Wolf of Wall Street and misogynistic podcasts have snuck their way into the echo chamber discourse of fratlife. Now not only is the bootstraps mentality of the GOP engrained in the American identity, but now it's perceived as masculine to be a Republican. Performing manhood is guzzling down a six pack, owning cowboy boots, owning a monster truck, and hating anything queer or unheteronormative.

This concerns me because by god, I love football and I love Americana. The armpits of America are camp as fuck. I love rocking camouflage to a happy hour. I love bumping bluegrass and outlaw country and folk out of a Chevy Scottsdale. I love our love for rampant, corporate logomania in the all the things we wear. It's like a new pop art. Though, as a straight-passing White man, this aesthetic is now an imminent threat and I can't take part in it fully because it normalizes the sights and sounds of those who hate me. Americana is an aesthetic of rising Christian nationalism and forced gender.

In my old college try at an Americanized Beau Travail,
I wrote a poem about a gay cowboy.

THERE ARE NO BALLS IN THE BIG SKY

Like a poet's poet, there is a nobody's nobody, growing out a ghillie suit firewatered by his own dribble. This one is a blond mondo that sprouts from sunscathed skin, caching all but his beaks

He's freer than we're, some think. He's tumbleweed teetering to Bessie Smith ditties, spread-eagle and hooch-slumped on a millipedish mattress back, ragdolled in various sprawls across the town.

An indiscernible bush or bear to the passerby, he tumbles out of pubs, where knives like him dull in Bud, singing a song never howled by wolves, or Mud, or harped on by the Kings. Muffled change six-eight swings across his pockets as he strums his chest,

riffing, Bouncer got the nerve to ask me why my jeans come with so much baggage.
I said honey, with balls this big,
you gotta get the britches to match it.

BY:
TAKE
BEALESS

This melts to cobwebbed jaws by sunrise, that nest gold nugget incisors and ash, and limbs shackled to marionettist clouds, hoodoo handing him to a bridge in Twin Falls he can swanny off, only for his parachute pants to break his fall.

If only he could have hopped on that train, galloping past the tele pole crosses along the Basin and into the Victorians of this country's forbidden fruitsburgs, their Toad Halls and Twin Peaks, cowboy killing and disco dancing with the dolls.

If only he had the nerve to hitch down with Godfolk, he could be the bear he always was, camped out in his denim squirrel suit, as seen on Haight Street, now swamped and ripping down the Snake River and tethered until this nobody's nobody attempts again to tear from his Strings of Life.

There is no Rhythm of the Night, but remnants of a blues seven-inch never spun under needles, buried in the burnt down House of Coeur d'Alene.