1972

The Paradox of Victory: the American Soldier in the Novel of World War II.

Ira Eugene Hindman Jr
Louisiana State University and Agricultural & Mechanical College

Follow this and additional works at: https://repository.lsu.edu/gradschool_disstheses

Recommended Citation

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate School at LSU Scholarly Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in LSU Historical Dissertations and Theses by an authorized administrator of LSU Scholarly Repository. For more information, please contact gradetd@lsu.edu.
INFORMATION TO USERS

This dissertation was produced from a microfilm copy of the original document. While the most advanced technological means to photograph and reproduce this document have been used, the quality is heavily dependent upon the quality of the original submitted.

The following explanation of techniques is provided to help you understand markings or patterns which may appear on this reproduction.

1. The sign or "target" for pages apparently lacking from the document photographed is "Missing Page(s)". If it was possible to obtain the missing page(s) or section, they are spliced into the film along with adjacent pages. This may have necessitated cutting thru an image and duplicating adjacent pages to insure you complete continuity.

2. When an image on the film is obliterated with a large round black mark, it is an indication that the photographer suspected that the copy may have moved during exposure and thus cause a blurred image. You will find a good image of the page in the adjacent frame.

3. When a map, drawing or chart, etc., was part of the material being photographed the photographer followed a definite method in "sectioning" the material. It is customary to begin photoing at the upper left hand corner of a large sheet and to continue photoing from left to right in equal sections with a small overlap. If necessary, sectioning is continued again – beginning below the first row and continuing on until complete.

4. The majority of users indicate that the textual content is of greatest value, however, a somewhat higher quality reproduction could be made from "photographs" if essential to the understanding of the dissertation. Silver prints of "photographs" may be ordered at additional charge by writing the Order Department, giving the catalog number, title, author and specific pages you wish reproduced.

University Microfilms
300 North Zeeb Road
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106
A Xerox Education Company
HINDMAN, Jr., Ira Eugene, 1931-
THE PARADOX OF VICTORY: THE AMERICAN SOLDIER
IN THE NOVEL OF WORLD WAR II.

The Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College, Ph.D., 1972
Language and Literature, general

University Microfilms, A XEROX Company, Ann Arbor, Michigan

© 1972
IRA EUGENE HINDMAN JR.

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED
THE PARADOX OF VICTORY:
THE AMERICAN SOLDIER IN THE NOVEL OF WORLD WAR II

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Department of English

by
Ira Eugene Hindman, Jr.
B.A., Roberts Wesleyan College, 1955
B.D., Asbury Theological Seminary, 1958
M.A., Stetson University, 1965
May, 1972
PLEASE NOTE:

Some pages may have
Indistinct print.
Filmed as received.

University Microfilms, A Xerox Education Company
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to express my deep appreciation to Dr. Lewis P. Simpson for his many important suggestions and his many hours of assistance that led to the completion of this study. I should also like to thank the other members of my doctoral committee: Dr. Darwin H. Shrell, Dr. Jack G. Gilbert, Dr. John Hazard Wildman, and Dr. Burl L. Noggle.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACKNOWLEDGEMENT</th>
<th>iii</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TABLE OF CONTENTS</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>viii</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## CHAPTER

| I. COMING OF AGE IN THE GREAT DEPRESSION | 1 |
| II. PRE-WAR LITERATURE | 50 |
| III. THE COMING OF WAR | 84 |
| IV. INDUCTION: FROM CIVILIAN TO SOLDIER IN THE WORLD WAR II NOVEL | 104 |
| V. TRAINING: LEARNING THE ART OF SURVIVAL IN THE WORLD WAR II NOVEL | 150 |
| VI. COMBAT: "PRO PATRIA MORI" IN THE WORLD WAR II NOVEL | 219 |
| VII. DEFEAT IN VICTORY: THE NOVELISTS' VISION OF THE FUTURE | 276 |
| CONCLUSION | 334 |
| LIST OF WORKS CITED | 337 |
| VITA | 345 |
ABSTRACT

The catastrophic events of World War II have remained in the American writer's consciousness for thirty years--there are still occasional "war novels" written today. But twenty-five years ago the War was an ascendent reality and an unusually large number of war novels was being written. This study is concerned with that first flood of Second World War novels.

America emerged from World War II a victor. But it is the contention of this dissertation that most of the American novelists who wrote of the War found little in the victory to cheer them. There were a few novelists who continued, in spite of a world aflame, to reflect the optimism of a waning liberal socialism. There were many more who, overwhelmed by the darkness they saw in human nature and in the world that man had made a grim reflection of himself, either retreated into nihilism or sought, painfully and with little success, some small hope for the future of the individual.

The novels of these latter novelists are permeated by a pessimism that arises out of their recognition of the high cost that the individual had to pay in order for the nation to achieve victory. That cost, according to the
novelists, included lives spent, limbs lost, and minds broken; but more significantly, it included the enslavement of the will and the brutalization of the spirit. In other words, it cost the individual his humanity. Despair at the cost, not joy in the victory, is the underlying motif that is discovered in the Second World War novel.

This study is also concerned with the origins of the war novelists' sense of despair. The antecedents of their despair, the study suggests, are found in the three decades of history that preceded their writing, in the literary forces that they inherited, and in the inhumanity that they found in military life. World War I, the abortive "war to end wars," shocked a rather naive generation into the reality of man's potential for evil, convinced them that many of their father's values were untenable, and sent them on a search for what security they could find in a decade of prosperity. When the vision of prosperity evaporated into the nightmare of depression, their distrust of traditional values deepened. Those who were aware of literary traditions, and certainly the young men who were to write the World War II novels were, could not escape current literary patterns. They had to react to the cynical assessment of traditional values suggested by the writers of the 1920's and the even more despairing judgements leveled by the writers of the 1930's. Then came Selective Service. It appeared to the novelists that
personal freedom and individuality had been replaced by
the rigidly proscribed life of military uniformity. With
the final blow to humane values, an insane war that seemed
to deny any human goodness, the novelists were convinced.
They had read the evidence; their conclusion was that life
was war, and defeat was its end. The future of the indi-
vidual did not appear at all promising to them.
INTRODUCTION

It is the thesis of this study that, in spite of the American victory in World War II, most American novels dealing with the War demonstrate despair of a peaceful and humane future.

Part One is concerned with the early sources of this despair. It rests upon the thesis that their experience of pre-World War II America is a direct and significant source, if implicit, of the despair that novelists expressed in their war novels; it examines the source of the attitudes given by novelists to the American soldier in the World War II novel. Presenting in very broad terms the American milieu between World Wars, Part One focuses primarily upon the 1930's, a period of changing values when entrenched American self-satisfaction was giving away to an increasingly bitter disillusionment with that mystique of success and moral superiority that Americans had come to think of as their special birthright. The future novelists' experience taught them to question all voices whether political, social, or moral. When they entered military life they were, unlike their World War I counterparts, already confused about their values, distrustful of their country's values, and unsure about the world and their future in it. When they came to describe their experience of war in fictional terms, they
wrote their own bewilderment with and despair for their
culture into the attitudes of their soldiers' characters.

The second part of this study deals with the World War
II novels themselves. Its focus is upon the American
soldiers' experience of and response to military life as
presented within these novels. The transformation of the
soldier, within the novel, from civilian to combat veteran
provides the novelists with an opportunity to examine their
soldiers' (and thus their own culture's) values and attitudes
under conditions of extreme stress. In some of the novels
the soldier is made to reaffirm the traditional values as
still valid. In most of the novels, however, the perceptive
soldier recognizes traditional values and attitudes as no
longer sound, and his response is either a retreat into
nihilism or an agonizing attempt to find some sound basis for
humane action in a world that appeared bent on proving that
there was no such basis.

In spite of those novels that reaffirm traditional
American values, it is the conclusion of this study that the
World War II novels, considered as a whole, demonstrate an
acute disillusionment with the values of twentieth-century
social idealism. As Malcolm Cowley has pointed out, the
novelists who wrote of the Second World War came to see that
"War, in all its senses, is the condition, not the crisis of
our lives."¹ They find that in life as combat optimistic

idealism provides a man with flimsy fortification. Moreover, they see little hope for the liberal idealist's future world where men live together in mutual trust and natural harmony. Hence, even though the American nation emerged from the War victorious, the American novelists of that War find the victory hollow. Within the fruit of victory they discover the seeds of defeat.

In organizing the chapters in Part Two, I have used the war novels in two ways. First, the novels are used to establish those attitudes toward military life and soldier response to it that the novelists hold in common. Hence, the first part of each chapter draws briefly from several novels. Second, selected novels (two in each chapter) are employed for in-depth examination. The intention is to probe more deeply into those that reveal the novelists' visions of reality. These examinations in depth are crucial to the final chapter, which aims at classifying the novelists according to their visions of reality and at showing the implications for man's future contained in these views.

A final word is in order concerning several criteria used in selecting novels for this study. I have chosen novels that represent a sampling of the attitudes found in the body of World War II fiction. Since the study intends to reflect attitudes current during and immediately after the War, and since it assumes that the further away from the War the writer gets the less accurate the record of those attitudes will be, I have employed dates of composition as a second principle of
selection, arbitrarily establishing a copyright date of 1955, ten years after the war's end, as the cut-off date. I have admitted two exceptions to that date. One is Anton Myrer's *The Big War* (1957), which did reflect the attitudes of the forties and was moreover too important to omit. The second is James Jones's *The Thin Red Line* (1962), because it reflects so accurately specific battle attitudes. I have used still another principle of selection: the relative literary merit of a novel. When I have had to make a choice between two novels, I have selected what I consider to be the novel that represents the stronger achievement in the technique and art of the war novel. Finally, I have chosen novels that focus on the land war over others. Again there are notable exceptions; Joseph Heller's *Catch-22*, Gore Vidal's *Williwaw*, and James Gould Cozzens' *Guard of Honor*. But all three of these novels are by authors of such established reputation that they could not be overlooked by any study of World War II fiction.
CHAPTER ONE

COMING OF AGE IN THE GREAT DEPRESSION

I. Into the Depression

A substantial percentage of the male American babies born during the first quarter of the twentieth century were born stenciled by destiny, like so much war materiel, Government Issue. The 1890's had been "gay"; the turn into the twentieth century had broadened perspectives, brought promises, and provided some solutions and hopes for more. The country was at peace; the government was stable. Most of the population was happy and relatively prosperous. The towns were sleepy, the streets quiet, the parents "getting ahead" and the children growing. The spirit of hope and progress was a part of the air that Americans breathed. This was the Progressive era in American history, and into this optimistic period were born roughly half of the boy babies stamped G.I. and set aside for the 1940's.

The other half was born in the shadow of world war. But World War I was fought in Europe, and Europe in 1914 was a long way off. Then in April, 1917, America joined the Allies in war, and what was once Europe's war became America's war. For reform conscious Americans it was to be the "war to end wars" and "the war to make the world safe for democracy." Wilson made the war into a religious crusade, thus offering
an outlet for the messianic zeal of the Progressive era. But it did not take long after the war for reaction against the moralistic propaganda to set in. As the soldiers began to come home, Americans discovered that the war had in fact been a dirty war that killed, maimed, and rotted body and mind. The war seemed to have made no sense at all, to have achieved no clear goal, to have served no sane purpose.

The decade of the 1920's opened with the country's nerves "rubbed raw by bitterness over the war, the debate on the League, the Red Scare, and the postwar inflation. In a word, the nation had had enough of Wilsonism. . . . The country yearned for release from the attacks of the reformers and the demands they made for altruism and self-sacrifice."¹

The sense of disillusionment with reform and sacrifice may be seen in the politics of the decade. The 1920's began with a national election. Warren Harding, the candidate who "looked like a president," was made the Republican nominee for the presidency in the infamous "smoke-filled room" of Chicago's Blackstone Hotel. His rhetoric that urged "'not heroism, but healing, not nostrums but normalcy,'" caught the spirit of the times and his election signaled the end of Wilsonian idealism. When Harding died three years after his election and the corruption of his administration was uncovered, corruption that reached into the Presidential cabinet,

the country was more amused than angered. Following Harding came Calvin Coolidge, the very symbol of Puritan honesty and clean-living but also a believer in business and government support for business.

The decade's adulation of business may be seen as evidence of its rejection of self-sacrifice. The war, it seemed, had demonstrated that the cry of the reformers and the philosophy of the altruists had been sounding brass and tinkling cymbal. The best thing to do was to be practical—look out for yourself, become prosperous, and enjoy life. The means to this end was business. During the decade of the 1920's national average income rose sharply. The work day was cut to eight hours, the work week to five days, and the two week annual vacation was introduced. New industries, in such areas as synthetics, chemicals, foods, canning and refrigeration made life easier for the buyer and made new stockholders richer. Construction boomed; roads unrolled everywhere. Utilities became powerful businesses, chain stores gained control of retail business, and the automobile became a way of life. Henry Ford's assembly line speeded the production of autos from one every fourteen hours in 1914 to one every ten seconds in 1925.² The radio was introduced and within ten years was a $852 million business.³ Radio made national advertising

²Leuchtenburg, Prosperity, p. 179.
³Leuchtenburg, Prosperity, p. 196.
possible and advertising made the seller and promoter as important as the manufacturer. Industrial boom brought mergers; ownership was spread among stockholders and was separated from management. The general public bought and sold on the stock market as though they were seasoned speculators. Business was king.

Control and restraint over one's personal life was not characteristically practiced during the 1920's. Prohibition was a last gasp of the reform movement. The way Americans reacted to Prohibition was proof of their scorn for reform. Illegal beer and liquor became a multimillion dollar business. Speakeasies operated openly, women began to drink in public, and the gangsters who controlled the illegal trade in alcohol were tolerated, even admired. The Twenties also saw the American woman "freed." She achieved enfranchisement, broke working barriers, and became aware of her public role. But as she took up her public role, there was a consequent loosening of the family structure and of marriage bonds. Freudian psychology was popularized and used as support for a more permissive view of sexual relationships. Behavioristic psychology, which saw man as a biological machine adjusting in whatever way necessary for survival, became a national preoccupation in child raising. Hollywood was in its golden era. Fads in fashions, cosmetics, music, dancing and behavior swept coast to coast. The mood of the nation had turned hedonistic. The future as a dimension of life was forgotten. The increase in spending, and credit and time payments, was
an indication of the emphasis on the "now." Thus America in the Twenties reacted to its inheritance of personal, social, and national reform-mindedness by rejecting such idealism for a more immediately practical emphasis.

It was in this decade that the G.I.'s of the early 1940's spent their childhood. By 1929 their ages ranged downward from eighteen to eight. Even the youngest of them felt some of the impact of the decade. The relaxed family structure, the new freedom of mothers, the permissive child psychology, the spirit of prosperity, the uninhibited discussion of sex, the general atmosphere of cynicism could reach and affect the child as easily as the adolescent. So they grew up hearing that World War I had been a mistake. When they came of working age, they knew the smart man went into business. They accepted money as success. They were conditioned to want what advertising told them they needed. They learned to drive the family automobile and use it to conduct their love affairs. They drank bootleg beer, learned conduct and language from the movie screen, affected the popular off-hand cynicism, and enjoyed the favors of the new woman. If the youth of the Twenties practiced a self-conscious bohemianism that lacked direction, it was because the previous generations had failed to keep social codes meaningful and had made morality so rigid it could not survive the cataclysmic war. If they refused to subscribe to Wilson's moral view of the war, it was because the war had violently re-educated them into the reality of an evil denied by the ageing liberals,
a denial that had made such a war possible. If they were
cynical in their pursuit of business success, it was because
they knew that money corrupted and that civilization was,
as Ezra Pound described it, "an old bitch gone in the teeth."
If they put undue faith in science or, conversely, attacked
science unreasonably, it was because they were left in confu-
sion by the loss of religious faith and because they could
find no substitute for what was lost.

So, as they reached their late teens, they read T. S.
Eliot who told them that the Western World was a waste land
of lust and faithless sterility. They read Ernest Hemingway
who told them to face the meaningless world with clenched
teeth. They read F. Scott Fitzgerald who gave them a Byronic
sense of his own tragedy and a hedonistic flair for extravaga-
cence. They read such iconoclasts as E. E. Cummings, and
Pound, and Sinclair Lewis, and Sherwood Anderson. And they
waited for they knew not what.

They did not wait long. In 1928 Herbert Hoover was
elected President. His campaign reflected the bitter divi-
sions in America, divisions between urban North and rural
South and Midwest, between Protestant and Catholic, between
wets and drys, between immigrant and Anglo-Saxon. Hoover
pronounced the economy sound, but in March, 1928, the stock
market went into a frenzy, in September, 1929, it broke
downward, and late in October it hit bottom. Gains were
wiped out in a matter of hours. Fortunes and savings were
lost. Business' confidence was shattered. Investors were
ruined; holding companies and trust companies destroyed. Bank after bank failed. No one was spared. Wealth and modest means were both gone. Laborer and manager and owner were all broken. The curtain had rung up on the Great Depression.

Everyone lost something; many lost everything. The most immediately felt loss was financial. In spite of President Hoover's insistence that the economy was sound and prosperity was soon to return, money grew more scarce. For the business executive and white collar professional, the Depression meant not only loss of income but also loss of faith in and zeal for business. Suicide was not an isolated response; despair was a normal response. Kenneth Fearing, a poet of the Thirties, described the futility so many felt:

... he ...

drank one straight Scotch, walked one short step, took one long look, drew one deep breath just one too many,
And wow he died as wow he lived,
going whoop to the office, and blooie home to sleep, and biff got married, and bam had children, and oof got fired,
zowie did he live and zowie did he die,
With who the hell are you at the corner of his casket, and where the hell we going on the right-hand silver knob, and who the hell cares walking second from the end ... .

With the collapse of many businesses came the loss of jobs. A year after the crash six million men were out of work. In 1929 there were about one and one half million

unemployed. In 1932 there were twelve million. By the end of 1934 over five million households, representing some twenty million men, women, and children, were living on relief. As the number of the jobless grew, the market for products shrunk. As the market shrunk, employers laid off unneeded workers. And so the cycle went. Everywhere men sought work; when work was not found, they turned to other solutions. In 1932, World War I veterans, out of work and money, marched on Washington to petition Congress to pay the war service bonus that was due them in 1945. With work so scarce and pay so minimal, they felt the early payment of the bonus was their only hope. But Hoover isolated himself from the situation. The veterans set up an orderly camp at Anacostia Flats in Washington, but their eventual expulsion was inevitable by a government that could not comprehend their plight. Federal troops were called, and, under General Douglas MacArthur, they razed the camp at Anacostia Flats and drove the veterans out. The government, it seemed, was not only unconcerned but was actually hostile to men seeking legitimate aid.

It was inevitable that after the family savings were lost and the father's job was lost, the family home would be lost. Unable to meet mortgage payments, families were dispossessed. They became renters, moving down in the housing scale until they camped in empty lots, or lived in

"Hoovervilles" of makeshift shacks, or even in city dumps, in parks, in railroad cars, under bridges, in caves. Farmers were turned off their land, losing at one stroke both home and living. In Iowa the farmers, enraged at falling prices, at bank foreclosures, at a system that could let crops rot while people starved, turned militant. They "blocked highways with logs and spiked telegraph poles, smashed windshields and headlights, and punctured tires with pitchforks." They formed the Farm Holiday Association to organize farmers for a strike effort that would force prices up and thus give them the means to save their land.

Consequent upon the loss of money, job, and home was the loss of social status. This proved to be a most disturbing loss, perhaps even more serious than the poverty or unemployment itself. Its seriousness lay in the fact that it attacked the man where he was most sensitive. In America, with its Puritan ethic that taught thrift, the intrinsic value of work, doing for one's self, and prosperity as a sign of God's favor, and with the memory of the business-minded and prosperity-oriented Twenties still fresh, economic loss meant loss of personal worth. Leuchtenburg says:

To be unemployed in an industrial society is the equivalent of banishment and excommunication. A job established a man's identity—not only what other men thought of him but how he viewed himself; the loss of his job shattered his self-esteem and severed one of his most important ties to other men. Engulfed by feelings of inferiority, the jobless man sought out

---

The status loss set men adrift, cut them loose from their normal moorings. Alfred Kazin, a young man "starting out" in the Thirties, recalls: "... I would fight my way through the enormous crowds lined three-deep up Forty-third Street for Benny Goodman, and wonder why I didn't stay in the movie all day long. I could feel myself just about ready to give up and let go. I could feel the pressure of all those crowds aimlessly filling up Times Square all day long. Everything was suddenly adrift." It was as though many people had "awakened, in the depression, from a sense of being at home in a familiar world to the shock of living as an atom in a universe dangerously too big and blindly out of hand." The sense of being adrift in a universe that was also adrift made men distrustful and afraid. The Lynd study of "Middletown, U.S.A." found that people were afraid to let their opinions be known. They feared reprisal, from employer, from police, from government, from labor. Teachers feared the D.A.R. and the Chamber of Commerce, businessmen feared

7Leuchtenburg, Roosevelt, p. 119.
taxes and public ownership, laborers feared to join unions. Those groups on the lowest rungs of the status ladder were pushed even lower, and at times severely persecuted. There was, for example, a rise in Negro lynching; over sixty Negroes were hanged, shot, or burned between 1930 and 1934. In 1934 they were lynched at a rate better than one a month. An anti-lynching bill was defeated in 1935, a year that saw Negroes lynched at a rate of more than one every three weeks.

The result of all this loss was a poverty that possessed both body and spirit and forced men into a stupefying submission. With money gone, jobs gone, homes gone, status gone, people quit living and began just existing. Some of the most desperate men and women fought over garbage cans, hunted half-rotted vegetables in dumps. Relief payments kept most from the garbage cans, but even relief did not keep many families from dire poverty. Poverty created a resentment toward business, government, and those who were better off. A letter to the editor of a mid-Western newspaper suggests a common attitude.

"Our [relief] slip called for two dollars a week and (those in charge of relief) thought any woman could prepare forty-two meals a week on a dollar-fifty for two people. So we got fifty cents taken from the two dollars.

"Those in charge of relief have never known the actual hunger and want, have never lain awake at night

10 Lynd, Middletown, p. 492.

worrying about unpaid rent, or how to make a few groceries do for the seemingly endless seven days till the next week's order of groceries.

"But we are supposed to have faith in our government. We are told to keep cheerful and smiling. Just what does our government expect us to do... [I] have to check off some item of needed food when we get soap...

"But we are supposed to fall down on our knees and worship the golden calf of government when we are in dire need.

"It is always the people with full stomachs who tell us poor people to keep happy... "No work, no hope; just live from one day to the next. Maybe better times are coming. Personally, I doubt it." 12

When poverty reached its most acute stage, men and women, boys and girls, whole families "went on the bum." Men slipped off from their families, never to be heard of again. Thousands of boys, discouraged by lack of work, drifted from town to town. They rode the "rails" and slept on park benches when the police did not chase them away. One contemporary account describes how they ate from soup lines when they could, or how they scavenged food from city dumps that had been sprayed with coal-oil to prevent the hungry from eating food that would poison them. It recounts with horror the premature birth of a baby, delivered by a young Negro boy with a jack-knife, in a reefer where an accidently closed door had trapped him with the young mother. 13 Another contemporary account, kept by a man on the bum himself, describes

12Lynd, Middletown, pp. 111-12.

a family adrift.

Our home is a garbage heap. Around us are piles of tin cans and broken bottles. Between the piles are fires. A man and a woman huddle by the fire to our right. A baby gasps in the woman's arms. It has the croup. It coughs until it is black in the face. The woman is scared. She pounds it on the back... I have me a big piece of canvas. This is not to keep me warm. It is to keep these rats from biting a chunk out of my nose when I sleep. But it does not keep out the sound and the feel of them as they sprawl all over you... "For three years," says this old stiff, "I have laid in the cold and the dark like this. Is this goin' to last forever? Ain't things never goin' to be different?"14

Indeed it did seem that it was "goin' to last forever."

Men slowly came to the realization that not next week, nor next month, nor next year would there be work. As the Depression wore on year after year, it began to look as though a majority of those over forty-five would never get their jobs back. Eight years after the crash, in his inaugural address of January 20, 1937, President Roosevelt could still describe America as one-third "ill-housed, ill-clad, ill-nourished."

Thus the Great Depression ground on, the central fact of the 1930's. The actual losses which it imposed were great. But the consequence of the losses, the sense of loss that led to a disillusionment with so much of American life, was a wound torn deeply into the American psyche, a wound that healed only slowly and left a scar clearly visible long after the decade was closed. The Depression was, in fact, so

traumatic that it has been called one of the two most important events in American history since the Revolutionary War. The other event was World War II. Both were destructive events; the War mutilated many, the Depression mutilated most. The inheritors of both events were the young men who grew to early manhood during the 1930's. Born into an era that distrusted its past, they came of age in an era that found its present unreliable and its future at best uncertain. Little wonder that they experienced a loss of faith that reached into all areas of American life; into business, into government, into politics, into manners and morality, and into self-expression.

II. The New Deal And Its Opponents

America's faith in "Business" was severely shaken during the decade of the Thirties. In the 1920's Business had been worshipped as a god; in the 1930's it was abused as a menace. It became the chief villain of the decade. Its role as villain was an important factor in forming the attitudes and opinions of the young men who would write the fictional accounts of World War II. It is therefore important to consider the causes contributing to its role as villain and the effects its role had upon the American public.

Actually, the term "Business," as well as much of the talk about it during the decade, was imprecise. It was a collective term that vaguely suggested the capitalistic
system and those oligopolistic corporations that controlled so much of the economy and that were so often referred to as "big" business. And Business, by the 1930's, was big. The Depression only confirmed what had often been suspected: that the bulk of American Business was controlled by a small minority of men; that, in fact, ". . . the heads of the corporations that produce between a third and a half of the national product of the United States could be seated comfortably in almost any neighborhood motion-picture theater." 15 Their power was so great that they seemed "more like states within states than simply private businesses." They commanded raw materials, inventions, the workers who produced and the products that he produced. They decided income, the "size and shape of the national economy," the level of employment and prices. 16 Business reached into every area and detail of daily life. One study of a "typical" American city revealed that the leading Business family controlled the city's bank and credit institutions, retained the best law firms, owned the trunk railways leading to the city, was able to keep labor from organizing, had power in the city's retail stores including control of the city's milk, engineered a state college, controlled the local school board, controlled local politics, donated the hospital, and had controlling

15 Galbraith, Capitalism, p. 65.

interest in one of the newspapers.\textsuperscript{17}

Business's power was drawn from several sources.\textsuperscript{18} One source was the very nature of American culture. The Protestant Ethic, the Puritan marriage of religion and material success, and the temporarily realized "unlimited opportunity" of a new continent produced a people who set great value upon production, upon the visible results of efficiently expended effort. In other words, the American gave Business its power when he came to admire it. Another source of Business's power was its role as keeper of American science. In America, science is primarily technology, and technology has long been the honored lode-star of American Business, the means by which Business produces with such dazzling efficiency and with such a minimum of effort. Since American man has, almost from his birth, been identified as technological man, it follows that the keeper of technology should elicit his deepest admiration and hence wield power over him. Still another source of Business's power was its ability to control public opinion, beliefs, and values. Mass production demanded mass assimilation. Business was forced to "sell" its production, and that meant creating markets equivalent to production. Advertising became the means to this end, a business whose

\textsuperscript{17} Lynd, \textit{Middletown}, pp. 77-90.

business it was to create and mold and direct a national climate of desire for production.

The old adage about power corrupting held true in respect to American Business. Business began increasingly to show signs of decadence. Still, pragmatic Americans remained unconcerned so long as things operated smoothly. Then the Depression laid bare the decadence. Suddenly, in the 1930's, a "system where nearly everything worked out for the best ... [seemed to have become] a system where nearly everything worked out for the worst." 19

When the wheels of production began clattering and screeching, Americans began paying more attention. So long as production flowed effortlessly, Americans were willing slaves in Business's sweatshop. But when the machinery showed signs of flying apart, another facet of American character began operating. Americans may admire success and the power that assures success, but they also have been traditionally suspicious of power as a threat to their highly valued freedom. So long as the success appears to be spontaneously achieved and the power remains covert, the American will do happy homage to success; but when the power becomes more obvious than the success, or when the machinery becomes more evident than the production, then power and machinery appear as a threat to freedom and are vigorously attacked as such. The Depression called attention to the machinery and the

19 Galbraith, Capitalism, p. 48.
attack began. Senator Gerald P. Nye chaired a Senate committee that investigated the armament business of World War I. The Committee turned up evidence to indicate excessive profit by J. P. Morgan and the DuPonts, attempts by industry to prolong the War, and indications that Business influenced national war policy. Another committee, headed by Hugo Black, investigated the lobbying tactics of the utility companies. The Committee findings seemed to bear out the "old thesis that the utilities were the source of all corruption and . . . that the power trust was out to take over the government." When Richard Whitney, the Wall Street broker who had served as president of the New York Stock Exchange from 1930 to 1935 went bankrupt, his five-million-dollar failure uncovered his irresponsible speculation, his use of his position to borrow money without adequate collateral, his falsified books and misappropriation of customers' securities. It was a dramatic example of the corruption of Business's power and the American character did not find it difficult to believe that most of Business was just as bad.

A second cause contributing to the role of Business as villain was its conservative stance once the Depression was underway. During the 1920's when the American people felt that they were sharing in business gains, there was little dissension between Business and people. But after 1929, when

the country turned more and more radical in an attempt to end the Depression, Business remained conservative, seeking to consolidate and hold the gains of the past decade. The gulf between Business and people became wide and fixed. Business refused to see that "the menace of depressions is not the production that is sacrificed but the jobs and income that are lost--in short, the threat to economic security." Instead, businessmen felt surrounded by the "'drift into Statism,'" and attacked government relief for the poor. In May, 1934, when the average relief grant was $24.53 per family, a sum the poor found wretchedly inadequate for living, the business community announced that relief should be cut back to balance the national budget. 23

Finally, Business began a sustained and vicious attack on the new President that only made its role as villain more obvious. President Roosevelt’s message of February 9, 1934, asking Congress for legislation to regulate the Stock Exchange, mobilized the business community against him. August, 1934, saw the formation of the American Liberty League, dominated by Northern industry, especially General Motors and DuPont, that served as a vehicle for anti-Roosevelt sentiment. 24 In 1935 the national convention of the Chamber of Commerce broke openly with the New Deal. The same year the Public Utilities

22 Galbraith, Affluent, p. 76.
23 Galbraith, Capitalism, p. 264.
Holding Company Act stimulated a campaign by the utility companies to make Roosevelt appear insane in his "obsession" to end the power of such companies. They rumored that he had had a laughing "fit" and went into "hysteric"s" when the Supreme Court struck down the NRA. When the tax bill of 1935 was proposed (it taxed the moneyed interests hardest), a new wave of rumors circulated. This time it was suggested that Roosevelt was carrying out a personal vendetta upon his moneyed friends and that Communistic influences were directing the President.  

To brand Business as villain is to suggest the national reaction to Business. The American people put the blame for the Depression upon Business—if it took the glory for the boom in the 1920's, it should take the blame for the bust in the 1930's. When a Senate committee under Ferdinand Pecora announced, in 1932, that the investment banker was a shady figure, a manipulator of money who lined his own pockets; that banks were selling out their customers to keep insiders solvent; that the wealthy, while others were in dire need of food, were drawing "astronomical salaries and bonuses" and were at the same time evading taxes; the country was "whipped to a fury at the performance of bankers and business-men."  

It became widely accepted during the Thirties that Capitalism allowed a far too unequal distribution of wealth.

26 Leuchtenburg, Roosevelt, p. 22.
Marx had viewed depression as an inevitable and recurring event in a Capitalistic economy, and here, it seemed, was proof that Marx was right. American Socialism and Communism enjoyed a popularity that it had never known before. Numerous studies were made that found a dangerous concentration of Business power in a few sprawling corporations. Such agitation against the business community, coupled with the widespread loss of economic security and the conservative stance of Business itself, awakened the American's latent suspicion of private Business's power. The near worship of Business in the Twenties soured into distrust in the Thirties. The Hero had become the Villain.

If Business was the villain of the 1930's, then Government, which was the "New Deal," was in some measure the hero. The character of Government during the Thirties was complex. It is beyond the scope and purpose of this study to examine that character in any depth; that has been done thoroughly elsewhere. But since it did exert an important influence upon the thinking of the young men soon to be at arms, it is necessary to make at least a few generalizations concerning the stance of Government during the pre-War decade and the effect it had upon Americans.

27Galbraith, Capitalism, p. 37.

28For a full discussion of the character of the New Deal see: Leuchtenburg, Roosevelt; Schlesinger, Jr., Roosevelt; James MacGregor Burns, Roosevelt: The Lion and the Fox (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, Inc., 1956). The following discussion has drawn upon these works.
Perhaps the most central characteristic of the early New Deal was its experimental nature. When Franklin D. Roosevelt became President in 1933, the country was floundering badly and Hoover's policy of waiting for the economy to right itself had achieved very little. The new President brought with him a spirit of energy and grit and promise that inspired hope. He also brought with him a flock of faces new to national politics. The variety of ideas that they represented began the fermentation out of which was to grow the early attempts at relief, recovery, and reform. Roosevelt, whose strength lay not in originality but in eclecticism, used whatever he and his advisors thought would work. If one method failed, he was willing to try another.

Roosevelt's buoyant campaign for President at first captured the admiration of the business community. With the stock market collapsed, with banks in every section of the country going under, with production grinding to a standstill, Business was in a state of shock. Roosevelt, who, after all, was "one of them," seemed to promise hope. Their hope was soon shaken. In his inaugural address the President lay the lion's share of blame on the "'money-changers'" who had "'fled from their high seats in the temple.'"

The New Deal focused its attention first upon relief and recovery, and later upon reform. But regardless of the focus, Business felt that it revealed the businessman in the worst possible light. Relief took from Business to assist the poor.
Recovery demanded that Business help clean up a mess for which it denied responsibility. Reform stung the businessman most of all, for, he felt, it pointed the finger of guilt directly at him. And he was not wrong. The objective of the New Deal has been described as "the determination to use democratic means somehow or other to give the plain people a better break in a darkly confusing world." That "better break" meant reform, and reform meant an attack upon the established economic interests, an attack upon Business. Given such a protagonist and such an antagonist, there was something of the inevitability of Greek tragedy in the way their paths moved inexorably toward confrontation.

As the decade wore on the conflict between Business and Government became more and more serious. There were skirmishes and full scale battles. When the economy, which had gradually strengthened, hit a recession in 1937, the administration blamed Business for not taking up the slack when Government cut back its spending program. Roosevelt's Secretary of the Interior, Harold Ickes, warned Americans of "'big business fascism.'" The Democratic Party itself split; a bloc developed in Congress with the unifying purpose of defeating any New Deal legislation. Roosevelt asked Congress for funds to investigate concentrated economic power. A federal wages and

29 The following discussion has been drawn from: Schlesinger, Jr., Roosevelt, III; Leuchtenburg, Roosevelt.
hours bill was passed but over such strong opposition that it required the use of every "parliamentary weapon in the administration's arsenal."\textsuperscript{30}

The bitterness and the depth of the division between Business and Government may be illustrated by the labor situation, a brushfire action that lasted through the decade. During the 1930's there was a general increase in labor union consciousness and a new militancy among laborers. The New Deal played no small part in labor's new attitudes. The National Recovery Act with its section 7a that provided for labor's right to organize and bargain for wages and hours suggested that the New Deal was not anti-labor and convinced labor that a coalition with the New Deal was in their best interest. But Business resisted the union. In 1934 there was a series of violent strikes. Milwaukee streetcar workers crippled streetcars, Philadelphia cabbies burned a hundred cabs, New York cabbies drove their cabs off the streets; farm workers, electrical workers, copper miners, cooks, waiters and textile workers went on strike. In Minneapolis war erupted with truckdrivers pitted against a "citizen's army" of Business leaders. Two of the businessmen were killed, sixty-five wounded. In San Francisco two strikers were killed; many were wounded.\textsuperscript{31} Then in 1935 the Supreme Court, in the

Scheckter brothers' case, ruled the NRA unconstitutional. Business felt relief; labor grew tense. Later in the same year the Wagner Act, creating the National Labor Relations Board and giving labor the right to organize and bargain without employer interference, became law. The Wagner Act seemed sure proof that the New Deal was pro-labor, and labor was determined to reap the full benefits of the Act. The next year, 1937, saw an unprecedented rash of strikes across the nation. When Government refused to lend support or encouragement to either side, Business charged that the New Deal was clearly and openly anti-Business, and, perversely, labor's John L. Lewis took Roosevelt's "hands off" policy as a betrayal of labor and dropped his support of the administration.

Such a set of attitudes, multiplied across the nation, erupted time and again in incidents of bitter recriminations and violence. All America was involved. Everyone knew his enemy. The attitudes on both sides had hardened until the thumbed nose was the mildest response either could muster.

The most explosive case of nose-thumbing was the Supreme Court's "attack" on New Deal legislation and President Roosevelt's subsequent Court "packing" plan. By 1935 the Supreme Court seemed ready to annul New Deal legislation. In 1935 and 1936 federal judges issued nearly sixteen hundred injunctions preventing federal officials from carrying out

32 This paragraph is drawn largely from Schlesinger, Jr., *Roosevelt, III*. 

federal laws. On May 27, 1935, Black Monday, the Court declared through the Schechter brothers' case that the NRA was unconstitutional. Later the AAA was struck down, the Securities and Exchange Commission was impeached, the Guffey Act fell, the Municipal Bankruptcy Act was thrown out, and finally, the Court's Morehead vs. Tipaldo decision ended the New York state law establishing minimum wages. It seemed as though the entire New Deal would go down before the onslaught of the Court. Business was happy for the first time since the 1934 elections. The Supreme Court seemed to be coming to their rescue, like the U.S. Cavalry, in the nick of time. But the President suggested ominously that if the Court continued its attack there would be marching farmers, miners, and workingmen throughout America. He proposed a Court "packing" plan aimed at streamlining the Federal Courts and making them more sympathetic to New Deal legislation.

The American people were deeply disturbed by the open division they saw. The majority of Americans supported the New Deal. In fact, Roosevelt had become the "natural leader of all Americans who felt themselves excluded by the Business tradition--farmers, workers, intellectuals, Southerners, Negroes, ethnic minorities, women." People everywhere identified with the cheerful smile, the indefatigable spirit, the lightly passed-off leg brace. And when they identified

33 Schlesinger, Jr., Roosevelt, III, p. 411.
with the man, they accepted his enemies as their enemies; his battles became their battles. But at the same time they had misgivings. The current of American respect for law and constitution runs deeply. Thus there could not help but be apprehension and ambivalence among the supporters of the New Deal when its leader attacked the judicial system.

There was also a segment of the population, small at first but picking up strength throughout the decade, that was from the start hostile to the New Deal. Business, of course, courted this group. Disgruntled and discarded New Dealers joined its ranks. Then, toward the end of the decade, Congress and more substantial segments of the general populace threw in with them. In the 1938 elections the Republicans picked up eighty-one seats in the House of Representatives and eight in the Senate. There developed, possibly by design, national hysteria about Roosevelt's becoming a "dictator"; the President's Court packing plan was their exhibit A. This same year a House Committee on Un-American Activities, under chairman Martin Dies, began hearings on Communist infiltration in America. The charge was made that the New Deal was a Communist strategem, and though the charge was proven farcical, the suspicion did not easily die. When, in the face of a growing challenge from European Fascism, Roosevelt sought to rebuild American defenses, his opposition loudly charged that he was sympathetic to the Russian plight, that

34 This paragraph is drawn largely from Leuchtenburg, *Roosevelt*, pp. 271-84.
he had a fascistic power complex himself, and that he could not solve domestic problems and therefore turned to foreign problems to divert attention from his failure. The bright optimism of the first "one hundred days" had by 1939 become a domestic crisis charged with acrimonious recriminations.

The spirit of divisiveness came from more than just the Business-Government rift, for Government was faced with more than one antagonist. The conservative business community may have been the most significant and the most dangerous adversary, but the New Deal also suffered vigorous attack from the far Right and Left flanks.

The range of attacks from the Right was wide. It included the mild Southern Agrarians, a group of Southern intellectuals who announced in I'll Take My Stand their gentle resistance to the "common or American industrial ideal." They took a skeptical view of the "Cult of Science," saw labor as a happy function rather than as a necessary means of survival, and deplored the cycle of "labor-saving" invention, consequent unemployment, and reemployment at a new industry, marketing a product that is soon made obsolete by a new invention that starts the cycle again. It included also H. L. Mencken, whose powerful voice had lost much of its sting, but who still attacked the New Deal as being "lunatic." Instead of patient hard work to rebuild a crumbling society, Mencken claimed

that Americans demanded easy medicine; hand out jobs, hand out relief, hand out hand-outs. Such a "New Deal" was worse than Marxism for it had no power.  

The far Right was occupied by a covey of demagogues, chief of which were Huey P. Long, Father Charles Coughlin, and the American fascists. Huey Long, the iron-willed "king" of Louisiana, organized and propagandized his "Share the Wealth" program for rebuilding America, a program that proposed such revolutionary ideas as limiting the personal fortunes of the rich, granting all men a homestead allowance and a guaranteed annual income, limiting work hours, balancing agricultural output and granting pensions for all over sixty years and free college education to the capable. The program may have been economic foolishness, but it struck a responsive chord in the depressed nation.

Father Charles E. Coughlin was a Catholic priest who used his national radio program to predict revolution in America. He railed against the encroachment of Communism, attacked Capitalism, and eventually degenerated into bombast and demagoguery directed against the Jews. He denounced Roosevelt as a liar and a hypocrite. He finally even turned


37 Schlesinger, Jr., Roosevelt, III, pp. 62-63. Long is considered "right" here in spite of his liberal program because of his demagoguery, his apparent urge to power, and his appointment of G. K. Smith, a man with fascist leanings, as his second in command.
on the Catholics.

The American fascists, a small and disunited group, added their voice to the rising cacophony of dissatisfaction and the rhetoric of threat. Seward Collins and his American Review aligned themselves with Mussolini and Hitler. Ezra Pound publically denounced America and turned to Italian fascism. Lawrence Dennis' The Coming of American Fascism prophesied the end of Capitalism and predicted fascism as America's only hope. Art J. Smith's Khaki Shirt movement sought the abolition of Congress. William Dudley Pelley's Silver Shirts saw in America one central issue, the removal of the Jew from power. A more serious threat than any of these groups was William Randolph Hearst's campaign against Communism in America. His "hunt" for communists set off a twelve month period of civil liberties violations that the American Civil Liberties Union said contained "'a greater variety and number of serious violations of civil liberties than any year since the war.'"

The range of factions on the Left was only a little less broad than that on the Right. There were, for example, such "thoughtful radicals" as: Floyd B. Olson, the governor of Minnesota, who advocated government take-over of key industries; Bob and Phil LaFollette, who, in 1934, launched in Wisconsin the Progressive Party dedicated to a "cooper-

38 Most of the above information was drawn from Schlesinger, Jr., Roosevelt, III, pp. 19-88, 628-29.
ative society" and who won a governorship (Phil) and a United States Senate seat (Bob); Fiorello H. La Guardia of New York, who fused western Progressivism with the needs and emotions of the city, who loved the defenseless and hated oppressors, and who, as mayor of New York City, instituted broad reform measures; Alfred Bingham and Selden Rodman, co-editors of Common Sense, the "most lively and interesting forum of radical discussion in the country"; Charles A. Beard, who saw America becoming a "collectivist democracy" with Government big enough to cope with Business; John Dewey, who felt that capitalism had to be destroyed and that only organized social planning could cure America's ills; Reinhold Niebuhr, who held that man was evil, power oriented, and that only power could control him; and such others as Senator George Norris, Senator Burton K. Wheeler, Representative Maury Maverick and Upton Sinclair.39

The Socialist Party was also a part of the Left in the 1930's. But the Socialist Party was tired, was so badly split that it could not take advantage of the favorable climate, and was losing its program to the New Deal.

By far the loudest and most vigorous group on the Left was the Communist Party. Communism in America crescendoed during the Depression. In 1931 the Communist Party of America had 8,000 members. By 1933 the number had doubled and was on

39 Schlesinger, Jr., Roosevelt, III, 96-162.
American Communism drew glamor from Communist success in the Soviet Union, impetus from the threat of European fascism that drove idealistic youth into Communism, and stature from the intellectuals that supported the Party. The latter was no small factor. The Party's American Writer's Congress of 1935 had the support of John Dos Passos, Theodore Dreiser, James T. Farrell, Waldo Frank, Lewis Mumford, Malcolm Cowley, Erskine Caldwell, and Nelson Algren. Harold J. Laski, professor at the London School of Economics, Sidney Hook, professor of philosophy at New York University, and Max Eastman of the New Masses were widely known and influential Party members. But the Party's major appeal was its "certitudes," its ready intellectual and psychological answers, and its assurance that it alone represented America's future.

But the Communist Party of America had its problems; it was beset by internal division and defections. In 1934 it lost an important segment of its intellectual following, the defectors explaining in "An Open Letter to American Intellectuals": "When the Socialist Party and a number of trade unions assembled 20,000 workers in Madison Square Garden to protest against the killing of the Austrian workers by Fascists and against Fascist tendencies in the U.S., the Communist Party deliberately broke up that meeting, and by that act of monstrous and irresponsible treachery proved its..."
utter unfitness to lead and direct an effective revolutionary movement." The letter called for a new and responsible revolutionary party, for a mass desertion of the Communist Party. In 1936 the Moscow Trials and Stalin's purge of the Soviet Party created another divisive issue. Only the threat of Hitler, Mussolini, and Franco prevented wholesale withdrawal of American Party members. The American Communists were, after all, idealists, and Fascism seemed to them a more immediate and a more dangerous problem. Still American discomfort with the Moscow Trials could not be erased by a party-line moratorium order; an uneasy conscience remained within the ranks.

When the Spanish Civil War broke out the Communists found a new unity. In Spain the masses, the workers, were pitted against the Fascists. The Communist call went out for aid, support, manpower, unified support for the poorly equipped peasants. But once again, even with an ideal cause, the discrepancy between Communist ideology and hypocritical Communist activity in Spain caused disillusionment.

Then, on August 22, 1939, Stalin signed the Non-aggression Pact with Nazi Germany. Such an about-face in Party line was a pill that could not be swallowed in America. There was mass defection. Only the most blindly loyal remained in the Party. Alfred Kazin wrote that on that morning "the Second

World War had begun," and he could only feel bitter angry scorn for those who "had lived from day to day in the Depression dreaming of the new life that would come to human beings under socialism," and who now admired Stalin's cleverness in saving Russia while condemning the French, English, Danes, Norwegians, and Greeks to death.\textsuperscript{42} The Communist Party was severely weakened by Stalin's action. Many disillusioned Communists became informers in order to make clear their new anti-Communist position and expurgate their guilt. Those who remained in the Party no longer had the \textit{elan} that had previously made them honest radicals.\textsuperscript{43}

So the noise of ideological and political conflict grew. Voices from far Right and Left, from Business and Labor, from Court and Congress, and from President and political candidates were raised in grim prediction, in hopeful promise, and in angry recrimination. Most Americans were bewildered by events and confused by explanations and charges, counter-explanations and counter-charges. It is therefore understandable that the young man who would write the fiction of World War II, who had heard reform denounced as narrow and hypocritical, who had seen hedonism fall apart under adversity, who was forced to form his ideas and learn his attitudes amidst the babble of ideological confusion; it is understandable that this young man should view his future and his country's future with a

\textsuperscript{42}Kazin, \textit{Starting Out}, pp. 139-40.

\textsuperscript{43}Kazin, \textit{Starting Out}, p. 161.
jaundiced eye.

III. Patterns of Thought and Action in the 1930’s

The feud between Business and Government and the ideological confusion contributed by the Right and the Left were major factors in developing the attitudes that Americans carried into the war years of the 1940’s. But the effect of these factors on attitudes was uneven. Some Americans were deeply and personally involved in the politics of the decade. Others were only incidentally affected by the ideological climate that surrounded them. But there were none who were not directly and profoundly involved in the social mores that will be considered here.

A study of everyday patterns of action and thought is a study as broad and diverse as human life itself. It is therefore imperative that focus be provided for any discussion of this topic. Focus here will be upon class structure, family life, and morality. Each of these contributed significantly toward the set of character that the young man was to take with him into his war.

Class structure in America exerted an important influence upon the patterns of action and thought characteristic of the American in the 1930’s. America in story and song is the "land of the Free" where, following the example of Benjamin Franklin, no man takes his hat off to any king. American society is, so the story runs, classless; any man
can attain the maximum of his capabilities. The twentieth century American began to question the fable; by the 1930's he was vigorously denying it.

Class structure in America is largely economic. The upper class is the moneyed class, primarily a business class. The closer to the top of this class one goes, the more rigid and impossible of access the structure becomes. The middle class is composed of salaried white collar workers who are oriented toward the values of their employers. The high degree of mobility within this class, both upward and downward, results in a high degree of anxiety among its members. The working class lies below, but tends to think of itself as part of, the middle class. Yet it is with the middle class that America's worker has his sharpest confrontations. The American working man acts within the frame of American values, "peaceful when he can be, violent when he must, an economic man most of the time, a political man in the great crises, an individualist when he can indulge himself in that luxury, but acting with class solidarity when he can do no other."  

Where the openness in American society actually existed, it existed as interpenetration of and mobility between classes. But by the twentieth century the American faced a

45 Lerner, p. 498.
growing rigidity of class line and stasis within class. Since American culture invites social mobility upwards by its haunting mystique of "ambition equals success," when the mobility is shut off and success denied as it was during the Thirties, the result is, predictably, disillusionment with the entire society.

What made disillusionment with the American class system even worse during the 1930's was the collapse of the core of the system. Status, and hence class, in America is primarily realized in economic terms. Success most often comes in terms of money accrued or manipulated, salary potential, occupational position over other individuals, or geographic location (dictated by financial capability) in the community. But the Depression clearly revealed the fickleness of economic success and, by association, the hollowness of America's class values. The myth of classlessness and equality of opportunity had dissolved into dissatisfaction.

The importance of family life in establishing and modifying the attitudes of youth is particularly important to this study. The Depression wrecked havoc with established patterns of family behavior. A study made during the early years of the Depression revealed a subtle breakdown of family ties, a "growing restlessness of the younger generation by the relaxation of discipline and lessened contact with their children by harried working-class parents."\textsuperscript{46} The father,

\textsuperscript{46} Lynd, \textit{Middletown}, p. 152.
long the symbol of authority, found his position undercut. When he lost his job and could not adequately perform his function as provider, his success-oriented society saw him as a failure, and his children came to see their father in a new and unpleasant way. Adding to the loosening family structure was the emancipation of the American woman, a process begun earlier but accelerated during the Thirties. The father's weakened position and the mother's strengthened position may help to account for some of the sexual problems given the American soldier by the World War II novelists.

Family behavior was further affected by the reduction to subsistence standards brought about by the Depression. Many families were forced to send any member who could work in search of a job. The family could then no longer perform in the same fashion the "old functions of economic production, religious cohesion, kinship continuity, educational and cultural transmission." It became instead a "consumption unit" spending the combined salaries of all of its working members. Where family cohesion remained, it existed in terms of common economic goals and fostered economic equality among its working members. But all too often cohesiveness simply vanished as the ties loosened. The "home" remained high in the American's hierarchy of nostalgic values, but in practice "home life" meant far less to him than it ever had before.

47 Lerner, p. 551.
The Depression decade provided the younger members of the family with more than the usual problems faced by American youth in the maturing process. The usual problems were there and had to be faced; and the usual problems were not easy ones to solve. There was, for example, the need to adjust into adult American society. American culture has generally been both permissive and restrictive with its youth; it may restrict by law but neglect to prosecute, or permit freedom of choice but pressure to choose "correctly." And always there is the pressure of the parental assumption that the child will "do well," be "popular," be a "leader," a "success," "adjusted" and "happy." Even if the pressure is not directly parental it is implicit in the culture. The child is given heroes who "made it big," men such as Thomas Edison, Henry Ford, Babe Ruth, Humphrey Bogart, Fiorello H. La Guardia or even Al Capone. Moreover, unless he is in the select upper class, the youth is expected to make his own way and to rise above the station of his parents. Thus he is taught on the one hand to aspire, and on the other hand to remain practical; on the one hand equality and on the other hand to excel over others; on the one hand to "think big" and on the other hand that dreaming is a waste of time; on the one hand to be self-sufficient and on the other hand that "connections" count; on the one hand to be slave to no man and on the other hand that social acceptance

Lerner, pp. 544 ff.
will "open doors." In trying to establish himself amid such conflicting emphases, the youth must reconcile the "cultural image" that inevitably tends toward conformity and his own "identity image" that generally clashes with the former; if the reconciliation can not be effected, the result is his alienation from society.

Such problems are usual for the American youth. But the 1930's added new dimensions to the problems. The previous decade had permitted parents to be lavish with their children, and youth began to accept the affluence of the Twenties as a normal pattern. The faddish popularity of psychology in the 1920's and 1930's put Freud and then the behaviorists in the hands of parents. The parent came to accept the view that the child was the product of cultural stimuli and had no responsibility for his own character and conduct. Naturally, the child quickly learned the new rules and made full use of his "innocence." The parents, in an attempt to control environmental influence, built a substitute world for the child, a world of social lesson stories, organized play, parties and "gifts." Such a world was hardly relevant to the problems of the real world; and as the parent lavished more attention on the child, the child paid less deference to his parent. Still worse, the child was now less able to face the usual problems of maturing into the adult world. So he remained in the transitional period for a longer time and there developed
that sub-culture known as the "teenagers." To make matters even more complicated, the 1920's had idealized this youthful sub-culture. The parent took up youth inspired national fads in dress, slang, games and leisure activities, attempting to look and speak and act much as his children looked and spoke and acted. Such adult behavior reinforced the natural carefree attitudes of youth and made entry into maturity still more difficult. The breach between what his culture told him he should be, and what he found it possible and easiest to be, widened. Then came the Depression. The affluence, the carefree life, the glamor evaporated. The stark realities of life were no longer hidden behind money, and youth was ill-prepared to deal with such realities. Little wonder that the usual reaction was one of distrust and disillusionment with the adult world. The young American began questioning the future instead of simply taking the future for granted as he had in the 1920's. He wished to be assimilated by his culture but felt unwanted and unneeded by his community. His parents, suddenly immersed in the problems of supplying life's necessities, could not quite understand the disaffection of their child; but they knew that their child was not accepting the traditional answers. The Lynd study of Middletown found that "among the younger generation, one can find everything from smoldering rebellion to a determined success pattern
that outdoes that of their elders when young." The working-class children, in school and just out of school, were the most disillusioned and rebellious, but a significant proportion of the more educated youth were in quiet revolt against "the system," working for some socialistic system that they felt would inevitably come. The general pattern, the Lynd study concluded, was that youth had become "harder boiled."

The family's use of leisure time also added to the discontent of the decade. Here the conflict between the culture's orientation toward success and the facts of an industrial and technological society was in sharp focus. Long before the Depression, mechanization had provided the working force with more leisure. But the cultural emphasis upon success by dint of hard work made leisure suspect. Leisure was to be "spent" and spent "profitably." With the Depression and unemployment, leisure increased drastically and became a severe burden. But burden or not, leisure time was used. Sports, especially baseball, became a national craze. If you could not afford the price of a ticket, you could certainly listen to the radio broadcast of the game in a tavern or with a group of friends. The moving picture industry came into its own during this decade. Films were made about love stories, successful-rise-above-insurmountable-obstacle stories, musical

49 Lynd, Middletown, p. 484.
extravaganzas; there were melodramatic serials and only a few socially conscious films. People flocked to see the latest film. The movies provided them with escape from sordid reality, and the sentimentalized plots elaborated on the life of the rich, the "big time" racketeer or the Hollywood star. The movies killed time, and if you were on the road they provided a warm place to sleep. There was an increase in reading during the decade, with the emphasis, quite naturally, upon fiction. The radio was widely owned and was perhaps the most popular form of family entertainment. The automobile was a close rival to the radio as a means of using leisure time. It provided the family with a Sunday drive and the son with an aid in courtship. But no matter how leisure was spent, there was too much of it. Time hung heavy; unemployed hours could not be productively filled. And that meant too much time to think about the state of the nation and the grim prospects of the future.

The Depression years also brought about a change in "morality." Underlying most any morality, of course, is a current of religious sentiment, and America has traditionally been a religiously conscious nation. But American religious tradition is complicated by a basic conflict, for it "is at once deeply individualist, anti-authoritarian, concerned with sin and salvation, yet secular and rationalist in its life goals . . . with its emphasis on man's

50 Lynd, Middletown, pp. 253-54.
relation to his own conscience and therefore to his private religious judgment."\textsuperscript{51} The conflict thus lies between the American's secular social goals and the religious conscience that overlays American culture with a sense of agony and evil.\textsuperscript{52} This conflict and the choice which it presents, a choice which Americans believe every man must make, is the source of much of the nation's psychic turmoil.

During the 1920's there was an attempt to weld the social and the religious ethics. Business was elevated to the status of a religion. Religion was lowered to the level of social consciousness. Under the strain that the Depression created, the weld that united the ethics broke, and hence the girders of the double standard implicit in such a union were left standing naked. What was now revealed as social evil had once been advocated in the name of religious good. The cant and the practice did not jibe. It became clear that, as C. W. Mills put it later: "A great deal of American corruption—although not all of it—is simply a part of the old effort to get rich and then to become richer."\textsuperscript{53} The collapse of Business and the consequent revelation of its shady practices seemed ample evidence for what had been suspected all along: that "the bigger you are, the less

\textsuperscript{51}Lerner, p. 705.
\textsuperscript{52}Lerner, pp. 705-06.
\textsuperscript{53}Mills, p. 346.
likely you are to be caught. . . . that all the petty cases seem to signify something grander, that they go deeper and that their roots are now well organized in the higher and middle American way of life. . . . "\(^{54}\) Thus Depression youth came to accept the "immorality of accomplishment"; that there was no essential connection between success and morality. And they learned to despise hypocrisy and moral sham.

The general reaction against religion and moral hypocrisy, the disillusionment with many ethical values, the emphasis upon youth and uninhibited action, and the increased leisure no doubt all contributed in some degree to the more permissive attitude toward sex and love.

Americans have traditionally honored the state of being in love. The American view follows the romantic tradition of the middle-ages with its self-conscious sorrow, triumph and irrationalities. Romantic love, the American believes, must lead to marriage, and the ultimate goal of marriage is "happiness"; marriage is to be an end to loneliness and the anxiety over sexual fulfillment. Not only is it to lead to happiness, it is often enough viewed as a means of salvation from the horrors of reality. Alfred Kazin recalls his early years during the Depression: "Everyone I knew talked of love as a shield against loneliness. On this bare ground that held us up under

\(^{54}\) Mills, p. 341.
a leaden sky, it was marriage that would save us." A view of love and marriage that is so idealized will most likely end in disillusionment over the realities of married life. And for Americans disillusionment is not an unusual reaction to marriage.

The American's romanticized view of love and marriage is complicated by an uncharacteristically rigid view of sexual behavior. The usual American permissiveness becomes stern control in the area of sex. But biological need and the bouyant American spirit combine to function outside of the accepted controls. Sex thus takes on furtive, suggestive, but rapturously exciting, overtones. It is sin, and will be followed by guilt, but the price only makes the product more exciting.

America's rigid view of sexual behavior underwent a revolution in the 1920's and 1930's. The revolt "asserted three freedoms: the freedom to break the formal codes; the freedom to diverge from the majority sexual patterns into deviant behavior; the freedom to lead a fully expressive sexual life in the pursuit of happiness." During the Twenties Americans began openly to disregard the controls. The old codes that forbid playing with such sexual fire as

55 Kazin, Starting Out, pp. 121-22.
56 Lerner, p. 677.
57 Lerner, p. 687.
kissing and public bathing were still operative; but behavior did not follow the accepted codes. The right to break the codes was consciously practiced, and in the vanguard of the rule breaking was the American woman. She began asserting her rights and her equality as a sexual partner. Her new boldness and independence may have freed her, but it tended to imprison the American male, for he often lost sexual confidence and sought other ways of asserting his masculinity. The sexual revolution also involved a new attitude toward sexual deviants. Homosexuality became an increasingly important and increasingly baffling problem.\textsuperscript{58} Americans became more willing to treat the Problem with humanity, but they were still unwilling to accept it as a satisfactory way of life.

The change in attitudes toward sex continued into the Depression, into "a world torn by social struggle and personal insecurity"; and the incertitude "led in turn to . . . excesses of sexual cynicism and normlessness."\textsuperscript{59} With the future so uncertain, marriages were postponed. At the same time open discussion of and experimentation with sex was inherited from the previous decade. The obvious result was an increase in premarital sex. One Depression study suggests that: ". . . increasing high-

\textsuperscript{58}Lerner, p. 683.

\textsuperscript{59}Lerner, p. 688.
school sophistication may likewise be viewed as an effort on the part of baffled, uncertain individuals to resolve their perplexities by bold, outwardly confident action patterned perhaps not so much upon the lives of their own cautious parents as upon one or another of [the] alternative other worlds about them." The same study further indicates that the Depression probably "increased both the number of available girls and women [prostitutes] and the ease with which they can be 'picked up,'" that picking up girls became more common, and that increasingly the girls picked up were not professional prostitutes.

Thus the breach between what was preached and what was openly practiced brought the young American to scorn the preachments; it provided yet another source of his general disillusionment with his society. By 1939 the young men who were soon to be inducted and stenciled Government Issue ranged in age from eighteen to twenty-eight years. They were themselves the jobless, the homeless, the hungry, the laborer or sons of the jobless and homeless. They were also learning the realities of national conflict. They heard and joined in the national dissension over economic, political, ideological and moral issues. They became involved, if not by choice then by necessity, in the

---

internecine feuding that characterized the decade in which they came of age.
CHAPTER TWO

PRE-WAR LITERATURE

One of the most important factors influencing the attitudes of Depression youth, and particularly the young man who would write the World War II novel, was the literature that they read. Mostly, they read "modern" literature; the general distrust of what was past or old made contemporary authors more appealing, and the spirit of disillusionment, or even of defeat, that was characteristic of the literature written during the Twenties seemed to fit their mood and the facts of their world.

The spirit of disillusionment, or of defeat, was caused primarily by World War I. The typical American male of fighting age in 1914 was an idealist, a naif who had been nurtured on Democratic ideals, Progressive politics, Victorian morality, and the optimism of a nation burgeoning into unparalleled industrial and scientific expansion. Convinced by war propaganda that the Hun was a black-hearted destroyer of civilized ideals, and impatient that America did not move at once to the rescue of the valorous Allies fighting their desperate holding action, he enlisted for duty, most often as a non-combatant, with a foreign army. In this capacity he got his first view of war. What he saw
shocked him deeply, traumatically. His perspective as an observer, in the war but not of the war, made him more a critic and less an involved participant. His job, often that of ambulance driver, gave him endless opportunity to see the effects of war—the maimed, the dying, the dead. His volunteer position with a foreign army gave him status and privilege so that he could sit sipping absinthe while watching the slack-faced infantrymen march to the front and death. He did not fight, but he did get close enough to the fighting to experience its terror, even close enough to be wounded. He saw that no one won; the war dragged on through rain, mud, cold; the same blasted area of no-man's land would be taken, lost, and retaken, all at great cost in lives; heavy barrages of artillery, let loose by an impersonal enemy that was never seen and could therefore never be punished, fell indiscriminately, killing haphazardly. The whole experience of dying, and privilege, and terror, and chance mutilation was more than his idealistic and sensitive nature could bear.

This is the discovery that John Dos Passos has Martin Howe experience in One Man's Initiation (1920). Martin is an innocent American with illusions about the world and the war; he enlists as an ambulance driver and soon has his illusions shattered. He replaces his original optimism with other illusions, this time turning to social reform as the means to a better world. When circumstances conspire to
dissolve even these illusions, Martin is thoroughly disillu-

Hemingway's *In Our Time* (1924) has Nick Adams come to much the same discovery. This book of short stories, interlaced with vignettes of violent action and death, is a record of how Nick was shocked out of the sleepy innocence of his mid-western boyhood and educated into a knowledge of the violent world. He found that the proper response to life was to endure its violence, and the largest step in his education was his double wounding in World War I.

The protagonist of E. E. Cummings' *The Enormous Room* (1922) learns from a similar textbook. Cummings, out of his own experience in the "enormous room" of a French "preliminary prison" where he was sent for giving flippant responses during a French military hearing, suggests a philosophy of war "compounded equally of resignation, hatred for all authority, and an almost abstract cynicism."

The emotional shock occasioned by the facts of war did not stop with disillusion about the war itself. War was waged by nations; nations had priorities, values; their values were obviously wrong if they could lead to the holocaust of war, and if, into the bargain, the values did not provide the necessary moral support needed to face that war. So the young soldier-writer experienced a sense of

moral loss. He brought his characters to see the old
Democratic ideals and Victorian morality as hypocritical
veneer, as meaningless, as irrelevant. It is in this spirit
of disillusionment that Dos Passos has John Andrews of Three
Soldiers (1921) desert his army duty and Hemingway has
Frederick Henry pronounce his now famous denial in A
Farewell to Arms (1929). Frederick, who has learned to
distrust the rhetoric of idealism, could be speaking for
most American soldiers in World War I fiction when he says:

I was always embarrassed by the words sacred, glorious,
and sacrifice and the expression in vain. . . . I had
seen nothing sacred, and the things that were glorious
had no glory and the sacrifices were like the stock­
yards at Chicago if nothing was done with the meat
except to bury it. There were many words that you
could not stand to hear and finally only the names of
places had dignity. Certain numbers were the same
way and certain dates and these with the names of
places were all you could say and have them mean
anything. Abstract words such as glory, honor,
courage, or hallow were obscene beside the concrete
names of villages. . . .

Frederick, faced with the ideals of religion, patriotism,
humanitarianism and love, rejects or loses each of them and
is finally left with only one thing in which he can believe--
the certainty of death. 3 Death, the central fact of war,
became the central fact of life as well, for the postwar
writers learned to see all life as a kind of war. They

2Ernest Hemingway, A Farewell to Arms (New York:

3James F. Light, "The Religion of Death in A Farewell
to Arms," Modern Fiction Studies, 7 (Summer, 1961), 169-73.
encouraged living life intensely because somewhere along the line, as J. W. Aldridge has noted, there awaited Nothing.

"If the war hurt them, as it hurt Frederick Henry, they became numb and stopped thinking and believing. It was not their war anymore. If love died they stopped believing in love too and began believing in sex. If everything collapsed and they were left with nothing, that too was all right. They began believing in nothing."\(^4\)

Maxwell Geismar, in *Writers in Crisis*, suggests that such "cultural negation" is a pattern that runs through the writing of the Twenties.\(^5\) It has been demonstrated above in Dos Passos and Hemingway. It is certainly in Cummings, for "as Cummings saw it, the world was composed of brutal sensations and endured only by a fiercely desperate courage and love."\(^6\) It is in H. L. Mencken who, "as an agnostic, a determinist, and a pluralist in one person, could only draw attention to the stupidity of man's conduct at home and in public and make him aware of his insignificant position in the universe."\(^7\) It is evident in his technique which was to "invert conventional prejudices. To a Protestant America


he proclaimed himself a Nietzschean; to a moral America, an atheist; to the Anti-Saloon League mind, a devotee of the fine art of drinking; to a provincial America, a citizen of the world." It is in Sherwood Anderson who "saw the chasm of fear in America—the fear of sex, the fear of telling the truth about the hypocrisy of those businessmen with whom he too had reached for 'the bitch-goddess of success.'" It is in Sinclair Lewis, "the bright modern satirist who wrote each of his early books as an assault on American smugness, provincialism, ignorance and bigotry." And it is in Fitzgerald. Even when he was presenting post-war America as a glittering playground, Fitzgerald was doing it with characters that knew, or were soon to learn, that, as Aldridge points out: "For the beautiful there is always damnation; for every tenderness there is always the black horror of night; for all the bright young men there is sadness... The sense of impending catastrophe is never more deeply or terribly felt than when we are immersed, and seem almost destined to be drowned, in the welter of life with which Fitzgerald presents us: the end of the big party is always implicit in its beginning, the ugliness of

8 Kazin, Native, p. 159.
9 Kazin, Native, pp. 169-70.
10 Kazin, Native, p. 174.
age is always visible in the tender beauty of youth."  

Defeat, disillusion, lostness; these are one half of the stock-in-trade themes in the literature of the Twenties. The other half is exile and alienation. The alienation which many young Americans of the 1920's felt was expressed in two ways; by actual physical exile and by exile of the spirit.

The facts of physical exile in the 1920's have often been noted. Malcolm Cowley's *Exile's Return*, for example, is a book length study of the exile. Cowley suggests that many young Americans, novelists, poets, reporters, artists, intellectuals, "were convinced at the time that society could never be changed by an effort of the will."  

The war had destroyed their illusions about America and its values, had destroyed any hope they may once have had in political action. They felt that their only course, since they could not bear to live the lie in America, was to go to France where the artist was free. There in their "second country" they became a coterie of self-conscious exiles. They wrote, they drank, they loafed, they visited one another, they made love, and time passed. The pattern of exile, according to Cowley, was: "the separation from home, the effects of service in the ambulance corps, the exile in France, . . .

---


bohemianism, the religion of art, the escape from society, the effort to defend one's individuality even at the cost of sterility and madness, then the final period of demoralization when the whole philosophical structure crumbled from within. . . ."\(^{13}\) This final period, when the money had run out, when they finally realized that their European counterpart was seeking America as intensely as the American had sought France, when they were forced to conclude that America was no worse than Europe, when they discovered that a "second country" was just that; this period saw them come home. Their physical exile had ended; still they remained exiles in spirit, for "Their real exile was from society itself, from any society to which they could honestly contribute and from which they could draw the strength that lies in shared convictions."\(^{14}\) The physical exile, like the revolt of the Dada movement in Paris, had been a gesture; the real exile had always been that of the spirit.

The alienation in spirit that the writers of the Twenties felt was a pervasive phenomena. It is reflected in the number and the importance of departure scenes in the fiction of the period. Take, for example, the final scenes of the most important novels by the most important novelists. Dos Passos' *Three Soldiers* ends with John Andrews, who has

\(^{13}\)Cowley, *Return*, p. 247.

deserted his Army duty, leaving his room in Paris where he had fled to compose music. He follows the Military Police down the steps to the street while the pages of his precious composition "blew off the table, until the floor was littered with them." Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms* takes departure as a theme and plays out scene after scene of departure, actual and symbolic, usually in the rain. The final scene pulls them all together. Catherine has taken her final departure; she has died in childbirth. Frederick, alone with her body, can only conclude that: "It was like saying good-by to a statue. After a while I went out and left the hospital and walked back to the hotel in the rain." The final scene of Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* finds Nick, "with my trunk packed and my car sold to the grocer," saying good-by to the East, to the world and the values of Tom, Daisy, and even Gatsby, and heading back to his native mid-West. Thomas Wolfe's *Look Homeward, Angel* concludes with Eugene Gant standing "for the last time by the angels of his father's porch," saying his good-by to Altamont, and "it seemed as if the Square already were far and lost."

The spirit of the times was that of leavetaking. Man, as Wolfe—and the decade—saw him, "is lost, as all Americans are lost, because their home is a place from which they

---


have grown away, and which has not yet been replaced by any other permanent or satisfying allegiance."

The void left by the spiritual loss of the Twenties demanded filling. To discard old values and the patterns of behavior which they demanded was not enough. New values, a new ethic, had to be found. The search for new values is as characteristic of the literature of this period as is disillusionment and exile. It finds its expression in two areas of the literature--its content and style.

One of the values that characterizes the writing of the Twenties is freedom from tradition. There was a determined effort to exploit forbidden subject matter and an even more intense effort to make use of new forms and techniques. Cummings' Enormous Room scornfully attacks the repressive nature of all authority and at the same time couches the attack in a style that is surrealistically innovative, divorced from many of the traditional concepts of fiction. The Dadaists rejected literary conventions for such chaotic experiments as simultaneously read manuscripts, poems composed by a chance selection of words, and poems read aloud to the accompaniment of noise sufficient to drown the words. Hemingway made daring advances in the treatment of sex and in the use of forbidden diction. He was also responsible for a writing style that may have been

the most important stylistic departure of the time.

"Truth" is another value of the period. For all the writers truth was a goal for which to strive mightily; they despised the hypocrisy of their Victorian inheritance. With Hemingway, for example, truth became a fetish. He believed that: "A writer's job is to tell the truth. His standard of fidelity to the truth should be so high that his invention, out of his experience, should produce a truer account than anything factual can be." He explains in A Moveable Feast that he would often begin a story by writing "one true sentence. . . . the truest sentence that [I] know." His passion for truth did not stop with the content of his work. His style was also an attempt at truth. He is praised by critics for his faithful reproduction of dialogue; for his spare, clean noun-verb prose that can give a sharp uncluttered picture of a Paris street, a Pamplona fiesta, or a trout stream in Spain; for his desire to "say" so truthfully that it will last forever.

Still another value of the writers of the Twenties is a stoic bearing. If the condition of life is war, if the ultimate fact of life is defeat, then the proper response to life is the set jaw, the clenched teeth, the sardonic

smile. The best that can be said of a man is that he behaves "well" under pressure; the worst that he behaves "badly."

Cummings suggests that life can be endured only by a fierce courage fortified with love. Dos Passos has John Andrews make his desertion a gesture of supreme disdain. But it is Hemingway's work that best illustrates the stoic value. In The Sun Also Rises Romero, the bull fighter, behaves well. He follows a mortally dangerous trade and shows nothing but scorn for danger. He faces the bull with calm, perfectly controlled skill. He takes Brett but on his own terms, not hers; his masculinity will not be sacrificed to her. Cohn, on the other hand, behaves badly. He lives in the romantic past, still proud of his Princeton "letter" in boxing, the author of a bad novel, infatuated with the idea of an affair with Brett to which he will sacrifice anything. When he has the affair and she breaks it off, he refuses to accept the end. This brings him into conflict with Romero to whom Brett has gone. The ensuing fight sees Romero beaten, bloodied, and shaking, but not defeated. He keeps struggling to his feet, returning to the fight. It also sees Cohn defeated, in tears, broken by a man who simply will not admit defeat when defeat is the only reality.

Sensuous experience is another value in the literature of the time. In Fitzgerald there are the parties, the sex, the drinking. In Wolfe there is the gargantuan appetite for food, the constant attention to the smells and sounds and
feel of the widest range of experience. But it is again in
Hemingway that the value is best illustrated. Drinking,
hunting, fishing, sex, bull fighting all heighten sensations.
Spain, in The Sun Also Rises, is good because it is the land
of sensations. While sensations are good in themselves,
it they are made far better when they also provide an ordered
experience. The ritual of the fishing trip in Spain gives
order to Jake's experience. The ritual of the bull fight
gives order to Romero's courage and order to the observer's
vicarious experience of the fight. Through this ordered
experience of sensation the individual "gets rid of" the
bad times. Romero thus cleanses himself of the Cohn affair
by his perfectly ordered experience in the arena the next
day. "Each thing that he did with this bull wiped that out
a little cleaner." For Hemingway this process also
worked in writing. "Art was actually the essence of the
good life. It required the same control, the same iron
will. . . . You got rid of the bad times in art by the same
process that you got rid of them in life. In art you wrote
them down and they were no longer part of you. In life you
got rid of them by doing something good afterward."21

Finally, there is the value of courage in the face of
deach of death, a value again more demonstrable in Hemingway's fiction

20Ernest Hemingway, The Sun Also Rises (New York:
21Aldridge, After, p. 41.
than in that of any other writer of the decade. It is the logical outcome, however, of the emphasis they all put upon stoical endurance and sensuous experience. War, the hinge upon which nearly all of the decade's literature swings, provided a natural situation for the expression of such courage. But when the narrative did not directly involve war, the writers were forced to submerge the theme (as in *The Great Gatsby* or in *Look Homeward, Angel*) or find another vehicle for the theme. The latter is Hemingway's choice; bull fighting (*Death in the Afternoon*), big game hunting (*The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber*), or even fishing (*The Old Man and the Sea*) gave him the alternate vehicle. Death, the ultimate test of man's stoic endurance, the final ritualized sensation, was an imperative dimension if the narrative were to take on the tragic proportions the writers of this decade desired.

The literature of the 1920's, with its themes of disillusion and exile and its values of rebellion and stoic endurance, had a profound effect upon its young audience in the 1930's; it provided the youth with a pattern for action or a basis for reaction. Throughout the late Twenties the young had aped the manner of Hemingway and his characters—the brittle hardness, the cynicism, the off-hand attitudes toward sex. They were equally inclined to mimic Fitzgerald's "sad young men" with their flip remark, their hip flask, their cool *savoir faire*, and their nonchalant
sexual know-how. But after 1929, when the mood of the entire country turned deadly serious, the forced imitation slipped into the real thing. As loss became more and more a fact of their lives, some young men threw up their hands in total despair and sank into nihilism. Others rejected despair, considering it romantic nay-saying, and optimistically looked to the future. Still others directed their attention beyond the immediate problems of the decade and sought to fathom their causes by sounding the depths of human nature and behavior. This pattern of action and reaction is illustrated by the literature of the Thirties.

The literature of the 1930's assumed all three directions. The first of these directions, nihilism, was simply an extension of what the previous decade had begun. Fitzgerald, for example, became more and more despairing. He moved from his early expressions of "golden illusion to the bitterness of loss to ultimate exile and return . . . [to] the failure of the American Dream." But he did not stop even there. In Tender Is the Night (1934) he wrote what he himself called "'the novel of deterioration,'" a book of "neurotic subtlety, crammed with tortured images and involuted patterns."²² Finally he produced The Crack-Up (1936), which, written "at this low point in his spiritual life is a sort of existentialism or nihilistic

²²Aldridge, After, p. 52.
despair."

John Dos Passos provides another example of deepening despair. John Andrews of *Three Soldiers* is the last of Dos Passos' characters capable of defiance. From this novel on, Dos Passos' characters seem to lose their will power. They are only acted upon and, in the end, destroyed. This is the case in what is perhaps his greatest work, *U.S.A.* (1930-1936). Louis Filler's view of this novel sees Dos Passos growing disillusioned with Socialism for, says Filler, the novel begins by presenting its socialist characters as the saviors of the world, but ends by presenting them as "dogma-ridden, small of soul and mind, inadequate in their own right." Aldridge's different view of *U.S.A.* sees Dos Passos focus his hatred on the exploiters, his sympathies on the working class, for it was the social system that he was attacking; thus it was the system that broke the rebels and at the same time corrupted the believers. Alfred Kazin, somewhere between these two views, has pointed out that: "Dos Passos certainly came closer to Socialism than most artists in his generation;
yet it is significant that no novelist in America has
written more somberly of the dangers to individual integrity
in a centrally controlled society."\(^{27}\) Whatever the cause,
all three critics agree that all of U.S.A.'s characters
lose. The final scene reflects their defeat. A nameless
vagrant scuffles the dust along the Lincoln Highway,
hitch-hiking aimlessly across the country. Overhead an
airplane passes, loaded with businessmen and vacationers,
well-fed and well-dressed. The scene is a graphic repetition
of Dos Passos' earlier statement of resigned defeat: "All
right we are two nations."

Dos Passos' despair continues in *Adventures of a Young
Man* (1938), a trilogy that explores the false hopes of
Communism; deepens in *Number One* (1943), that explores the
false hopes of democratic government by the common man; and
culminates in *The Grand Design* (1949), that examines the
impossibility of retaining ideals in a bureaucratic system.
Thus "Dos Passos' career has been a long process of running
through and destroying the ideals which seemed to him worthy
of belief. Now, at the end, he has run through them all
and been left with nothing."\(^{28}\) The defeatism of the Lost
Generation has, in Dos Passos' work, been "slowly and
subtly transferred by him from persons to society itself."

\(^{27}\) Kazin, *Native*, p. 267.

\(^{28}\) Aldridge, *After*, p. 81.
Society has been his protagonist—and it is defeated.\(^{29}\)

The second direction taken by the literature of the Thirties was that of affirmation. Maxwell Geismar, writing in 1941, believed that "The age of denial and doubt is passing now, the sands of skepticism are running out." He saw literature on the brink of a "new American success story" and claimed that the change in American values was the effect of the Depression and the international crisis facing the world.\(^{30}\) Geismar's optimism was only partially justified, as he himself later acknowledged in a 1960 "Preface" to his earlier work.\(^{31}\) Still there was a literature that could be classified as affirmative in its emphases. The literature of affirmation took three forms. There was a body of literature that "rediscovered" America as a nation; there was a much smaller, but in the long run more important, segment of literature that offered human solidarity as the hope for man's future; and there was a large portion of literature that saw Marxist socialism as America's only hope.

The first of these three groups, "an enormous body of writing devoted to the American scene," was one of the most

\(^{29}\) Kazin, *Native*, p. 266.


\(^{31}\) Geismar, *Writers*, pp. viii-x.
remarkable phenomena of the literature of the Thirties. The obvious fact of the decade was that something had gone wrong with the country. Americans, especially American intellectuals, felt an almost compulsive need to examine the national failure and demoralization. Such a need produced a great deal of writing about America. Naturally, "much of this writing represented the reflex patriotism and hungry traditionalism of a culture fighting for its life as it moved into war." This would probably account for such popular novels as Hervey Allen's *Anthony Adverse* (1933), the rags-to-riches story of a young American who succeeds in business by overcoming many obstacles; Margaret Mitchell's *Gone With the Wind* (1936), the story of Scarlett O'Hara's "indomitable energy in overcoming every difficulty" and of her uncanny ability to "adjust" to every emergency; and Kenneth Robert's *Northwest Passage* (1937). These novels illustrate success achieved in the more or less traditional mode, and they assume the validity of traditional American values--patience, hard work, shrewdness, determination. But "reflex patriotism" does not account for all of the nationally conscious literature. It does not account for the vast amount of reportorial writing about the

---

33 Kazin, *Native*, p. 379.
34 Straumann, pp. 63-66.
American geographic and social scene. It does not account for *These Are Our Lives*, a federally subsidized study of the Southern sharecropper. Nor does it account for the photographs and text of Walker Evans' and James Agee's *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*, a study that presented with objectivity and compassion the plight of the Southern tenant farmer, that described families of from six to ten living for six or seven winter months on from eight to ten dollars borrowed at eight percent interest against their next crop and living the rest of the year on what they could grow or scrape up. There was also Pare Lorentz's moving text from "The River," a kind of film documentary that reflected the bewilderment of the struggling tenant farmer, and, in a sense, the bewilderment of all Americans. He describes them as:

```
a generation growing up
with no new land in the
West--
No new continent to build.
A generation whose people
knew King's Mountain, and
Shiloh;
A generation whose people
knew Fremont and Custer;
But a generation facing a life
of dirt and poverty,
Disease and drudgery;
Growing up without proper
food, medical care, or
schooling,
```

"Ill-clad, ill-housed, and ill-fed"—
And in the greatest river valley in the world.36

And there was Archibald MacLeish's "book of photographs illustrated by a poem," Land of the Free, Carl Sandburg's poetry of America, and the travel literature and regional studies of the Federal Writers Project. All of these latter works and authors illustrate a serious attempt by writers to "rediscover" America, to praise what was unique and significant about America, to uncover the source of America's failure and thus to set her right again. Very little of this literature is read today. Still less of it is seriously considered as first rank literature of the decade. Still, its volume commands attention, and, taken as a body, it offers a significant insight into the spirit of the period.

The second direction taken by affirmative literature in the Thirties may be represented by Hemingway's For Whom The Bell Tolls (1940) and John Steinbeck's The Grapes of Wrath (1939). Both works suggest that man's hope lies in human solidarity; but, since neither work nor author espoused the Socialist or Marxist formulas characteristic of the "Proletarian" literature of the period, their works must stand apart.

For Whom the Bell Tolls is a crucial novel in the Hemingway canon. Critics are divided in their judgement of the novel's strength and merit, but it can hardly be denied that it represents an attempt at departure from the lostness and disillusionment of the author's previous work. The title and the epigraph should be proof enough of that. Robert Jordan is, in the beginning of the novel, a rather typical Hemingway hero. He is in Spain to aid the Loyalists in their civil war. He is a skilled and artful dynamiter, a cynic who loves to trade political lies with the Russians in Gaylord's Hotel, a stoic who seeks to keep his mind in suspension until the brutal facts of war are gone. But his duties bring him into contact with a band of Loyalist guerillas—with Maria and Pilar, whom Hemingway identifies with the Spanish earth and human fertility, and with honest and unaffected Anselmo who becomes Jordan's intimate friend. Against these uncomplicated Loyalists is arrayed the mechanized might of the Fascists' planes, tanks and automatic weapons. Jordan's love for Maria, his admiration for Pilar, his comradeship with Anselmo, and his respect for the courage and conviction of an unequipped peasantry that is forced to withstand the Fascist army; all of these factors gradually break down Jordan's cynicism and stoic aloofness and involve him in their lives and their future. Thus, when Jordan is wounded and must be left to die, he
persuades Maria to affirm life. He tells her: "But if thou
goest then I go with thee. It is in that way that I go
too. . . . Thou wilt go now for us both." Clearly
Hemingway is suggesting that Jordan has come to recognize
the truth of John Donne's "No Man is an Island." Hemingway
goes even further. He shows "a struggle waged by men close
to the earth and to the values of a primitive society
against men who had turned away from the earth, men who
had turned to the machine and to the antithetical values
of an agressive and destructive mechanical order." In so
doing he suggests, as Allen Guttmann notes, that: "the
Spanish war [had] its roots in a very American tradition
of thought and feeling. The Spanish war was, among other
things, a fight against the desecration of that relation­
ship between man and nature which Natty Bumppo sought. . .
which Henry Thoreau found . . . which Herman Melville
pursued . . . which Walt Whitman contemplated." In other
words, for Hemingway the Spanish war pointed up America's
own dilemma; how to reconcile the inevitable and perhaps
necessary progress of industrialism that had resulted in

depression with the dream of an American Eden where the needs of uncomplicated natural man were central. Two ideas need re-emphasis here: first, the novel addressed the Depression dilemma—human deprivation in the midst of industrial plenty; second, Hemingway saw his novel as prescribing for such ills the ideal of human solidarity.

John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* arrives at much the same destination but by a different route. Steinbeck is more openly propagandistic than Hemingway, more obviously concerned with political and social problems. He describes families evicted to make way for large scale machine farming and makes the bank the faceless and emotionless destroyer of families and reaper of large profits. He describes the "Oakies," cut adrift by the Depression, bewildered by the lack of food and the failure of human sympathy, and turning to collective action when what they need is destroyed before their eyes. At times his style becomes highly political.

The people come with nets to fish for potatoes in the river, and the guards hold them back; they come in rattling cars to get the dumped oranges, but the kerosene is sprayed. And they stand still and watch the potatoes float by, listen to the screaming pigs being killed in a ditch and covered with quicklime, watch the mountains of oranges slop down to a putrefying ooze; and in the eyes of the people there is the failure; and in the eyes of the hungry there is a growing wrath. In the souls of the people the grapes of wrath are filling and growing heavy, growing heavy for the vintage.

Still Steinbeck is not a Proletarian novelist, for he

---

accepts human reality as only partially political, and, rather than divorcing his characters from the American past, he ties them securely into that past. Jim Casey, for example, may embody "the mystical transcendentalism of Emerson . . . the earthy democracy of Whitman, and the pragmatic instrumentalism of William James and John Dewey." Hence, the appeal for rational solidarity that Steinbeck illustrates through Casey and Tom Joad is not the self-conscious Marxism or socialism of the Proletarian novelist. And the instinctual racial solidarity represented in Ma Joad is a kind of primitive reflex action to preserve the "family" of man, not a political program oriented toward an economic system. Both For Whom the Bell Tolls and The Grapes of Wrath offer man the ideal of solidarity, but both also avoid the political orientation so characteristic of the third type of affirmative literature found in the Thirties.

This third type of affirmative literature is the Socialist or Marxist novel, the "Proletarian" novel. There are several factors that contributed to the emergence of such literature. One factor was the naturalism in American literature. The literary realists had, within limits, accepted man's free will and his ability to change events; they were generally optimistic. But American literary naturalists, behaviorists who saw man with little or no

freedom and evolutionists who saw events as determined by chance, had raised their voices near the turn of the century. First World War I and then the disillusionment of the lost generation lent credence and force to the naturalist dogma. At the same time Russia was proudly proclaiming herself the showcase of the political and economic future, the final result of inevitable natural forces. The Depression in America seemed to prove Russia correct. It became easy to believe that in the evolution of society the Democratic system with its Capitalistic economy was passing, and Communism was the rising star. Then too, there was the already existing tradition of the American novel as a political voice that went back through Mark Twain to James Fenimore Cooper. American writers, says Michael Millgate, have often "been worried, confused, or angered--rarely amused--by the irreconcilability of American ideals and American experience, and one result of this sense of the gulf between the way things should be and the way things are, has been a readiness to regard the novel as a political instrument."42

It is hardly surprising, then, that a sizeable segment of the literature of the Thirties became an expression of political belief. Nor is it surprising that the young writers of the Thirties turned to Hemingway for technique.

and to the naturalists for tone: Hemingway's prose, hard-boiled, iconoclastic, direct and violent, fit the proletarian novelist's propagandistic needs while the determinism of the naturalists fit the mood of the period. But the determinism of the young Proletarian writer was colored by his social consciousness; his was "the determinism of the class struggle, the policeman's night stick, love without money, and the degradations of a society in which so many men were jobless and hungry." His determinism was also tempered by the American idealism which no American determinist can completely shake, for, as Heinrich Straumann suggests, American naturalists "secretly seem to hope that after all there might be some sort of justice in this world that will give their own pessimism the lie. This is especially obvious in some of the so-called proletarian writers of the '30's." Both of these factors, the social consciousness and the American idealism, account for the paradox of political hope in a deterministic universe found in so much proletarian fiction.

The work of James T. Farrell illustrates the social fiction of the decade at its best. Farrell's hard-boiled...

---

43 Kazin, Native, p. 265.
44 Straumann, p. 31.
45 For a full study of the paradox inherent in American literary naturalism see Charles C. Walcutt's study: American Literary Naturalism: A Divided Stream (Minneapolis:University of Minnesota Press, 1956).
prose is more than a little indebted to Hemingway. His
determinism is so overwhelming that he finds "difficulty
in reconciling the successful individual . . . with [his] feeling that nothing good can come out of a corrupt America." His Studs Lonigan trilogy (1932-1935) captures the futility and consequent sense of disillusionment with life that characterizes so much of this type of literature. Studs, a young man from Chicago's Irish tenement district, struggles to be respectable, to rise above his environment, to avoid the "rackets." But when the Depression strikes, he loses his little savings and is soon out of work. In order to marry his respectable girl friend he must get a job. His search for work in a cold, soaking rain, his rising and falling hopes, his waiting in lines and in offices, his pathetic eagerness to say and do the right thing during an interview, followed by his rationalization or scorn for the employer when the job is not his, his despair that takes an erotic turn in a cheap burlesque house, his weary, fever-ish trip home, and finally his collapse in the street all underline the loss and the despair that the "system" perpetrated upon the working man. Farrell's aim in the Studs Lonigan trilogy is to "demonstrate that it was false standards" that undermined and finally destroyed Studs; \(^\text{47}\)

\(^{46}\) Cunliffe, p. 296.

\(^{47}\) Filler, "Introduction," p. 10.
and false standards can be politically corrected. Many of these same characteristics can be found generally in the proletarian literature. The intense social consciousness is illustrated in John Wexley's *They Shall Not Die*, a drama about the "Scottsboro Boys' case" that claims an utter lack of justice by the State's Attorney and the judge who tried the nine Negro boys for the alleged rape of two white girls. The bitter disillusionment with American ideals is illustrated by Edward Dahlberg's *Those Who Perish*, the story of Eli Melamed, a Jew who tries to be a part of American society but who finally realizes, in the middle of a ping pong match with a less skilled Aryan, that he will never belong. The hope in Marxist politics is illustrated in Richard Wright's *Native Son*, a violent novel dealing with the slum-imprisoned Negro, that offers the reader Party homilies as the cure for such oppression. Albert Halper's *Union Square*, a picture of New York City apartment living and of persons within the Communist ranks; Robert Cantwell's *The Land of Plenty* and Meyer Levin's *Citizens*, both "strike" novels; Josephine Herbst's *Pity is Not Enough*: all of these are among the best of the proletarian novels and all illustrate to some degree the above characteristics.

The rise of proletarian literature was meteoric because its appeal was direct and immediately relevant. *The Cradle Will Rock*, a musical play that was produced by
the Federal Theater, was a smash hit because it captured the spirit of an explosive America. Its setting is Steeltown, U.S.A., the night of a union drive against Mr. Mister, a capitalist enemy. The Liberty Committee, composed of such stalwart citizens as Reverend Salvation, Editor Daily, College President Prexy and Doctor Specialist, is sponsored by Mr. Mister. Larry, a worker and the hero, speaks for working America. "Open shop is when a boilermaker can be kicked around, demoted, fired like that—he's all alone, he's free—free to be wiped out. Closed shop—he's got fifty thousand other boilermakers behind him, ready to back him up, every one of them, to the last lunch pail."48 Such direct and simplistic political appeal made proletarian literature immediately popular.

But proletarian literature was not destined to live a long life. Alfred Kazin has said that: "The appeal of Marxism to writers in the Thirties was rarely founded upon their conscious and intelligent acceptance of it as a doctrine; rather it found converts and stimulated zeal by setting up an image in their minds, by giving their thinking a new sense of order and their everyday lives the excitement of a liberation."49 When the excitement grew thin, when economic conditions grew better and when the New

49Kazin, Native, p. 320.
Deal began offering some hope of righting the most glaring social injustices, the people's and the writers' interest in Communism waned. Moreover, the Moscow Trials took a good deal of the glitter from the Russian "experiment," Communist conduct in the Spanish Civil War did nothing to strengthen loyalties in America, and, finally, when Stalin signed the non-aggression pact with Hitler, the end had arrived. Serious writers deserted the cause; only those who were willing to trim their work to the demands of changing party lines remained.  

There remains for consideration the third major direction taken by the literature of the 1930's. The literature included here has been called a new literature of "sensibility"; William Faulkner and Thomas Wolfe may be considered the major authors in this division. In one sense, they stand apart from their decade for they are not at all politically motivated. Their concern is overwhelmingly with man's consciousness rather than his actions, and, with the possible exception of Wolfe, they exerted only minimal influence upon their decade. Their hour was to come later. But in another and an important sense, these authors are a part of their decade. They too were in search of the source of America's failure, but they looked beyond the decade's

---


51 Kazin, Native, p. 361.
preoccupation with social problems to seek the source of failure in man himself. Faulkner's grotesque characters, his tortured style, his gothic atmosphere mark him as a man obsessed with "agony, the agony of a culture." Violence is as much a part of his writing as it is of Hemingway's or the proletarian novelist's; but Faulkner's violence is unlike that of Hemingway or the naturalists of the Thirties. Faulkner, in the tradition of Hawthorne and Melville, views man as the battleground over which the forces of good and evil wage their fierce armageddon. The violence in Faulkner is therefore only an outward expression of the violence generated by "the struggles of a sensibility at war with itself." For Faulkner, America's problem is both the individual man's problem and the whole world's problem. Wolfe's novels, on the other hand, are not marked by violence or gothic decay. Rather, his prolific self-conscious recording of experience suggests the sensibility trying to comprehend its self. But as different as Wolfe and Faulkner are, "the common note one hears in them is one of pure terror. They represent . . . the loneliness of the individual sensibility in a period of unparalleled dissolution and insecurity."  

52 Kazin, Native, p. 360.  
53 Kazin, Native, p. 361.  
54 Kazin, Native, p. 362.
Thus the literature of the Twenties provided the literary pattern that the writers of the Thirties either enhanced or reacted against. The Thirties moved, in general, toward a deeper and more genuine sense of despair. If moral shock, self-conscious exile and stoic endurance characterized the literature of the 1920's, then moral outrage, bitter alienation, and a growing sense of helplessness characterized that of the 1930's. Fitzgerald and Dos Passos could offer the Thirties no encouragement. The nationalistic literature was too often either that of a worried man whistling in the dark or that of a sincere man who had not looked deeply. Hemingway (in the Thirties) and Steinbeck offered the hope of solidarity, but that hope was in part mitigated by their corresponding acknowledgement of a disintegrating world. The Marxist literature, after the initial bruiting of excited revolution, faded to the mumbling of slogans that no one seriously believed. Faulkner and Wolfe privately plumbed the depths of man himself, and both found the exploration terrifying.

The literature of both decades reflected and reinforced and helped to mold the attitudes of its American audience. For the young Americans who were reading during the 1930's the consensus of what they read seemed clear enough: life in America was unbearably bad; the future offered either nothing, or it offered more of the same, or it offered the violence and uncertainty of revolution. This
was the literary inheritance of the young men who would write the fiction of World War II.
War burst upon America with the scream of Japanese dive bombers on December 7, 1941, but it had been close for a long time. On March 5, 1933, the day after Roosevelt's inauguration as President, Adolf Hitler was given absolute power by the German Reichstag. Year by year, event by event, the world moved toward conflagration.

America at first remained uninformed about the global storm warnings. American attention was directed toward domestic problems. Moreover, there remained a strong residue of revulsion against Wilson's internationalism. Roosevelt, feeling both of these pressures, pledged to keep the nation "unentangled and free." Still American unconcern could not hold back the flood of events. Hitler began his moves. September, 1938, brought the Sudeten crisis in Munich; two months later Hitler initiated his pogrom against all Jews. Four months later Germany invaded Czechoslovakia. Inside of one month German troops were in Memel, Franco had taken Madrid, the Japanese had "claimed" the Spratly Islands,

1Leuchtenburg, Roosevelt, pp. 197-230. The following several paragraphs have been drawn largely from this source.
and Mussolini had Albania. In August, 1939, Russia signed a non-aggression pact with Hitler. On September 2, Nazi troops marched into Poland and World War II began. Hitler continued to overrun Europe. In April, 1940, he took Denmark and Norway; in May it was the Low Countries and then on into France. By June 22, France had surrendered, and only England lay between Nazi Germany and the United States.

In America, the international crises added a new dimension of confusion and accusation and distrust. With aggression breaking out around the world, Roosevelt began having second thoughts about America's hands-off attitude. In October of 1937 his proposal of a world "quarantine" of aggressors brought American isolationist sentiment to immediate and violent attack. Neutrality Acts were passed and an abortive attempt was made to make into law the requirement of a national referendum for any declaration of war. With only England between America and Nazi Germany, Congress grew more willing to increase defense appropriations. In late June, 1940, a bill was introduced in Congress that called for military conscription. At first opposition to the bill was intense but, with the Nazis poised to attack Britain, support began to grow and Selective Service became a reality in mid-September. Roosevelt, whose sympathies had long been with Britain, announced his
"destroyers for bases" deal with English Prime Minister Winston Churchill. The intentions of the exchange were clear; America was supplying Britain with desperately needed naval strength in return for little needed islands in the Atlantic. But more important, historically, the deal marked in a decided way the end of official American neutrality. Just two months later the President proposed lending or leasing war materiel to England. It was, he said, a simple matter of loaning a garden hose to a neighbor whose house was on fire. America was to be the "arsenal of democracy." At the same time Roosevelt struck at those "American citizens, many of them in high places, who, unwittingly in most cases, are aiding and abetting the work of [enemy] agents." Within three months Lend Lease became official. Events rushed quickly toward climax. The Atlantic Watch was established to aid English shipping avoid the Nazi submarine pack. In Japan, the military took over control of the government and quickly invaded Indochina. In September the Japanese, German, and Italian leaders signed the Tripartite Pact. In just two months Pearl Harbor would be attacked.


As events led America inexorably toward war, the attitudes of the American people underwent metamorphosis. Initially there was widespread and intense sentiment against any American involvement. The isolationism in Congress was only an indication of the same feeling in the electorate. From 1934 to 1936 the Senate committee headed by Gerald P. Nye of North Dakota investigated profits made by American business during World War I. Magazines and books reported the findings of the committee; that the "'merchants of death' were deep in 'iron, blood and profits'; it was 'one hell of a business.'" The committee findings reassured Americans that their revulsion from World War I was right and strengthened their resolve to avoid future wars. Women formed peace societies; college students joined the ironic "Veterans of Future Wars" organization to collect bonuses before they had to die.4

Events in Europe only stiffened isolationist feelings. When England and France did nothing to assist Ethiopia in its hopeless fight against Mussolini, they felt exonerated for opposing the League of Nations' ideal of collective security. In 1937 a poll of American opinion revealed that 19 out of 20 respondents gave a flat "No" on the question of intervention in European affairs.5 Sentiment against

4Burns, p. 254.
5Burns, p. 399.
intervention became louder and more hysterical. The aviatrix Laura Ingalls showered the White House with "peace" leaflets; Father Coughlin switched the focus of his rantings to the Jews, in apparent support of Hitler's pogrom; even John L. Lewis got into the isolationist act. People read Dalton Trumbo's *Johnny Got His Gun*, an antiwar novel, and Robert Sherwood's *Idiot's Delight*, a play that exploited the findings of the Nye Committee, played to full houses. The historical revisionists absolved Germany of World War I guilt and blamed the Allies. As late as 1939 a large majority of Americans felt that America was safe, that Germany posed no threat, and that domestic matters were all important. War had been a mistake before; it would be a disaster now. A poll taken by *Fortune* magazine indicated that eighty-three percent of the respondents thought that Hitler should be stopped but not by America or Americans.

Attitudes changed slowly. By February, 1939, after Munich and Hitler's shocking attack against Jews, Americans were still opposed to American intervention. Still, a Gallup poll of all the men and women listed in *Who's Who in America*, taken about the same time, found that fifty percent of the respondents were in favor of immediate war with Germany. Most Americans remained either unconcerned

---

6 Burns, p. 399.


8 Fehrenbach, pp. 33, 196.
or uncommitted. As the war moved quickly through Poland, Denmark, Norway, the Low Countries and finally France, the American mood changed. The new war--blitzkrieg--made America seem far more vulnerable. England was left as the only barrier between America and Nazi invasion. Defense became a national priority in American thinking. Such bold Presidential ploys as the destroyers for bases deal and Lend Lease would have been political suicide as little as three or four months previous. But now there was national speculation that German ships, perhaps the Bismark, would shell coastal United States cities. By 1941 the American people felt that entry into war was "inevitable, and even imminent."\(^9\) Thus, on Sunday morning December 7, 1941, war came as a shock, but not as a surprise.

The events leading to war were confusing and frightening for most Americans. They had felt the fury of the German war machine before, had helped in what they thought was its dismantling, but here it was again, rebuilt with greater speed, more power, and straining its engines in impatience. The years ahead forebode what few Americans chose to face. But on July 17, 1936, when the Spanish Army revolted in Morocco, invaded Spain and began a civil war, Americans were given a glimpse of the future they feared. A closer examination of the Spanish Civil War will provide

\(^9\) Sherwood, p. 298.
illustration of the confusion and uncertainty Americans experienced concerning events that were leading them back to war.

Government reaction to the Spanish Civil War was firm. Roosevelt took a strong "neutral" stand, accepting the British and French theory that only by nonintervention could the civil war be kept a civil war. Neutrality legislation was invoked, and no support was tendered either belligerent. Roosevelt may have been privately sympathetic with the Loyalist cause, but he was following British foreign policy, American isolationists were strong, and the Catholic Church was determined to block any aid to the Republic. Roosevelt did call for a "moral embargo" but it did little good; Texaco shipped smuggled oil to Franco, Du Pont Corporation had a tenuous relationship with him, and the ship Mar Cantabrico, loaded with arms, set out for his port. When The Industrial Workers, an organ of the I.W.W., exposed the Texaco shipment, the State Department did nothing. The result of official American reaction was that the Spanish Loyalists received next to no aid; but the Spanish Fascists received a stream of war material, largely sent by the Italian and German Fascists who wished to test

10 Leuchtenburg, Roosevelt, p. 222.


12 Guttmann, Wound, p. 137.
under battle conditions the efficiency of their armored trucks, tanks, planes, and guns.

Reaction among the American people was various. The most common reaction was indifference. One poll found "the remarkably high figure of 66 per cent of respondents neutral or with no opinion." But there was also support for both Franco and for the Loyalists. The American fascists, of course, were vociferously pro-Franco. A substantial number of American conservatives, oriented to property rights and opposed to the New Deal, were "strongly tempted to announce their support for the Caudillo [Franco's Army], for many felt that the Nationalists were fighting against a Spanish version of the New Deal." Time and Newsweek, once fearful that American property would be "Sovietized" by the Loyalists, grew increasingly disenchanted with Franco's tactics and openly antagonistic toward his Italian and German ties.

The Spanish Civil War confronted the American Catholic with a severe dilemma. The Catholic Church was officially opposed to Communism and the Loyalists were closely allied with the Communists. Moreover, Franco was a strong Catholic. Thus surface loyalties demanded that the Catholic support Fascism and Franco. The Loyalists also had their religious

13 Leuchtenburg, Roosevelt, p. 224.
14 Guttmann, Wound, pp. 54-55.
15 Guttmann, Wound, p. 60.
supporters. American Protestantism, when it took a side, supported the Loyalists, for it saw Spanish Catholicism as the unreformed Catholic Church against which the first protestants revolted centuries before. Catholic-Protestant antagonism, never very sound asleep, now came wide awake. Many Catholics, however, saw that their loyalties could not be simply given. When Franco began decimating Spanish cities with Fascist bombers, as at Guernica, American Catholics were generally shocked. They could not understand the Church's alliance with such tactics and were torn between Church loyalty and humane sympathy. Commonweal thus shifted from its early pro-Franco position to uneasy neutrality.16

The Spanish war caused other Americans problems also. American pacifists, who, after World War I, had become increasingly vocal in American politics, were faced with the first test of their position; many of them deserted pacifism for the Loyalist cause, their liberal democratic sympathies aroused by Franco's militarism.17 America's Communists were also pro-Loyalist. The Communist line became the "Popular Front," all forces aligned against Fascism, and the American party readily fell in line. But as the war ground on and word began to filter back to America that Stalin's aims in Spain were really

17 Guttmann, Wound, p. 111.
nationalistic and that the Communists were as ruthless as the Fascists, many American Communists had second thoughts. The war also aroused American liberals and artists. To these Americans, dedicated to reason and progress and humanity, it seemed that Fascism was a return to the dark ages, a denial of reason and a tragic halt to social progress. The facts of the war seemed to underscore their fears.

Education, as it had briefly existed in the new Spanish Republic, had been praised by the liberals. Now battles raged, and continued to rage for twenty-nine months, over the University of Madrid campus. The Republic had given women freedom and countermanded the Spanish tradition of anti-Semitism; now the news of freedom and equality was replaced with hair-raising stories of atrocities and repression. For the liberal democrat, whose faith in the rational process had been weakened by Darwin and Marx and Freud and then severely threatened by World War I, the Spanish Civil War seemed "a last hope, a last opportunity for an individual to do something in the face of a world gone mad." 18 For the artist there was still another dimension to the Spanish situation. An American literary tradition, coming down from the Puritans through the Transcendentalists, proclaimed "wholeness" as a value man should strive for; he should be simultaneously a social man, political man, artistic man and so on. The Spanish

Republic seemed, to the American artist, to provide an expression of this wholeness and post World War I America a denial of it. The artist in America felt alienated; in Spain he knew artists were leaders. Naturally, the Spanish Republic became his cause. Writers as diverse as Ernest Hemingway, Earl Browder, Archibald MacLeish, Malcolm Cowley, Wallace Stevens, Max Weber, the painter William Gropper, the sculptor Jo Davidson, the New Yorker cartoonist Helen Hokinson, actors Shirley Temple, James Cagney, and Orson Wells, choreographers Angna Enters and Martha Graham, composers Marc Blitzstein and Virgil Thompson and musicians Benny Goodman and Leadbelly rallied to the cause. Artists spoke publicly for the cause, raised money for the cause, signed petitions, wrote congressmen, or, as many other young Americans did, joined the Abraham Lincoln Brigade and went to Spain to fight.

The Spanish Civil War brought a great deal of distress to American youth, particularly intellectual youth. American failure to assist the Republic, Communist duplicity, Fascist involvement, and Franco's eventual victory over the out-manned, ill-equipped but courageous Loyalists added another deep scar to the intellectual's confidence in his world. He had paused for a moment in his post World War I disillusionment to hope; his hope had been betrayed. He would be more wary about pausing again.

If the events leading to World War II were confusing and distressing to most Americans, the rhetoric that surrounded the events was hopelessly bewildering. One of the loudest voices belonged to the America First Committee, "the most powerful mass pressure group engaged in the struggle against the foreign policy of the Roosevelt administration in the crucial years of 1940-1941." The Committee was an unlikely coalition. Its 450 chapters and 800,000 to 850,000 members were drawn from all regions of the country except the South, from all age groups, from various ethnic and social groups. Its national chairman was General Robert E. Wood, chairman of the board of Sears, Roebuck Company; its greatest attraction was the unpredictable Colonel Charles A. Lindbergh; its financial support came from Business conservatives. A small percentage of the Committee's members were Nazi or pro-Nazi; but, despite striking similarities between Committee statements and Nazi propaganda, despite its unwitting harboring of the Nazi agent Laura Ingalls, and despite its use of Nazi agents for their own propaganda purposes, the Committee was not pro-Axis.

The Committee's rationale, reduced to its simplest terms, was that American intervention in the European war would result in America's destruction. It urged national

defense only, on the assumption that Hitler could not successfully attack America. Roosevelt's belief that England was America's first line of defense was denied. The Committee "insisted that the European war was a battle for power and that Britain was fighting to preserve her empire," not to defend democracy.  

The tactics employed by the Committee were various. They used speakers extensively. Lindbergh drew overflow crowds every time he spoke, but his refusal to denounce the Nazi regime and his acceptance of a medal from Marshal Goering in 1938 did little to gain support for the Committee. A campaign of posters, letters, radio broadcasts, telegrams, and bulletins by the hundreds of thousands was marshalled against Lend Lease. Petitions were circulated; the Chicago chapter alone obtained 628,000 names on an anti-Lend Lease petition. When Life magazine conducted a poll that indicated a favorable response for aid to Britain, the Committee polled the identical area and announced that seventy percent of the community opposed such aid.

Opposition to the Committee was not silent. Many Americans believed that the America First Committee was just a new name for the businessmen, Republicans, and disgruntled New Dealers who were out to discredit the President. Opponents attacked the Committee's simplistic rationale.

Cole, p. 37.
Interventionists formed committees of their own to organize the opposition. The Friends of Democracy circulated a pamphlet maintaining that the America First Committee was a Nazi front. The Committee to Defend America by Aiding the Allies and the Fight for Freedom Committee joined the attack. Newscasters Walter Winchell and H. V. Kaltenborn publicly denounced the America First Committee, and the America First Committee, by using its business leverage, attempted to silence them by pressuring their sponsors.

Who to believe? World War I had been ushered in by a hallelujah chorus, composed by George Creel and sung in national unison. The prelude announcing World War II was an antiphonal monody, a collaboration by prophets of doom that was listened to in silence by subdued crowds. And behind the disharmony, when the ominous static faded for a moment, would come the crunch of hob-nailed boots and the hoarse hypnotic waves of "Sieg Heil."

As the possibility of war loomed darker on both eastern and western horizons, Americans grew concerned about their armed forces. Between the wars the military had remained impotent, starved to skeletal proportions by the nation's anti-military sentiments. Military men had learned to think "small." Their central concerns were narrowed to rank and promotion and the best base for the easiest duty. Now the country was speeding toward war. Suddenly everyone, Government, Army, and civilians, realized that the military
was so underfed that its malnutrition endangered national security. Congress agreed to raise and equip an army of two hundred thousand men. In August of 1940 Congress authorized the President to call the National Guard to active duty. In September the Selective Service bill was passed; all men between the ages of 18 and 35 were required to register. Eight hundred thousand men were to be called to action. Ten days after the bill passed, Secretary Stimson chose the first numbers, and the United States had its first peacetime draft.

The draft immediately caused more problems than it solved. The Army had far too few officers to train the men. There was no equipment for the men and many of them were trained with broomsticks for guns and trucks for tanks. The "training" seemed ridiculous play to the men. Before long the most crucial problem became "the shocking morale of the men themselves: they didn't know why they were in the Army, they were muttering and shouting about promises made to them of only one year of this useless subjection to the brass hats."\(^{22}\) They began going O.H.I.O., Over the Hill in October, with alarming frequency. As the year 1941 drew toward its close, Americans knew that their Army was woefully unprepared for what lay ahead.

If the Army was unprepared, it was largely because the

\(^{22}\)Sherwood, p. 366.
nation itself was unprepared. The twenty-three years between the wars was for most young Americans a period of increasing discontent and disillusionment with their government, their economic status, their position within the class structure and their inheritance of a rapidly changing world. The 1920's had impressed upon them that happiness was their right, that happiness came with money, that money meant success and that success was found in Business. They were told that the morality of their parents was hypocritical, that right was "deciding not to be a bitch," that life was hell and they might as well accept it with a cynical smile over clenched teeth.

The next decade shattered about them with its own brand of truth. Now Business was a diseased villain, success was securing food and shelter, money was what the rich had, and happiness was an illusion. The young American discussed and heard discussed a wide range of causes and cures for what everyone agreed were hard times. The New Deal was the only hope for the future; the New Deal was trying, but how far could a tired horse pull a broken wagon? The New Deal was crooked, Communistic, or the "Jew Deal." Roosevelt was a fool or a savior, an anti-Christ or a genius, a shrewd pragmatist or a power-hungry dictator. Hope lay in a revitalized Capitalism, or in Socialism, or in Marxist Communism, or in Fascism, or in Huey Long, Father Coughlin, Doctor Townsend, Silver Shirts, or Ku Klux Klan. Business
was growing fat off Labor's blood; Labor was choking the life out of Business. Class consciousness, racism, and ethnic prejudices were signs of hope or signs of decay. The family was being drawn together by adversity or driven apart by necessity. Youth was becoming more immoral; adults had really "messed things up." Events seemed beyond understanding.

The writers of the Twenties had told the Depression decade that war was hell, that life was a process of disillusionment, that deprivation and death were the key facts of life; well, the young American of the Depression decade could tell the writers of the Twenties something about deprivation and disillusionment. And as for war and death—well, they would soon have something to say about those as well.

From among America's Depression youth came the novelists of the Second World War. Almost to a man the novelists of World War II shared the military experience.23 Some of the established writers, like Hemingway and Irwin Shaw, chose to write about World War II, but most of the novelists, and there were many of them, were new to writing and were "chosen by their subject"—war. Publisher's Weekly, reviewing war novels in 1948, noted that many were "first" novels. (Of the sixty leading trade publishers, the survey

discovered, all but four published at least one war novel by 1948. The claim is made that by this year there were 270 new novels "in which the war or some aspect of it was the dominant theme." And 1948 was far from marking the end of the World War as a subject for the novelist.)

Perhaps the most striking feature of the war novelists is the remarkable similarity in their presentation of the experience of war; they present the "same American characters, the same conflicts of purpose, and the same message or group of messages." This similarity argues that the novelists read accurately the history that they were living. In fact, one of the novelists, John Hersey, has claimed that his fellow novelists have more often than historians or journalists been able to "make reality seem real." The war, he claims, is best understood by reading the war novel, not the history book or the newspaper. The war novelists spoke for all soldiers, indeed for all Americans at war, and they were able so to speak because they had in common the heritage of the Twenties and the Thirties and the experience of war.

For all Americans the Second World War was a

cataclysmic event. For the young novelists of the war it became, instead of "an exterior event to describe, . . . an inner condition of their lives." Their immersion in the war does not lead them toward experimentation with form and style as it did their counterparts of World War I; they are much more concerned with the subject itself. Perhaps, as R. P. Blackmur suggests, this is because "Experiment in language requires more of a culture safely assumed than . . . [they seemed] to possess." Or perhaps it is because their literary ancestors had given them a form and a style that was uniquely suited to the experience of war. It can be convincingly argued that Hemingway and Dos Passos and Cummings had given them the tools to handle overwhelming events, shifting values and mass confusion; that the proletarian novelists had given them technique for depicting violent action and rapid pace, had shown them how to subordinate thought and characterization to events and documentation, and how to make the hero the group rather than the individual. Whatever the cause, the novelist is clearly more concerned with the experience of war and its effects on men than with the stylistic expression of that experience.


If the facts of his coming of age in the 1930's had made the Second World War novelist "tougher and more sophisticated" than his First World War counterpart, as Cowley has suggested, the facts of war convinced him that "he was in the throes of an especially deadly struggle. His culture threatened to obliterate him. Even his history might work to efface him or bury him." Thus, as Chester Eisinger has indicated, as he prepared to write his war novel, "The cultural life which the writer found everywhere about him in the forties was marked by incoherence and uncertainty. He had to examine the possibilities for literature in a universe of fragmented beliefs where a multiplicity of values or none at all had long ago replaced a unified world view. The fragmentation of belief did not take place in the forties, but the decade was heir to it."

29 Cowley, Situation, p. 27.


31 Eisinger, Fiction, p. 6.
The typical Second World War novel has a natural beginning; the young civilian is inducted into the United States Armed Forces. There the story of his soldiering starts, for it is during induction that the young man begins to discover the facts and form attitudes about military life.

The first fact that the inductee discovers, a fact that does not initially surprise him but that will become increasingly more traumatic to him as he moves through training and into combat, is his own insignificance as an individual. Even before induction, during that first physical examination, the soldier begins to discover something about his military identity. During induction, as he hesitantly begins to seek his place within the mass of equally uncertain inductees, he discovers the immensity of the military effort and that he is only a minute part of a great cross-section of American life. All geographical sections of America and a representative selection of character types are repeatedly present in the war novels. Malcolm Cowley identifies the usual types this way: "There will be a Jew and an Italian (one of them from Brooklyn), a
Texan, a farm boy (always from Iowa), a hillbilly, a Mexican, and an Anglo-Saxon from an Ivy League college--these are the required characters--and sometimes there will also be a Boston Irishman, an Indian from Arizona, a Pole from the Midwestern steel mills, and a Swedish lumberjack from Puget Sound."¹ Cowley's list of character types applies, with little variation, to most of the novels. Norman Mailer's The Naked and the Dead, for example, has in its "recon" company the following persons: Roth, a Jew turned atheist; Goldstein, a self-conscious New York City Jew; Wilson, a moonshine loving Southerner; Gallagher, a Boston Irishman; Croft, an embittered Texan; Valsen, an ex-coal miner and hobo; Brown, a Midwestern social climber; Martinez, a poor Mexican; Ridges, a fundamentalist farm boy; Polak, a New York City slum boy; Hearn, a rich Ivy Leaguer; and Stanley, an underage hero worshipper. There is an assortment of less important characters who either repeat the categories or establish new ones--for example, Conn, the Regular Army man, and Toglio, the sincere patriot. Leon Uris peoples his novel, Battle Cry, with Brown, an Iowa farmer; Forrester, the All-American boy; Gray, the prejudiced Texan; Hodgkiss, the intellectual; Hookans, the Swede lumberjack; Zvonski, the Polish city boy; Lighttowers, the Indian; Jones, the fat happy Southerner; Pedro, the

¹Cowley, Situation, p. 29.
Mexican; Levin, the New York City Jew and so on. One writer, Ross Carter, says in the introduction to his novel, Those Devils in Baggy Pants, that: "Every level of society had its representation among us. Senator's sons rubbed shoulders with ex-cowboys. Steel workers chummed up with tough guys from city slums. Farm boys, millionaires' spoiled brats, white-collar men, factory workers, ex-convicts, jailbirds, and hoboes joined." In such a cross-section cast of characters the individual soldier is submerged in two ways: he is made just one man in a representative group, and he is made a type himself.

The unimportance of the individual is given emphasis by the novelists' use of point of view. The writers of the Twenties and of World War I put their emphasis upon the shock of military life to the individual consciousness. They concentrate upon a single individual to tell their story. For Hemingway it is Jake Barnes in The Sun Also Rises, Frederick Henry in A Farewell to Arms, and Nick Adams in In Our Time. Dos Passos makes the consciousness of John Andrews central in Three Soldiers. In such novels the emphasis is on "the simple and concrete rather than the complex and ideological. The evil of war was a personal affront; it could be concretely blamed and

specifically attacked."\(^3\)

The single consciousness of the World War I novel gives way in the novel of the Second World War, says Aldridge, to a "huge comprehensiveness in which whole armies and social masses are encompassed. From the individual, neo-romantic hero we have progressed to the multiple-hero or, more correctly, to the subordination of all heroes to the group."\(^4\) To illustrate the point only a few novels need to be mentioned. James Jones in *From Here to Eternity* deals with a wide and varied selection of officers and enlisted men in Schofield Barracks, the Army base in Hawaii. Norman Mailer's *The Naked and the Dead* studies an entire squad of about eighteen men and often expands to embrace all of the six thousand men of the 406th Regiment conducting the Anopopei campaign. James Gould Cozzens in *Guard of Honor* includes a large portion of the officers and some of the enlisted men of Ocanara, an Army Air Force Base in Florida. John Horne Burns in *The Gallery* may paint individual portraits, but he paints many of them. Clearly the novelists of the second war take a broader point of view to tell their story than did the novelists of the first war. The difference in point of view indicates

\(^3\)Aldridge, *After*, p. 114.

\(^4\)Aldridge, *After*, p. 89.
a difference in how the novelists view the individual; for one the individual is central, while for the other the individual is subordinate to the group.

One need not look far to find the cause for the World War II novelist's emphasis upon the group. The Depression had driven home the fact that trouble and poverty and insecurity are the concern of all. It had been a shared experience that had exempted very few. The young American carried the sense of shared misfortunes with him into the Army, and there the collective nature of Army experience kept the sense stimulated. Moreover, the Thirties had given Americans the proletarian novel in which the protagonist was made to carry the ideological burden not as an individual but as a representative of the masses who stood behind him as the real hero. There was also the political ferment of the Thirties. Socialism, communism, the various "plans" of Huey Long, Townsend, and Lewis Sinclair, and labor union organization, all efforts to plan and to act collectively, drilled the need for group action into the national consciousness. Little wonder, then, that when the young man came to write his novel of World War II, he presented his soldier as only a small part lost in a much greater whole. And little wonder that his soldier, although prepared to some degree for a collective experience, should develop

immediately a sense of his own insignificance in the immensity that swallowed him.

The Second World War novelist also demonstrates concern with his soldier's reasons for going to war. His reasons, of course, reveal his specific attitudes, at the time of his induction, toward his society and toward military life.

The most obvious reason for the young man's presence in the Army prior to Selective Service was career; he was a part of the regular Army, a "thirty-year man." Actually, there were very few career soldiers in 1941, both in fact and in the war fiction. Only one novel, From Here to Eternity, is a study of pre-War military life. Others have scattered examples of career soldiers as Conn, Croft, Martinez and Cummings in The Naked and the Dead; Wiley, Beal, Mowbray and Nichols in Guard of Honor; Walsh of The Thin Red Line and Mac of Battle Cry. But for the most part the novels concern themselves only peripherally with the career soldier. Generally they make him an officer and usually a high-ranking officer, almost always characterizing him with stupidity, cupidity, or the capricious use of his power.

If he was not a career soldier, the novel's young man may have joined, as Prewitt did in From Here to Eternity, because the depression drove him to it as a source of bed and board. Jones explains: "Three days after he [Prewitt] was seventeen he got accepted for enlistment. Having
been used to certain elemental comforts back in Harlan, he
had already been turned down a number of times all over the
country because he was too young. Then he would go back on
the bum awhile and try some other city. He was on the East
Coast at the time he was accepted and they sent him to Port
Myer. That was in 1936. There were lots of other men en-
listing then." Prewitt, one of the dispossessed of the
Thirties, goes on the bum because:

... in the seventh grade his mother died of the
consumption. There was a big strike on that winter
and she died in the middle of it. If she had had
her choice, she could have picked a better time.
Her husband, who was a striker, was in the county
jail with two stab wounds in his chest and a frac-
tured skull. And her brother, Uncle John, was
dead, having been shot by several deputies. Years
later there was a lament written and sung about that
day. They said blood actually ran like rainwater in
the gutters of Harlan that day. (Eternity, p. 21)

Prewitt witnessed the blood and carried with him into the
Army the hard-as-nails individualism and the admiration
for the underdog that he had learned in Harlan.

Another reason given for seeking the regular Army life
was the lack of skills, intelligence, or personality to
"make it" on the "outside." Red, another character in
From Here to Eternity, explains to Prewitt: "'why you
think I'm in the goddam army?' 'I dont know. Why are
you?' 'Because.' Red paused triumphantly. 'Same reason

6 James Jones, From Here to Eternity, (New York: The
New American Library, 1951), pp. 22-23—hereafter cited
as Eternity.
as you: Because I could live better on the Inside than I could on the Outside. I wasn't ready to starve yet'"

(Eternity, p. 13). Such a man might think well of the Army, but his motivation for enlistment is fear of civilian life and harbored resentments about its rejection of him.

Some men just seemed to drift into the Army, as though it was the natural and logical place for them. Jones writes of such men:

Most of them had bummed across the country at least once, before they finally enlisted. Most of the younger ones had grown up in the CCCs during the Depression, and graduated into the Army from there. Without exception they had all spent time on the bum. They had worked in North Carolina paper mills, cut timber up in Washington, maybe tried a shift of raising cukes in southern Florida, worked in the Indiana mines, poured steel in Pennsylvania, followed the wheat harvest in Kansas and the fruit harvest in California, loaded cargoes on the docks in Frisco and Dago and Seattle and N. O. La., helped spud in wells in Texas. They were men who knew their country, and in spite of that still loved it. . . . These now were . . . jerked loose from ties by the Depression and set to drifting that had ended finally in the Army as the last port of call. (Eternity, pp. 568-69)

Other men became regulars because they were fleeing from personal problems and the Army offered them safety. In The Naked and the Dead Martinez, the Mexican, "knocks up" Rosalita, but he has no desire to marry her and settle down to the degrading life of a typical Mexican husband. Mailer describes his situation: "Tired? Restless? Knock up a dame? Join the Army. Martinez is a buck private in
1937. He is still a private in thirty-nine. Nice shy Mex
kid with good manners. His equipment is always spotless,
and that's sufficient for the cavalry." In the same novel
Croft joins the National Guard because he hears that girls
are to be easily had if you have a uniform. It is a woman
who drives him into the Army. His new wife gives herself
to other men and Sam Croft finds out. "'If Sam coulda
found any of the boys who was scooting up her pants, he'da
killed 'em,' Jesse Croft said. 'He torn around like he
was gonna choke us all with his hands and then he took off
for town and threw himself about as good a drunk as Ah've
seen him indulge. And when he got back he'd enlisted
himself in the Army'" (Naked, p. 129). Both Martinez and
Croft find the Army a refuge and a place to vent their
peculiar personal desires; for Martinez the Army is a chance
to get "ahead" in America; for Croft it is a place to in-
dulge his brutal nature and use his skill as a hunter.

The regular Army man, according to the war novelists,
was more often than not a misfit in civilian life. The
Army was less a career for him than a refuge from the misery
of Depression life in America. He was essentially a
civilian and his attitudes toward his society were not sig-
nificantly different from those of the civilians who were
to flood the Army a few years later.

---

7 Norman Mailer, The Naked and the Dead (New York: New
There were other volunteers in the Army prior to Selective Service. They were not thirty-year men but "short timers," men who enlisted but for only one term. As war approached and as Selective Service became a fact, the number of enlisted men rose. The short timer of the Thirties enlisted, no doubt, for much the same reasons that the career man enlisted. But by 1941 the short timer's reasons for joining had broadened. A most important point must be made here. The war novelist does not motivate his enlistee by the altruism that characterized the enlistee of World War I fiction. Joseph Waldmeir says that the World War II novelists "send their heroes to war as anything but crusaders. They are indifferent to values. They don't go along with the pinkish socialism of the 1930's, but neither can they revert to the so-called integrity of free spirits of the 1920's. They don't want war and they can't not want war."⁸ There were no Frederick Henrys who joined the Italian Army in order to do his part in saving the world for Democracy. There were no idealistic John Andrews who went to France dedicated to the principle of a war to end wars. In 1917 and 1918 the American doughboy was a national hero; his home town sent him off with fanfare of brass and roll of drum and twenty-one gun salutes. In the early Forties "Everywhere men were dis-

appearing into uniform, and hardly anyone knew when they left. There were no military parades, no triumphant marches to the station." The enlistee of the Forties accepted military life out of a sense of inevitability—war was coming, conscription was just around the corner, one might as well choose one's poison; the Navy had good food, the Merchant Marine had shore leave, the Army Air Force had dry beds. Or he joined out of a sense of boredom and a desire to see some action. This is the motivation that Mailer gives Hearn in *The Naked and the Dead*. Hearn is the rich Ivy Leaguer, the young man with connections, the man who is destined for love affairs. He tries being the "Young Man in New York," tries being junior editor of a publishing house, tries ideologies but then goes back to Chicago and his father's business, the Country Club, the conventions, the business entertaining. Then it is back to New York and writing copy for a radio station. A month before Pearl Harbor he enlists, his boredom unbearable. Or the young civilian may have joined because he saw Fascism as clearly evil and felt, wearily, that someone had to do the dirty work. Danny Kantaylis, a character in Anton Myrer's *The Big War*, enlists soon after finding out about Pearl Harbor. The author does not state direct motivation, but the clear implication is that Danny recognizes the evil

of Fascism and, against his will, felt the responsibility for fighting it. Roughly the same conclusion may be drawn from the similar enlistment of Danny Forrester, a character in *Battle Cry*. Such enlistments are as close to idealistic motivation as the World War II novelists ever come in presenting their characters.

The common factor in these various motivations is the lack of any ideological orientation—the soldier in fiction either did not know or could not say why he was going to war. This must certainly be because his creator, the novelists, "do not presume to judge the war. They do not think much about its causes or consequences and, unlike the novelists of the other war, they do not rebel against it." The ideological neutrality is not surprising in either the enlistee or his creator. The young American had been educated by a reaction against reform, by a sudden collapse of prosperity, by a bewildering welter of ideologies, all clamoring for implementation of their solutions. When first the rumors and then the facts of impending war reached him, he was reminded of the ideological hypocrisy surrounding the First World War. His education had taught him to distrust ideological cant.

When the soldier in the World War II novel is not an enlistee, he has only one reason for accepting military

---

duty—Selective Service. When his draft number is chosen, he goes. His motive, simply stated, is to avoid being jailed for draft evasion. He has no great desire to become a soldier. In fact, he is often shown resenting his conscription. Samuel Stouffer's study of the attitudes of actual World War II soldiers found that until the defense boom started "many men in their late twenties and early thirties had never known steady employment at high wages. Just as they began to taste the joys of a fat pay check, the draft caught up with them." Bitterness, the study suggests, was a common and natural reaction. The soldiers in the War fiction reflect the same resentment toward being uprooted and deprived of newly found financial security and personal independence.

Whether career soldier, short termor, or draftee, according to the Second World War novel the soldier went to his induction with the same confused and distrustful attitudes that he had learned as a civilian in the 1930's. He went with few illusions about his going. He expected very little. He accepted almost nothing as absolute. The great adventure that beckoned the soldier in World War I fiction had become for the soldier in World War II fiction a chore that he had not asked for, did not want, and resented having to do.

Most of the Second World War novels indicate the general sense of disillusionment with American life and the lack of enthusiasm with which their soldiers went to war. At least two of the novelists make their soldier's pre-induction attitudes crucial to their novels. In Saul Bellow's *Dangling Man* such attitudes are vital to theme, indeed, in a sense are the theme. An examination of the novel should reveal the intensiveness of the inductee's disenchantment with both American life as he has experienced it and with his dread of military life. In Norman Mailer's *The Naked and the Dead* pre-induction attitudes are critical to both the author's approach to his materials and his theme. Examination of this novel should reveal the part that pre-War disenchantment played in determining the later attitudes of the fictional soldier.

Norman Mailer's approach to his materials in *The Naked and the Dead* is naturalistic. That is hardly a new observation; it has been often remarked. However, though it is often remarked, it is seldom explained, and an explanation is needed here in order to show how the characters' pre-induction attitudes are critical both to Mailer's technique and his thematic intentions in the novel.

It is remarkable how many of the characteristics that C. C. Walcutt detects in the naturalistic novel are present in *The Naked and the Dead*. The sensationalism and attempt to shock are there, most certainly. There is the attempt
at a "scientific" approach; the characters are analyzed in the highly clinical "Time Machine" sections. There is also ever-present in the novel the "tension between hope and despair, between rebellion and apathy, between defying nature and submitting to it, between celebrating man's impulses and trying to educate them, between embracing the universe and regarding its dark abysses with terror." And finally, the elements Walcutt calls the "major themes and motifs" of literary naturalism—determinism, survival, violence, and taboo—are all present. Determinism, Walcutt explains, is "the idea that natural law and socioeconomic influences are more powerful than the human will." Survival is the result when determinism has eliminated the unfit through "biological competition." Violence is the condition of survival. And taboo subjects—as sex, obscenity, and so on—are simply a part of physical survival. Walcutt's description closely fits Mailer's approach in *The Naked and the Dead*.

Mailer's naturalistic approach to character is most obvious in the "Time Machine" sections which he devotes to ten of the novel's characters. The purpose of these sections

---


13 Walcutt, p. 20.
is two-fold. First, they are to establish the soldier's pre-War environment and thus explain his actions in and attitudes toward the War. It is the naturalist's belief in determinism that is at work here. Second, they are to establish the conflicts about which the novel's theme revolves. Conflicts produce the novel's tension (a kind of violence) and their resolution is survival on the one hand and destruction on the other.

The first of these purposes may be illustrated by reference to two of the "Time Machine" sections. Sam Croft's background section opens with the question, "No, but why is Croft that way?" (Naked, pp. 124-30). Here Mailer's naturalistic intentions are undisguised for the section intends to provide the answers. Croft is the sergeant of Mailer's "recon" company. He is a lean, expressionless Texan. He is coldly efficient, empty-minded, and brutally contemptuous of weakness. His background section shows him as a boy. His father gloats that Sam was "whelped mean." When his father beat Sam, the boy would make no sound but his eyes would glare hatred. As a child Sam refused to have any man interfere with him, and he "'Couldn't standt to have anyone beat him in anythin'." He became a hunter when still a small boy and soon outclassed the men at hunting. He would even fight his father to prove which one put a deer down. He became a rodeo rider and a fighter with few peers in his territory. He imbibed the sexual and racial
prejudices and the male violence that came out of the ranch bunkhouse. When a National Guard outfit was organized nearby, he joined because he was told that a man could get more girls if he wore a uniform. It was in the Guard that he killed his first man: during a strike, instead of firing over the heads of the strikers Croft shot to kill. He married Janey because he enjoyed her brand of sexual violence. When he found that she was cheating him by servicing other men, he threw a violent drunk and enlisted in the Army. There he vented his wrath in steady, heavy drinking and his hatred on other men's wives. "He pushed and labored inside himself and smoldered with an endless hatred. (You're all a bunch of fuggin whores) (You're all a bunch of dogs) (You're all deer to track) I HATE EVERYTHING WHICH IS NOT IN MYSELF" (Naked, p. 130).

Robert Hearn is Mailer's privileged Ivy Leaguer. He is a Lieutenant whose half-hearted idealism coupled with his stubbornness gets him transferred from General Cummings' aide to command of Croft's "recon" company on a suicidal mission behind enemy lines. He likes "very few people and most men sensed it uneasily" (Naked, pp. 258-78). Hearn's "Time Machine" section describes his father as a wealthy industrialist from Chicago, a Babbit of Midwestern business, and his mother as a social climber. Robert learned to get by on his own but there was always the big booming voice of his father for his psyche to contend with. At private
school he earned demerits for refusing to make his bed because "you just got to take it apart at night," then erased them by his intellectual and athletic skills. The football captain accused him of not trying hard enough—he had the skill but not the desire. At a secret graduation party he got drunk and sought admiration by jumping from a second-story window. He had summer romances; drove his new Buick too fast; went to Harvard because his father suggested Yale. His father sent him off with comradely advice about women, and an offer to assist him in any scrape he got into. Robert wanted to study medical research; his father wanted him as partner in the business—researchers were a dime a dozen. Hearn remained aloof from the fraternity foolishness and worked diligently but without inspiration at his studies. He was awakened to the world of reading and switched his major to English. He did some drinking and slumming; he developed the pose of the "jaded young man" who knows all and hates phonies. One summer he had a fight with his father who hated labor unions; refusing to take any more tainted money, Hearn went back to school to work his way through. He turned political for a short time, but gave that up out of amusement and contempt. He played some intermural football and enjoyed the physical violence. Society dances did not move him, the Spanish Civil War did not move him. After graduation he took a job as junior editor in a friend's business in New York
but was soon repelled by the phony writers and critics. He had women but never in a lasting relationship. "I can't tell you why, he says one night to a friend. It's just every time I start an affair, I know how it's going to end. The end of everything is in the beginnings for me." When the war begins in Europe, he considers joining the Canadian Air Force but instead becomes a union organizer. The result is the same. He realizes that he is "A dilettante skipping around sewers. Everything is crapped up, everything is phony, everything curdles when you touch it." Finally, a month before Pearl Harbor, he enlists in the Army. "You never do find out what makes you tick, and after a while it's unimportant."

Both of these background sketches make it clear that Mailer is carefully establishing, in the clinical naturalistic fashion, the influences that gave each character his peculiar set of attitudes. Or put more specifically, the soldier's cynical view of the War and many of his actions in it have their roots in the general sense of disillusionment with American life that he felt before the War ever began. This is why Brown, who grew up believing in the accepted American goals of "getting along" and "getting ahead" but who could never quite manage either, is the company "brown-noser" who keeps a sharp eye open for "chances" and is continually "bucking" for promotion. For Brown, the War is at first an exciting opportunity to get
ahead and later, when his ambition disintegrates under the stress of danger and his only goal is personal safety, a deliberate trick that his country has played on him to discredit him.

Discontent with pre-War life also explains Red Valsen's attitudes and actions as a soldier. Valsen is an ugly, raw-boned man with "an expression of concentrated contempt," who grew up in a Montana mining town where everything, including the people, were owned by the Company (Naked, pp. 176-86). From age thirteen on he worked in the hated mine, but always he told himself he would someday just leave. And he does leave to live the life of a hobo. When the other vagrants talk of group action and Communism, Valsen thinks "They're full of crap." He takes odd jobs, he accepts relief, he drinks heavily, he prefers prostitutes because one can always walk away from them. He takes a steady job, meets a woman who has a little girl and moves in with her. They get along fine and he likes the child, but after the War starts his feet again turn itchy. He decides that "It's no good steady, and it's no good bumming. Ya lose whatever you want when you start goin' for it." His response is to go for nothing. His disillusionment turns him into a "loner" with a defiant brooding independence. He hates the Army and its theft of a man's independence. He resists Army life in bitter isolation until he is finally broken and forced into submission. For Valsen the
Array is just an extension of the social system that began its grinding in the Montana mining town.

Mailer spends a great deal of time developing the background of General Cummings, a man whose pre-War life has left him a coldly, mechanically efficient manipulator of men. His face, usually smiling, appears numb. He was born into a rising, middle-class Midwestern family (Naked, pp. 316-35). His father and grandfather were hard shrewd conservatives. His father demanded that his son be manly, but his mother secretly indulged the softer side, teaching him to sew and paint. His father instructed him in the double standard—"in religion you act one way, and in business . . . well, you go about things in another way."

He learned that people who hate you will still "lick your boots." He came to hate his mother's softness and to sweat and tremble under his father's stern discipline. He excelled at military school but his classmates did not like him. He developed a painful crush on his father-like cadet-colonel. At West Point he challenged the military tactics of a professor and was publicly humiliated into submission. He decided that he must be above mistakes, that he must not "expose himself to the pack." While at West Point he was taken in tow by a girl from Boston society who managed their courtship. For the first time he realized that a girl was important to possess. After his graduation and their marriage, Cummings found that to love
is to subdue and "he fights out battles with himself upon her body."

During World War I, as a young officer, Cummings got a chance to observe an attack from a slit trench observation post. The effect on him was overwhelming. "To command all that. He is choked with the intensity of his emotion, the rage, the exaltation, the undefined and mighty hunger." He grew obsessed with the need to be a superior Army officer, to have the best company on the post, to have all the right answers. He studied constantly, absorbed in such thinkers as Freud, who told him that man was rotten but could be controlled, and Spengler, who told him that war was coming and authority would rule. He came to admire Hitler's political skill. Between the Wars he was stationed in Washington where he cultivated military and political influence and used it to advance himself. Manipulation of men and events now becomes his keenest pleasure, and his career his only motivation. He had a homosexual experience, which, although he found it enjoyable, he renounced as too dangerous to his career; he came to admire the power and authority of the Catholic Church, but rejected the Church for the same reasons. He saw the War coming and recognized that "He must not commit himself politically yet. There would be too many turns. It might be Stalin, it might be Hitler."

When the War does come it means the realization of
Cummings' dream of power; he is a brilliant strategist, a leader who drives both his men and himself, a military politician who uses influence to win campaigns as he had used it before to win advancement. He can now indulge his whim for male companionship and suffer only lifted eyebrows. He enjoys his privileges at the top of the hierarchy and sees to it that the hierarchy is maintained and that the privileges of rank are dispensed. He has no patience with failure or weakness. Power for its own sake is his only passion; war is thus an erotic experience for Cummings as well as a means to future power during peace.

The preceding examples should leave little doubt that Mailer's "Time Machine" sketches are intended to indicate the causal relationship between the soldier's pre-War attitudes and his experience of and attitudes toward the War. The technique, which is that of the naturalist who sees his characters as determined by their past environment, is used extensively by Mailer in the development of each soldier in *The Naked and the Dead*.

There is still another purpose served by the pre-induction attitudes of Mailer's soldiers; such attitudes serve to establish the novel's conflicts. Some of the conflicts are less important than others. There is, for example, the class conflict; the poor Mexican Martinez with his American Dream aspirations is opposed to the rich Hearn with his dilettantish idealism. There is the Hearn-Cummings Oedipal
conflict in the popular Freudian perspective. There is Brown's distrust of his wife, occasioned by the new female freedom, the political distrust in Gallagher, the local politician, and the religious conflict in Ridges, Goldstein, and Roth. Each of these conflicts reflects the disquietude dealt with in the first several chapters of this study. There are other conflicts, however, that prove central to Mailer's thematic intentions. The power conflict that opposes the raw will to power of Croft against Valsen's self-sufficient isolation and the ideological conflict that pits the driving success-oriented conservativism of Cummings against the self-indulgent liberalism of Hearn are not only rooted in American society of the 1930's, they also provide The Naked and the Dead with a thematic center. There is an important point here that should be made very clear. Mailer has written a novel that is more than just a study of World War II. It is a study of attitudes toward and responses to environment. The actual environment of the Forties was the Army and war; the American of the Forties was a soldier. But Mailer makes his Army representative of American society, of the total social environment. Herbert Goldstone, writing of The Naked and the Dead, says that "the war brought out all the conflicts and tensions of the Americans, so that to write about it is ... to mirror the United
Moreover, since Mailer's soldiers form a cross-section of American society, they provide a composite of American attitudes. Therefore, stated in broad terms, *The Naked and the Dead* is an attempt to describe the American's response to his society, to indicate why it was his response, and to suggest what the results of his response might be. Put more narrowly, the novel is concerned with how American's reacted to the facts of military life.

The facts of American life in the 1940's are military facts, and military life is represented in *The Naked and the Dead* by the characters of General Cummings and Sergeant Croft. They "exemplify the army's ruthlessness and cruelty, its fierce purposefulness and its irresistible will to power." They represent not only the Army, but, by the above extension, the dominant note in modern American society. Norman Podhoretz has said that although past literature has often represented the common soldier as the victim of a force he could neither understand nor control, it is only in our time that the Army has become identified with the irrational and destructive authority of society itself. *The Naked and the Dead* incorporated this death-dealing power in two characters, General Cummings and Sergeant Croft.

In Mailer's political scheme he [Cummings] is, simply, Fascism, and Croft is his eager though unconscious collaborator. . . . This Army


which, in the name of historical necessity, captures, rules, and destroys the common life of humanity, is modern society as Mailer sees it.\textsuperscript{16}

Cummings and Croft, then, are the environment. In the novel's scheme of conflicts, the other characters, caught in the grip of the environment, must react to it. Their reaction, says Podhoretz, hinges upon their choice between two alternatives: they "can either submit without resistance (and eventually be led into identifying . . . with [their] persecutors) or . . . [they] can try to maintain at least a minimum of spiritual independence."\textsuperscript{17}

There are degrees to their adjustment, of course. The easygoing Wilson represents the indifferent man who is concerned primarily with physical gratifications that can be effected in any environment, whether it be civilian or military. His adjustment is best represented by the following from his background section. "(Ah jus' don' understand how screwin' makes a kid, one thing's one thing, and t'other's t'other. It's jus' too damn confusin' when you set down and try to start thinkin' things out, wonderin' what you're gonna do next. Hell, ya jus' let it happen to ya and you go along all right that way)" (\textit{Naked}, p. 298). Brown represents the submissive man who may not like the facts of his environment but who nevertheless, because


\textsuperscript{17}Podhoretz, p. 183.
alternative reactions frighten him, submits in order to "get ahead" or "get along." He reflects this in his statement: "A man works his fool ass off [Brown does not] and he wants to have some friends, people he knows will trust him and like him, 'cause if he ain't got that what's the point to his working" (Naked, p. 434). The officers, such as Major Dalleson, the stodgy plodder whose talent lay in shooting pebbles thrown into the air; Major Hobart, the "Great American Bully" who never disagrees with his superiors; Lieutenant Dove, the Cornell "Deke" and socialite, and Lieutenant Colonel Conn, phony, name-dropping, regular Army man; such officers represent adjustment to and acceptance of the environment, represent the belief that things are fine just the way they are. Finally there are Hearn and Valsen who represent the rebellious man, the individual who resists those facts of his environment that he considers undesirable. This attitude is best illustrated by Hearn's deliberate grinding-out of his cigarette butt on the spotlessly clean floor of General Cumming's tent.

Indifference, submission, acceptance on the one hand and rebellion on the other; these are the responses to environment that Mailer sees Americans making during the Forties. Indifference Mailer rejects as inadequate; Wilson

18Podhoretz, p. 183.
is mortally wounded and in the long interval before he dies his indifference deserts him. He begs almost constantly for help, for life, and finally for death. Submission Mailer makes despicable by the slippery self-seeking inconsistencies of Brown (and Stanley, another submitter). Acceptance is shown as the response of such stupid mindless men as the officers. The response that gets concentrated attention and sympathetic treatment is that of rebellion. Mailer's sympathy is clearly with the rebels Hearn and Valsen. Their reaction is the only acceptable response to the frightful power of Cummings and Croft.

Mailer's intentions, then, seem clear. Cummings and Croft represent the Army's ruthlessness and irresistible will to power. Hearn and Valsen represent the rebellious individual who challenges that power; they represent also Mailer's sympathies and therefore represent his recommended response to the world of Cummings and Croft. But Hearn and Valsen are both finally destroyed, indirectly by the subtle power of Cummings and directly by the raw power of Croft. Of course, destruction does not necessarily mean defeat; but the destruction of Hearn and Valsen is defeat. Hearn's death and Valsen's submission all too clearly resolve the conflicts in favor of Cummings and Croft. The defeat of

Hearn and Valsen stems from their characterization. Mailer has failed to give them enough strength of character to challenge the dynamic power of a Cummings or the sheer strength of a Croft. Both Hearn and Valsen are weak and ineffectual, "incapable of attaching themselves to anything or any one, and they share the nihilistic belief that 'everything is crapped up, everything is phony, everything curdles when you touch it.'" Their resistance, though it appears courageous, is nothing more than an attempt to, in Hearn's own words, "get by on style." Effective rebellion requires determined convictions; Hearn's dilettantish stubbornness and Valsen's petulant withdrawal cannot stand against real power. As Podhoretz has pointed out: "Style without content, a vague ideal of personal integrity, a fear of attachment, and a surly nihilistic view of the world are not enough to save a man in the long run from the likes of Cummings and Croft, and certainly not enough to endow him with heroic stature." Knowledge of Hearn's past explains why Hearn's "redemption" (his rejection of privilege by joining the masses as a combat soldier) comes too late and lacks conviction. It explains why his sacrifice seems so pointless. And it explains why Mailer felt it necessary, very late in the novel, to cut down

---

20 Podhoretz, p. 184.
21 Podhoretz, p. 184.
Hearn's opposition by deflating Cummings (Cummings' campaign is won without him, through a series of chance events kept in motion by the stupid Major Dalleson). Knowledge of Valsen's past explains why his submission is defeat and why Mailer reduces Valsen's opposition by denying Croft the top of Mt. Anaca (Croft is driven down from the mountain and back from his patrol by a nest of hornets). But Cummings and Croft have been too strong and too steadily in command to be overthrown so late and in so contrived a fashion. Moreover, as Podhoretz says: "If life is truly what The Naked and the Dead shows it to be—a fierce battle between the individual will and all the many things that resist it—then heroism must consist in a combination of strength, courage, drive, and stamina such as Cummings and Croft exhibit and that Hearn and Valsen conspicuously lack."22

So there are no winners in The Naked and the Dead. The reader is left with the nagging suspicion that the author's naturalistic approach to his materials has led him to damn even those that he wished to praise. The environment has determined all, and only chance has been able to circumvent the environment. Chester Eisinger has pointed out that Mailer's "pessimism is implicit in the naturalistic literary philosophy that he chose as the very ground upon which his book would stand. The dominant view of experience

22Podhoretz, p. 185.
here is that an over-all futility marks man's every effort. The role of accident in human life is so much more important than that of individual will, mind, or skill that life appears to be meaningless." Mailer has written, in The Naked and the Dead, of the inevitability of defeat. He has shown that the young American was already diseased, before he ever reached the induction center, with the attitudes that would finally destroy him. And he has made it clear that the War was not an aberration of the early 1940's but the facts of modern life.

The second novel illustrative of pre-induction attitudes is Saul Bellow's Dangling Man. Here such attitudes constitute the novel's theme. Dangling Man seems, at first glance, to be a novel unconcerned with war. The violent facts of World War II are never an immediate reality on its pages, for "The war for Bellow did not mean an exposure to the great realities of hardship, violence, and death; nor did it mean a confrontation between the virtuous individual and the vicious instrument of a vicious society." Nor does this novel fit the usual pattern of World War II novels. Its focus, for example, is directly and steadily upon one man, not upon the broad cross-section of American soldiers. Rapid pace and intense action, so typical of

23 Eisinger, Fiction, p. 37.
24 Podhoretz, p. 207.
the World War II novel, is sacrificed in *Dangling Man* to contemplation.

Still *Dangling Man* is a war novel, and it is perhaps the most illustrative statement of the soldier's attitudes as he approached induction into military life. The War may not be a part of the novel's scenery, but it is, undeniably, a central fact of the novel. The focus may be on one man, Joseph, but Joseph's situation, repeated countless times during the War decade, is representative. For *Dangling Man*, according to Podhoretz, "was one of the first expressions of the dislocation that set into American intellectual life during the 40's, when a great many gifted and sensitive people were quite literally dangling... between two worlds of assumption and were forced back upon themselves to struggle with all the basic questions that had for so long been comfortably settled." Action may be sacrificed but Joseph's intellectual and emotional responses are clearly out of the Thirties and are therefore highly relevant to this chapter. *Dangling Man* may not fit the war novel pattern, but it is nonetheless a war novel, for it is the War that provides the fixed point from which Joseph dangles.

Joseph is half soldier and half civilian. His story is a study of the American passing from one world and its

values into another; a study of his "social and psychological disintegration as he struggles to assert . . . [personal decency, individuality, and free choice] and other ideals, such once-glibly articulated values as Truth, Justice, Beauty . . . in the non-ideal, depersonalized world of World War II." The "two worlds" between which Joseph dangles are, most literally, the civilian and the military worlds. Joseph is twenty-seven years old, a University of Wisconsin graduate, a history major. He worked for a travel agency but when his induction notice came he quit his job in expectation of an immediate call. The call did not come. His classification was 1A, he had had his physical examination, all was ready—but seven months passed without orders to report for duty. He could find no work for no one would hire a man classified 1A; so he remained in Chicago, living in a state of suspension, supported by his wife. This is Joseph's literal situation. But Joseph's two worlds are more than physical worlds. Joseph is an intellectual and his worlds are really worlds of "assumption" or attitudes. Moreover, his assumptions are different at different points in the novel.

One of Joseph's assumptions is his sense of an individual identity, which he values; opposed to it is the knowledge that military life means loss of identity.

"Joseph, who early in the novel says he must 'give all his attention to defending his inner differences, the ones that really matter,' is determined to seek out his own identity." But his search must be made at a time when, he realizes, "There is nothing to do but wait, or dangle, and grow more and more dispirited. It is perfectly clear to me that I am deteriorating, storing bitterness and spite which eat like acids at my endowment of generosity and good will." He can not or will not believe that the "bitterness and spite" which are caused by waiting for induction, have become a part of his identity. He sees himself as self-reliant, an independent man whose importance lies in the simple fact of his individual existence. He fiercely asserts his independence by refusing money or gifts from his brother, his parents or his in-laws. But he is forced to rely upon his wife's work as a librarian for his material existence; consequently he feels robbed of his dignity and is reduced to petty wrangling over coffee money. The situation has its ironic twist when Joseph stops by Mr. Fanzel's tailor shop to have a button sewed on his coat. There he finds illustrated the principle "look out for yourself, and the world will be best served." Mr. Fanzel, who a few months ago sewed buttons free, now makes a charge

27Eisinger, Fiction, p. 346.

of fifteen cents, even when he knows that Joseph is not working. Joseph laments such operation of the principle, and yet the principle is the logical extension of his own self-reliance.

Joseph may feel compelled to seek and assert his own individual identity, but at the same time he is aware that military life lies directly ahead of him. If individual identity can be achieved at all in the Army, it must be achieved through established procedures of advancement into the upper levels of the hierarchy. This Joseph refuses to consider. He will not benefit himself, that is, become an officer, at the expense of others. He asserts that "... I would rather die in the war than consume its benefits. When I am called I shall go and make no protest. And, of course, I hope to survive. But I would rather be a victim than a beneficiary" (Dangling, p. 56). Such an attitude negates an individual future in the Army, and Joseph knows it. When his "successful" brother tells him to think of the future he responds:

"Well, who the devil has one?"
"Everybody," Amos said. "I have."
"Well, you're in luck. I'd think about it a little if I were you. There are many people, hundreds of thousands, who have had to give up all thought of future. There is no personal future any more. That's why I can only laugh at you when you tell me to look out for my future in the Army, in that tragedy." (Dangling, p. 44)

So Joseph is caught, and he realizes that he is caught, between his desire for individual identity and the inevit-
ability of submersion into the masses. His realization brings him to think:

Great pressure is brought to bear to make us undervalue ourselves. On the other hand, civilization teaches that each of us is an inestimable prize. There are, then, these two preparations: one for life and the other for death. Therefore we value and are ashamed to value ourselves. . . . Because, of course, we are called upon to accept the imposition of all kinds of wrongs, to wait in ranks under a hot sun, to run up a clattering beach, to be sentries, scouts or workingmen, to be those in the train when it is blown up, or those at the gates when they are locked, to be of no significance, to die. The result is that we learn to be unfeeling toward ourselves and incurious. (Dangling, p. 79)

A second set of assumptions, one that complicates Joseph's search for identity, is his belief in man's sense of community, a belief that is in conflict with the facts of a world at war. Joseph struggles desperately to keep his belief in a humane community in the midst of a world that is demanding collective destruction. He wishes to be one of many unique parts in a cohesive humane whole; but the reality of war demands uniform parts skilled in mass brutality. He is therefore outside the existing pattern of society, alienated from that society. He knows that he must continue to live in the real world where men have given up their humanity to fight a real evil (Fascism); but he also seeks to live "in a world of 'ideal construction,' which is 'the one that unlocks the imprisoning self.'

Joseph lives, in other words, in two worlds, and is aware of the unbridgeable gap between them. The tensions in Joseph's life, then, are in part the result of being both
His insistence upon the humane community causes a break down in his sense of the real world. He shuts himself up in his apartment, has almost no visitors, and makes few visits himself. His friends move away or go to war. Those who remain he avoids. His contact with people comes second-hand, through newspapers. He knows this is ultimately destructive and attempts to fight it, to retain his sense of the real. But he cannot avoid shunning reality as sordid. He sees "on the kitchen sink a half-cleaned chicken, its yellow claws rigid, its head bent as though to examine its entrails which raveled over the sopping draining board and splattered the enamel with blood."
The scene brings him to reflect that people are only a composite of things surrounding them. The idea repels him, for it is at once an admission of the power of reality and a denial of the ideal community that he seeks.

There must be a difference, a quality that eluded me, somehow, a difference between things and persons and even between acts and persons. Otherwise the people who lived here were actually a reflection of the things they lived among. I had always striven to avoid blaming them. Was that not in effect behind my daily reading of the paper? In their businesses and politics, their taverns, movies, assaults, divorces, murders, I tried continually to find clear signs of their common humanity. It was undeniably to my interest to do this. Because I was involved with them; because, whether I liked it or not, they were my generation, my society, my world. (Dangling, pp. 17-18)

29Eisinger, Fiction, p. 346.
But try as he might, Joseph can neither disregard reality nor divorce himself from it. In one of his inner dialogues he argues with himself: "'You can't banish the world by decree if it's in you. Is that it Joseph?' 'How can you? You have gone to its schools and seen its movies, listened to its radios, read its magazines. What if you declare you are alienated, you say you reject the Hollywood dream, the soap opera, the cheap thriller? The very denial implicates you'" (Dangling, p. 91). Joseph's sense of separate identity is therefore seriously complicated by his inability to deny his involvement in the real world at war; and his idealistic belief in the humane community of men will not correspond to the facts of that world. So he swings between his belief and the facts.

Another assumption that contributes to Joseph's dilemma is his insistence upon freedom and individual action opposed by his realization that at any moment he will be forced into an authoritarian situation where only directed collective action is acceptable. Freedom, Joseph believes, is the end for which all men strive. It is the only condition in which man can pursue his primary role as a man, the search for knowledge of himself and his world. But such freedom creates a responsibility that the individual has difficulty bearing. Joseph, for example, exclaims: "I am forced to . . . ask questions I would far rather not ask: 'What is this for?' and 'What am I for?' and 'Am I
made for this?' My beliefs are inadequate, they do not guard me" (Dangling, p. 82). The War and the Army lie behind these questions of Joseph's. He knows that the Army is inescapable, but his "beliefs" offer him the illusion of choice. He is "willing to be a member of the Army, but not a part of it" (Dangling, p. 89). Still, he recognizes the illusion, for he can admit that "If I were a little less obstinate, I would confess failure and say that I do not know what to do with my freedom" (Dangling, p. 100). Further, the spectre presence of death (throughout the novel the old landlady of his apartment lies dying, he reads of friends and strangers dead or missing in action, and in many more oblique ways death is kept steadily in the reader's mind) belies the "pure freedom" that Joseph seeks. He perceives and admits "The sense in which Goethe was right; Continued life means expectation. Death is the abolition of choice. The more choice is limited, the closer we are to death. The greatest cruelty is to curtail expectations without taking away life completely. A life term in prison is like that. So is citizenship in some countries. The best solution would be to live as if the ordinary expectations had not been removed, not from day to day, blindly" (Dangling, p. 98). He knows that army and war mean, very likely, death and the end of freedom. But he also knows that his present life, with the "ordinary expectations" removed, is equally restrictive. The dilemma comes to focus in a long
argument with himself.

"Look, there are moments when I feel it would be wisest to go to my draft board and ask to have my number called at once. . . . I would be denying my inmost feelings if I said I wanted to be by-passed and spared from knowing what the rest of my generation is undergoing. I don't want to be humped protectively over my life. . . . But it is even more important to know whether I can claim the right to preserve myself in this flood of death that has carried off so many like me, muffling them and bearing them down and down, minds untried and sinews useless--so much debris. It is appropriate to ask whether I have any business withholding myself from the same fate."

"And the answer?"

"I recall Spinoza's having written that no virtue could be considered greater than that of trying to preserve oneself."

"At all costs, oneself?"

"You don't get it. **Oneself.** He didn't say one's life. He said oneself."

"He was speaking of the soul, the spirit?"

"The mind. Anyway, the self that we must govern. Chance must not govern it, incident must not govern it. It is our humanity that we are responsible for it, our dignity, our freedom. . . . We are afraid to govern ourselves. Of course. It is so hard. We soon want to give up our freedom. . . ."

"And you're afraid it may happen to you?"

"I am."

"Ideally, how would you like to regard the war, then?"

"I would like to see it as an incident. . . . A very important one; perhaps the most important that has ever occurred. But, still, an incident. Is the real nature of the world changed by it? No. Will it decide, ultimately, the major issues of existence? No. Will it rescue us spiritually? Still no. Will it set us free in the crudest sense, that is, merely to be allowed to breathe and eat? I hope so, but I can't be sure that it will. In no essential way is it crucial. . . . The war can destroy me physically. That it can do. But so can bacteria. . . . They can obliterate me. But as long as I am alive, I must follow my destiny in spite of them."

"Then only one question remains. . . . Whether you have a separate destiny." *(Dangling, pp. 110-12)*

From that question Joseph flees in confusion; the rationale
that brought him to "'I must follow my destiny'" is destroyed, and he remains hanging between the alternatives.

Still another assumption that causes Joseph trouble is the sense of continuity with the past that he seems to both value and reject. The War, for Bellow and for Joseph, meant "the disruption of continuity with the past, the explosion of a neat system of attitudes that had for a time made life relatively easy to manage." For example, Joseph's dangling has caused him to lose his sense of Time as flow.

... for me it is certainly true that days have lost their distinctiveness. There were formerly baking days, washing days, days that began events and days that ended them. But now they are undistinguished, all equal, and it is difficult to tell Tuesday from Saturday. ... It may be that I am tired of having to identify a day as "the day I asked for a second cup of coffee," or "the day the waitress refused to take back the burned toast," and so want to blaze it more sharply, regardless of the consequences. Perhaps eager for consequences. (Dangling, pp. 54-55)

Personal responsibility—that is what he means by "consequences." But modern liberal thought, Joseph believes, has devalued man by denying personal evil and hence personal responsibility.

... we have been taught there is no limit to what a man can be. Six hundred years ago, a man was what he was born to be. Satan and the Church, representing God, did battle over him. He, by reason of his choice, partially decided the outcome. ... But, since, the stage has been reset and human beings only walk on it. ... We

Podhoretz, p. 207.
were important enough then for our souls to be fought over. Now, each of us is responsible for his own salvation, which is in his greatness. (Dangling, p. 59)

It was in such existential search of salvation that Joseph had once embraced Communism. But, he remembers, "I changed my mind about redoing the world from top to bottom a la Karl Marx and decided in favor of bandaging a few sores at a time. Of course, that was temporary too" (Dangling, p. 24).

So neither the proscriptions of Communism that made evil class oppression, nor the prescriptions of social action that saw evil in terms of environmental influences proved satisfactory. As a boy Joseph had feared "something rotten" in himself, but under the influence of modern thinkers he came to excuse such an early view as the usual Romantic or Byronic posture of youth. The War forced him into second thoughts.

With all the respect we seem to have for perishable stuff, we have easily accustomed ourselves to slaughter. We are all, after some fashion, the beneficiaries of that slaughter and yet we have small pity for the victims. This has not come with the war, we were ready before the war ever started; it only seems more apparent now. We do not flinch at seeing all these lives struck out. . . . I do not like to think what we are governed by. I do not like to think about it. (Dangling, p. 56)

At a cocktail party where his friends indulge in the usual petty cruelties and vicious remarks, he becomes convinced that "bloody rages" are a common denominator in men, that "the human purpose of these occasions had always been to . . . give our scorn, hatred, and desire temporary liberty
and play" (Dangling, p. 31). After the party he reflects:

One was constantly threatened, shouldered, and, sometimes invaded by "nasty, brutish, and short" [Thomas Hobbes' dark view of human nature] lost fights to it in unexpected corners. In the colony? [Joseph's term for his ideal human community] Even in oneself. Was anyone immune altogether? In times like these? There were so many treasons; they were a medium, like air, like water; they passed in and out of you, they made themselves your accomplices; nothing was impenetrable to them. (Dangling, p. 38)

The violent party, a microcosmic war, convinces Joseph that the traditional view of evil as the natural condition of man may well be the correct view. And modern liberalism itself the disruption rather than the other way around.

Not only has the War made liberal humanism seem foolish, it has negated the future and thus itself disrupted continuity. When Joseph chances upon an elderly man, fallen unconscious in the street, he thinks: "To many in the fascinated crowd the figure of the man on the ground must have been what it was to me--a prevision. Without warning, down. A stone, a girder, a bullet flashed against the head, the bone gives like glass from a cheap kiln" (Dangling, p. 77). In a later argument with himself he questions: "'The vastest experience of your time doesn't have much to do with living. Have you thought of preparing yourself for that?' 'What's there to prepare for? You can't prepare for anything but living. You don't have to know anything to be dead. You have merely to learn that you will one day be dead. I learned that long ago'" (Dangling, p. 110).
Death, then, is the final disruption of continuity.

So Joseph dangles between these alternatives: between his desire for individual identity and army anonymity; between his belief in a humane community and the facts of global war; between his insistence on freedom of will and the denial of freedom that Army and death constitute; and between continuity, about which he is ambivalent, and the disruption of the modern world. On the final pages of the novel Joseph makes his choice. For anonymity, for Army, for submission, and even, perhaps, for disruption. "I was done. But it was not painful to acknowledge that. . . . Not even when I tested myself, whispering 'the leash,' reproachfully, did I feel pained or humiliated" (Dangling, p. 121). He goes, at 10:00 at night, to the draft board to request immediate induction. Just before leaving for the Army, he has a mystical experience in his boyhood bedroom at his parents' home. He was brought, through the experience, to question the reality of ephemeral materiality, and hence to conclude that:

. . . there was an element of treason to common sense in the very objects of common sense. Or that there was no trusting them save through wide agreement, and that my separation from such agreement had brought me perilously far from the necessary trust, auxiliary to all Sanity. I had not done well alone. I doubted whether anyone could. To be pushed upon oneself entirely put the very facts of simple existence in doubt. Perhaps the war could teach me, by violence, what I had been unable to learn during those months in the room. Perhaps I could sound creation through other means. Perhaps. (Dangling, p. 126)
That last "perhaps" may have been Bellow's, thus leaving the correctness of Joseph's choice open to question.

There is little question that Joseph, whether right or wrong in his choice, is a defeated man. Eisinger has charged that Joseph never does reconcile his alternatives, and that, worse, he cannot exist in his own independent world. The first half of the charge seems to prove true enough. Joseph's "alternatives" are all reflections of two conflicting world views. On the one hand there is an ideologically derived liberal humanism; on the other hand there is a practical, reality-oriented conservative traditionalism. The former was the intellectual currency of the Twenties and Thirties. The latter was in intellectual disrepute until World War II breathed some life back into its nostrils. With these as the primary assumptions between which Joseph and his generation of soldiers dangled, it is little wonder that they remained unreconciled. They are unreconcilable.

The second half of Eisinger's charge Joseph himself admits. His admission serves to indicate the extent of the decade's disillusion and the depth at which the despair was operating. Reuben Frank calls Joseph's defeat "more inglorious than that of Frederick Henry or Jake Barnes." It is so because Hemingway's generation at least allowed

31 Eisinger, Fiction, p. 347.
32 Frank, 102.
themselves the romantic gesture, the thumbing of the nose at the world and the clenched teeth when the world turned and lashed them across the face. Joseph goes under shouting "Hurray for regular hours! And for the supervision of the spirit! Long live regimentation!" (Dangling, p. 126).

Frederick Hoffman has argued that Joseph's submission "is not evidence of the failure of his wish to remain free, but rather a desire to move into the society of his fellows." There is no doubt that he chooses "the society of his fellows," but, in the terms of the alternatives that Bellow establishes for Joseph, when Joseph chooses submission he is committed to a sacrifice of his freedom. That is defeat.

_Dangling Man_, then, offers a revealing view of the American soldier as he approached and submitted to induction. He awaited induction a confused, bewildered man, pulled in conflicting directions by all that he felt he was and wished he could be and all that the War promised to take from him.

CHAPTER FIVE

TRAINING: LEARNING THE ART OF SURVIVAL IN THE WORLD WAR II NOVEL

After induction and the cheerless departure by train or bus came the Army base where the World War II novelist sends the new soldier into rehearsal for battle. The period of rehearsal proved almost as traumatic as combat itself would prove later. What the soldier found when he set foot on U. S. Government property shocked him in spite of his lack of illusions and served to strengthen that disenchantment that he had brought with him to the induction center. What did he learn and how did he react according to the World War II novel?

Perhaps the primary fact that the trainee learned was the complete dehumanization that the military imposes upon a man. A common metaphor, used by the novelists to describe the military experience, is that of the military as a machine. The machine is an appropriate metaphor for various reasons. In less than fifty years warfare had moved from personal combat by large land forces, through the trench and artillery warfare of World War I, to the highly mechanized warfare of World War II. In the World War I novel, the typical soldier slogs to the front through
mud, carrying his heavy Springfield rifle; once at the front he lives day after day in muddy trenches, looking out across tangled barbed-wire, taking and losing the same few hundred yards of no-man's land time after time, always fearing an artillery barrage. The typical soldier in the World War II novel rides to the front in truck convoys; he is accompanied by light-weight rubber-tired artillery, by fast heavily-armored tanks, by ammunition-carrying half-tracks; he has been preceded by tactical air support that heavily bombed and machine-gunned the enemy; he carries light-weight automatic rifles, grenade-throwers, bazookas, flame-throwers, armor-piercing rifles, light radios, walkie-talkies, mortars, K rations; he may take miles of territory in just a few days or even hours. He is quickly followed by hot food, showers, field hospitals, semi-permanent roads, pontoon bridges, jeeps, electric generators, air fields, the U.S.O., and nurses. Everything that can be done by machine is done by machine. The pace is fast, the philosophy is throw as much fire-power as possible, and the outcome is dependent upon who has the most, the best, and the most quickly deployable machines. That was World War II.

The War demanded that all life be organized, from the 4F factory worker in the United States who had to produce the machines to the "dogface" on the beach-head who depended upon the machines for his life. The diversification of total land, sea, and air war required organization never
before seen by mankind. Therefore, the machine was not only a vital part of the Army, the Army was itself a gigantic machine built to destroy and geared to roll rapidly. The individual was little more than a cog on a gear. One soldier, Edmond L. Volpe, writing later as a literary critic, remembered his own military training. While doing "KP" duty he reports: "... I saw through the kitchen window a sight that left me shaken. On the prairie of the drill field were platoon after platoon of marching uniforms. Under identical helmets, not one man was distinguishable from another. Each uniformed figure was a stamped-out cog in a gigantic marching machine." The distinction between men and machine became blurred, even non-existent. Mailer's awareness of such dehumanization can be seen in *The Naked and the Dead* when General Cummings, after firing an artillery piece as a gesture to his men, writes in his diary:

> It's not entirely unproductive conceit to consider weapons as being something more than machines, as having personalities, perhaps, likenesses to the human. The artillery tonight started it all in my mind. ... The howitzer like a queen bee I suppose being nurtured by the common drones. The phallus-shell that rides through a shining vagina of steel. ...

> And for the obverse, in battle, men are closer to machines than humans. A plausible acceptable thesis. Battle is an organization of thousands of man-machines who dart with governing habits across

1Volpe, "James Jones," p. 106.
a field, sweat like a radiator in the sun, shiver
and become stiff like a piece of metal in the
rain. We are not so discrete from the machine
any longer, I detect it in my thinking. We are
no longer adding apples and horses. A machine
is worth so many men; the Navy has judged it
even more finely than we. The nations whose
leaders strive for Godhead apotheosize the
machine. (Naked, pp. 441-42)

If mechanization and organization reduced the soldier
to a machine part, the size of the military made him a
very minor part. Fortune magazine remarked in 1942 that
the military Services of Supply might "be likened to a
holding company of no mean proportions. In fact--charged
with spending this year some $32 billion, or 42 per cent
of all that the U.S. will spend for war--it makes U.S.
Steel look like a fly-by-night, the A.T. and T. like a
country-hotel switchboard, Jesse Jones' RFC or any other
government agency like a small-town boondoggle."² The
novels also reflect the size and diversification, as Malcolm
Cowley has noted, for the novelists write about "the three
armed services and . . . special branches of each: infantry,
artillery, engineers, paratroops, bombing and pursuit
squadrons and their ground crews, ambulance sections,
salvage outfits, Army Transport Service, Navy destroyers
and cargo ships, War Crimes Commission, Military Government,
and the psychiatric hospitals."³

²C. Wright Mills, The Power Elite (New York: Oxford
Basic training soon taught the soldier that, as a minute part of a mighty machine, he no longer had individual identity. He was an anonymous entity, a serial number. Volpe, the critic cited above who saw the soldier as a "stamped-out cog in a gigantic marching machine," also recorded his response to the knowledge.

At twenty, I had never doubted my significance and my future importance to the universe. But I knew suddenly I had metamorphosed into number 31337580. . . . Perhaps for my generation this vision of anonymity was the great trauma. We had grown up on Hemingway and Dos Passos and Cummings, and we had no illusions about heroism and glory, but we were not prepared to be swallowed up and lost in the massive organization of the army.4

Over and over the novelists present situations in which their characters are lost in the vastness of the Army. In Guard of Honor Cozzens shows Colonel Ross reporting to Washington for assignment. "They asked him what he was doing in Washington. Shown his orders, they scratched their heads; to no avail, called up a few people; and then said that they could only suggest that he stand by."5 He stands by for several months, just waiting for someone to realize that he exists. In The Naked and the Dead General Cummings tells Hearn: "'In the Army the idea of individual personality is just a hindrance. Sure there are differences


among men in any particular Army unit, but they invariably cancel each other out, and what you're left with is a value rating" (Naked, p. 143). Williwaw, Gore Vidal's war novel, is entirely devoted to a few forgotten men waiting in the backwash of an Aleutian outpost. Catch-22, Joseph Heller's macabre novel, plays a minor theme on lost, or mistaken, or shifting or irrelevant identities. The message that the trainee received, that the individual man was no longer an individual man who belonged to himself and had a personal destiny but a machine part stamped "U.S. Government Issue" to be used and then discarded, is a message that is unmistakable in the novels of World War II.

A second important fact that the trainee was forced to learn in the Second World War novel was the Army's rigidly hierarchical structure. Almost all of the novelists agree that a wide gulf lay fixed between the officers and the enlisted men. The trainee found immediately that Army life was a continual series of deprivations and frustrations, and it did not take him long to discover that his officers had less of both. He found that the officer used his rank to take the best women, food, liquor and entertainment; the enlisted man got what was left— if anything was left. He directed his resentment at the system that permitted such favoritism. As Stouffer's study of actual soldiers has explained, the American "with his democratic civilian background, resented not so much the fact that superiors
could afford certain privileges as the denial of his own right to enjoy them." He had only scorn for the officer who avoided the work and the danger and indulged himself with privileges. Mailer makes such a point when a consignment of fresh meat arrives for headquarters company: "It was divided equally. One half went to the one hundred and eighty enlisted men in the bivouac at the time, and the other half went to the thirty-eight officers in officers' mess. The General's electric refrigerator was uncrated, and was fed from the gasoline generator that created all the electric power for the bivouac" (Naked, pp. 131-32).

The barrier between officers and men was real for both sides. The officers felt superior and some felt uneasy in their superior position. On the other hand, the enlisted men resented the officer's superior attitude and his own inferior status. Mailer's Lieutenant Hearn reflects officer unease when he observes that his fellow officers "slept in cots a few feet away from men who slept on the ground; they were served meals, bad enough in themselves, but nevertheless served on plates while the others ate on their haunches after standing in line in the sun... They slept with mud and insects and worms while the officers bitched because there were no paper napkins and the chow could stand improvement" (Naked, p. 61). In Those Devils

6Stouffer, I, 373.
in Baggy Pants Ross Carter has an enlisted man say: "About
eight o'clock some chicken supply sergeant would fall us
out to draw some trifling piece of equipment, and again
before lunch, and once more before supper. Between times
some officer would lecture us on military courtesy and
discipline. We sat in a daze hoping he would fall dead or
have his guts eaten out by dysentery or some other minor
ailment" (Devils, p. 13). James Jones's The Thin Red Line
tells about the combat soldier's digging foxholes for his
officers. The men's tents remain behind as they move up
for combat, but the officers' tents are sent along and must
be set up by the weary men. In the same novel, Lieutenant
Band observes about his men: "You simply could not treat
them equal as men, as Stein had tried. It had to be a
stern paternal love relationship, because they were children
and did not know their own minds or what was best for them.
They had to be disciplined and they had to be ordered." 7

In the same novel, when Colonel Tall is promoted for having
successfully driven his men through a battle, the men are
told that the promotion is to replace another officer "so
ill from malaria that he could no longer command. This
brought sour smiles to the lips of malaria sufferers in the
Battalion, most of whom were running consistent temperatures
of 104+ during their attacks. Another thing that brought

7James Jones, The Thin Red Line (New York: New American
laughter was the comprehension that Old Shorty was being promoted because of their exploits and their shed blood" (Line, p. 349). It does not take the novel's recruit long to recognize his inferior position, but he never learns to accept it. Such open arrogance by a privileged class was an experience for which even the Depression had not prepared him.

Another cause for the enlisted man's resentment of Army structure is the discipline that he is forced to accept. The novels make it clear that the enlisted man is powerless, the officer is omnipotent, and training is geared to make this situation forcefully apparent and absolutely accepted. The Army sought to develop not only policed obedience but the habit of obedience so that the soldier would react instinctively to command during battle stress. The method used to accomplish this was a kind of brutal shock treatment. Training was deliberately organized to destroy old patterns of thought and action built upon the civilian assumption of self-importance and to impress the recruit with his own ignorance and unimportance. Consequently training was often a humiliating experience. The novels demonstrate such harsh training. For example, a recruit in Battle Cry refers to his rifle as a "gun." As punishment for the crime he must unbutton his fly, expose and hold his penis in his right hand while holding his rifle in his left hand, then parade to every tent on the
training base and repeat "'This is my rifle,/ This is my
gun,/ This is for fighting,/ This is for fun.'" How the
new soldier is deprived of any privacy is also depicted in
the novels. In Anton Myrer's The Big War a soldier reports
of his training: "I doubt if you could conceive of the kind
of degradation that surrounds us: our nakedness, our acute
vulnerability. For there is something pathetic about men
living together for so long without the dignity of respite
or seclusion." Even the routine of training was directed
at blasting the recruit out of his normal patterns of
behavior:

A bugle blasted reveille through the loudspeaker.
It was followed by a record that soon became the
hated symbol of four-thirty in the morning.
Forty-five minutes to shower, shave, dress,
make up the cot, police the area and fall in for
rollcall. In darkness to the mess hall to stand
and wait.
Back to the tents and clean up. Mop, squeeze,
pick up cigarette butts and bits of paper. The
policing buckets were always nearly empty and it
was a rare prize when a boot found a stray fruit
peel to pounce upon. (Battle, p. 34)

With such unaccustomed demands constantly bombarding him,
the disoriented soldier turns to the only source of comfort
he can see, his fellow recruit who is undergoing the same
treatment. The process of group consciousness and identity
thus begins. In this too the Army manipulates the man.

8 Leon Uris, Battle Cry (New York:Bantam Books, Inc.,

9 Anton Myrer, The Big War (New York:Dell Publishing
Stouffer's study has shown that with old patterns crumbling it was relatively easy to substitute new patterns, and the Army was able to successfully mobilize "informal pressures of the soldiers in support of their fellows who conformed and against the nonconformist." Thus, continues Stouffer, the new soldier, with "personal insecurity on the one hand, and the motivation to 'see it through' on the other, . . . is malleable to the 'discipline,' which consists of a fatiguing physical ordeal and a continued repetition of acts until they become semi-automatic, in an atmosphere dominated by fear." 10

The novels support Stouffer's observations. General Cummings in The Naked and the Dead points to such a training scheme when he tells Hearn that the American civilian is a miserable fighting man.

"They have an exaggerated idea of the rights due themselves as individuals and no idea at all of the rights due others. . . ."

"So what you've got to do is break them down," Hearn said.

"Exactly. Break them down. Every time an enlisted man sees an officer get an extra privilege, it breaks him down a little more."

"I don't see that. It seems to me they'd hate you more."

"They do. But they also fear us more. I don't care what kind of man you give me, if I have him long enough I'll make him afraid. Every time there's what you call an Army injustice the enlisted man involved is confirmed a little more in the idea of his own inferiority. . . . The Army functions best when you're frightened of the man above you, and contemptuous of your subordinates." (Naked, p. 139)

10 Stouffer, I, 411-12.
In *From Here to Eternity* General Slater philosophizes about such training:

"In the past," Sam Slater said carefully, "... fear of authority was only the negative side of a positive moral code of 'Honor, Patriotism, and Service.' In the past, men sought to achieve the positives of the code, rather than simply to avoid its negatives... But the advent of materialism and the machine age changed all that, see?... Obviously, you cannot make a man voluntarily chain himself to a machine because its 'Honorable.' The man knows better... All that is left, then," Sam Slater went on, "is the standardized negative side of the code as expressed in Law. The fear of authority which was once only a side issue but today is the main issue, because it's the only issue left."

"You can't make a man believe it is 'Honorable,' so you have no choice but to make him afraid of not chaining himself to his machine. You can do it by making him afraid of his friends' disapproval. You can shame him because he is a social drone. You can make him afraid of starving unless he works for his machine. You can threaten him with imprisonment... the majority of men must be subservient to the machine." (*Eternity*, pp. 329-31)

Display omnipotent power to induce fear and produce obedience; that, according to the novelists, was the rationale behind the recruit's basic training. Tear him loose from his civilian bearings, remold him into a fighting machine that responds upon command, control him by a fear that is even greater than his fear of death; that was the procedure and the goal of his training in discipline.

The practice of destroying to create led many of the novelists to see a real enemy within the camp. They agreed that fascism, as it was represented by Nazi Germany, was clearly evil; but fascism is equally evil when it exists in the American Army. In fact, it is the fascism within
the Army that receives most of the novelists' attention. And it is not just the fascism of officer brutality that concerns them; the fascism represented by the inhumanity and the self-seeking of the individual soldier is also attacked. Mailer may give us a Lieutenant Colonel Conn whose ineptitude and veniality are made to represent what is called the "Corruption ... that keeps the Army from breaking apart," but he also gives us a Croft whose brutality and naked cunning are a part of his nature. Cozzens may give us Lieutenant Colonel Howden, the airbase intelligence officer who has a passion for spying on his own men in an attempt to uncover "disaffection," but he also gives us Benny Carricker, the hot-shot pilot who cruelly attacks a Negro pilot who blunders into Carricker's landing pattern. Or Irwin Shaw in The Young Lions makes Captain Colclough a mean and despicable Jew hater, but he gives the same characteristic to a large number of the enlisted men as well.

The novelists, by making fascism a characteristic of both the Army organization and the individual soldier, point up the irony of like fighting like. Their point is clearly made, says W. P. Albrecht, for "one cannot miss a contrast between the democratic ideal and the rape, prostitution, perversion and bestiality offered in great abundance by

---

these novels." Even the soldiers within the novels do not miss it. Roth, one of Mailer's soldiers, notes: "Did you notice how they treated the officers? They slept in staterooms when we were jammed in the hold like pigs. It's to make them feel superior, a chosen group. That's the same device Hitler uses when he makes the Germans think they're superior" (*Naked*, p. 43).

The hierarchy of the Army thus taught the trainee his second important lesson. Officers were a privileged caste; they had unlimited power over men in ranks; discipline was rigidly enforced; fear was the ultimate lever that moved all men; fascism was the enemy whether it was German or American, whether it was official Army policy or the attitude of a fellow soldier.

A third fact that the novelists have their trainees learn is that the Army reeks with racial prejudice. The novelists consistently make racial prejudice a theme. At times the theme becomes major, as in *The Young Lions*; at other times it is only a minor motif as in *The Thin Red Line*. But it is present nearly always and always the novelist is clearly against it and angry that it should exist.

The presence of racial prejudice as a theme is most likely due to the literature of the Thirties. Concern for the Negro and the Jew represents only a slight shift, or

12 Albrecht, p. 464.
no shift at all, from the proletarian novelist's concern for the "ritualistic victims" of our culture, a concern that is represented in a sizeable portion of the fiction of the Thirties. Hence, Eisinger claims, the attitudes that the war novelists "brought to questions of prejudice or to the status of the underdog, who is the enlisted man in this case, were preformed for him in the decade of social protest literature in which he may have grown up. The rebellion against mindless, arbitrary authority, which had been directed against the police in the thirties, was directed, in the war novels, against the officer class."  

The method of presenting the theme is almost as consistent as its presence. There are usually Jewish, sometimes Negro or Mexican characters, who carry the responsibility of illustrating it: in The Naked and the Dead they are Jewish and Mexican; in Battle Cry they are Jewish and Mexican; in The Young Lions they are Jewish; in The Thin Red Line and From Here to Eternity they are Jewish; in Guard of Honor they are Negro. The illustration may be worked out in the action with the minority group character being openly persecuted by officers and enlisted men as Noah Ackerman is in The Young Lions or Pedro is in Battle Cry; or it may be written into the consciousness of the minority group character so that the reader views his mental

13 Eisinger, Fiction, p. 27.
suffering over some real or imagined persecution as in Roth or Goldstein of The Naked and the Dead or Noah of The Young Lions. Within such a framework there is of course variation. Lothar Kahn, writing of the Jew in modern fiction, admits varying degrees of sensitivity to Jewishness, ranging from a studied casualness to a pathological aggressiveness; a struggle for survival where Jewishness is conscious and insecurity and wonderment where it is subliminal; a generous, though often concealed, element of self-hate; a maturing of personality as the Jew makes peace with his Jewishness, usually insuring a better adjustment to his Christian surroundings and a self-steeling against further blows.\(^\text{14}\)

At times the theme over-rides the novelist's primary intention. When the Jewishness of the character is his only or his primary distinguishing characteristic, as with Roth and even Goldstein in The Naked and the Dead and certainly with Noah in The Young Lions, the theme distorts the author's perspective and makes his presentation a polemic rather than a fictional reality.\(^\text{15}\)

The intention of the war novelists in their presentation of the racial theme can hardly be missed. They wish to point out the discrepancy that exists between the rhetoric and the practice of official American policy; between American moral indignation over a Fascism that made racial purity by deliberate mass extermination a national policy

\(^\text{14}\) Lothar Kahn, "The Jewish Soldier in Modern Fiction," American Judaism, 9, No. 3, 12.

\(^\text{15}\) Aldridge, After, p. 102.
and the American practice of blinking at racial discrimination within its own Army. The Jew or Negro or Mexican in the war novel was made to fight two wars at once; the war against Nazi Fascism or Japanese imperialism that wished to eliminate him and the war against Army "fascism" that differed only in degree in its treatment of him. Such a two front war is the problem of Pedro in Battle Cry. Pedro is a Mexican from San Antonio, Texas, who enlists as a corpsman. His experience in New Zealand is disturbing to him, for he finds what he has long suspected—that America is not really the "land of the free."

"Have you ever been to San Antone, Mac?" His face was sad and sullen as his mind drifted back over six thousand miles. "Have you ever been to the Mexican quarters around the city dumps?" He shook his head at us and spoke softly. "Yes, I am sad because I find this country [New Zealand]. Do you know this is the first time I have ever been able to walk into a restaurant or a bar with a white man? Oh yes, even in San Diego they look at me like I was a leper. People here, they smile and they say, 'Hello, Yank.' And when I say I am from Texas—well, this is very first time a person he call me a Texan. . . . I went to a dance at the Allied Service Club and some colored sailors from a ship come in and the girls, they just dance with them and treat them like anybody else. And then some goddam Texans they go to the hostess and demand the colored boys leave the club." (Battle, pp. 305-06)

Pedro goes on to say that Mexicans at home are accused of being dirty, but that is only because they are charged thirty cents a barrel for water. He recounts the sickness and misery and poverty of the children at home, the lack of work, the scarcity of opportunity for improvement, the
corruption of white "fixers" who prey off the little that the Mexican has. And he concludes with "Remember, Mac, I no fight war for democracy. Pedro, he only fight to learn medicine." Pedro is going home to help cure the sicknesses of his own people. His real war is against the very system that demands, in the end, that he give his life in its defense. Against such injustice the war novelists are in concerted attack.

Homosexuality is another facet of Army experience that the war novelists often introduce into their novels. In The Naked and the Dead there is the latent homosexuality of General Cummings that becomes overt in his experience in an alley in Rome. There is also the Freudian implications of the relationship between Hearn and General Cummings. In From Here to Eternity the soldiers "chase" homosexual civilians in order to get free food and liquor and to wrangle spending money from them. In The Thin Red Line there is the initial overt love-making of Fife and Bead and the developing relationship between them. Fife, trying to justify his love for Bead, recalls that: "... there were oldtimers in the army who had their young boyfriends whom they slept with as with a wife. In return, the young soldiers received certain favors from their protectors... None of this buggering was considered homosexual by anyone and authority turned a blind eye to it... On the other hand there were the overt homosexuals, much increased
since the drafting of civilians, whom everybody disliked, though many might avail themselves of their services" (Line, p. 120). In several of the novels soldiers throw at green recruits the sly charge of "pogey bait" (pogey is candy or favors used by "oldtimers" to lure young recruits into a relationship).

The purpose of such a theme, even though it is minor, is no doubt to shock the reader. The shocking facts of war had been the World War I novelist's strength; but Americans had grown hardened to the brutalities of life—those first war novels and the Depression had seen to that. If the World War II novelist, committed as he was to the literary mode of the Twenties and the Thirties, wished to jar the emotions of his reader, he had to turn to subject matter that was not already emotionally exhausted. Homosexuality was one of his choices. He may also have felt, as Aldridge suggests, that the homosexual was "one of the last remaining tragic types," and that the homosexual's dilemma could be made to symbolize such "larger conflicts of modern man" as alienation and moral perversion.\(^\text{16}\) Whatever the purpose of the novelist, the trainee in his novel learned to be, or learned to understand, or hate, or use the homosexual.

These were the major experiences that the trainee was made to face by his author; the dehumanizing force of the

\(^\text{16}\) Aldridge, After, p. 101.
war machine, the rigidity and power of the hierarchical system, the injustice of racial prejudice and the distortion of natural sexuality. Most of what he was brought to experience came as a shock to him; not because he was naive, for after all his education had been severe. Rather it was because the experiences came abruptly and with intensity, because they were directed without mitigation against his person and because there was no recourse available.

The response that the recruit made to the facts of his new life was dual. Stouffer's study of soldier psychology during World War II discusses the duality of recruit response. Stouffer contends that the trainee had to learn "'expedient behavior'" for dealing with the officers and "'proper behavior'" for living with his fellow soldiers. Stouffer's contention is reflected in the war novels. The fictional soldiers also have two basic patterns of action, and the two patterns are conflicting. On the one hand the fictional soldier, like the real soldier, is forced to accept the system and work and live within it; on the other hand he seldom likes the system and what it demands of him and therefore he resists it with varying degrees of success. Both patterns of behavior seem necessary; the first because the only alternative is death or imprisonment, the second because the only alternative is loss of identity, loss of

\[17\text{Stouffer, I, 413.}\]
humanity, and perhaps even madness.

The first of these patterns, the demands of conformity to the system, is reflected in two ways in the war novel. Soldiers either use the system or remain passive within it. Those who use the system do so from varying motives. Some find that the Army reflects their own personalities and they use it to satisfy an affinity. In this group are the authoritarian officers and non-coms, the bullies and the destroyers. All of the novels have their examples. In *The Naked and the Dead* we find Cummings and Croft; in *Battle Cry* Spanish Joe Gomez; in *The Thin Red Line* "Big Un" Cash; in *The Big War* Capistron and Helthal; in *The Young Lions* the ten men who fight Noah. If there is a scene played out in the brig, the brig officers and guards will be in this category, and the Military Police are often grouped with them. The range of characterization within the category runs from the flagrant sadism of brig sergeant Ransome in *The Big War* to the sly treachery of Gomez in *Battle Cry* to the calculated power of Cummings in *The Naked and the Dead*. All of these characters are frightening and are meant to be. They are the Army stripped of its public veneer, man "red in tooth and claw."

A second group of soldiers who use the Army do so in order to improve their rank or status. The Army encouraged "bucking" for promotion, doing extra duty, and volunteering for details to impress non-coms and officers. Stouffer's
study found that when promotion was granted it was on the basis of conformity to Army regulation and success with standardized and routine jobs, and was granted by officers who often did not know the individual except by report. All too often, Stouffer found, promotion said little of the man's ability, and among the ranks reaction to promotion was usually negative. Again the war novels reflect Stouffer's observations for there are examples of men refusing promotion or resigning their position as officer or non-com. But the novels also provide examples of men who use the system for promotion. Examples include Brown and Stanley in *The Naked and the Dead*; Leva and Bloom and Captain Holmes in *From Here to Eternity*; Doll and Dale in *The Thin Red Line*. Dale represents the thinking of the entire category when Jones says of him: "He had watched the promotions list with a shrewd and careful eye that went far beyond his own sergeantcy. He knew that that fool schoolteacher Band liked him. And he was convinced that Sergeant Field, Doll's old squad leader, had been promoted to Platoon Guide of 1st Platoon simply to get him out of the way. If anything happened to Skinny Culn now, Dale was convinced he could bullshit Teacher Band into promoting himself into the job of platoon sergeant of 1st Platoon" (*Line*, p. 378). Dale becomes a fearless combat

\[18\] Stouffer, I, 259, 264.
soldier, oblivious to death or injury, in order to gain his rank and status; he succeeds and at the same time provides the system with a "fighting" leader.

A third group of soldiers who use the system are more admirable than the previous two. These men accept the system as the only available means of getting the War over. They recognize the weaknesses and failures of the system but believe that the job has to be done and that no other tool is available. Such characters as Witt of The Thin Red Line fall into this category. Witt "had enough confidence in himself as a soldier to be pretty sure he could take care of himself in any situation requiring skill; and as for accidents or bad luck, if one of those caught him, well, it caught him, and that was that. But he didn't believe one would, and in the meantime he was sure he could help out, perhaps save a lot of his old buddies" (Line, p. 244).

Danny Kantaylis of The Big War is in this group as well. Danny tells his wife:

"There's no such things as heroes, Andrea. You find yourself in a bad deal you do your best to get out of it. . . . It's wrong, Andrea, it's all wrong: it's wrong to kill people, it's wrong to order people around, treat them like animals, make them do a whole lot of degrading things--it's wrong, that's all. . . . [But] I don't see any way out of it, I don't see we've got any choice now except go all the way, kill as many of them as we can--but it's all wrong." (Big War, p. 119)

Several characters in Guard of Honor accept the Army as the only means available for ending the War, and, in fact,
their position provides the thematic material for the novel. Captain Andrews lives by a philosophy of "You can be sure of getting pretty much what you work for. Since when? Since always" (Guard, p. 358). Captain Hicks reflects the same thinking, applying it directly to the War situation. He feels that the merits or demerits of the contest are irrelevant; "(once the contest began the only issue was beat or be beaten, and this easy choice could command almost anybody's best endeavor quite as well as zeal for right and justice, or the heady self-gratulations of simple patriotism)" (Guard, p. 28). But it is Colonel Ross, Cozzens' most important character, who best illustrates the point. Ross's guiding principle, both as a civilian judge and as an Army colonel, is to work within the "limits of the possible."

The novel is, in fact, an attempt to examine the limits of the possible. The setting is an Army Air Force training base in Florida; the dramatic situation is a racial incident that involves the area civilians, the base personnel, a Negro flight group, and the Pentagon in Washington. The novel demonstrates, claims Chester Eisinger, that:

- the moral and social qualities of conduct are identical with each other; that conduct is molded by environment; that intelligent conduct takes into consideration the possibilities and necessities of the social situation; that human behavior must be discussed with reference to its social context, not with reference to abstract principles, because men do not act on principle; that an idea is valid if it is instrumental in the reorganization of a given environment; that rigid moral codes do not work because there are too many exigencies to which they do not apply. Out of these ethical conceptions . . .
[Cozzens] has created a realism that recognizes the dynamics of society but paradoxically defends the status quo. . . . In this pragmatism he finds the sanction for the art of the possible, which suggests a sliding relativism, but he insists also upon the moral means to moral ends. 19

Cozzens' novel is not a document in praise of the military; he is clearly aware of the injustice, the inequity, and the inhumanity within the Army. But, given the facts of a world mad with war, the military is a necessity that must be accepted. It must be used to get the job done as quickly as possible.

To use the system is one response soldiers make when faced with the necessity of accepting Army life. The other response is to remain passive; they can not avoid the system, but they will not be coerced into eager and willing soldiers either. This response is by far the most prevalent in the war novels and is demonstrated by both major and minor characters. This passivity has prompted Herschel Brickell's unwarranted charge that the characters in the Second World War novels have active bodies but no soul or mind to speak of. 20 Even the characters themselves recognize the passivity. Captain Stein of The Thin Red Line realizes during combat that: "His men would do what he told them to if he told them explicitly and specifically. Otherwise they would simply lie with their cheeks pressed to the

19 Eisinger, Fiction, p. 165.

ground and stare at him. . . . Initiative may have been the descriptive word for the Civil War; or enthusiasm. But apparently inertia was the one for this one" (Line, p. 200). Because it is so integral a part of the attitudes displayed by so many of the characters, the existence of such inertia is difficult to pin-point within the novels. It lies behind the "gold-bricking" and the shirking of work details, the scorn for officers and the reluctance to volunteer for anything, the refusal of promotion, and the constant search for easy duty.

The reasons for the passivity are clear enough. The soldier does not like the Army, he is unenthusiastic about the War, and he resents the invasion of his personality and the interruption of his life. Unlike the soldier of the First World War novel, he never even considers making a "gesture"; John Andrews' desertion or Frederick Henry's separate peace would strike him as not only futile but also ridiculous and romantic. These soldiers do not believe, as Hemingway's Krebs believed, that the War made Kansas unbearable; rather they "bring with them their image of Kansas, purified of its more unpleasant facts, and hold to it." They do not desert; a few go AWOL but they eventually return to fight. But they are not ideological heroes either. They simply are accepting what is inevitable and succumbing as

\[21\] Hoffman, Modern Novel, p. 172.
little as possible to the dehumanized environment that they despise. A John Andrews or a Frederick Henry thought that he could escape to something better. These soldiers know better than that. They were weaned on what happened to Frederick Henry after his separate peace, and cut their teeth on what the Depression did to the romantic gesture. They possess very few illusions about the War or their part in it. When one of them refers to World War I as "the Great War," the bitter response of his buddy is:

"You mean the World War, Chick." "No, the Great War." "Well: maybe that was the great one. This is just the big one," Klumanski says somberly. "Big as I'll ever want to see, anyway. The biggest and the last." "Ah, there'll be bigger ones," Freuhof remarks from his cot with soft scorn. "There always are." "No there won't Jack." And Klu stubbornly shakes his head. "Another one like this it'll be the name of the game. Hell, there won't even be any playing field left." (Big War, p. 231)

So the soldier will do what he has to do, but as little as he can do, and then just wait until it is all over.

The second pattern of behavior that Stouffer found in the actual soldier was that which the soldier followed when the official Army was not present. What Stouffer calls "proper behavior" was really an attempt on the soldier's part to maintain a sense of his own individuality and importance in an environment that was calculated to deny him both. It was his means of resisting the Army's claim upon him and at the same time of affirming the integrity of his own personality. Such behavior is demonstrated by the novelists'
soldiers in various ways. Some, for example, assert their individuality through physical prowess. Prowess is perhaps the novels’ most common method, for it includes the traditional vices of any soldier: liquor, sex, feats of strength and endurance. When the restrictions and the deprivations and the anonymity of military life are suspended temporarily by a "pass," the novelists' soldiers inevitably turn to liquor. Liquor is so much a part of the war novel that to single out examples would be a waste. It is everywhere; those youngsters who do not drink when they are inducted soon learn to do so during training. At every opportunity almost every man will "get drunk." And he will try to create opportunities. He will attempt to smuggle it onto the base; he will hide it just off base; he will pay an exorbitant price for a bottle; he will drink anything that he can get; he will even make his own if no other is available. It is an obsession with some men, and with most others it is only a little less important. Its value seems to lie in its ability to cut quickly through the military veneer that surrounds the soldier like a cocoon and permit him to act in a satisfyingly unmilitary fashion. It becomes a mark of distinction in the novels to drink heavily and still maintain a degree of sobriety. A man's ability to drink marks him as manly, supplies him with exploits to recall when the deprivations return, re-establishes his sense of personal ability and provides him with an indi-
viduality that his peers recognize. It is the soldier's way of scorning the rigid life, a release that, at proper times, is even sanctioned by the Army itself.

Second only to liquor as a favorite pastime of the soldier in World War II fiction is sex. Usually the two are combined; certainly they serve the same psychological function. The war novels spend a rather large amount of space dealing with the sexual behavior of the soldier. He is shown making love with prostitutes, with civilian "canteen" girls, and with girls native to his battlefield. The novels show him pursuing sex with much the same degree of single-mindedness that they show him pursuing liquor. Since permanent relationships take time, something that he has little of, his sexual experiences are generally devoid of love. The novelist will often surround the experience with the aura of love, but the relationship seldom comes across as genuine. For example, in Battle Cry, Hodgkiss, the "intellectual" soldier, meets a girl while riding a ferry boat. He speaks to her, they agree to meet again, do meet with regularity; he reads poetry to her, and, the author insists, they fall in love. By accident Hodgkiss discovers that she is a prostitute. After the initial shock wears off, he forgives her, has her quit her job, and sends her to his parents. There she knits pair after pair of socks which she sends to him at the front. The cliche-ridden relationship is unintentionally ridiculous. In the
same novel Danny Forrester, at a service man's canteen, meets a young married girl whose husband is away. Without delay he leads her into an affair; then, after a time, he writes it off with "'I guess it's just one of those things that happened that wouldn't have happened if the world was in its right senses'" (Battle, p. 97). But the relationship between Forrester and his "real" girlfriend back home is no warmer nor more convincing than this lightly broken affair.

Their own promiscuity gives rise to a common worry among the novels' soldiers. The married men worry about the loyalty of their wives, and the single men worry about their girl friends. They realize how easy it is for them to obtain sexual gratification; they can imagine that other soldiers are having the same success back home. Their fears develop into bitterness. Brown, in The Naked and the Dead, says of his wife upon no evidence at all: "I should have known better, marrying a two-timing bitch like that. Even when we were in high school, she was rubbing up against everything that wore pants. Oh, I know that it's a mistake to marry a woman 'cause you can't make her any other way, holding out on me for all that time" (Naked, p. 96).

The soldier's pursuit of sex is more than an animal need for "release." Sex provides him direct contact with civilian life, gives him a brief opportunity to involve himself in the suspended patterns of normal living. If offers him a one-to-one relationship with another human
being, of whatever caliber, and thus re-establishes a degree of his own humanity. Private Bell of *The Thin Red Line* theorizes that the attraction of sex is "its reassurance, its re-establishment of—of existence, of personality" (*Line*, p. 142). Even the illusion of love with a prostitute, as brief and unsatisfactory as it is, offers the soldier a moment when he feels that he is individually important to someone, a moment when he feels, as Prewitt does in *From Here to Eternity*, that he is cared for. Such an experience gives him back something that the Army had earlier taken from him.

Feats of strength and endurance also provide the soldier with a degree of individuality in many of the novels. They depict men who stand out because of their size. In *The Thin Red Line* there is Big Queen and "Big Un" Cash; in *Those Devils in Baggy Pants* there is Rogers and Berkely; in *Battle Cry* there is Andy Hookans; in *The Naked and the Dead* there is Ridges. All of these men are singled out because of their physical capabilities. Many of them perform feats that become "legendary." For example, Big Queen unearths the body of a Japanese soldier buried in a mass grave by pulling with almost superhuman strength on a protruding foot.

Just as physical size provides individuality, so does physical endurance. The endurance may be of various kinds, ranging from the monumental beer drinking contest of Burnside and McQuade, two regular Army men in *Battle Cry*,
to the fantastic feat of standing on one's feet after a thirty-six mile forced march in full combat gear as in William Styron's The Long March. But perhaps the endurance that received the novelist's greatest attention is that which the unlucky soldier must undergo when he is sent to the stockade.

The stockade holds a fascination for several of the war novelists. There are extended scenes in From Here to Eternity, The Young Lions, and The Big War. In each of them it is one of the central characters that must endure brig punishment. The punishment is, at times, far more inhuman than the combat that they will face later. In From Here to Eternity, for example, the punishment taken by Blues Berry impressed even the hardest men in a stockade that boasted of having started John Dillinger on his career. Berry is taken from his bed for questioning, then after several hours, the men are led to the place of questioning to watch.

Blues Berry stood against one of the side walls in his GI shorts under the lights, still trying to grin with a mouth that was too swollen to do more than twist. He was barely recognizable. His broken nose had swollen and was still running blood in a stream. Blood was also flowing out of his mouth, whenever he coughed. His eyes were practically closed. Blows from the grub hoe handles had torn the upper half of both ears loose from his head. Blood from his nose and mouth, and the ears which were not bleeding much, had spotted his chest and the white drawers. (Eternity, p. 627)

Berry dies from the beating, but he achieves a degree of individuality that the soldier lost in the well-behaved
ranks would never know. Endurance, the tough spirit that demonstrated to the soldier's peers that he could "take it," provides the soldier in the novels with one means for emotional survival, one way in which he could show the Army that, try as it might, it could not dominate his spirit. And, in fact, this toughness of spirit, the novels show, underlies Army morale, a morale which was based more on group solidarity than on any personal commitment to principles of freedom or democracy or patriotism.

Physical prowess, then, whether through liquor, sex, or physical endurance is a means for the soldier in the World War II novel to assert his individual identity. He also finds other ways, according to the novelists, of establishing his own importance in spite of the depersonalizing Army machine. The most important of these ways, more important even than the physical prowess already discussed, is the "buddy" relationship. There is no novel in which this relationship is not given centrality. The soldiers themselves recognize the strangeness of such relationships. One of Uris's soldiers comments: "'Funny . . . how people from different worlds, different lives, people who wouldn't much bother to talk to each other before the war, are drawn together in such fine friendships in such a short time. . . . I suppose the word "buddy" is something far removed from anything we ever knew before'" (Battle, pp. 65-66). The relationship of the novelist's soldier with
his peers usually works in this fashion: he forms strong emotional attachment to one or two men in his squad; he has some feeling for the rest of his squad but little for the entire platoon. Nothing but the smallest of groups elicits his trust. Beyond the immediate group he trusts, his attitude is not just indifferent; it is hostile. His attitude is reflected in often repeated catch phrases: "'Semper Fil! Hooray for me and screw you!'" and "Screw you, Jack: I've got mine!" But for the inner circle of buddies he feels the strongest of emotions, and will willingly risk his life for their safety.

The reasons for such strong attachments are essentially those, as the novelists suggest, which motivated his sexual relationships. The soldier, by establishing a buddy relationship, is able to maintain a sense of his own individuality and his own worth. It is immensely important to him that his buddy remain alive and equally important to his buddy that he remain alive. He knows that so long as his buddy lives he himself is important, that his life counts, and hence he can throw the lie of his anonymity and insignificance back into the teeth of the Army machine. There is also a mutual security that exists in such a relationship. The soldier knows that when combat comes he will have someone to look out for him, help him if he is wounded, rescue him if he is pinned down, destroy the unseen enemy who has leveled a rifle at his back. At times in the novels the
relationship even reaches the level of talismanic magic. In The Young Lions, for example, Noah and Burnecker form such a relationship. They believe that as long as they are together they will be safe. When Noah is wounded and sent to the rear, Burnecker falls into despair, awaiting his own death which he knows will come. It does come. The security found in the buddy relationship also provided the soldier with his most immediate and perhaps his most important reason for fighting. A soldier in Those Devils in Baggy Pants expresses it this way: "But somehow I felt that comradeship with . . . [the men in my platoon] had about it a value that in itself geared me to face whatever lay ahead as well if not better than my hatred for the enemy and his philosophy" (Devils, p. 94).

The buddy relationship is therefore a means of emotional survival. When the Army proves to him that he is an insignificant and easily replaceable part of a giant machine, when men outside his intimate group hurl at him "Screw you, Jack," and when the enemy seeks with diabolical diligence to snuff out his life, the soldier has to have such reassurance in order to maintain his sanity.

Another, though less important, means that the soldier finds in the novels for maintaining his individuality is the weapon that he carries. Several of the novels make this point. In Battle Cry the men raid an ordinance shack to provide themselves with Gerand rifles to replace their
flimsy and badly rusting Rising guns. In James Jones's *The Pistol* the Army forty-five pistol becomes a symbol of individuality and ability. In *The Thin Red Line* Doll gains the respect of his platoon by stealing a pistol, Cash gains their awe by effectively using a sawed-off shot gun, and seven men form an exclusive and admired "club" by raiding a supply dump and making off with Tommy guns. In all of these cases the weapon provides the man with a claim to individuality. His weapon sets him apart.

Still another means to individuality that receives attention in the war novels is a kind of semi-madness that amounts to a revolt against the system. The madness varies in degree. In *Guard of Honor* Lieutenant Edsell is presented as a messy liberal; ineffectual, jumping into action for a "cause" without ever having thought his action through. To further racial equality he uses the bewildered father of a Negro soldier, giving no thought to the injured dignity and feelings of the father, for "Edsell was exultantly dedicated to making all the trouble he could" (*Guard*, p. 387). His blind anger with the system drives him to a kind of half-mad irrationality that is his identifying mark. In *Those Devils in Baggy Pants* the men are strangely comforted by a Nazi soldier they nick-name Rudolph the Gallant Bastard. Rudolph asserts his individuality by coming out of his mountain side cave at seven o'clock every morning to perform ten minutes of sitting-up exercises in full view of the
American lines. He is too distant for rifle fire and when the mortars zero in, he saunters back into the safety of his cave. When the mortars stop, he reappears and waves to the Americans. When a direct hit by a phosphorous shell finally gets him, the Americans are genuinely saddened. Somehow they lose something of their own sense of individuality at the same time. In the same novel a character who has been a hobo, living free and unrestricted all of his life, adjusts to Army regimentation and anonymity by believing in a fantasy that he is a termite, the Master Termite of all termites. During a lull in combat the Master Termite breaks into tears and observes that ""I was a real Termite on Hill 1205, but in the States, I'm just a make-believe Termite"" (Devils, p. 83). When he is forced to break through his fantasy he finds the reality of the Army and combat too much for him. It is only in semi-madness that he can be assured of his own worth.

These, then, as seen in the novels of World War II, are the patterns of behavior that the trainee develops: the first is an enforced pattern of conformity to a system that denies him identity and worth; the second is a pattern of self assertion that reassures him of his identity and worth. Between these two patterns the soldier alternates, conforming to the former when he is under official observation, fleeing to the latter when he is with his peers.

An analysis of two of the novels under consideration
will illustrate how important the trainee's attitudes are in those novels. While the attitudes dealt with above are significant in most of the war novels, in both Irwin Shaw's *The Young Lions* and James Jones's *From Here to Eternity* such attitudes provide the novelists with their themes. In Shaw's novel it is the soldier's reaction to the degrading effects of fascism that receives central attention. In Jones's novel it is the soldier's response to the impersonal Army machine that is central.

James Jones's *From Here to Eternity* takes as its setting Hawaii and the Schofield Army Base during the period immediately preceding the attack upon Pearl Harbor. The characters are aware that war is imminent. The Army is undergoing change; the small peace-time Army is rapidly moving away from the well-established pattern of paternalism toward the gigantic machine that will take in trainloads of dissimilar civilians and turn out row upon row of similar soldiers. Within the changing Army two characters are trapped. Prewitt's problem is precisely that suggested earlier in this chapter—how to survive as an individual in an Army that is becoming increasingly impersonal. Warden, Prewitt's sergeant, is faced with the problem of either maintaining the old order or mitigating the change so that such an individual as Prewitt has a chance for survival.  

22 Richard P. Adams, "A Second Look at *From Here to Eternity,*" *College English,* 17, 206.
Prewitt loves the Army. Even though he joined just to escape the deprivations of the Depression, he soon found that he liked the security that the Army offered. There was comradeship and a sense of order in the Army that the "road" had never provided. His desire for comradeship and order is best demonstrated when he is confined to the stockade. There he deliberately becomes unruly so that he will be sent to barracks number two where his buddy, Angelo Maggio, is confined. Angelo has told Prewitt about the men in barracks two, men who "were the toughest of the tough. They were the cream. They wore their barracks number like a medal of honor and guarded its bestowal as jealously as any Masonic Lodge or mid-western Country Club ever guarded theirs" (Eternity, p. 556). The Army also provides Prewitt with the opportunity to practice virtues in which he believes, such traditional virtues as courage, and endurance, and loyalty; in fact, the Army offers to reward such virtues. Prewitt needs these virtues because his personal creed is to fight for the underdog, for "here in America, he thought, everybody fights to become top dog and then to stay top dog. And maybe, just maybe, that is why the underdogs that get to be top dogs and there is nothing left for them to fight for, wither up and die or else get fat and wheeze and die" (Eternity, p. 268). Fighting for the underdog keeps a man in trim, keeps his courage ready and his endurance up. It also gives him practice in loyalty. Prewitt can
therefore agree with the company cook, Stark, who argues that: "'We livin in a world thats blowin itself to hell, as fast as five hundred million people can arrange it. In a world like that, theres ony one thing a man can do; and thats to find something thats his, sam, really his and will never let him down, and then work hard at it and for it and it will pay him back. With me its my kitchen'" (Eternity, p. 207). With Prewitt it is the Army. It is no doubt because Prewitt welcomes struggle that Leslie Fiedler has accused the novel of being ruled by a passion "to spit out teeth, to be beaten and scarred, to be hurt past endurance and to endure it." The accusation is not quite accurate, at least not if it is aimed at Prewitt. Prewitt does not seek punishment; he only welcomes the opportunity to prove his courage and endurance and loyalty. The difference, though subtle, is important, for such virtues represent, in From Here to Eternity, the order and the tradition of the past. Jones has Sam Slater, a hot-shot general who speaks a part of Jones's truth say: "'In the past ... fear of authority was only the negative side of a positive moral code of 'Honor, Patriotism, and Service.' In the past, men sought to achieve the positives of the code'" (Eternity, p. 329). Prewitt accepts such a

23 Leslie Fiedler, "James Jones' Dead-End Young Werther," Commentary, 12, 254.
"positive moral code" as valid and believes that "'if I want to do something and I do do it, then I can still go along and live my life, as long as I dont harm nobody, without bein kicked around. Thats my right, as a man. To not be kicked around.'" In other words, in a system where order and tradition exist, the individual knows the rules, knows what is expected of him, knows the consequences of breaking the rules; and within such established boundaries a man is able to create for himself a separate identity and is able to maintain his freedom. This is the primary reason for Prewitt's love for the Army; the Army is such a system. This is also why Prewitt can protest: "'I aint never refused a order yet, when its official duty. But I dont think they got the right to order me what to do outside of duty hours'" (*Eternity*, p. 258). And this is why he can accept "The Treatment," when he refuses to box for G Company; he made the choice knowing the rules and the rules said that if he would not box he would get "The Treatment."

Comradeship, traditional values, order, freedom and personal identity; these are the things that Prewitt loves and, he believes, the Army offers all of them. But the Army in *From Here to Eternity* is undergoing change. The change gives Prewitt trouble, for he discovers that the changing Army does not offer him all that he values.

Jones identifies the nature of the change through several characters, chief of whom is General Slater.
General Slater says of the Army's code:

"In the past, men sought to achieve the positives of the code [Honor, Patriotism and Service], rather than simply to avoid its negatives [fear of authority]. . . . But the advent of materialism and the machine age changed all that, see? We have seen the world change," he said, "in our time. The machine has destroyed the meaning of the old positive code. Obviously, you cannot make a man voluntarily chain himself to a machine because its 'Honorable.' The man knows better. . . . All that is left, then," Sam Slater went on, "is the standardized negative side of the code as expressed in Law. The fear of authority which was once only a side issue but today is the main issue, because its the only issue left.

"You can't make a man believe it is 'Honorable,' so you have no choice but to make him afraid of not chaining himself to his machine. You can do it by making him afraid of his friends' disapproval. You can shame him because he is a social drone. You can make him afraid of starving unless he works for his machine. You can threaten him with imprisonment. . . . the majority of men must be subservient to the machine, which is society. (Eternity, pp. 329-31)

Mechanization, with its emphasis upon the mass rather than the individual and materialism with its emphasis upon the value of things rather than upon human values; this is the change that is sweeping the Army. General Slater voices the theory of the change; Stark illustrates what it means in practice. When Prewitt asserts his right "not to be kicked around," Stark tries to set him straight.

"Now in the first place," he said, "you're looking at it all bassackwards, you're going on the idea of the world as people say it is, instead of as it really is. In this world, no man really has any rights at all. Except what rights he can grab holt of and hang on to. . . . He [man] got to see how other people get and keep what they got, and then he got to learn to do it that way too.

"The best way, the one most people use the most, is politics. They get friendly with somebody who's got influence they need." (Eternity, p. 206)
In the new Army rules, order, and tradition are nothing more than thin veneer. Courage and endurance and loyalty are not now rewarded; the way to reward is "politics." And politics is exactly how Stark got his kitchen—at the expense of Preen, the former cook, who is busted to private complaining that "'Its hard to see somethin you love [the Army] patchworked by politicians. After twenty years service, I'm going back to bein a buckass private in the rear rank.'"

So Prewitt's view of the Army proves to be outdated. The rules have either been changed or circumvented. The order is not order at all—only discipline and hierarchy. The traditional virtues do not produce reward. Quite the contrary, they may and do produce punishment. Ike Galovitch is Prewitt's platoon guide and superior. He is a vengeful old man who despises Prewitt for not joining the Company boxing team. During an argument with Prewitt, Galovitch, when no others are present, pulls a knife and attacks Prewitt. Prewitt must knock him unconscious. Charges are brought against Prewitt, but the traditional virtue of loyalty to Company personnel seals Prewitt's lips. He will not mention that Galovitch attacked him, and with a knife; and Galovitch, who has learned the "politics" of the new Army, will not admit his guilt. So loyalty earns Prewitt a Special Court Martial and several months in the stockade.

Jones, having established that what was once order has
become chaos and that once valid actions have become impractical, goes on to illustrate that freedom is an illusion and identity is elusive. As for freedom, Prewitt is sent to the stockade to serve his term. There, in barracks two, he meets Jack Malloy, a character who is presented as a sincere worker for social salvation, another spokesman for the author, and a man who is worshipped by his fellow inmates. Malloy tells Prewitt: "'In our world . . . there is only one way a man can have freedom, and that is to die for it, and after he's died for it it don't do him any good'" (Eternity, p. 561). As for identity, Prewitt can only search for it. When he visits Lorene, a prostitute, he asks her if she thinks of him as special. She wonders if it is important to him that he be special.

"Yes, it's important," he said urgently, "important because there are so many of us; that's just faces, to you. So many of you that ain't even faces, just bodies, to us. Do you want to be just a unremembered body? When we come here and then go away we need to know at least that we're remembered. Maybe we seem all alike but none of us is ever all alike. Men are killed by being always all alike, always unremembered. They die inside." (Eternity, p. 241)

Prewitt's problem, then, is staying alive inside while staying within the changing Army. His love for the Army rules out desertion; the problem that Jones sets up requires that he remain in the Army. There are three solutions open to him. He can accept Malloy's religion of change; he can adjust, as far as possible, to the new Army
while at the same time drawing strength from his buddies and his woman; or he can resist and be destroyed.

Jones dramatizes the situation by presenting the choice to Prewitt, still in the stockade, in the form of Fatso, the stockade sergeant. Fatso is made to represent all those qualities that Prewitt has come to hate in the new Army. He is brutal; he is without human sympathy; he is an automaton who responds to command without thought; he is amoral, never considering the right or wrong of a situation; and he is only one of countless more like him.

Malloy makes all of this clear when he tells Prewitt:

"He [Fatso] doesn't do what he does because it is right or wrong. He doesn't think about right or wrong. He just does what is there to be done. . . . But if you asked Fatso if he thought what he did was right, he would probably look surprised as hell. Then, if you gave him time to think, he would say yes it was right; but he would be saying it simply because he had always been taught that he ought to do what is right. Therefore, in his mind, everything he does must be right. . . . If it would do any good to kill him, I'd say go ahead, kill him. But all that will happen will be they will get somebody else just like him to take his place." (Eternity, pp. 629-30)

Prewitt's values have convinced him that he ought to kill Fatso (the beating of underdog Blues Berry prompts the decision). That decision becomes the hinge upon which Prewitt's fate and the novel's theme must swing. If he returns from the stockade to G Company and forgets about killing Fatso, Prewitt's adjustment will be made and he will be assimilated into the new Army. If he goes through with his plan to kill Fatso, it will be an overt attack
upon the new Army, and Prewitt's destruction will be inevit­able.

Malloy subtly urges Prewitt to follow the first course of action by accepting his religion of change. Malloy does not suggest the chameleon "politics" of Stark; that would be to lose personal integrity. His kind of adjustment is reflected in his philosophy, a rather vague evolutionary religion of love. Malloy believes that "over the old God of Vengeance, over the new God of Forgiveness, was the still newer God of Acceptance, the God of Love-That-Surpasseth-Forgiveness, the God who saw heard and spoke no Evil simply because there was none" (Eternity, p. 618). Man's view of God has evolved and, Malloy goes on, the present view of God (Malloy's view) is "Instability rather than Fixity," a "'God which is never the same twice.'" With God as Evolution, the old view of God as Absolute is gone and with it goes the view of morality as fixed. As Malloy argues: "'if evolution is growth by trial and error, how can errors be wrong? since they contribute to growth?'" (Eternity, p. 618).

As a philosophy Malloy's new religion does not hold up. It is riddled with contradictions for Jones is not a philosophical novelist. But the implications for Prewitt are clear. Malloy is suggesting that Prewitt must abandon his worship of order as an absolute and his belief in traditional values as a fixed scheme of right and wrong
with established and inevitable rewards and punishments. To hold such a view today is not only destructive, it is inaccurate. If Prewitt can accept such truth, his adjustment would become a natural and correct response, and he could therefore retain his personal integrity while remaining in the Army that he loves.

But Jones slams this door to salvation shut with a clang. Jones may have made Malloy a poor philosopher unintentionally but he deliberately made him a poor messiah. In practice Malloy's system has proven ineffectual. Even Malloy admits that:

"I've tried to teach people things I saw but they always take them wrong and use them wrong. Its because there's something lacking in me. I preach passive resistance and a new kind of love that understands, but I don't practice it.

..."

"You see, the same things wrong with me that's wrong with everybody else. I preach against it with them, but it's true of me, too. Even though I can prove logically that it's not. ... I suffer from the same disease I try to diagnose, the same disease that's destroying the world." (Eternity, pp. 631, 634)

If the new religion does not work for its creator, it certainly will not work for Prewitt, and he does not even attempt to put it to the test.

The second alternative that Prewitt may choose is to return to G Company, adjust as much as his sense of integrity will permit, and endure what he can not accept by drawing strength from his buddies in the Company and from his woman, Lorene. Prewitt does return to G Company, determined to
kill Fatso but also determined to wait nine days before the act. Those nine days with buddies and Lorene could give him a chance to change his mind. What he finds upon his return does nothing but confirm his decision to kill Fatso. The change has accelerated; everything has altered during his stay in the stockade. Even the old pressures that had caused Prewitt's trouble in the first place are gone. The change that had produced the trouble had itself undergone change and created a still newer situation. His friends in G Company are gone. Maggio, his closest buddy, has been discharged for insanity. There is a new man in the orderly room. At chow "there were more new faces than familiar ones." Promotions have taken some men, transfers have claimed others. Even the Company Commander is a new man. And worse, Warden, the one man who could have been of most help to him (as will be shown later) is by chance away on leave. Prewitt is so disoriented that he never even goes to see Lorene before killing Fatso. Forces beyond his control have determined Prewitt's action; freedom is an illusion. Identity has eluded him, for a pawn can have no individual identity. In other words, Prewitt has no choice. "With Capt Holmes gone and G Co no longer a jockstrap outfit, all the old forces that had caused the trouble were gone now, obsolete, rescinded. They were expecting the new CC any day now. He [Prewitt] felt somewhat like a man on a mountainside to whom someone has thrown a rope too late
and who watches the now useless rope receding uselessly up into the heights as he falls" (Eternity, p. 638).

The final alternative, to resist the Army by killing its symbol, Fatso, is the alternative that Prewitt follows. The action leads to self destruction, both actually and symbolically. After killing Fatso Prewitt flees, wounded, to Lorene's house and hides there, first unable to return to the Company because of the wound, and later afraid to return because as a deserter he would be returned to the stockade. A few weeks later, the Japanese attack Pearl Harbor. Prewitt, still believing in that old virtue of loyalty, tries to sneak back at night and is shot. Jones's implication is that Prewitt offered himself to the bullet, fired by an impetuous sentry who thinks that Prewitt is an enemy agent. More important is the symbolic self-destruction. Back in the stockade Malloy had tried to convince Prewitt that to kill Fatso was to kill Warden as well. He tells Prewitt:

"Well, Fatso is as much a part of the Army you love as your 1st/Sgt, Warden, that you're always talking about. One as much as the other. Without the Fatsos you couldn't have the Wardens."

"Someday we will."
"No. You never will. Because when that day comes you won't have any Armies, and there will be no more Wardens. You can't have the Wardens without the Fatsos, either... But what you want can't be achieved by killing off all the Fatsos. When you kill your enemy Fatso, you are also killing your friend Warden." (Eternity, p. 630)

Clearly, Jones is suggesting that what is bad about the Army
is so inextricably bound up with what is good about the Army that to destroy one is to destroy both. Thus Prewitt, who is deliberately first and last a soldier, not only destroys Warden, he destroys himself when he kills Fatso.

Warden, the man who represents what is good about the Army, is no less trapped than Prewitt. Warden's problem is to maintain sufficient order (stability) within the changing Army that the individual can recognize his place in it and thus have individual identity. Order is not only his responsibility, it is a part of his personality. The men in his Company know precisely what to expect; the rules are clear. When Prewitt arrives in G Company, Warden lets him know just what is expected of him and what he can expect if he steps out of line. Efficiency is another element of Warden's personality. He is the First Sergeant of G Company, and as such he takes it upon himself to run the Company. He believes that: "'the only sin is a conscious waste of energy. I believe all conscious dishonesty, such as religion, politics and the real estate business, are a conscious waste of energy. I believe that at a remarkable cost in energy people agree to pretend to believe each other's lies so they can prove to themselves their own lies are the truth'" (Eternity, pp. 117-18). Officers, he knows from experience, are energy wasters; they are inefficient, they are stupid, they are venal. Therefore, he runs the Company. He tells Prewitt, who has just arrived in G Company: "'This is G
Company, of which I am First Sergeant. Holmes is the CO, but he is like the rest of the officer class: a dumb bastard that signs papers an rides horses an wears spurs an gets stinking drunk up at the stinking Officers' Club. I'm the guy that runs this compny'" (Eternity, p. 53). Warden is not only characterized by order and efficiency, he is also just. He will favor no man nor punish without sufficient cause. His justice is carefully tailored to fit the situation. The men know that his scales balance precisely. Therefore, as the man responsible for G Company, Warden must and does accept the responsibility for assimilating Prewitt into the Company. If Prewitt is not assimilated, then the Company fails and Warden fails as well. The problem of both men, then, is essentially the same problem.

Prewitt's problem is complicated by change which he can not understand and accept. Warden's problem is complicated by a temptation to join the officer class and thus become a part of what he despises. The temptation comes through Karen Holmes, the wife of Warden's Company Commander. Warden falls in love with Karen, and she with him. They decide upon marriage. But marriage to your Commander's wife when you are only a Sergeant is impossible short of leaving the Army. That possibility is ruled out for Warden as well as for Prewitt. That leaves one other possibility; Warden

24 Adams, p. 206.
must apply for a commission. But to be commissioned as an officer is to be a part of "the dumb bastards that sign papers." It is to be tainted by the kind of injustice that has been visited upon Karen (She has lost her fertility because of a severe case of Gonorrhea contracted from her officer husband who picked it up at an officers' stag party). It is to lose control of G Company or any other company. It is to be pulled into the Army's politics. Still the temptation is strong. Warden believes that he loves Karen and he is moved by the injustice that she has suffered.

Warden goes so far as to apply for the commission, but when it comes through, signed and ready for Warden's acceptance, he turns it down. He has decided that he just can not sort out the complications of love for Karen and Army responsibility. When he explains his decision to Karen and they meet for the final time, Warden complains bitterly: "'Why does the world have to be like it is? ... I dont know why the world has to be like it is.' 'I dont know either,' she said. 'And I used to be very bitter about it. But now I know it has to be that way. Theres no other way for it to be. Whenever a menace is conquered, a new more subtle menace arises. There is no other way it could be'" (Eternity, p. 786). Karen's fatalism is reflected in Warden's failure to assimilate Prewitt into G Company. Warden, aware that both he and the Army are failing when
Prewitt is first sent to the stockade, considers more drastic steps to save Prewitt. But when Prewitt unexpectedly returns to G Company, Warden is on leave, spending an idyllic few days with Karen. The chance to help Prewitt passes, and Fatso is killed. Prewitt is in hiding. Still Warden carries him on the roll, not reporting Prewitt as AWOL. He tries to see Lorene, tries to see Prewitt, takes various chances himself to get Prewitt safely back into G Company. It is all to no avail.

When Warden learns of Prewitt's death, he must explain to the new Company Commander why a man who has been absent for weeks has not been reported as absent. The reactions of Lieutenant Ross, the new Commander, and Warden reflect the differences between the new Army and the old Army.

"My first responsibility is to this Company as a whole," Lt Ross said. "Not to individuals in it. And any individual who threatens the security of the whole threatens my responsibility. I still say, I think it's just as well we're rid of him [Prewitt]."

... "In a war a country needs every good soldier it can lay hands on. It can't have too many." [said Warden]

"One soldier more, or less, don't matter much," Lt Ross said tiredly.
"You think not?"
"Production is what wins wars," Lt Ross said. (Eternity, pp. 768-69)

Warden feels responsibility to the individual within the group; Ross feels individuals are easily replaceable. That difference in emphasis is the dimension of change that has taken place within the Army, the change that has destroyed
Prewitt, Warden, and in a sense the Army.

*From Here to Eternity* is a novel about the individual's response to a changing world. The individual's sense of his own worth and his assertion of his own identity is lost in the chaos of shifting values, is destroyed by a society turning increasingly toward materialism as its ruling philosophy and toward the machine as its model for efficient human response. Prewitt's dilemma is a reflection of that faced by almost every trainee in the World War II novel; how to survive as an individual in a homogenizing Army.

Irwin Shaw's *The Young Lions* takes as its thesis that fascism is evil, that democratic liberalism is good, and that sacrifice must be made if the latter is to be restored to its proper place of power in the world. The thesis is dramatized by examining the effects of Nazi Fascism on Christian Dietsl, a young Nazi soldier, and the effects of American Army fascism (described earlier in this chapter) on Noah Ackerman, an American Jew, and Michael Whitacre, an American liberal.

Dietsl is relevant to this chapter only as he reflects one side of Shaw's dichotomy and will therefore receive little attention. It should be indicated, however, that Dietsl undergoes a process of brutalization throughout the novel. He begins as a ski instructor with natural human sympathy that he deliberately subjects to Nazi doctrine so that "larger issues" can be decided. He is also a man of
action and his dilemma is that as he becomes increasingly aware that the Nazi basis for action is wrong, his commitment to action requires him to perform increasingly inhuman deeds. In other words, the facts of war drive him to become more and more brutal as he becomes less and less ideologically committed. Finally, he is little more than a destroyer, without rationale, without direct cause, acting as he has been taught because he knows no other way to act. He becomes Shaw's representative of Fascist philosophy and practice; a man possessed by "the love of war and killing, the cultivation of the predatory and egotistic elements . . . the unrestrained lust, the utilization of treachery, the belief . . . that the end justifies the means."  

Noah Ackerman is Shaw's scapegoat in the scheme of The Young Lions. Noah is a young American committed to humanity. He is a Jew, and his Jewishness plays a large part in the novel; but Shaw seems to take pains to make the early Noah supra-Jewish, acting and thinking on a humane plane above racial distinctions. For example, he is disgusted by his dying father's self-conscious Jewishness, he finds his best friend among the goyim, and his wife is a New England Protestant. He is the antithesis of the cliche Jew; he is quiet, unaggressive and unassuming, poor, avoiding the delicatessen cliques. He is given an abundant

25Eisinger, Forties, p. 111.
supply of enobling characteristics. He is a loyal friend and is deeply moved by the enlistment and early death of his friend Roger. He is deeply in love with his wife and treats her with gentleness and consideration. He refuses to take advantage of a drunk whore, patiently humors his dying father, and worries about disturbing the crotchety uncle of his wife-to-be. The day after Pearl Harbor, he enlists, he tells himself, "As an honorable citizen, as a believer in the war, as an enemy of Fascism, as a Jew. . . . He shook his head. . . . As an American, then." 26 His commitment to the War is based upon his belief in the goodness of humanity. He refuses to accept chance as the ruling principle of his world, believing blindly that: "If you thought about it you stared into the shouting pit of madness. No plan to anything. No plan to loving or dying or fighting or anything. The Equation: Man plus his intentions equals Accident. Impossible to believe. The plan must be there, but cleverly camouflaged" (Lions, p. 199).

Such identification with and commitment to humanity not only leads him quickly into the fight against fascism, it makes him a devoted fighter. His war against fascism takes two directions: he despises the official Fascism of Nazi Germany, and he abhors equally the fascism that he

finds in the American Army. His fight against Nazi Fascism is his official combat against the German Army in Europe that culminates in the climactic prison camp scene. In this scene Noah's Army unit takes a prison camp and liberates the prisoners, mostly Jews, who have survived the gas ovens, the starvation, the disease and the cruelty of the guards. The prisoners are emaciated, some dying quietly where they lay even as the Americans throw open their prison. Captain Green, Noah's Company Commander, listens to the request of one of the prisoners, an old Rabbi, that they be permitted to hold a service for the Jewish dead in the prison. Another prisoner, an Albanian, objects on the grounds that it might anger the prisoners of other religious persuasions. Green angrily orders the Albanian out and guarantees order for the religious service. Noah (and Shaw) sees this as a guarantee of hope for the future and an end to Fascism.

"When the war is over," Noah said and his voice was growing loud, "Green is going to run the world, not that damned Albanian. . . . The human beings are going to be running the world! . . . The human beings! There's a lot of Captain Greens! He's not extraordinary! There're millions of them!" Noah stood, very erect, his head back, shouting crazily, as though all the things he had coldly pushed down deep within him and frantically repressed for so many months were now finally bursting forth. (Lions, pp. 594-95)

"All the things he had coldly pushed down" constitutes the second part of his war against fascism, the fascism that he finds in the American Army. Except for the prison camp scene, Nazi Fascism in the novel is an impersonal force
against which Noah directs a general, somewhat vague and officially sanctioned indignation. But Army fascism is a very personal, very specific and very unofficial force, and receives more of the novel's direct attention than Nazi Fascism. It receives Shaw's special indignation and makes his novel particularly relevant to this chapter. American Army fascism is directed at Noah by both officers and enlisted men. During his training period, Noah's Commanding Officer is Captain Colclough. Colclough is a cruel man who encourages cruelty among his men. He dislikes Noah the Jew and deliberately makes his life miserable. He sanctions the physical beatings that Noah takes at the hands of his fellow soldiers. When Noah tries to make a request through official channels he gets the deliberate red tape stall. The Sergeant will not grant him permission to speak to the Company Commander even though the Commander is just a few feet away. He must first put on his "class A uniform." He does so, returns to ask permission a second time, and is told the Commander has just gone. Noah waits until the Commander returns, asks a third time and is told to wait, even though the Commander is visibly present and not busy. After half an hour passes the Commander sees Noah, but immediately and without cause rejects his request for an evening pass to meet his wife arriving from New York by bus. When Noah goes AWOL, Colclough takes it as a personal insult and vows vengeance, even drinks a toast to Noah's capture
Noah experiences Army fascism from his fellow soldiers also. They taunt him with remarks calculated to arouse his anger, question his courage when he refuses to respond, throw the usual prejudicial cliches at him. He is unmercifully ridden by his barracks sergeant, Rickett, the usual stupid, prejudiced Texan of the Second World War novel. Rickett throws at Noah extra detail, the most miserable detail, and blame for barrack irregularities, always reminding Noah in his vulgar lisp that: "'Thith ithn't a shitty thynagogue on the East Side, Ikie, thith ith a ba'ack in the Ahmy of the United Thtates of Americuh, and it hath t' be kep' shahnin' clean, white-man clean, Ikie, white-man clean'" (Lions, p. 265). At one point Noah is called out of the barracks on a pretense, then jumped and beaten. Another time the men in his barracks open his footlocker and steal ten dollars that he has saved to buy his wife a birthday present. When he discovers the theft and challenges the anonymous thief, the ten biggest men in the barracks step forward as co-responsible. So Noah fights all ten, one by one. He loses two teeth, has his mouth cut and his eye ripped in the first fight; has two ribs broken in the second; loses two more teeth and has his nose broken in the third; receives a ruptured ear in the fourth; has his larynx injured in the fifth and so on down the list. His courage does not alter the attitudes of the men. Later,
during combat dangers, the men do work with Noah, for their lives as well as his are at stake. Noah becomes a leader under fire and risks his life to save theirs. But when the fight is over and the danger is gone, their response is "'oh, Christ, we still got the Jew.'"

The third man in Shaw's scheme is Michael Whitacre, an American liberal. He is artistic and intellectual—he is a well-known Broadway stage manager—and he knows the people who count in the world of the theater. He has money and prestige, and he lives the American middle-class life, with the cocktail parties, the numerous affairs, the unfaithful wife, the divorce, and the social and political openmindedness. Most important for Shaw, Michael has good (that is, liberal) ideological instincts. He recognizes the falseness of the cocktail parties and the affairs; he helps organize medical assistance for the Loyalists fighting Fascism in Spain; he is deeply concerned with the darkening war news from Europe and, when he does finally get into the Army, he feels that he should serve as a part of the masses, as an enlisted man.

Shaw gives Michael one major flaw. He makes him a man uncommitted to action. For example, when a suicidal acquaintance attempts to jump from an upper story, Michael, who is beside him, remains frozen in place and another man leaps across the room to the rescue. Or when the war breaks out, Michael is convinced that he should "get a gun"
but rationalizes that his producer "needed him to put the play on. And, there was no escaping this fact, Michael needed the money. If he went into the Army now, his mother and father would probably starve" (Lions, p. 164). When Michael does finally enlist months later, his "good" instincts send him as a private in infantry, but the Army's fascism quickly discourages him. At his training camp he meets Noah and, throughout Noah's ten fights, he watches the beatings and helps patch Noah up after each fight is over. The injustice pains him but he cannot bring himself to intervene. When he does go to Captain Colclough about the fights, Colclough tells him to mind his own business, and he does just that; he "pulls strings" and gets himself transferred out of the infantry and away from the situation. This pattern of good instincts but no action is often repeated.

Michael undergoes a kind of redemption that brings him to action. It begins when he recognizes the need for action and enlists as a private in the infantry.

I'm here, Michael thought, smelling the Army blanket under his chin, it's happened. I should have rushed into it and I didn't and I could have dodged it and I didn't. Here I am, in this tent, under the stiff blanket, as I always knew I would be. This tent, this blanket, these snoring men have been waiting for me for thirty-three years, and now they have caught up with me and I have begun to pay up. Pay for my opinions, pay for my easy life, for good meals and the soft beds, pay for the easy girls and all the easy money. Pay for the thirty-three year holiday that ended this morning when the Sergeant said, "You. Pick up that butt." (Lions, p. 226)
But the price, the Army's injustice, particularly with regards to Noah, proves too much for him and he flees into Special Services where he directs entertainers. Special Services does not satisfy Michael's political instincts; the soldiers are sloppy, everyone drinks too much, anyone could do his job and he does not feel that he is helping to end the war and restore sanity to the world. He meets a great many officers of upper rank and discovers the fascism of the official Army. The Army operates not with justice but, like civilian business, by political influence and favor. Michael's disillusioned drinking earns him a stint in the stockade and he experiences that brand of Army fascism. Finally he is made a driver for Colonel Pavone, a Civil Affairs officer who roams the battle front observing and recording the war, and Michael sees still another kind of Army inhumanity. It is at a reassignment center, where he is awaiting new orders, that Michael again meets Noah. Noah has gone from training camp to combat to hospital. Having recovered from his wound, Noah is awaiting reassignment to his old combat unit.

Noah becomes the agent of Michael's redemption, for from this point on Michael stops drifting and begins to act upon his beliefs. Noah convinces him that they should remain together by simply going AWOL from the reassignment center and returning on their own to Noah's combat unit. In this way Michael will be under the care of a combat veteran; he
will have a buddy and will therefore be spared the almost certain death of green replacements.

"You go up as a replacement," said Noah, "and your chances are awful. The men who are there are all friends, they feel responsible for each other, they'll do anything to save each other. That means every dirty, dangerous job they hand right over to the replacements. The Sergeants don't even bother to learn your name. They don't want to know anything about you. They just trade you in for their friends... You've got to have friends," Noah was saying fiercely. "You can't let them send you any place where you don't have friends to protect you." (Lions, pp. 546-47)

Noah serves as protector, educator, and example while Michael learns his new role as man of action. Michael is finally molded into a combat soldier, and the stage is therefore set for the thematic climax.

Noah and Michael walk off from the prison camp where Captain Green is arranging for the Jewish service. As Noah is loudly proclaiming Green a harbinger of justice for the post-War world, Dietsl, wounded and separated from the fleeing German Army, hears, senselessly shoots and kills Noah. Michael, now the man of action, hunts down Dietsl, puts him out of action with a grenade, then stands over the battered German and dispatches him with a rifle shot. The novel's thesis is now finally and fully illustrated. Fascism (Dietsl) is evil; democratic liberalism (Michael) is good and will overcome fascism; but it will require the sacrifice of Noah and millions like him to bring democratic liberalism to action. The Young Lions is clearly intended
as a polemic against fascism, both the Nazi brand and the American Army brand, and as a call to action for the establishment of a more just world. In spite of Noah's death it ends on a note of optimism, a note of faith in the essential goodness of men who, like Michael and Captain Green, will accept the challenge and set the world aright.

Shaw's scheme in *The Young Lions* is clear but the scheme fails. The structural failure of *The Young Lions* arises out of its artificiality. According to Fiedler, Shaw was established in the liberal-social mold of the Thirties and brought his "breathless pursuit of the very latest liberaloid cliche-problem" into his war novel.\(^{27}\) The "cliche-problem" rules the materials and gives it its form. Fascism must be shown as totally evil, liberal democracy must be shown as good intentioned but in need of arousing, and the sacrifice of millions of Jews must be shown as the tragic but necessary price the world must pay for a humane future. This scheme controls all: plot is manipulated to contrast Dietsl and Michael; chance is used to bring characters together at appropriate times for the sake of appropriate actions; and characters are over-drawn that they may carry their symbolic weight. The result is an obvious heavy-handedness in structure.

But it is in the area of character that Shaw's failure

\(^{27}\) Leslie A. Fiedler, "Irwin Shaw: Adultery, the Last Politics," *Commentary*, 22, 71.
is most severe, where his polemic, along side of which all else is secondary, fails to convince, and where even his optimism finally rings hollowly. Noah is required, in Shaw's scheme, to be both Jew and supra-Jew, both the symbolic scapegoat of Hitler's racial fascism and American Army fascism and the representative of those humane qualities that will move the liberal conscience through guilt to action. He fails to adequately represent either. His Jewishness refuses to be repressed and often becomes his primary motivation for acting as he does, thus distorting both the author's perspective and scheme. Further, Noah's death at the hands of fascism is meant to be tragic. Instead it is ironic, for Noah is a willing soldier, plying the trade of the soldier, and is not, therefore, a helpless victim. He is cut down due to his own foolish action in a battle zone—he gives away his position by shouting. His death, intended to have meaning, is really senseless.

Moreover, Noah fails to convince as the agent of Michael's redemption. Noah may convert Michael to action, but Noah has himself previously decided that he will practice inertia as far as possible. After he has offered his life in combat, after his attempt to save the lives of several fellow soldiers, after he realizes that such action will not alter the prejudice and injustice of his fellows, Noah decides that now: "nothing is up to me. I travel with the tide. No faster, no slower, no better, no worse. If
they want to advance, I will advance, if they want to run, I'll run. . . . he felt strangely at peace with his new decision. It was a gloomy and hopeless peace, and it came only from the most bitter defeat of his dearest hopes, but it was soothing, relaxing, and, in a sour way, held promise of survival in it" (Lions, p. 473). Such a view is not far removed from Michael's decision, before going with Noah to the front, to "take no chances, volunteer for nothing, take nothing seriously. Survive, he thought, survive; it is the only lesson I have learned so far" (Lions, p. 404). Noah, having decided that "nothing is up to me," can hardly be a credible savior to a faith in and commitment to action.

Finally, Noah may see the fascistic philosophy of "ends justify means" (the basis upon which Nazis justified the deaths of six million Jews and the American Army justified brutal training tactics) as totally evil, but he acts upon the same principle and with the same cold fascistic brutality. At one point a Lieutenant from Supply, dressed in a rich warm coat, approaches Noah's unit at the front. He has come as a "tourist" with money to buy battle souvenirs. At the same time hidden German machinegun fire has pinned the unit down. Noah's combat-wise sergeant directs the Lieutenant to an open area where, he tells him, there are plenty of souvenirs; but he does not tell him that he will draw machinegun fire and thus reveal the German position. When Michael (who is now with Noah) protests such a brutal
sacrifice, Noah the teacher quickly silences him. The Lieu­
tenant is killed, the machinegun is spotted and eliminated, 
the unit receives no casualties. Noah has accepted and 
advocated, for his own and for others' safety, what he 
rejects in fascism.

The presentation of Michael's character fares little 
better. His conversion to action upon principle is uncon­
vincing, not only because Noah is an unconvincing savior 
but also because Michael's change is not adequately motiv­
at ed. His inability to act is so well established that to 
reverse himself simply upon the advice and example of a 
former acquaintance is unacceptable as motivation. What is 
more, it can be argued that when Michael accompanies Noah 
to the front, he is fleeing responsibility just as much as 
embracing it. He is, after all, going AWOL, not back to 
his unit as Noah is but away from his unit. He had said 
earlier that "'When I went into the Army, I made up my mind 
that I was putting myself at the Army's disposal'" (Lions, 
p. 339). By going AWOL, even to the front, he is certainly 
not putting himself "'at the Army's disposal.'" Michael's 
conversion is further suspect because it is to violent 
action, to the means-ends philosophy that Shaw gives to 
fascism. Noah, it has been suggested above, taught Michael 
the lesson; Michael learned it well. He stalks and kills 
Dietsl, automatically performing the mechanical functions 
of arming and throwing the grenade, then deliberately
executing by putting a rifle bullet into the wounded German. There is not a hint of the humane qualities that are to save the world in this action; there is only cold vengeance. Shaw has unintentionally illustrated that the means to a better world is the fascist-like elimination of all fascists.

The result, then, is a novel that is not what it sets out to be. It is not a call to liberal-democratic action, though it intends to be. It is not pacifistic, as Bergen Evans notes, though it tries to be. "As a matter of fact, its author's solution for most of mankind's ills is naively unpacifistic. If soldiers are unhappy, let them mutiny. If the gentle people of the world are oppressed by gangsters, let them murder the gangsters. If tyrants threaten liberty, let some peace-loving young man assassinate them." It is not optimistic, either, though it attempts to be. In its attempt it only proves that the liberal's optimism was an untenable position during the Forties.

The Young Lions does demonstrate two things quite clearly, and both make it relevant to this chapter. It illustrates the hard realities of military life—the humanization, the power of an entrenched hierarchy, the prejudicial treatment of racial minorities—and the struggle of the individual to both conform to the system.
and still maintain his own private dignity. It also illustrates, inadvertently, by its failure as an optimistic statement about the world's future, that the facts of American life during World War II did not lend themselves to ideological manipulation. Survival, not ideology, was the soldier's real preoccupation. Self-defense, both physically and emotionally, was his primary motivation.
CHAPTER SIX

COMBAT: "PRO PATRIA MORI" IN THE WORLD WAR II NOVEL

Combat is made the central fact of almost all the World War II novels, and destruction, which in some form touches every one of their soldiers, is made the central fact of combat. An examination of the experience of combat as it is presented in the various novels will reveal the centrality of destruction in the soldier's combat experience.

Destruction comes to the soldier in the World War II novel in a variety of forms, the most obvious of which is death. The soldier's first experience of combat death is deeply shocking to him. He is both fascinated and horrified by the indignities done to the human body. In The Thin Red Line Jones's soldiers involuntarily watch the lingering and agonizing death of Private Tella, "hit squarely in the groin with a burst of heavy MG fire which had torn his whole belly open" (Line, pp. 211-227). The steady piercing scream of Tella chills the men more than the steady enemy fire does. They are unnerved by "blue-veined loops of intestine bulging between bloodstained fingers," the second burst of fire that hits the wounded man, the "flies, the bloody hands, the blood running slowly from the other, newer wound in his chest whenever he breathed," and the screams
when his broken body jackknifes as a rescuer attempts to pick him up. After an early battle in The Naked and the Dead Mailer's soldiers wander in awe over the now quiet battlefield. They are stunned by what they see. One man's head "was crushed from his ear to his jaw and it lay sodden on the runningboard of the vehicle." Another man "had a great hole in his intestines, which bunched out in a thick white cluster." Corpses, dead for a week, "had swollen to the dimensions of very obese men with enormous legs and bellies and buttocks which split their clothing. They had turned green and purple and the maggots festered in their wounds and covered their feet" (Naked, pp. 167-68). Over and over the World War II novel describes death in the violent and repulsive terms of indignities done to the human body.1

After a while the novel's soldier grows more hardened to the carnage that he sees. Then he becomes concerned with the element of chance that surrounds death in combat. Before combat the soldier is presented as being relatively sure that

1 But the scenes did not have the effect upon the American public that the novelists intended. This fact has been noted by several critics, particularly Malcolm Cowley in The Literary Situation. He has diagnosed this lack of shock in the following fashion. "Partly the lack of impact may be the fault of their readers more than that of the writers. The American public has become so familiar with horrors recounted from life that it is no longer much impressed with those described in novels. . . . Dead is more shocking than any battle scene in the first-war novels, it produced no such public outcry" (p. 37). Cowley goes on to indicate that Dos Passos' stockade in Three Soldiers produced debate in Congress and a response from the Army. Jones's stockade in From Here to Eternity, which is much worse, caused no ripple of protest.
death will strike close, but equally sure that it will miss him. When he gets his first view of battle, his assurance is weakened. The men in The Thin Red Line, watching the battle they will soon join, realize that "There were too many things to watch out for. One man could not take care of them all to protect himself. It was about as easy to get killed by accident as by enemy deliberation" (Line, p. 134). The soldier realizes that "searching fire" is used by the enemy as well as by himself, and that it significantly increases his chances of being hit. His realization is the more painful because it takes from him even the small comfort of death by individual enemy action. To be "killed by accident; slain not as an individual but by sheer statistical probability, by the calculated chance of searching fire" is a "nowhere way to go" (Line, p. 179). When he enters combat, his first reaction is an immobilizing fear. If he comes through his first battle, he may still fear, but with each battle his period of fear is shorter and less intense. He now devotes most of his attention to staying alive, to improving his "chances," and he knows that fear does not help much in the attempt. The novelist brings him to realize his own isolation during battle, that his life is his concern and his alone, that each man exists, as Jones puts it in The Thin Red Line, "in total and unspeakable insularity, so many separate small islands" (Line, p. 169). Only his "buddy" cares, and in
the confusion of battle even that relationship sometimes grows thin.

As the fictional soldier becomes a combat veteran, he also becomes resigned to the possibility of his own death. Kantaylis in *The Big War* tells a green soldier: "'Well: if you get hit, that's all. It's just good luck or bad luck. It isn't important'" (*Big War*, p. 225). The novels indicate that the soldier's fatalism is a way of protecting himself. Red, in *The Naked and the Dead*, "had been through so much combat" that: "he no longer had any illusions about the inviolability of his own flesh. He knew he could be killed . . . and he had grown a shell about that knowledge so that he rarely thought of anything further ahead than the next few minutes. . . . When he heard of some man he knew who had been killed or wounded badly. . . . It was merely something that happened to somebody he knew" (*Naked*, p. 98). His insularity during battle and his growing fatalism convinced the soldier that "There is nothing to care for you or rescue you here at the aqueous end of a world replete with violence and death: and death and death and death" (*Big War*, p. 242). The novelist does show him sympathizing with the replacements going into battle, for he knows that:

> a large percentage of them got killed before they learned how to woo the narrow percentage of safety accorded by lady luck to discerning and sagacious warriors. They would die in the damndest ways: One would trip over a mine or get shot accidentally, a third would let his foxhole
cave in and smother him. And in the first battle they usually died in heaps. (Devils, p. 122)

Nevertheless the novelists also show that the veteran will not cut his own chances in order to shield the replacements. As his time in combat lengthens, the veteran knows that his chances for survival grow slimmer and slimmer, and he does not care to "waste" the little good luck he has remaining. So he resigns himself to the fact that "Some men would survive, but no one individual man could survive. It was a discrepancy in methods of counting. The whole thing was too vast, too complicated, too technological for any one individual man to count in it. Only collections of men counted, only communities of men, only numbers of men" (Line, pp. 214-15).

The fact of his own insignificance, a fact impressed upon him by the novelist long before his first combat, is now the central reality of the soldier's existence. The realization that he is expendable and will be expended leads the soldier to question, and even to deny, that there is meaning to his war. Even Kantaylis, in The Big War, perhaps the most truly heroic of all the soldiers depicted in the novels being considered, is eventually "inundated with a sense of calamitous foreboding--of a final, culminating disaster at the core of which lay the certainty that he too would die trying to avert it, that he would die in vain" (Big War, p. 276). And in The Thin Red Line one of Jones's soldiers wonders, after the battle is over:
What Power was it which decided one man should be hit, be killed, instead of another man? ... If this were a movie, this would be the end of the show and something would be decided. In a movie or a novel they would dramatize and build to the climax of the attack. When the attack came in the film or novel, it would be satisfying. It would decide something. It would have a semblance of meaning and a semblance of an emotion. And immediately after, it would be over. ... Here there was no semblance of meaning. And the emotions were so many and so mixed up that they were indecipherable, could not be untangled. Nothing had been decided, nobody had learned anything. But most important of all, nothing had ended. (Line, p. 214)

Tomorrow, the soldier in fiction knows, there will be another battle and his chances will be slimmer. Such knowledge leads him, at times, to see the War as a deliberate attempt to destroy him.

The breakdown of his health is a second form of destruction that the soldier in the World War II novel must endure. Many of the novelists show how bad weather, treacherous terrain, and the perilous night are all a part of the soldier's lot and contribute to the destruction of his health. The novels set in the European Theater of Operations emphasize the effects of rain, and mud, and snow, and cold upon their soldiers. Wind actually provides the terms of war itself in Gore Vidal's novel, Williwaw. Novels set in the Pacific Theater describe the soldier contending with jungle heat, torrential rain and wind, insects, and snakes. Natural conditions are described as a part of the conditions of war. Mailer's description of the typhoon in
in *The Naked and the Dead* is a case in point:

The wind started again, and their mute tense struggle to preserve the tent began once more. Goldstein felt as though he was holding onto a door which a much stronger man was trying to open from the other side. He saw two more tents tear off into the wind, and he watched the men running to find shelter somewhere else. . . .

A tremendous gust of wind bellied under the tent, blew it out like a balloon, and then the ridgepole snapped, tearing a rent in the poncho. The tent fell upon the four men like a wet sheet, and they struggled stupidly under it for a few seconds before the wind began to strip it away. . . .

For a whole week they had worked on improving their bivouac. Every spare moment, there had been something new to set up. And now his tent was lost, his clothing and writing paper were sopping, his gun would probably rust, the ground would be too wet for sleeping. Everything was ruined. (*Naked*, pp. 79-80)

The novelists recognized also the way in which terrain contributes to the soldier's misery. The march up the jungle river in *The Naked and the Dead* frightens the men as much by its natural horrors and its clinging jungle and treacherous river current as by the threat of Japanese soldiers. The same novel follows Recon Platoon up the dangerous face of Mt. Anaca, describes its creeping journey along impossible ledges, and graphically describes the plummet of one of its members onto the rocks below. The terrain depicted in *Those Devils in Baggy Pants* is no kinder. The African desert leaves the men energyless; the rugged Italian mountains stop the machines and all supplies must be carried by the men. Then they find that their trenches must be built rather than dug.
Night is no friend to the novel's soldier either. It brings cold, sleeplessness, mosquitoes, and sometimes the enemy. Almost every novel shows soldiers shivering through long tense hours of watch or sleeping fitfully with a perimeter string in one hand. A sudden jerk may warn that the enemy is trying to infiltrate. Or it may indicate a buddy with diarrhea has left his fox-hole. Newcomb of The Big War is almost killed trying to leave his fox-hole at night. Recon Platoon of The Naked and the Dead faces its first combat in the nervousness of a wet mosquito-infested night. Noah of The Young Lions gets lost behind enemy lines at night and must crawl and swim back to his own lines.

The weather and terrain and sleepless nights that the novel's soldier must endure, combined with severe work details and combat, gradually bring him to the point of stupification. Mailer pictures a platoon dragging artillery (the road is impassable for trucks) up a muddy road through a rainy night. The men become totally exhausted.

When one team was relieved by another, they would stagger alongside the guns trying to regain their wind, falling behind sometimes to rest for a little while. Every ten minutes the column would stop to allow the stragglers to catch up. During the halts the men would sprawl in the middle of the trail not caring how the mud covered them. They felt as though they had been running for hours; they could not regain their breath, and their stomachs retched emptily. (Naked, p. 105)

When the guns are finally delivered, the men are marched to the battle perimeter. "Their eyes had been closed almost
the entire march, and they drowsed for the instant their foot was in the air and awakened as it touched the ground" (Naked, p. 115). In this condition they move into position to defend against a banzi attack. In The Thin Red Line the men go into combat during the day. The heat and the exertion soon dehydrate them. There is no water. Rations can not be brought to them. They eat old Japanese food that they find scattered about. They drink what water they can find standing in pools, first "purifying" it with pills. At night they fight off swarms of mosquitoes.

The novelists describe a variety of ailments, most of them the result of unrelieved exhaustion and stress. Dysentery, they make a general condition. Its attacks are not delicately described.

His bowels clutched at him, released momentarily, gripped him again... a quick, hot, violent pain that made him gasp and bend double... . . . His entrails griped and griped inside him--let go with a fierce burning spasm that made him groan; sweat broke out on his chest and back and his legs trembled so badly he had to support himself with his hands. . . . his very innards were streaming out of him, all his organs in a bound-convulsive debilitation. (Big War, p. 314)

Along with his dysentery the novel's soldier often enough develops malaria and its recurring fevers and chills. Or worse, he collapses with dengue for which, the novelists point out, the Army had no cure. He is put completely out of commission by its soaring fever; sometimes he dies from its effects. Other physical disorders are shown working
their misery as well. The steaming jungles produce fungus and rot on any break in the skin. The European winter cripples men who suffer wet feet and frostbite day after day. Old ailments from civilian life return under the continued strain and fatigue.

And then, of course, there are the wounds. Every kind of wound, in every part of the body, from every possible cause seems to find its way into the novels. The obvious inference is that wounds are a common occurrence. Many of the novel's wounded die; others try to use their wounds to escape battle; a few simply disregard their wounds and fight on. In almost all of the novels the soldier visualizes a wound as release from the next combat, as a trip back to the field hospital, or better to the division hospital, or best to the "States." His dream is of a "million dollar wound"--one that will send him home without severely crippling him.

The soldier's reaction to Army medical care is also a concern of the war novelist. Too often, the novelist suggests, medical care is superficial, usually it is irrelevant, and always it is hurried and impersonal. Its primary purpose is not so much to heal as to keep the soldier in combat. When the combat soldier in the novel learns that a broken body will not take him out of combat, he responds with the frustrated resignation of a trapped animal. This is the reaction of Red Valsen in The Naked and the Dead. He
returns from one stint of combat with kidney trouble, an old ailment that could not withstand the fatigue of combat. He tries the hospital and they accuse him of "malingering." The doctor gives him a package of wound tablets, tells him to take them if he is telling the truth or throw them away if he is lying. Red returns to his platoon enraged. "Sure, they got it all figured out, Red thought. If they get ya to hate 'em enough you'll crack a nut before you'll go to 'em, and that way they keep ya on the line. Of course a guy dies every now and then, but what the hell's another guy to the Army? Those quacks get their orders to be sonsofbitches from the top" (Naked, p. 292). In The Thin Red Line, when the first of C Company's wounded are sent back to combat, the men turn from incredulous to resentful. "Apparent ly Division policy was to send everybody back to their outfits who could crawl, so the Division Commander could get this fight over with and secure the island and his reputation. Even the very worst of the malaria cases were not being admitted [to the hospital]. Instead they were given a double handful of atrabrine and sent back to their outfits" (Line, pp. 314-15). Before long their attitude turns to bitterness. ". . . the first real sense of the true imprisonment of combat reached the newly blooded veterans. . . . So a new element darkled in their already darkling mood: a somber, deep-rooted bitterness which would grow and grow" (Line, p. 315). They are trapped; even a
wound does not provide escape unless it is the kind that permanently incapacitates—an arm gone, a leg lost.

Another form of destruction that the Second World War novelists describe is the deadening of their soldiers' senses. Many of the novelists attempt to illustrate the destructive effect that combat has upon their soldiers' senses, but not all of them are successful. The most successful in this respect is Anton Myrer in *The Big War*.

Myrer's style, quite unlike the Hemingwayesque style of Jones or Mailer, is deliberately less "realistic," less precise, less spare, less masculine or hard. His "soft" style works against him up until the time that he takes his characters into combat. It tends to dismay a reader accustomed to the more objective Hemingway style, for it seems either to get in the way of what the author is attempting to say or to exaggerate his characterization. The latter is particularly true of Newcomb, the character Myrer uses as his major focus in describing combat. Newcomb is a Harvard graduate, a young poet, a self-conscious intellectual who scorches his education as irrelevant on the one hand, but who on the other, sentimentally, even bathetically, reels off literary allusion after literary allusion. This sophomoric emotionalism makes the reader impatient with Newcomb. The author seems to be insisting on Newcomb's sensitivity too obviously and too directly. But as he describes the amtrack grating on shore and the men erupting into the violence of
combat, Newcomb's consciousness becomes the effective center of a world that grows increasingly unreal and surrealistic. The smells, the sights, the sounds, and the feelings of Newcomb are all recorded, but recorded as though perceived through a distorting aqueous curtain. A hand rises out of the ground "from someplace" and makes a "slow, looping motion." Newcomb falls into a shell crater on top of five men he does not recognize; moments later they are friends from his own platoon. A grenade is thrown and while it arcs it is lazily described in minute detail. Then comes the explosion. The effect is to slow motion almost to a standstill. A log rolling down a hill turns into a man, armless. A bulky soldier (a flamethrower is strapped to his back) bursts into a dancing orange flame. The bombardment gradually dulls Newcomb's senses until the unreal becomes the real. Great gaps in his consciousness, periods of unrecorded sensations, are indicated by abrupt shifts in his conscious perception. Finally Newcomb discovers that he is just quietly sitting; the battle has ended. As battle follows battle and as his fatigue grows, he drifts in and out of conscious perception. At one point he becomes aware that he is eating. "It was a cold, damp substance that tasted sourly of eggs. It wasn't, of course: any more than anything else was anything else. That was the game--a macabre game in which nothing bore any relation to anything previously experienced despite the odious pretensions of appearance"
(Big War, p. 315). He looks up and sees other men as "a race of numbed, exhausted beasts in holes, wolking mechanically the tasteless contents of green metal tins" (Big War, p. 315). At another time he is lost in a maze of surrealistic sensations and emotions. "For nothing could ever be the same again: ever. The sun no bigger than the moon had crashed in darkness, trees hung inverted underwater, houses, vehicles, human beings drifted by in a dolorous trance that never closed their eyes--screaming soundlessly, all of them, in a dark nausea of solitary cells without appurtenances of hope or love. All were doomed, all guilty and forsaken" (Big War, p. 323). The transition back to reality serves to heighten the distance from reality that Newcomb has drifted. On another day he finds himself sitting, in silence, eating. Gradually he comes to the realization that his company is being rested, that the smooth mass in his mouth is bread, that the heat in his hand is a full coffee cup.

His senses returned, expanded in one slow, ardent throb of recalled sensation. . . . He sank his teeth into the dough, felt it pressing soft and delightful against his gums; chewed it slowly, in felicity. It was so unbelievably good--and real--

He paused, his mouth open. This was reality, too. This also, of course, was reality. . . .

But then--but then; if all that other was not real, neither was this. . . . Yet here it was, soothing and restorative and infinitely good. Balm in Gilead. And if this was reality, then so was that--! wasn't it? Ah God, wasn't it? No. Accept it all: accept it all, both terrors and delights. What other conclusion was there? (Big War, p. 327)

Myrer's descriptions of combat are unmatched in any of the
other World War II novels. His success is largely due to his skill in illustrating how combat assaults the senses and gradually deadens them until the individual is moving in a waking dream, now himself, now someone else, now no one.

The novelists also suggest the effects of their soldiers' destroyed senses. With his senses dulled the fictional soldier responds automatically to commands by acting mechanically in the behavior patterns learned during his training period. Put simply, the novelist shows that the soldier becomes a machine. This is Mailer's point when he has General Cummings describe battle as "an organization of thousands of man-machines who dart with governing habits across a field" (Naked, p. 442). This also lies behind Captain Stein's dismissal as field officer in The Thin Red Line. Stein's commanding officer tells him: "'In a war people have to get killed. . . . There just isn't any way around it, Stein. And a good officer has to accept it, and then calculate the loss in lives against the potential gain'" (Line, pp. 298-99). Stein is unable to manage this because he can not capitalize upon the stupor that makes men into machines that may be easily controlled. When the novelist ends a battle and permits his men rest and rehabilitation, he shows the soldier gradually returning to his more normal condition. But he has his soldier realize that he will never be the same, for his senses have somehow been violated and he has acted involuntarily.
Still another form of destruction dealt with in the World War II novel is the deterioration of the soldier's sense of individual worth. The soldier in the War fiction learns during his period of training that the Army is a vast machine composed of countless parts. He has impressed upon him the unimportance of the single individual. When his author takes him into combat, he makes his soldier even more profoundly aware of his own insignificance, makes him recognize that the technology of modern war dwarfs the individual soldier. The narrator in Those Devils in Baggy Pants reflects that:

War . . . was getting somewhat beyond reasonable bounds of courage when an inanimate mass of steel and explosive could be guided to a target 150 miles away. It made me feel ineffectual and futile. As long as we manipulated our own weapons individually and faced weapons manipulated individually by the enemy, we could feel the confidence of self-courage and heroic determination. But the sight of the rocket [a Nazi V-2 rocket] . . . encouraged the belief that modern science might nullify and even mechanize the human spirit. (Devils, pp. 165-66)

The novelists also show that the scope of the war overwhelms their soldier. They generally make their men aware of the global nature of the War. They often have their soldier comment on the immensity of an invasion armada that stretches out of sight over the horizon, the staggering swarms of bombers heading into enemy territory, or the mountains of stock-piled war materiel. The observation of Colonel Ross in Guard of Honor is voiced, in one
way or another, by many of the novelists. Ross sees that the Americans will achieve victory "not because they had a few more Bennys [an exceptionally skilled pilot], but because they had thousands and thousands of run-of-the-mill pilots; and thousands and thousands of planes; and hills of bombs; and dumps of supplies as large as small cities, which could not be neutralized, as Benny had so nearly been, by one burst from one automatic rifle in one ditch" (Guard, p. 161).

But it is the largeness of his individual war that most impresses the soldier in the Second World War novel. The scope of the battle in which he is personally involved is more than his author will permit him to comprehend. The narrator in Those Devils in Baggy Pants comments: "The average soldier, much less a civilian, can form little concept of the scope of a battle. For us it was the part we were mixed up in. Over a large area little scraps are taking place with men suffering, fearing and dying in them, and the loosely connected little scraps taken together constitute a battle" (Devils, p. 114). Even the "little scraps" prove difficult for the fictional soldier to fully comprehend. Myrer says of his soldiers: "If there was a grand strategy, some master plan with whose majestic orbits they were in accord, they knew nothing of it. Their world had constricted to tufts and hummocks and vines and each
The novelist denies his soldier comprehension of the scope of battle; awe is the reaction the soldier displays. C Company in *The Thin Red Line* has a front row seat on a hill overlooking the battle for Hill 209. They are deeply moved by what they see; companies of men are moving up to the front, milling around and by and through other companies. They see a terrain dotted with the sack-like bodies of fallen men, staggering and crawling and walking wounded, many men who are doing nothing but standing and watching, and the near tableau of the charging men and the flash and thunder of artillery, the ripple of machine gun fire, the sharp crack of small arms. The bewildering compass of battle stuns them. In other novels the characters are impressed by such spectacular sights as night artillery bombardment, amphibious invasion, air battles overhead, and the drifting of hundreds of parachutes, like autumnal milkweed, toward earth.

No matter what spectacle the novelist presents, the most common effect that it has upon his soldier is to dwarf the soldier's individual effort and leave him with a sense of his own insignificance. After hours of constant artillery bombardment, one rifleman sees silly. With thousands of men swarming over a hill, no one will miss one man. With
so much enemy shrapnel in the air, one man can not hope to survive. Then, when he is in the midst of the battle and a part of the spectacle, he can only register confusion and incredulity. At such times, suggests Shaw in The Young Lions, the soldier sees "helmets, vomit, green water, shell geysers, smoke, crashing planes, blood plasma, submerged obstacles, guns, pale, senseless faces, a confused drowning mob of men running and falling, that seem to have no relation to any of the things they have been taught since they left their jobs and lives to put on the uniform of their country" (Lions, pp. 405-06). Everything about battle, suggests the World War II novel, convinces the soldier that he is of little worth, a piece of materiel to be thrown at the enemy. He is brought to recognize that his comfort, his health, his sanity, his life is of no importance to an Army that has an endless supply of others just like him. And this knowledge embitters him. What makes him even more bitterly frustrated is the conviction that he will be returned to combat again and again until he is wounded or killed or captured. A paratrooper in Those Devils in Baggy Pants says after his part in the War is finished: "When I was a child I looked at doddering old men, tottering about the country ... and I wondered how they felt, being so near to their graves. I know now. I too lived in the past. There was no perceptible road to life visible for the front line men in Italy in 1943 and 1944. To be wounded, killed or captured: these were the
three roads to our destiny" (Devils, p. 94).

The World War II novelists are in general agreement that the worst form of destruction visited upon the soldier during the War was the wearing away of his human spirit. Their emphasis makes the loss of their soldier's humanity a most crucial loss, for again and again the novels depict the War as a degrading experience that gnawed away a man's restraint and left exposed his animal nature. They picture the War's degrading effects as coming from two paradoxically different sources. When the soldier is not in combat, the tedium of war undermines his sense of self-significance; then, when he goes into combat and sees demonstrated on every hand the cheapness with which life is held, the already unstable structure of his spirit give way.

Many of the novelists directly point out the tedium of war. There are examples of boredom and inefficiency arising from the skilled civilian who is denied the use of his skill by the Army; or from the skilled who is given a position requiring a skill that he does not have; or from the unskilled who is given a position requiring skill. Moreover, the novelists illustrate that the majority of Army jobs were done in a set way, with little or no chance of demonstrating initiative, and were jobs that required endlessly repeating the same process or maneuver. For example, training for combat required day after day of the same routines. In Battle Cry the bored radiomen fall asleep
learning the "dit-dats" of morse code. In *The Thin Red Line* the men are kept busy at the "neverending, universal digging. Sweating and panting with exhaustion, digging. Like last night. And almost every night in the world. And sometimes two or three times in the day" (Line, p. 394).
In *The Naked and the Dead* a work detail is sent to the road every day, where

> the days repeated themselves without incident, and they were no longer able to distinguish between things which had happened a few days before. They would stand guard at night, awaken a half hour after, eat breakfast, wash their mess kits, shave, and load onto trucks which drove them through the jungle to the stretch of road upon which they were working. They would return at noon, go out again after chow, and work until late afternoon, when they could come back for supper. (*Naked*, p. 199)

The monotony becomes so great that at times the novels show the men wishing for combat again. One entire novel, Gore Vidal's *Williwaw*, is devoted to detailing the degrading tedium of war.

It has been suggested above that the novelist emphasizes, as one of the most consistent impressions his soldier receives from his military experience, that the Army destroys a man's sense of self-worth. Some novelists show the destruction of self-worth as a deliberate practice of Army training when they describe their soldier's indoctrination into soldiering. Most novelists suggest that, even apart from the Army's deliberate practice, the facts of Army life during World War II impressed the soldier with his own
insignificance. The boredom of war serves to forcefully reinforce, in the novels, the soldier's belief that he is unimportant, that what he does is unimportant, and that the entire process of war is, if not totally useless, then extremely inefficient and wasteful. In Catch-22 Joseph Heller illustrates such useless time serving activity in scheme after scheme which the officers devise to keep the men busy, schemes that range from Lieutenant Scheiskopf's passion for leading pilots in precision drill parades to Colonel Cathcart's prayer campaign. The Gallery, John Horne Burns' war novel, details the tedium of censoring V-mail all day, every day. John Hersey's The War Lover describes the boredom of pilots and crews waiting, hour by hour, for the weather to clear so that missions may be flown. Always the tedium is shown as degrading; it is shown destroying morale, reducing the soldier's opinion of himself and his Army, eating at his tolerance, setting him against his fellow soldiers, even against his buddy, and adding to his growing bitterness.

Most of the authors point out, and concentrate upon, combat as the final abrasive that wears through their soldiers' humanity. Many of the novels describe atrocities by American soldiers. Croft in The Naked and the Dead slaughters a Japanese prisoner after first leading him to believe that he will be treated kindly. Several of the novels show their men with pliers and Bull Durham sacks,
smashing open the mouths of the enemy dead and extracting gold teeth. Milo Minderbinder in *Catch-22* kills friend or enemy for profit. Helthal in *The Big War* shoots down prisoners without hesitation. Michael in *The Young Lions* watches, at a Paris brothel, "the soldiers going up to the rooms, still carrying their M-1s and their Tommyguns" (*Lions*, p. 516). But it is in *The Thin Red Line* that the brutal lust and loss of humanity are best illustrated. Human brutality is described in scene after scene. In one scene Big Un grabs two prisoners by the neck, and "then grinning savagely began beating their heads together. The cracking sound their skulls made as they broke was loud in the new, palpable quiet" (*Line*, p. 274). In another scene four men carry a scrawny, pitifully sick Japanese prisoner back to headquarters for interrogation, one man to each arm and leg; they deliberately swing and bump him against rocks, then roar in laughter as he simultaneously ejects streams of vomit and diarrhea. In another scene a frightened soldier, alone in the jungle, is attacked by a single Japanese soldier. The American claws and beats the Japanese man, stabs him with his own bayonet, shoots him with his own rifle, then beats the dead man’s face to a bloody pulp. In another scene a company runs suddenly upon an unsuspecting Japanese bivouac.

A crazy sort of blood lust, like some sort of declared school holiday from all moral ethics, had descended on them. They could kill with
impunity and they were doing it. The sweating terrors and suffering of yesterday [their first combat], the enthusiasm over their undetected advance from the rear, the massacre of the fifteen unprepared Japanese at the crest, all had contributed to their ebullient mood and there was no stopping them till they wore it out. (Line, p. 291)

All of the brutality is not limited to fighting men in the ranks. There is also the brutality of officers who send their exhausted men into battle after battle. Some do it, as Sam Huxley in Battle Cry, because they are convinced that their men are superb soldiers and have worked hard for a chance at the enemy. Some do it out of simple-minded capriciousness as Colonel Cathcart of Catch-22 who continually raises the number of required missions. Others do it because of their own stupidity as Lieutenant Band in The Thin Red Line.

Wherever the War's brutality and inhumanity are found, and they are found in every novel, the effects upon the soldier are the same; the novelists generally agree that there are more and worse things to be lost in war than health or senses or even life. His humanity is the highest price that the novel's soldier pays for his part in the brutality. The Thin Red Line again offers the clearest statement. Before the Company gets into combat, the men examine an area where a battle has been fought some days earlier, and they find a bloody shirt on the ground. With the facts of death and mutilation still unexperienced, the
men feel shame and guilt at sight of the shirt. But after
their first combat period, when they are sent back for rest
and rehabilitation, they fall into an orgy of primitive,
brutish lust. They drink until

almost everybody vomited one or more times. Several
men got down on their hands and knees, in the moon-
light shining tranquilly down into the beautiful if
deadly coconut groves, and bayed the moon like wolves
or hounds. Another group of ten or twelve divested
themselves of all clothing and, bareass nude, ran
tripping and dancing like Martha Graham students
across the open field beside the bivouac to swim
in the Natanikau in the moonlight. There were at
least nine fist fights. And Don Doll tried to
seduce Carrie Arbre [an effeminate soldier]. (Line,
pp. 407-08)

Carter, in *Those Devils in Baggy Pants*, records that weeks
after combat, back in England for rehabilitation, "we con-
ducted ourselves like uncouth barbarians. Africa, plus the
campaigns in Sicily and Italy, had dissolved most of the
thin veneer that civilization spreads over the instincts.
The boys simply went wild in England and didn't give two
hoots in hell what they said or did" (*Devils*, p. 132).
Moreover, the brutality of war, the novelists clearly suggest,
does not end with the crack of the last rifle. The soldier
loses something that makes him less human, less tolerant,
less capable of humane sensibility, less in command of his
primitive nature, and more like the war that he so despises.

Combat, as it is presented in the Second World War
novel, is a process of destruction. All too often it snuffs
out the soldier's life; it generally destroys his health,
numbs his senses, and cancels his sense of self-worth. But
worst of all, it takes from him his humanity and leaves him callous about his fellows' lot, bitter about his own state, and with little hope for his future. His final despairing state is perhaps best represented by James K., a soldier in *Those Devils in Baggy Pants*. James K. can neither read nor write, and he has no idea at all of what the War is all about. Before the War his existence had been carefree and easy. The discipline and rigidity of the Army unsettles him and drives him to the edge of insanity. Combat turns him morose and silent. At times he slips over the edge into unreality. At these times he "would slink from the tent, throw back his head and give forth with a wild, strange scream of helplessness and frustration. . . . Other men revolting against their hard lot occasionally let out strange, strangled expressions in futile anger, but the bitterly-lonely cry of James K., epitomized a desolate moral isolation belonging to a category supreme in its uniqueness" (*Devils*, p. 149).

Again two of the novels will be examined at length in order to illustrate the importance of the destructive effects of war upon the individual in the Second World War novel. In *Catch-22* Joseph Heller makes his subject the entire range of war's destruction. Heller, more than any other World War II novelist, fixes steadily upon and forcefully illustrates the cost that World War II levied upon the individual American consciousness. *Williwaw,*
Gore Vidal's war novel, is more narrow in its approach, detailing the destructive effects that the tedium of military duty has upon the soldier.

At first glance Williwaw hardly seems to be a war novel for it appears to have only the most incidental of relationships to World War II. Its setting in time is the period of the War, but its locale is the Arctic, the Aleutian Islands, where no one has even seen the enemy, let alone shot at him. The novel concerns several crew members and passengers on board a small Army Transportation Corps ship that ferries cargo and passengers along the Aleutian chain. The War, for these men, is different from the war of the combat soldier, or even of the non-combat soldier in a combat theater. For these men the war is boredom. But Williwaw's tedium proves no less destructive for the human spirit than the combat of other novels.

Actually, the forms of Army life are as much a part of the life of Williwaw's characters as of the lives of any other war novel characters. Army rank and the privileges of rank are observed. The officers and the enlisted men live in different areas, eat in separate messes, and generally do not mix. The predominately male world of the Army is also the world of Williwaw's soldiers. Although they are ashore often, the little towns and Army bases that they visit are either void of women or the women are very few and generally undesireable. Further, Army orders or
"missions" provide them with the bulk of their activity. They run their ship, under Army orders, from town to town, base to base. The menial jobs that take up so much of the soldier's time take up all of the time of Williwaw's soldiers. They paint what is already painted, hose clean decks, check and recheck the same weather reports, and collect needless multiple copies of passenger orders. Ambition for promotion, Army politics, mismatched men and jobs, Army rations; all of these are a part of the men's lives.

What makes the War different for Williwaw's characters is that there is no war in the Aleutians. No one has ever seen a Japanese man or ship or plane; no one ever expects to see one. Therefore, the forms of Army life, without the War to give them some purpose or meaning, are nothing more than forms. The unique quality of Williwaw's "war," then, is boredom. The "missions" are little more than shifting the resting place of Army materiel and Army personnel. Discipline is relaxed, menial tasks are worse than menial, and ambition is nothing more than petty politics. The men sleep a great deal, gossip a great deal, grow irritated with each other over trivial personal habits and become careless in dress and duty. Their war is without meaning for "The truth of the war for the men who lived in its boredom but were denied its dangers was purposelessness."²

²Aldridge, After, p. 171.
Vidal makes purposelessness the central fact of his novel. The mission that occupies most of the novel's pages, for example, is a mission of little importance, a mission without a point. Major Barkison of the Adjutant General's Office wishes to go from Andrefski Bay to his headquarters in Arunga. The weather is poor and all air transportation has been grounded. The Major is in a hurry, he has a report to deliver, and this particular ship is the only transportation available at Andrefski Bay. The Major's report is that the Army should close its port at Andrefski because it is not busy enough to warrant the few men necessary to keep it open. Everyone seems happy that the port is to be closed. The matter has absolutely no urgency. But the Major, it is discovered later, is to receive a promotion when he returns, and he is impatient to get back. He orders the mission begun under the threat of bad weather. So an entire ship is dispatched with only incidental cargo to be dropped at Dutch Harbor and three passengers to be taken to Arunga.

The purposelessness of the mission is pointed up by the Arctic storm, or williwaw, that the ship encounters. The storm brings to the mission and the men what has been lacking in their war—the element of danger—when it strikes the ship, driving the men to their knees and snatching control of the ship away from them. Passengers and crew are, for a short time, faced with imminent death. The common
danger serves to unify the irritable crew. While the ship is in danger and their lives are imperiled, they work together with increased efficiency and harmony. Duval, the Chief Engineer, and Captain Evans have petty differences and dislike for each other. But during the williwaw, when Evans rings the engine room for power, Duval responds immediately. Even the serious quarrel, between Duval and Second Mate Bervick that later erupts in murder, is laid aside during the storm. The storm is a common enemy that requires unified and coordinated action. It is an enemy that gives meaning, at least temporarily, to what the men are doing; if they are careless or uncooperative in their response to this enemy, they will be dead. Their actions are therefore invested with purpose, the common and basic purpose of any war action, survival. But the meaning provided by the storm disappears with the storm. The bickering revives, the feud between Duval and Bervick is renewed and comes to a climax in murder.

The murder of Duval is another indication of the purposelessness at the heart of this novel. The feud between the two men began over a woman, Olga, one of the few that the men ever see. Olga permits Bervick to make love to her without paying the usual price. But when Duval comes into her life with a large roll of money, Olga accepts him also. Bervick, who can not conceive of a woman accepting sex without pay for any reason other than romantic love,
will not believe Duval's story of Olga's promiscuity. Duval, of course, delights in irritating Bervick by repeating accounts of his love-making with Olga while Bervick is near enough to listen. From this central situation the feud spreads until neither man can bear the other.

After the storm, the two men are sent to repair a leaking ventilator. Duval sits on the ship's railing, refusing to work on "above decks" duty for he is a "below decks" officer, and Bervick must make the repairs alone. When Bervick hits his own hand with the hammer and Duval comments sarcastically, Bervick throws the hammer at Duval, hits him on the neck, and Duval loses his balance and falls overboard. Bervick just watches him disappear as the ship pulls rapidly away. The murder is clearly pointless: Olga does not care for either man; the quarrel over her is foolish and actually does not seem very serious until the point of the murder; the act itself is just a spontaneous release of petty frustration; the murder is as much by Bervick's omission as by his commission and is therefore not a clear definite act.

The pointless murder, coming as it does immediately after the narrow escape from death in the williwaw, serves as an ironic comment upon the pointlessness of the entire mission, and, since such missions are the War for these soldiers, upon the War itself. It is this theme of meaningless destruction that places Vidal's novel unequivocally
within the World War II genre. Once the motif of pointless death, common to the war novels, is recognized, other points of similarity appear. The boredom of the men stems from their recognition of their own unimportance, from their lack of accomplishment and lack of any sense of contribution toward ending the War. As the combat soldier fought natural conditions, so too did the men of Williwaw; as the combat soldier waited fearfully for what battle would bring, so too did the ship's crew as they watched the falling barometer; as chance made claims during combat, so too during the williwaw and the murder following it; as combat drove men to lust and brutality, so too did fighting the storm. And, most important, the despair that is so characteristic of the fiction of the Second World War is present in Vidal's novel.

The despair in Williwaw is implicit in the impersonality of the storm and the amorality of the men. Vidal uses the williwaw, for example, much like Stephen Crane used the ocean in his story "The Open Boat." The storm is simply the impersonal force of nature. Just as there is little personal malice between the combat soldier and his faceless enemy counterpart in other war novels, in Williwaw there is no sense of personal struggle against a malicious enemy (the storm) or sense of personal victory when the ship escapes whole. There is, in other words, no special significance

---

attached to the storm or the men's survival of it. The facts of the storm (or of war) are the commonplace facts of life. The individual's death or survival is a matter of no consequence except to the individual.

The impersonality of the storm is matched by the amorality of the men in this novel. The relationship between the men and their women illustrates their amorality. Captain Evans was married, but after a very brief life together he left her for his ship and she divorced him. He is consoled, he tells himself, by "other" women and believes that someday he will marry again because it seems a nice thing to do. Martain, the First Mate, gets letters from a girl back home that he reads with little interest; he feels that "she was a nice girl and he would probably marry her." Duval's relationship with Olga was a financial relationship; he felt nothing for her as he felt nothing for his wife back in New Orleans. Bervick thought that Olga loved him, believed that he felt something for her, but when she turned him down he was satisfied with Angela, a sloppy prostitute. Relationships, whether between men and women or men and men, are on a matter-of-fact impersonal basis. Never is a note of devotion or tenderness or responsibility sounded.

The most dramatic illustration of the men's amorality, however, is Duval's murder and the response made to it. The casualness of Bervick's act has already been noted. After the act, he simply goes to bed and sleeps out the night. In
the morning, when Duval's absence is noted, the Captain asks several questions, the Major from the Adjutant General's Office makes a comment or two, and everyone concludes that Duval just fell overboard, although everyone suspects and evidence indicates otherwise. There is a simple burial service and the matter is left suspended until the ship reaches Arunga. The Captain tells his First Mate that there will be an investigation.

"Just a routine one?"
"Usually. It's different if they disappear and nobody sees them."
"What happens then?"
"Still an investigation; a little more so maybe."
"What are you going to tell them?"
"Just what I know. Last anybody heard, the Chief was out on deck. Then he fell overboard."
"I wonder what they're going to think happened."
"Nothing happened except that."  

When the ship reaches Arunga, it turns out that the Major on board has received the promotion he has been waiting for and is put in charge of the Adjutant General's investigation of the "accident." He informs Captain Evans that the investigation made on board the ship was all the investigation there would be. Thus, even though Bervick has admitted to the Captain that he saw Duval go overboard and as much as admitted that he had helped him go, the matter is closed. The Major wants no mess so soon after his promotion. The

Captain simply does not care. He tells Bervick: "'It doesn't make much difference one way or the other,' said Evans, quite sure now that Bervick had killed Duval. 'It doesn't make no difference at all. He was better off out of the way. Guys have been knocked off before. Nicer people than the Chief have been knocked off'" (Williwaw, p. 140). Bervick is not prosecuted, not because of any moral or humane or even immoral reasons, but because no one is much concerned and the matter is let drop.

Vidal takes the theme of the War's destructive effects on the soldier, characteristic of the Second World War novel, and illustrates it by showing how war's purposelessness undermines the soldier's spirit. Life without meaning leads to the destruction of body and spirit. It encourages amoral action and erodes a man's sense of personal responsibility. Its final result, as Williwaw's carefully controlled tone makes clear, is despair.

Unlike Williwaw Heller's Catch-22 is immersed in the bloody facts of combat. But Heller has claimed that his novel is not a World War II novel at all: "'the cold war is what I was truly talking about, not the World War.'" The concerns of the novel are undeniable larger than the fear and mutilation and death of war. But so are the con-
cerns of most of the World War II novels. To divorce Catch-22 from World War II, its setting in time and place, is something that the author can not ask of his reader, for the novel's tone and atmosphere are so clearly of that time and of that place. Destruction and the effects of destruction upon the individual are crucial to Heller's vision in Catch-22. Thus Heller's novel, as much as and perhaps more than The Naked and the Dead, or The Gallery, or The Big War, is a novel of World War II.

An Army Air Force base on a small Mediterranean island during the Second World War; that is the world of Catch-22. This microcosmic world is absurd and unpredictable. Man's sojourn in it is a nightmare of irrational and unexpected attacks upon his body and his spirit; his struggle to survive these attacks is a lonely struggle that is doomed inescapably to end in the mutilation and death of his body; worse, his spirit will suffer the same mutilation and extinction unless he continually resists the irrational demands of his world. This is the "truth" of Catch-22.

Almost every critic who undertakes a discussion of this novel mentions the absurdities with which Heller constructs his microcosm. Absurdity is the most persistent characteristic of Heller's world. It seems to Yossarian, the novel's most important character, that everything in his world is built upon the logic of illogic. Catch-22, the concept from which the novel takes its title, illustrates
the point. Catch-22 is a "pattern of non-reason, a habit of
mind, a perversion of logic." It can be applied to any
situation and for any end that those in power have in mind.
For example, Yossarian, war weary from unrelieved bombing
missions and on the edge of nervous breakdown, asks the
flight doctor, Doc Daneeka, to ground him. His reason is
that he is "crazy." Doc Daneeka agrees that he can ground
anyone who is crazy but there is a catch, and he refuses to
ground Yossarian. Doc explains:

"Sure there's a catch," Doc Daneeka replied.
"Catch-22. Anyone who wants to get out of combat
duty isn't really crazy."
There was only one catch and that was Catch-22,
which specified that a concern for one's own safety
in the face of dangers that were real and immediate
was the process of a rational mind. Orr was crazy
and could be grounded. All he had to do was ask;
and as soon as he did, he would no longer be crazy
and would have to fly more missions. Orr would
be crazy to fly them. If he flew them he was crazy
and didn't have to; but if he didn't want to he was
sane and had to.  

Illogical logic is the source of most of Catch-22's
absurdity. It determines, for example, who is dead and who
is alive. Mudd is a replacement who is sent on a mission
before he is even processed by the base administration. He
is killed on the mission and thus poses a serious problem;
he can not be reported dead because he has never been re-

6 Brian Way, "Formal Experiment and Social Discontent:
Joseph Heller's Catch-22," Journal of American Studies,
II, 263.

7 Joseph Heller, Catch-22 (New York: Random House, 1955),
pp. 45-46--hereafter cited as Catch.
ported present on the base. So his possessions remain in Yossarian's tent. The reverse of this situation catches Doc Daneeka. Doc hates to fly but wants the extra pay for flying time. So he arranges to have his name listed with the crew of McWatt's plane for unimportant training flights. On one of these flights McWatt crashes, and, though Doc Daneeka explains until he is hoarse that he was not on the plane, the flight record says that he was and so he is reported dead, his wife is paid his insurance, no one will talk to or listen to a dead man, and he is even forced to sneak into the mess kitchen for his food.

Yossarian's world, founded as it is upon perverted logic, is made further absurd by the illusions that such logic produces. Things that seem commonplace are impossible; things that seem impossible are given commonplace treatment. The Air Force base seems to be under the command of General Dreedle, with Yossarian's flight group under the command of Colonel Cathcart. But in reality ex-P.F.C. Wintergreen controls the base through his position as mail clerk; he simply manipulates the correspondence and issues his own letters turned out on his own mimeograph machine. The first mission to Bologna appears as a highly dangerous mission, and Yossarian destroys his plane's intercom system to avoid it. It turns out to be a "milk run." The second mission to the same place a few days later is expected to be a "milk run," and instead the planes are cut apart by
flak. Captain Flume develops a morbid fear that Chief White Halfoat will slit his throat while Flume is asleep. So he flees into the woods about the base, vowing to live the life of a hermit until winter when, he predicts, Halfoat will die of pneumonia. Winter comes, Flume moves back into his tent, and Halfoat does go to the hospital to die of pneumonia. Hungry Joe, a nervous wreck from the many missions that he has flown, has a recurring dream that he is being smothered to death in his sleep by his tent mate's cat that has fallen asleep on his (Hungry Joe's) face. By the novel's end Hungry Joe has died, smothered in his sleep by a cat asleep on his face.

One of the most disturbing illusions in the novel is that which revolves around Milo Minderbinder's M&M Enterprises. Milo is a pilot who is made cook and from there rises to become the most powerful man in the world. His success is due to his peculiar talents for "free enterprise." Milo's egg business illustrates his source of power. Milo buys eggs for seven cents apiece, sells them for five cents apiece and makes a profit of six cents apiece. This economic sleight-of-hand feat is explained by Milo.

"... I make a profit of three and a quarter cents an egg by selling them for four and a quarter cents an egg to the people in Malta I buy them from for seven cents an egg. ..."

Yossarian felt he was beginning to understand. "And the people you sell the eggs to at four and a quarter cents apiece make a profit of two and three quarter cents apiece when they sell them back to you at seven cents apiece. Is that right? Why don't you sell the eggs directly to you and eliminate
the people you buy them from?"

"Because I'm the people I buy them from," Milo explained. "I make a profit of three and a quarter cents apiece when I sell them to me and a profit of two and three quarter cents apiece when I buy them back from me. That's a total profit of six cents an egg. I lose only two cents an egg when I sell them to the mess halls at five cents apiece, and that's how I can make a profit buying eggs for seven cents apiece and selling them for five cents apiece. I pay only one cent apiece at the hen when I buy them in Sicily. (Catch, pp. 226-27)

Through such adroit manipulations of the capitalistic system, Milo rises in the world's power structure until he can control the course of the war itself and turn a neat profit through it. He contracts with the United States to bomb German positions (using United States planes and crews, naturally), and with the Germans to shoot down the United States planes and crews (with German Antiaircraft guns, naturally), and later with the Germans to bomb his own air base with its own planes and crews.

Nothing is what it seems to be. Logic is illogical; or illogic is logical. Upon the absurdities rising out of illusion and illogic is Yossarian's world founded. At times the predominant emphasis of the absurdity is hilarious. At other times it is horrifying. Always it is double-edged. Never can it be predicted.

The humor and the horror found in Catch-22 are organic to the novel. They grow very naturally out of both the novel's content and style. Take characterization for example. Orr is a hilariously absurd caricature. As a child, Orr
explains, he walked around all day with crab apples in his cheeks, crab apples that he claimed were really horse chestnuts, because he wanted apple cheeks. He takes sly pleasure in annoying Yossarian by disassembling and assembling tiny valves; he giggles constantly, even when a naked whore pounds him over the head with her spike-heeled shoe. Tragedy seems to pass over Orr; comedy is his element.

On the other hand, any laughter directed at Hungry Joe is uncomfortable laughter, for Hungry Joe is a mass of exposed, twitching nerves; his health is broken, his senses are disoriented, his self-esteem lost. He is the end product of combat, on the thin edge of total disintegration.

There were noises, for instance. Small ones enraged him and he hollered himself hoarse at Aarfy for the wet, sucking sounds he made puffing on his pipe, at Orr for tinkering, at McWatt for the explosive snap he gave each card he turned over when he dealt at blackjack or poker, at Dobbs for letting his teeth chatter as he went blundering clumsily about bumping into things. Hungry Joe was a throbbing, ragged mass of motile irritability. The steady ticking of a watch in a quiet room crashed like torture against his unshielded brain. . . . Hungry Joe ate voraciously, gnawed incessantly at the tips of his fingers, stammered, choked, itched, sweated, salivated, and sprang from spot to spot frantically. (Catch, pp. 51-52)

There is no laughter at all in Aarfy's characterization. Aarfy at first seems to be a placid, moral, patriotic American. As navigator of Yossarian's crew he shares the plexiglas nose of the plane with Yossarian, the bombadier. During a bombing run the navigator is to leave the plane's nose so that, in case of trouble, the bombadier will have
some small chance to escape through the narrow crawlway into the plane and his waiting parachute. But Aarfy will never cooperate. He enjoys staying in the nose with Yossarian, endangering Yossarian and the whole operation, because from the plexiglas nose he has a fine view of the bombs exploding and the flak bursting. There he will calmly light his pipe, throwing Yossarian into a paroxysm of fear that the plane is on fire; he will unexpectedly jab Yossarian in the ribs with his pipe stem during Yossarian's frantic direction of the plane's evasive maneuvers, sending the terrified bombadier "up toward the ceiling with a whining cry... white as a sheet and quivering with rage" (Catch, p. 147). Aarfy's placidity is really insensitivity; his insensitivity, it develops later, is really inhuman cruelty. In the darkest chapter of the novel, a chapter reminiscent of Dante's Inferno, Aarfy has forced a simple-minded maid into his room, "raped her once that same evening and had then held her prisoner in a clothes closet for almost two hours with his hand over her mouth until the civilian curfew sirens sounded and it was unlawful for her to be outside. Then he threw her out the window" (Catch, p. 408). She dies on the pavement. When Yossarian arrives, moments later, Aarfy is barely ruffled, explaining that he had to kill her because he had raped her, that he had raped her because he had "never paid for it in my life."

Catch-22's humor and horror are also produced by Heller's
style. He takes obvious delight in the written word and the turns that it can take. It can take a hilarious turn as in the military trial of Clevinger when the inept bloated Colonel conducting the trial is distracted and asks the recorder:

"Now, where were we? Read me back the last line."
"'Read me back the last line,'" read back the corporal who could take shorthand.
"Not my last line, stupid!" the colonel shouted.
"Somebody else's."
"'Read me back the last line.'" read back the corporal.
"That's my last line again!" shrieked the colonel, turning purple with anger.
"Oh, no, sir," corrected the corporal. "That's my last line. I read it to you just a moment ago. Don't you remember, sir? It was only a moment ago."
(Catch, p. 77)

But it can also take a sinister turn. In that Dantesque chapter near the end of the novel Yossarian wanders through the streets of war-destroyed Rome. He comes upon a civilian holding an arm-load of books and being beaten by the police. The civilian cries out:

"Police! Help! Police!" . . . There was a humorless irony in the ludicrous panic of the man screaming for help to the police while policemen were all around him. Yossarian smiled wryly at the futile and ridiculous cry for aid, then saw with a start that the words were ambiguous, realized with alarm that they were not, perhaps, intended as a call for police but as a heroic warning from the grave by a doomed friend to everyone who was not a policeman with a club and a gun and a mob of other policemen with clubs and guns to back him up. (Catch, p. 406)

Transitions are another stylistic source of both humor and horror. Heller's development in Catch-22 is associational rather than chronological, and therefore his facts
come unexpectedly and repeatedly, with each repetition being incremental.\(^8\) His transitions are consequently abrupt, unexpected, and unpredictable. They may lead from laughter to laughter, from laughter to tears, or from tears to laughter. In one representative paragraph he begins with Dobbs' nervous condition, switches to Hungry Joe's nerves, to Orr's absurdity, to Milo's trip to Cairo for eggs that results in cornering the Egyptian cotton market, to Istanbul and a plane load of spider-infested bananas, to Orr and his ability to ditch a plane, to Sicily and a ten-year-old pimp with two twelve-year-old virgin sisters (not really virgins and really twenty-eight years old). The rapid pace, the unexplained shifts, and the seemingly irrelevant material carry the reader helplessly along from smile to smile.

The shifts are not always so amusing. The most calm and idyllic scene in the novel erupts into one of its most horrifying scenes. Yossarian, driven to his wits' end by the destructive effects of combat, has fallen in love with Nurse Duckett. He is relaxing on the beach with her and with his buddies, playing cards with them and lovingly stroking her bare skin, drawing desperately needed comfort and reassurance from their presence. Without warning, with no transition or preparation, the roar of McWatt's bomber

vibrates the beach. McWatt's plane sweeps low, buzzing the off-shore raft which the men use for diving, the raft on which blond, pale Kid Sampson, his naked sides scrawny even from so far away, leaped clownishly up to touch it at the exact moment some arbitrary gust of wind or minor miscalculation of McWatt's senses dropped the speeding plane down just low enough for a propeller to slice him half away... and then there were just Kid Sampson's two pale, skinny legs, still joined by strings somehow at the bloody truncated hips, standing stock-still on the raft for what seemed a full minute or two before they toppled over backward into the water. (Catch, p. 331)

The sudden shift from soothing calm to shuddering horror is one of the novel's most indelible impressions.

Absurd and unpredictable; this is the world of *Catch-22*. It is a world riddled with illogic that passes as logic and illusion that passes as reality. It is a world where destruction is the normal condition, where shock is commonplace, and where the unexpected is to be expected. The reader is forced, while reading the novel, to live in this world. He finds himself beginning to smile, then finds the smile freezing on his face as he is spattered with Kid Sampson, or forced to face the spectre of his own inhumanity in the brutal insensitivity of Aarfy or his own profit-seeking in the unscrupulous manipulations of Milo. The reader is never prepared; he is constantly off balance, vulnerable to the absurdities of such a perverted world. And as the novel progresses he becomes increasingly aware that he is the target every bit as much as Yossarian is; he
gradually finds himself waiting for the shock of the bullet that Heller seldom fails to fire. In this fashion the reader is wounded, over and over again. He grows outraged at the hilarious caricatures, the playful shifting style, the absurdities and the unrealities that, in spite of his rage, hold him steadily in front of the deadly black muzzle, waiting helplessly for the terrible truth and the painful logic that he knows will mutilate him. And thus is the reader led to share Yossarian's world, Yossarian's trap, for Yossarian is trapped in his absurd world, just as surely as the reader is trapped in the illogic of *Catch-22*.

Yossarian's response to his world, then, is the response of every man, certainly of every Twentieth Century American. His initial response is instinctive. He knows that his world is unfriendly, that there is a "plot" to destroy him. The plot is made increasingly clear to him as one by one his friends are lost, as Kraft is in a flaming plane, or Snowden is by bursting flak, or Sampson is by McWatt's plane, or McWatt is by a suicidal crash in remorse at Sampson's death. Yossarian's instincts tell him that he must avoid any attack upon his body, that he must either destroy or flee the attacker. Staying alive is primary; in Yossarian's own absurdly logical terms, he had "decided to live forever or die in the attempt, and his only mission each time he went up was to come down alive" (*Catch*, p. 29). Of course, such instinctive action is in conflict with his world where
self-sacrifice is considered "normal" behavior. Yossarian's self concern is only insubordination, even insanity, so far as his world is concerned.

But staying alive is Yossarian's central preoccupation. He becomes the leading authority on "such sanctuaries as Spain, Switzerland and Sweden where American fliers could be interned for the duration of the war" (Catch, p. 303). When it is rumored that the mission to Bologna is a suicidal mission, he "knocked on wood, crossed his fingers, and tiptoed out of his tent to move the bomb line [on the briefing map] up over Bologna" (Catch, p. 118). As a result the Colonel thinks that the ground forces have captured Bologna over night and the mission is scrubbed. When the truth is later discovered and Bologna is rescheduled, Yossarian yanks the wires out of the intercom system in his plane and, without communications, the plane must turn back and miss the mission. Such examples, multiplied by many others, indicate the intensity with which Yossarian pursues his instinct for self-preservation.

Yossarian is also rational man. Throughout the novel he is in desperate search for a rational approach to his environment, an approach that will harmonize both his instincts and his world's demands. Time and again he is led to conclude that the world is insane, that his instincts are correct, and that there is no rational response that can be made. Still he searches for reason. He argues with his
friend Clevinger about the moral right of self-preservation.

Clevinger tells Yossarian:

"You know very well that I don't approve of Colonel Cathcart any more than you do." Clevinger paused for emphasis, his mouth quivering, and then beat his fist down softly against his sleeping bag. "But it's not for us to determine what targets must be destroyed or who's to destroy them or--"

"Or who gets killed doing it? And why?"

"Yes, even that. We have no right to question--"

"You're insane!"

"--no right to question--"

"Do you really mean that it's not my business how or why I get killed and that it is Colonel Cathcart's? Do you really mean that?" (Catch, p. 122)

When Clevinger says that he does mean it and that it is necessary for the right side to win the war, Yossarian responds with: "'Open your eyes, Clevinger. It doesn't make a damned bit of difference who wins the war to someone who's dead.'" In analyzing who wants him dead, just who the enemy is, Yossarian's logic is incisive and irrefutably correct from the instinctive and rational man's point of view. He argues that "'The enemy . . . is anybody who's going to get you killed, no matter which side he's on, and that includes Colonel Cathcart'" (Catch, p. 122).

But Yossarian is doomed to fail in his search for a rational response to his society. The causes do not produce predictable effects, and the effects never seem to follow their causes, if they are indeed causes. For example, Yossarian can step out of his tent to go for a candy bar and instead get a "dose of clap when that Wac I never even saw before hissed me into the bushes," while a friend
of his who makes love to a filthy diseased prostitute on the
beach does not get clap but a mosquito bite. Or he can
capture Bologna by simply moving a red line on a map. Or
the fluid that flows out of a jar and into the veins of the
Soldier in White is interchangeable with the fluid that
flows out of his bladder and into a second jar. Or Aarfy can
rape and murder the simple maid, but when the MPs arrive,
they arrest Yossarian for being AWOL not Aarfy for murder.
There simply is no adequate intellectual response to absurd-
ity, to nightmare, to the world that Yossarian must call his.

Still, Heller does permit Yossarian a response; as
Yossarian comes to realize that there is no satisfactory
rational response to his world, he also comes gradually
into a growing sense of empathy and love for his fellow
human beings. The process begins when Yossarian finds the
hospital as a means of avoiding missions. But he also finds
that his hospital visits are emotionally painful because
there he finds graphic illustration of his world's destruc-
tive character. His instincts have told him all along to
destroy Cathcart, one focus of the novel's destructive
force, but when Dobbs offers to execute Cathcart if
Yossarian will only say that it is right, Yossarian's
conscience will not permit it. When, on the order of
Yossarian who is lead bombardier, the planes make a second
run over a target and Kraft is killed, Yossarian begins to
live with guilt. But it is on the mission over Avignon
that Heller makes Yossarian squarely face the crucial "secret" of man for the first time. There, with the plane in a steep dive and Dobbs the co-pilot and Huple the fifteen-year old pilot fighting for the controls, with flak bursting about them until the sky is black with metal, with Dobbs sobbing over the intercom "'Help him, help him,'" Yossarian crawls back into the plane's belly to find Snowden literally falling apart from flak wounds. Yossarian felt goose pimples clacking all over him as he gazed down despondently at the grim secret Snowden had spilled all over the messy floor. It was easy to read the message in the entrails. Man was matter, that was Snowden's secret. Drop him out a window and he'll fall. Set fire to him and he'll burn. Bury him and he'll rot, like other kinds of garbage. The spirit gone, man is garbage. That was Snowden's secret. Ripeness was all. (Catch, pp. 429-30)

This incident, which is a kind of structural center for the entire novel, marks a change in Yossarian. When he leaves the plane, his uniform covered with bits of Snowden, even the phlegmatic Doc Daneeka recognizes the change. It is after this incident that Yossarian symbolically sheds his uniform and goes about the base naked. Naked and perched in a tree that he identifies as "'the tree of life . . . and of knowledge of good and evil, too,'" he watches Snowden's funeral. His growth in the knowledge of good and evil intensifies after this incident. He is now fully aware of the destructive nature of his world. Here, at the apogee of his frustration with and alienation from his
society, Yossarian begins to struggle, not just to save his life, but to save his spirit. He grows in the knowledge that man is spirit and that "The spirit gone, man is garbage." The outrage at destruction that he felt prior to learning Snowden's secret develops into love. He falls in love with Nurse Duckett and comes to draw solace and sedation from her nearness. He had a craving to touch her always, to remain always in physical communication. He liked to encircle her ankle loosely with his fingers as he played cards with Nately, Dunbar and Hungry Joe, to lightly and lovingly caress the downy skin of her fair, smooth thigh with the backs of his nails or dreamily, sensuously, almost unconsciously, slide his proprietary, respectful hand up the shell-like ridge of her spine beneath the elastic strap of the two-piece bathing suit she always wore. (Catch, p. 329)

When he returns to Rome and the prostitutes that have given him his "love" before Nurse Duckett, he finds that such impersonal and irresponsible sex is unsatisfactory and unrewarding. "He missed Nurse Duckett in Rome... He banged a thin street-walker with a wet cough who picked him up from an alley between hotels but that was no fun at all and he hastened to the enlisted man's apartment for the fat, friendly maid in the lime-colored panties, who was overjoyed to see him but couldn't arouse him. He went to bed there early and slept alone" (Catch, p. 345). Not only does he miss Nurse Duckett on this trip to Rome, he also sees Rome as he has never seen it before. For it is on this trip to Rome that Heller sends Yossarian through his inferno.
Yossarian wanders the streets of the "eternal city" alone and lost. Everywhere he sees inhuman tortures perpetrated by men upon men. His prostitute friends are all gone, driven by an MP raid into the winter without any of their possessions. He finds a soldier racked by convulsions, his flailing body being held without purpose by six other soldiers. He sees dogs and children beaten without meaning or mercy. He witnesses repeated rape, police brutality and hears unidentified cries of "Please don't." Wherever he wanders he finds misery, and his spirit goes out to the broken and the defeated in the world. He reflects:

What a lousy earth! He wondered how many people were destitute that same night even in his own prosperous country, how many homes were shanties, how many husbands were drunk and wives socked, and how many children were bullied, abused or abandoned. How many families hungered for food they could not afford to buy? How many hearts were broken? How many suicides would take place that same night, how many people would go insane? How many cockroaches and landlords would triumph? How many winners were losers, successes failures, rich men poor men? How many wise guys were stupid? How many happy endings were unhappy endings? How many honest men were liars, brave men cowards, loyal men traitors, how many sainted men were corrupt, how many people in positions of trust had sold their souls to blackguards for petty cash, how many had never had souls? How many straight-and-narrow paths were crooked paths? How many best families were worst families and how many good people were bad people? (Catch, p. 403)

When, by chance, he finds that he is back at the enlisted men's quarters, he discovers Aarfy's rape and murder of the dull-witted maid. Overcome with anguish at what he has seen, Yossarian cries painfully out of his new knowledge:
"'Aarfy, don't you understand? You can't take the life of another human being and get away with it, even if she is just a poor servant girl. Don't you see? Can't you understand?'" (Catch, p. 409). But when the MPs storm into the room, they arrest Yossarian for being AWOL, not Aarfy for having committed murder.

Yossarian's growing sense of empathy for human suffering creates a problem for both Yossarian and Heller. The problem comes about in this fashion. Immediately after his arrest in Rome, Yossarian finds himself in Colonel Cathcart's office back at the Air Force base. With the suddenness of Kid Sampson's death, Colonel Korn, in Cathcart's name, offers Yossarian a "deal." They will send him home, publicize him as a war hero, give him a promotion; all Yossarian must do is announce that he "likes" Colonel Cathcart and Colonel Korn. Yossarian is at first dumbfounded, but when he realizes that the deal is not just another illusion, he quickly accepts it. After all, this is precisely what he has been after from the first chapter of the novel; it is what his instincts have told him to seek. Upon leaving the office he is attacked and stabbed by a "private in green fatigues" that "turned suddenly into Nately's whore." In the hospital Yossarian has a delirious dream in which a "strange man with a mean face who curled his lip at him in a spiteful scowl and bragged, 'We've got your pal, buddy. We've got
your pal" (Catch, p. 422). The dream causes Yossarian to change his mind and refuse the deal. His empathy for those of his friends who are left, for the children of the world represented by Nately's whore's twelve-year-old sister, and for humanity in general, and his moral sensibility that will not permit him to lend his name to the representatives of war, bring him to reject the offer of personal safety at the expense of others. But he also knows that he will never agree to fly another mission; his only alternative, he believes, is to desert, try to find Nately's whore's sister and then try to make it to Sweden. Yossarian's novel-long dilemma is brought to quick sharp focus by the "deal" which he must accept or reject and is hastily resolved in the final few pages of the novel.

Yossarian's dilemma is also Heller's dilemma; but Heller can not be rid of the problem so easily as Yossarian can. Norman Podhoretz describes Heller's problem this way:

If we take what this new [after the dream] Yossarian says seriously, then the whole novel is trivialized, for what we had all along thought to be a remorselessly uncompromising picture of the world written from the point of view of the idea that survival is the overriding value and that all else is pretense, lying, cant, and hypocrisy, now becomes nothing more than the story of a mismanaged outfit and an attack on the people who (as Yossarian puts it with a rhetoric not his own) always cash in "on every decent impulse and every human tragedy." No, the truth is that Mr. Heller is simply not prepared to go all the way with the idea that lies at the basis of his novel and that is the main tool he has used in making an incredible reality seem credible. He is
simply not prepared to say that World War II was a fraud.

Minna Doskow has argued that Yossarian's desertion is not running away to escape the War; that rather it is running to embrace social responsibility. Yossarian's vow to go to Rome for Nately's whore's sister is his promise to attempt the world's salvation; save the children to save the world. If Podhoretz is correct and Heller was not prepared to "say that World War II was a fraud," then Doskow's argument is specious. And Podhoretz is correct. Heller evades his problem by bringing his book to a close at the tail end of the War. Just before deserting, Yossarian tells Major Danby, who has just reminded him that German Fascism, unchecked, would have swallowed the children of the world:

"I know that... Christ, Danby, I earned that medal I got... Don't talk to me about fighting to save my country. I've been fighting all along to save my country. Now I'm going to fight a little to save myself. The country's not in danger any more, but I am... The Germans will be beaten in a few months. And Japan will be beaten a few months after that. If I were to give up my life now, it wouldn't be for my country." (Catch, pp. 435-36)

The words ring hollow. An enemy is not defeated by an army that quits half-way through the war. Yossarian can not walk

9 Podhoretz, pp. 233-34.


out on present misery in the name of future humanity. The simple fact is that Yossarian is defeated. If he follows his instinct for survival at all costs, he will be court martialed and will be reneging on his new sense of human responsibility. If he accepts Cathcart's deal that will put him in harmony with his world, he will be physically alive but spiritually withered by his refusal to accept his human responsibility; his spirit gone, he will be "garbage." If he rejects Cathcart's deal and deserts, he may think that he is embracing human responsibility, but he is just as clearly rejecting it; and even he admits that his chances of reaching Sweden with or without the girl are nil.

There is one character in Catch-22 who does escape. The last five pages of the last chapter bring word that Orr, who was reported lost at sea long before, is safe in Sweden. Orr, the most enigmatical and nearly the most absurd character in the novel, escapes. And rightly so. Orr is Twentieth Century man in a way that Yossarian is not. He is a mechanic, a technician who studies carefully the machines and systems and procedures of his world. He practices crash landings, practices rowing the yellow life-raft with the little blue oar, studies ocean currents and maps. Finally prepared, he quits practicing and, as Yossarian knows, goes "'to Sweden deliberately.'" Orr is practical man who, rather than complain about the absurdity of the world, studies its absurdities and then uses them to defeat
it. Yossarian, on the other hand, is the Quixotic man who fights the machines and complains about the procedures and manages little else, and who finally breaks himself on the hard rocks of a reality, however absurd or illogical, that he has never learned to avoid or to use.

Heller is clearly appalled by the high cost of the War, a cost measured in lives destroyed, in identities destroyed, and in spirits destroyed. How critical the facts of destruction are to his novel is indicated by Heller's own statement that the second most important character in *Catch-22* is the novel's brooding, pervasive sense of death.\(^{12}\) And death in *Catch-22*, it should be added, comes as often to the spirit as to the body.

\(^{12}\textit{Time}, p. 66.\)
CHAPTER SEVEN

DEFEAT IN VICTORY:
THE NOVELISTS’ VISION OF THE FUTURE

The Second World War novel has a natural beginning point; the civilian is inducted into the United States Armed Forces and a new life begins. It also has a natural concluding point; the survivors of combat are given a few days of Rest and Recreation. Often enough the temporary cessation of combat provides the novelist with an opportunity to evaluate the effects that the War has had upon his soldier and to reflect upon what it all means for his future. It is the intention of this final chapter to assess the novelist's vision of what the War has done to the American consciousness and what its implications are for the future. Such an assessment requires a more general approach than that used in the previous three chapters. It requires examination of the novelist's intentions, evaluation of the total impression created by his novel, and the characteristics of the novels as a genre.

In his study of the attitudes of World War II soldiers, Stouffer, a well-known psychologist, says:

If we set as our definition of a consistent, favorable, intellectual orientation to the war the requirements that men (a) accept the defensive necessity of
of the war, (b) repudiate such critical or cynical views as are implied in explaining the war in terms of the British Empire, big business or economic imperialism, and (c) dismiss the superficial theory of causation implicit in describing the war as America straightening out Europe's messes, then less than a fifth of the men could be classified as having a consistent, favorable, intellectual orientation to the war... If we add to them the additional criterion that men accept some positive formulation—that is, that they either agree that the war was solely a defensive one, fought with no thought of saving the world; or that the war was being fought to guarantee democratic liberties to the world, but that they do not accept both formulations, since, interpreted literally, they are inconsistent—then the proportion classified as viewing the war from a consistent and favorable intellectual position is reduced to less than a tenth of the men.¹

The war novelists reflect Stouffer's findings, for they demonstrate in their novels that they are, as Malcolm Cowley has said, "disappointed by the fruits of victory, and more than disappointed: some of them are heartbroken at the contrast between our aims and efforts on one hand and our achievements on the other."² Almost all of the novelists recognize that the War, massive in scale and technological in character and concluded by atomic holocaust, represents an unprecedented threat to the survival of man—a threat to both his physical and spiritual survival. Their eschatological vision takes three forms: some are nihilistic, seeing the War as a fiery Armageddon that can either mark the

¹Stouffer, I, 432-33.
²Cowley, Situation, p. 39.
beginning of the end of human history or drive man into an apocalyptic age where the ethics of survival override humane action; others are optimistic, believing the American victory to be a reaffirmation of man's commitment to democratic ideals; still others, while agreeing with the nihilists that the War is cause for the deepest despair, still search the war-torn psyche for some surviving remnant of humane value upon which man can rebuild his world. These categories remind us of the pattern of the literature of the Thirties. The Thirties had a literature that continued the pattern of disillusion and despair begun in the Twenties. But the Thirties had too a literature of affirmation, one that "rediscovered" America or offered either human solidarity or Marxist Communism as man's future hope. The Thirties had as well a literature of sensibility that sought to understand man by examining his psyche. Here, then, are the obvious antecedents of each category of war novels. It is the novelists' three-fold pattern of response to the War that provides the organization for this chapter.

The first category of war novels, those characterized by a nihilistic spirit of defeat, has direct lines of connection with the literature of the Twenties and Thirties. Ernest Hemingway, who assisted at the birth of a nihilistic literature in the Twenties, contributed directly and indirectly to its survival during the Forties. He himself
wrote a World War II novel in this mode, and his stylistic influence remained strong in the World War II period. The naturalistic stance, the structural techniques, and the style of such novels as Gore Vidal's *Williwaw*, Vance Bourjaily's *The End of My Life*, and Norman Mailer's *The Naked and the Dead* are clearly rooted in Hemingway. So too is the spirit of defeat in these novels, a spirit that began as disillusionment in the Twenties and deepened to despair in the Thirties.

Actually, nihilism appeared to observers in the late Forties to be the only pattern existing in the war novels. A survey of writers in 1948 offers the following observation:

> It has been a bad decade so far. . . . Wider military operations, their prolongation, their involvement of civilians, above all the preceding and accompanying genocide, distinguish this war from the last. Everybody lost years, and many seem to have lost their nerve. There is a political, perhaps a moral, paralysis. . . . The chief cultural phenomenon of the decade here has probably been the intellectuals' desertion of Marxism. What they have replaced it with, I cannot discover; nihilism is more articulate and impressive than in any other period of which I have knowledge. ³

John W. Aldridge's *After the Lost Generation*, a 1951 study of the Second World War novel, insists that "the chaos of loss" is the primary, perhaps the only, response of the war novelists to their experience. Twenty years later

this observation seems to be correct in regard to the pattern itself, incorrect in regard to its extensiveness. It still seems valid, for example, to suggest that the nihilism "emerged in part as the frustration of social idealism in the light of triumphant brutal authority or of the meaningless military machine. Much of the nihilism in the war novel, but not all, results from a recognition that democratic and humane conceptions, the currency of the thirties learned in that period or taken from it, could not survive in the armed forces and during war time." Such an explanation may well account for the political and social nihilism found in Mailer's The Naked and the Dead.

In the 1940's Mailer felt that America's post war troubles with Russia were the responsibility of American capitalism. The discussions between Hearn and Cummings in The Naked and the Dead, the irony of the unsuccessful scouting mission, its political motivation and its waste, all suggest that America fought Hitler not because America was anti-fascist, but because Hitler had proven himself unwilling to play the "capitalist game according to the rules." After disposing of Hitler, America could concentrate on Russia as the last obstacle to total American power. The War, Mailer suggests, was only one phase of a

\[\text{\textsuperscript{4}Eisinger, Fiction, p. 27.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{5}Podhoretz, pp. 181-83.}\]
more ambitious plan for world dominance, and the Army was a "laboratory of fascism" that offered a preview of the kind of society Americans, and the world, could expect in the future.

Mailer's nihilism goes still deeper; The Naked and the Dead is not only infused with political and social nihilism, it also offers man nothing but defeat. Mailer's naturalism, the ground upon which he built his novel, controls his characters. Man's deepest urge, Cummings tells Hearn, is to "'achieve God.'" The brutal struggle upward is both man's destiny and his desire. If life is, as Mailer proposes, a struggle, a fierce battle between the individual will and the many forces that resist it, then nobody in the novel wins the battle. Hearn and Valsen fail for they do not have the courage and stamina necessary to force their will into effective operation. Cummings and Croft, who have the necessary strength, fail because accident and nature conspire to snatch achievement away from them at the final moment.

The lasting impression left by The Naked and the Dead is that, as Valsen so often says, "'everything is crapped up, everything is phony, everything curdles when you touch it.'"

Jones's The Thin Red Line may also be characterized as predominantly nihilistic. Combat is presented as a dehumanizing and brutalizing experience. The men who fight finish less than men; they are animals who lie in their own filth, fight their own kind, lust after any kind of
sexual release and either grovel in fear or pound their chests in bravado. But more important, they discover that whatever they once thought about war and country, combat has made them believe that only one thing has value—staying alive. There is a concerted effort by the men to be rid of the war, to lie or cheat or self-wound or kill if necessary in order to be evacuated. For some, who know there is no chance for evacuation, there is no hope at all. Jones writes that: "... over 35% of the old C-for-Charlie—the men who had ridden back in the trucks from Boola Boola—had managed to get themselves evacuated for one thing or another. Many many more had tried and failed, and a few who knew they had no chance had not tried at all" (Line, p. 434). Although there is a romantic quality to Jones's despair that at times seems to belie his nihilistic reporting, the final effect is negative. Survival alone is important. Everything else may be justifiably sacrificed to survival.

Nihilism is also the atmosphere of Vidal's Williwaw. Here the emphasis is not political or social but moral. Vidal, as Mailer, accepts the mode of the literary naturalists as his method of recording the War. He carefully records the facts and just as carefully avoids any appearance of commenting or interpreting those facts. He makes no investigation into the problems of evil or punishment or morality. He simply describes the boredom of war, the fury
of nature, the murder of Duval. Such a level tone seems to suggest the irrelevancy of moral questions, seems to indicate the amorality of all experience, seems to deny value of any kind. The final impression that is left by *Williwaw* is that life is pointless and those who live it are waiting out a sentence imposed upon them.

Ernest Hemingway's World War II novel, *Across the River and Into the Trees*, should also be classified as nihilistic, even though the evidence is not so clear cut as in *The Naked and the Dead* or *Williwaw*, because it is essentially a story of defeat and can affirm no lasting values along the way to defeat. *Across the River and Into the Trees* is set in Italy after the close of the War. Hemingway does not adopt the typically broad focus of the Second World War novel, but concentrates, as he did in his previous war novels, on one character, Colonel Robert Cantwell. Cantwell is a career soldier, a battered veteran of both world wars. He is, in fact, Frederic Henry, Nick Adams, and Jake Barnes after the second time around. His wounds, like those of his predecessors, are physical and emotional; the only difference is that Cantwell has so many more of both kinds. His knee has been shot away, leaving him with a limp. His hand has

---

been smashed, leaving a crooked cracked claw. He has sus-
tained "maybe ten" concussions that have either knocked him
unconscious or produced a loss of memory for a time. His
body is covered with scar tissue. Most important, his heart
is bad and requires constant medication to keep it operating.
The two wounds that receive repeated attention are the
claw-like hand and the failing heart. Hemingway always has
given his soldiers' wounds special significance and Cantwell's
prove no exception. His crooked hand is representative of
his crippled physical capabilities; his faltering heart is
representative of his withered emotions.

Evidence of Cantwell's emotional wounds is not difficult
to find. He is divorced from a woman who is a journalist,
who married him in order to advance herself in Army circles
and thus improve her chances for inside information. He has
had other previous "loves" as well, none of which worked
out well for him. He is as taut as an over-tuned guitar
string: he always chooses the corner table in a bar or
restaurant in order to have "both his flanks covered"; he is
often annoyed with himself for not immediately observing a
new comer in a room, not seeing well enough in the dark,
losing his way in the maze of Venice streets; he finds it
difficult, if not impossible, to sleep in a room without
the light burning (Jake Barnes's and Nick Adams' old prob-
lem). Perhaps the most significant evidence of his
emotional malaise is what Hemingway labels his "roughness."
Cantwell's "roughness" grows out of a bitter cynicism and disrespect for all men but the mutilated and all institutions and governments. It is evidenced in his open contempt, his belligerent attack upon what he considers "phony" or insincere, and his deliberately coarse and cutting remarks.

The cause of Cantwell's emotional disability is also clear. It is World War II, a war that he calls a "bad war," an "uninteresting" war. World War I was a good war, and Cantwell, who fought it in Italy, spends a great deal of his time remembering how good it was. He fought it in the "high country," and, as in *A Farewell to Arms*, the high country is good country, clean country, bracing country. He also fought it along and between two rivers which provide terrain for sound tactics, for courageous action and for a stoic unbending defense. The enemy was worthy and fought well. But World War II was different. It was uninteresting because the enemy was beaten by "tactical aviation." It was "phony" because the killing went on even after the enemy was beaten. It was fought, at least Cantwell's part of it, in low country, in France and in the Netherlands. And it was fought in the woods. The crucial battle, the one that pricks Cantwell's memory most severely, was fought in a woods where the strategic bombing pounded indiscriminately both friend and foe, and where the artillery burst treacherously in the tree tops and rained shrapnel over the men beneath. Cantwell, a general at the time, was ordered to
take his regiment through the woods and capture several towns beyond. The orders were suicidal; he knew as much, but he could not refuse. In the woods his battalions were decimated, the innocent towns turned out to be fortresses, his regiment was lost, the objectives proved unstrategic, next to worthless, and Cantwell was broken in rank to Colonel.

Cantwell tries desperately to be rid of, to purge his memory of, this bad war. The opportunity that Hemingway offers him is Renata, an Italian girl. But Renata is to prove no Maria; she does not leave him by dying, as Katherine left Frederic Henry, or by reluctant choice, as Brett left Jake Barnes, but neither is she successful in reclaiming Cantwell. The failure is not primarily Renata's. Cantwell tries desperately to love her and to be cured. He affirms his love for her over and over but his protestations only serve to belie his words. His crooked hand seeks to be repaired by its search of her body, by its attack of her "high ground" and her "island in the great river with its high steep banks." His failing heart seeks purgation through confession as he relives the bad war by telling Renata about it while she lies in the crook of his arm. But after the love making and after the confession, Cantwell remains the same. He is still "rough" with Renata, by reflex and against his will. When she asks him "'Can't you do anything kindly?'" he can only answer "'I guess not. But
I've tried." Later, reflecting upon his relationship with her, Cantwell thinks: "I never give her anything, as she pointed out. . . . What I would like to give her is security, which does not exist anymore; all my love, which is worthless; all my worldly goods, which are practically non-existent except for two good shot-guns, my soldier suits, the medals and decorations with the citations, and some books" (Trees, p. 302). The end comes when the crooked hand goes duck hunting, waiting for the female decoy to call the drake into firing range, then pulling the trigger to explode the promise in the female's call. The withered heart surges in anger at the boatman who breaks the rules of hunting and then finally ceases, stopped at least in part, by the murderous rage which makes Cantwell wish he had a rifle that would reach and kill the distant boatmen.

And so Cantwell dies. Just before dying, he recalls the words of another dying soldier, Stonewall Jackson. He quotes Jackson as saying: "'No, no, let us cross over the river and rest under the shade of the trees.'" Across the River and Into the Trees ironically omits both the rest and the shade. The river was a part of the good war, but that part of life is gone, crossed over. Life must now be lived, as the bad war was fought, in the treacherous trees, trees that offer no shade because they are shattered, no rest

because their splintered trunks are mute monuments of life's treachery. The irony is pointed up by Cantwell's chauffeur, Jackson. Jackson is a caricature of the World War II soldier, the young draftee who, unlike Nick, or Jake, or Frederic, did not choose his war. Jackson is polite and obedient but disinterested. He does not drink, he does not seek sex, he does not hunt; he only sleeps. He fought in his war, but for him there was no romance, no guilt, no glory. His war was just another of the many and confusing facts of his life. He is, in other words, what Cantwell would have been without World War I, the end product of the bad war. Cantwell has at least crossed the river before moving into the trees. Jackson has only known the trees, for there is nothing left but trees, and there is suggested no way out of the trees.

One of the most remarkable and unequivocally nihilistic war novels is John Hawkes' *The Cannibal*. The uniqueness of *The Cannibal* lies in its surrealistic vision of mid-twentieth century despair. It is difficult, if not impossible, to discuss the facts of the novel in the usual manner. The central narrative line, if indeed one can identify a "central" narrative line or any line at all, concerns a plot by several German conspirators in a post-World War II American-occupied German village. They seek to kill an American soldier, Leevey, the sole American left to oversee about one-third of defeated Germany. But the facts of this plot occupy only a few of the novel's pages, and then, it
seems, only incidentally. The bulk of the novel's facts are disconnected, out of time sequence. The "narrative" flits vaguely backward to World War I Germany, dips opaquely into Germany between the wars, and prowls grimly into and about the rubble of post-World War II Germany. Characters appear and disappear without introduction and it seems without cause. The setting, always shrouded with vapors as in a half-remembered dream, fades and returns, its details now grotesquely sharp, now blurred. The disconnected and dream-like quality that is sustained throughout the novel is aimed at the subconscious mind and demands that the novel be felt rather than intellectually comprehended. Scenes may be quoted for their effect, but not for their meaning or their relevance to plot.

Meaning is not absent in The Cannibal. It simply is not achieved in the usual fashion, through the sequential order of facts. It is achieved, in a sense, outside the facts, in the method of the novel. The facts do provide clues to meaning. There are observable motifs of flight, violence, lust and destruction. But such motifs, presented as they are in a surrealistic fashion, force the critic to discuss, not the motif but its method of presentation. Surrealism, it has been suggested, "deserts the ordered, rational world of experience because reason has failed both as an instrument of order and comprehension." 8 That

8Eisinger, Fiction, p. 31.
seems to be precisely the point of *The Cannibal*. Two world wars, held apart by world depression, speak convincingly to Twentieth century man of the decay of order and reason. With order gone and experience beyond understanding, morality ceases and man is swept by the uncontrolled fires of lust and violence. The weak flee, the strong pursue, as the debauched Duke pursues the lame child through the empty theater with its flickering movie screen. The strong devour and the weak are eaten, as the Duke consumes the child, once caught. Or the desperate lie in wait in a seeping sewage ditch, watching for the light and listening for the stutter of the motorcycle that will bring them their enemy, Leevey. Murder is committed with impunity and without conscience. An insane asylum erupts and the escaped inmates roam the countryside undetected, their insanity melding with the general insanity of all men in the larger institution of the world. The vision provided by *The Cannibal* is apocalyptic. Its world is distorted because it is seen through the smoke rising from the rubble of a world destroyed by men gone mad. *The Cannibal* is suggesting that, for mid-Twentieth Century man, surrealism is the only reality.

The war novels in the second category are those which view the War from an affirmative stance. But even these optimistic novels tend to belie their affirmation. Their hope is often desperate and strained. They will describe the brutal realities of the War and then give the facts an
optimistic turn that the facts do not warrant. They will often "rely far more upon the pieties of democracy than upon serious analysis of political or ideological positions" and fail to "render in imaginative terms and in the lives of their characters the dramatic conflict of the felt idea."^9

The affirmative war novel has deep roots in the literature of the Thirties. The Thirties had produced a large body of affirmative literature that moved in three directions: it patriotically "rediscovered" America, or it offered human solidarity as the hope for man's future, or it preached Marxist socialism as the hope of the world. This third type of literature, best exemplified in the proletarian novel, had largely exhausted itself by 1941. But the chauvinistic literature and the literature advocating human solidarity found expression in the war novels.

Even if the propagandistic pulp fiction, that saw the Japanese as "little yellow bastards" and the Germans as crude, "Krauthead" butcherers, is discounted, there remain several novels by "serious" authors that take an unabashedly chauvinistic approach to the War. Such novels tend to assume that fighting national enemies somehow completes a man; that brutality is to be destroyed by brutality; that the submersion of the individual will in a collective effort is a positive good; that there is security in collective

^9Eisinger, *Fiction*, p. 27.
These novels praise the United States military machine, as does The Caine Mutiny, which seeks to justify the "Navy way"; or they praise the fighting man, as does Leon Uris's Battle Cry.

Battle Cry is obviously written out of what Uris himself notes as "My pride in serving with the Marines." It is a hymn in praise of the U.S. combat Marine. The novel follows the fortunes of a group of recruits, youngsters who are just out of high school, whose worries are about football, dates with girl friends, and parental over-protection. Marine training polishes the metal of their character, builds their muscle, and begins the process of turning them into men. They get their taste of the world in "Dago," where they learn to "take care of" themselves by fighting, by recognizing the sharks that feed on new soldiers, and by conducting their first real sexual affairs. They carry their new role off with aplomb. The major characters are followed into training as combat radio operators where their worldly education continues. They are finally assigned to their permanent battalion, "Huxley's Whores," named after Major Sam Huxley, a real "hell-for-leather gyrine" who bullies his men into being precise fighting

---

10. Eisinger, Fiction, p. 45.

machines, and then fights for them at headquarters and with them in the line. Battle Cry is "gung-ho" all the way. Its social comments are at a bare minimum, its questioning of the death and mutilation of war is very occasional and is glossed over with the rationalization that if war puts an end to the war-creators the dying will be worth it. Combat is realistically described; many of the soldiers do die. But when they die they die gallantly, taking their share of the enemy with them. Others in the novel live, particularly those with whom the novelist is most involved, and they bear their wounds with dignity and courage, returning to their women subdued and educated men. Their bodies may be broken, but their spirits have been made whole. As strained as the action may seem at times, it is natural compared to the rhetoric with which it is presented. The dialogue is false; the author's praise is hollow. What attempts to be serious is first annoying and then amusing; what sets out to praise ends by irritating; what hopes to affirm actually discourages. The optimism that is built into the novel is too forced to be convincing. The failure is given away when, after heavy bloodshed, a model Marine asks what the War is all about. The novel's "intellectual" soldier answers him: "'This much I can say, Danny: don't let anybody tell you that you were a sucker. Something better has got to come from it all, it has to. Sure, we're going to get kicked around and they'll tell you it was all for nothing. But it
can't be for nothing" (Battle, p. 456). The obvious strain in the answer, the affirmation against all the evidence, is characteristic of the novel's tone. The affirmation is not acceptable, for the reader sees easily through the spit-and-polish pose to the emptiness of the rhetoric.

Another kind of affirmative war novel is that novel which offers a socially or morally optimistic justification for the War. Such a novel does not deny the cruel and extensive destruction of the War, but it does assert that out of such cruelty comes positive value. As bad as the War is, its argument goes, it may well produce a better world after it is won, or make men better for having fought it.

A better world is what Irwin Shaw's The Young Lions offers. Shaw had already established a reputation as an author with a liberal orientation before war broke out. He was committed to the liberalism of the Thirties that saw human solidarity as the means to a better future world. He accepted and illustrated in his writing most of the liberal ideals of the Thirties. World war did not shake his commitment. He carried his liberalism into the Forties and into his war novel. The Young Lions is a call for social justice, a plea for humane men to act in concert against injustice and tyranny. But The Young Lions, as has been noted earlier, is not convincing as a document of hope.

Lionel Shapiro's The Sixth of June does not offer so patently liberal a view of the War; Shapiro's concern is
not with what the War will do for society but with what it
can do for the individual. His novel suggests that the War
can serve to straighten and strengthen a man morally.

Brad Parker, the central character of The Sixth of June,
is a young man whose roots are deeply embedded in New
England's sturdy morality and staunch ethic. His ancestors
were "first family" stock. He married a girl, Jane Lakelock,
whose father, Damien, "came up the hard way." Damien
Lakelock owns a large newspaper, one of the most powerful
in the state, and he is a man of clear principles and honest
actions. He and his son-in-law share a deep affection that
grows out of like character and similar beliefs. When war
breaks out, Brad enlists as a Lieutenant in the paratroops.
Duty, not idealism, prompts him. But there is also the
reverse of responsibility at work in Brad, for the War repre-
sents an opportunity to get away from New England, to be
temporarily free of his early marriage, to be released from
the demands of his position as heir to the Lakelock power
and wealth. The War, he knows, will provide him with an
opportunity for freedom that he has never before experienced.

Brad is not destined to jump with his paratroop outfit,
for just before being sent into action, he is transferred to
an office position with the Army's operations planning
headquarters in London. A United States Senator, needing
the political support of Brad's father-in-law's newspaper,
sees to the transfer without Brad's or Damien's knowledge.
In London Brad meets Valerie Russel, daughter of a retired British general and fiancee of a heroic British commando, and they fall deeply in love. When Brad is transferred to headquarters in Algeria, the separation is painful. Although his action is repugnant to him, he uses his friendship with the Senator as leverage to have himself transferred back to London and Valerie. Shortly thereafter his father-in-law visits London, listens compassionately to Brad's avowal of love for Valerie and the news that Brad will not return to his wife Jane and his New England responsibilities at the War's end, and then informs Brad of what he has just lately learned—that the first transfer from paratroops to headquarters was "arranged." Meanwhile, Valerie's dilemma intensifies when her fiancee, John Wynter, turns up wounded but alive after being reported missing in action. This, then, is the situation: Valerie is torn, by her British sense of duty, between real love for Brad and affection for Wynter and what he represents; Brad is torn by his New England sense of responsibility, between his real love for Valerie and his affection for Jane, for Damien, and for his heritage. Both Brad and Valerie agree to "let the war" decide the outcome. With this solution in mind Brad transfers into a commando outfit that is to precede the Normandy invasion. The fortunes of war (and plot manipulation) see to it that the recovered Wynter becomes the commanding officer of the commando assault force to which
Brad is attached. The stage is set. The War will indeed tell. Brad fights with courage, is wounded but lives. Wynter, too, is wounded but lives. But Brad has observed and is deeply impressed by Wynter's quiet heroism, and his baptism under fire cleanses him of his careless thinking. He and Valerie agree to deny their love and to return to their responsibilities.

The point of the novel seems to be that the War has set things right. Running through the novel is the assumption that enduring combat is somehow more ennobling than planning combat. The novelist admires Colonel Timmer even though he is an alcoholic and a braggart because he wants to fight. The novelist admires Dan Stenick even though he is a drifter because he is a fearless fighter. Brad's dilemma is brought on because he is removed from a fighting outfit and sent to a planning outfit. When he gets back into combat his dilemma is resolved, for combat, it seems, reduces men to the most basic of motives and emotions and consequently re-establishes a proper sense of values. Men respond to their natural sense of right and goodness during combat. The novel also repeatedly asserts the Army's good judgement. The Army uses men where they can best serve. When Brad is removed from his proper niche, he is brought to act in an immoral fashion by using power for his own advantage. When he is returned to his original position, to the place that the Army first sent him, he is brought back to moral action;
he has sacrificed self-gratification for the higher good of submission to collective, responsible action. Although the War denies the lovers their love, it solves their dilemma by persuading them of the soundness of traditional values. Wynter's sacrificial heroism in combat is the model for that moral action. The War has, in a very real sense, been the agent for moral and ethical strengthening.

Guard of Honor, James Gould Cozzens' contribution to the fiction of the Second World War, is not precisely a novel of affirmation, but it fits more appropriately into this category than into any other. Cozzens' novel demonstrates the rational conservative's view of the War. Cozzens may not see the War as a means toward social reform, nor as a moral straightener, nor as a completer of the individual's manliness; but neither does he see the War as an unmitigated evil to be resisted or fled from whenever possible. Rather, Cozzens suggests that the War is a hard fact that can not be avoided, and the only realistic reaction to it is to do all that can be done to win it; "the art of the possible" is Guard of Honor's key phrase.

The situation in Guard of Honor is this. General Beal, commander of an Army Air Force training base in Florida, is faced with an explosive racial problem. Washington has ordered an integration policy into effect but because of community pressure Beal is hesitant about complying. Benny Carricker, a superb pilot and General
Beal's intimate friend, precipitates the explosive situation by slugging and hospitalizing a Negro flier. The same day a Negro journalist, sent with Washington's permission to review the new integration policy, is denied access to the base. Lieutenant Edsell, a political liberal and activist for Negro rights, keeps the situation boiling with his injudicious meddling. Things grow even more critical when General Nichols arrives. Nichols is a high-ranking official from the Pentagon who has come to award a medal to a Negro flier as a public relations gesture supporting the integration policy. But the Negro flier is the same man who has been sent to the hospital as a result of Carricker's rage. The Negroes on the base are on the edge of mutiny; the community is ready to retaliate.

This is the situation that General Beal must resolve. But, while he may be an excellent combat pilot and leader, he is not capable of dealing with the diplomatic problem before him. He dumps the problem on Colonel Ross, his air inspector and the novel's representative of "the art of the possible." Ross is a wise man of mature mind who had been a judge during his civilian life. He believes in and practices the art of doing what is possible; but he also believes in moral means to moral ends. He knows that there are hard, irrefutable facts surrounding every problem, facts that must be considered when seeking a solution, and he knows a solution is no better than the means of implementing it.
Sentiment and idealistic principles only muddy the water; it is pragmatic moral hardheadedness that gets things done. He knows that race should have nothing to do with the military's treatment of a man; but he also knows that there is a Southern town outside the base and that there is a preponderance of Southerners on the base. The integration policy may be right in principle, but its full application is inappropriate on this base at this time. Man must deal with things as they are and not with things as he wished they were. He must do what it is possible to do rather than break himself on the impossible. Ross is able, through a series of compromises, to keep the base operating, General Beal in command, the Negroes more or less satisfied, the Southerners mollified. The status quo is maintained.

General Nichols, himself a practitioner of the art of the possible, is satisfied with the solution. He realizes that no man can be expected to excell in every area; therefore he sees to it that Beal remains in command where his talents can do his country the most good. While the crucial situation in Guard of Honor is not exactly military, Cozzens makes it clear that he intends the principles applied by Ross to be applied by the reader to the exigencies of the War. He says concerning another character's presence in the Air Force:

The answer Nathaniel Hicks needed was one beyond or behind the accessible and obvious answer, that there was a war on, and since he would probably
be drafted anyway, he might as well volunteer; or any feelings about the merits of the contest (which, in a way, did not matter; once the contest began the only issue was beat or be beaten, and this easy choice could command almost anybody's best endeavor quite as well as zeal for right and justice, or the heady self-gratulations of simple patriotism). (Guard, p. 28)

The War is a fact; man's appropriate response to that fact is to do what is possible, within certain moral limits, to win. There are concrete realities that, if overlooked, destroy a man; Lieutenant Edsell is ineffective and chronically miserable because his liberal idealism blinds him to such realities. It is only by practicing the art of the possible that a man can accomplish. This, in essence, is the conclusion of Guard of Honor.

In one sense, the novel is pessimistic. It sees the facts of life as intractably difficult and impossible of quick easy solution. Still its reflections about life, as Chester Eisinger says, "do not lead to hopeless surrender but to that Stoic acceptance and endurance which Cozzens seems to see as the best possible expectation of man." The final effect of the novel is therefore not pessimistic; but neither is it optimistic. The reader feels suspended half-way between the two moods.

There is left only the final category of World War II novels. The novels in this category are characterized by

12 Eisinger, Fiction, p. 160.
their unblinking view of the War's destructive effects upon men, by their admission that there were no victors in this war, by their search, in spite of their despair, for some faint light within the darkness of the human soul, and by their search for an ethic that would permit survival in the waste land of the post-War world. The immediate ancestor of this category was the literature of "sensibility" represented earlier in this study by the work of William Faulkner and Thomas Wolfe. The central concern of the earlier literature was with the questions "what is man?" and "how should he behave?" Both questions remain crucial in this final group of World War II novels.

The novels in this category begin to answer the question "what is man?" by being fully aware of the tragic costs of war. They point out the destruction and the brutality with as much honesty and realism as the nihilistic novel does. They look without flinching at the implications of a massive technological army; the reduction of the individual to an expendable part of a vast machine; the necessary submission of will to a uniform code; enforced lessons on the skills of execution and the rationale for execution; the use of distasteful and immoral means to achieve desired and only possibly moral ends. Such a bleak view of the War does not stop these novelists from pushing on to look for some meaning where there appears to be only contradiction.

The area of their search is internal; if the material
world is reduced to smoldering debris, if war has forced ethical considerations into a chaotic reversal, if events indicate that the individual has no value as an individual, if, in short, external meaning is gone, then perhaps meaning can only be private, can only be found within the self. Thus it is within the self that these novelists conduct their search.

The World War II novelist of sensibility accepts and builds upon three assumptions: that man's nature is dark and complicated and not understood even by himself; that the external world within which he is forced to exist is hostile; and that the hostile world is only a reflection of his own inner darkness, is indeed a horror of his own creation. World War II saw the creation turn upon its creator and threaten to destroy him. Man was forced to fight for his soul, forced to resist being herded and branded and slaughtered, forced to assert his own identity and supremacy as creator. The war novels of sensibility may be seen as man's groping search for his soul and for his former supremacy as creator.

The war novel of sensibility indicates that the first step in man's search is resistance. When the individual realizes he is a pawn to be played with and finally spent, he rebels against those forces which demand he give up his identity. It is this resistance that is the dramatic core of Jones's From Here to Eternity. Prewitt struggles to
maintain his individual identity within a society that enforces conformity. He loves the Army because it is a reflection of his own values, but he refuses to succumb when it demands that he give up his identity. He would rather suffer personal destruction than defeat, and that is the price that he finally pays. From Here to Eternity does not suggest that man can achieve a clear-cut victory. It is questionable that it suggests a victory of any kind if victory requires that the status quo be altered for the better. But it does show man defying the inevitable; it does ennable man by having him refuse to accept defeat when the only other option is destruction. If it does not hold up the hope of victory, it mitigates the bitterness of defeat.

Resistance, of course, creates the sense of alienation, and alienation, according to the novels under consideration, is the second step in man's search for self. When the individual deliberately asserts himself as distinct from all other selves, he sets himself apart. He desires his own unique distinctness, but the other side of that coin is isolation.

The alienation that accompanies self-distinctness is fully illustrated by Joseph in Saul Bellow's Dangling Man. Joseph is classified 1A for the military draft, but for some unknown reason he is not called to duty. He waits, unable to find temporary work and separated from his friends either by their induction or his own inner struggle. His
struggle is against passive acceptance of the regimentation and the regularity that he knows awaits him in the Army. He believes in individual identity, in freedom of action, in the continuity of life, and he is fully aware that the military demands of the Second World War negate all of these. He wishes to maintain his personal identity; but his desire only further alienates him. He loses his sense of community, his few remaining friends avoid him, he stays shut up in his apartment, angers his family, even endangers his relationship with his wife. He grows increasingly bitter and spiteful as his alienation increases, and his alienation increases in proportion to his awareness of the struggle that is taking place within his soul. Joseph's major war is thus fought on the battleground of his psyche, not on the soil of North Africa, Italy, or Iwo Jima. The resolution of the story in his eventual request for immediate duty is not clear-cut. Most likely it represents the capitulation of his self; or, less likely, it may be his recognition that identity is, after all, found only in relation to other identities. If it is capitulation, the novel is a chronicle of defeat; if it is alignment with his fellow suffers, the novel suggests a muted victory but only on a limited and individual basis. Either way it is the alienation produced by resistance that has brought Joseph to his decision.

Resistance creates alienation; alienation in the war novel of sensibility produces suffering. Joseph Heller, in
Catch-22, is deeply impressed by the suffering that the individual must experience. Yossarian follows the course of resisting the Army; he is alienated in the process, and then suffers because of his alienation. At first Yossarian accepts the War and his part in it. Slowly he comes to doubt it and to fear its effects upon him. When he learns Snowden's secret—that "the spirit gone, man is garbage"—he learns that man must resist, must struggle to keep his spirit intact. His resistance separates him from his world, for he now sees that his society is geared to grind him into submission, or, if he refuses submission, to destroy him. The novel is primarily devoted to the suffering that Yossarian must accept because of his resistance. And not only is the novel's content concerned with the suffering of its characters, its methodology is intended to draw the reader into that suffering. The suffering does not come to a satisfying end. Yossarian's final action, his flight from the Army and the accompanying rationalization that seems to close the book on a note of victory, simply will not stand as victory. Yossarian's search ends tragically, but Catch-22 does illustrate that the search for self is a value worth the suffering, worth even dying for.

From resistance, to alienation, to suffering; out of the suffering may come some degree of hope. Suffering, caused by alienation, paradoxically reunites the sufferer with his fellows. The sufferer comes to recognize suffering
in those about him and can thus empathize with them. Out of his empathy may come love and a sense of community. This entire process is detailed in John Horne Burns's *The Gallery*. The *Gallery* is a series of nine "Portrait" stories separated by "Promenade" sections. The stories are self-contained units with no overlapping of characters or events. The Promenades are brief first person interludes held together by the common narrator, an American soldier in Headquarters Division, and the geographical progression through North Africa to Naples, Italy. Structural unity thus seems quite loose. But there is an artistic unity that holds the material together on a much deeper level. There is a progression, evident in both Portraits and Promenades, through alienation and suffering into self-knowledge. The movement is away from America and the American way of life that is built upon a denial of life and that produces alienation, and toward Naples and the Italian way of life that is built upon affirmation and a sense of community. The Portraits establish the two poles by illustrating the American alienation and the Italian sense of community. The Promenades show the movement of the narrator from one pole to the other.

The keynote of American life, as Burns describes it, is denial. The very spirit of life itself is denied by the crass materialism and artificiality of American values. Louella, in the "Second Portrait," is an American Red Cross
volunteer. She is in Naples to "do her bit" for the "boys in uniform." But the portrait makes it clear that her bit is not being done for the boys at all but for her own unsatisfied ego. She is artificial, intolerant, prudish, and unhappy. She handles life only after drawing on sterile rubber gloves, for life is dirty and soils the hands and grimes the fingernails. She appears the unselfish, sincere, worldly "mother," but her appearance is only gilt veneer hiding the emptiness and the waste of her existence.

Chaplain Bascom is another American of the same ilk. He is a Southern Baptist who loves food of any kind, good or bad, preaches hellfire and damnation for sinners, believes in what he calls "justice," and freely admits to certain prejudices. He admires American business practice, rages against wine and sex, and only half jokingly needles his Catholic companion, Father Donovan, about Catholicism. Father Donovan enjoys wine, preaches mercy, has compassion for lovers and seeks to convert his Baptist friend to Catholicism. Indeed, Bascom begins to lean toward conversion, for he does drink a glass of wine and admit to failings of the flesh. But a street accident claims both of the chaplains before the conversion can be completed. Bascom's body dies, but in fact his spirit has never lived. And this, the author seems to be saying, is a condition common to most Americans.

The denial of life, The Gallery suggests, is only one
step away from the denial of empathy for one's fellows. If the individual is himself dead, he cannot feel the compas­sion that life demands. One of the most memorable of the Portraits is that of Hal, a "beautiful" American youth who is intuitively loved by everyone who meets him. He can walk into a bar, stand with drink in hand, and know that a stranger will soon be exposing his soul's misery to him. Hal listens, but does nothing and feels nothing other than boredom. In the Army Hal is a kind of barracks confessor for officers and enlisted men alike. But he is powerless to provide the empathy that they seek, for he is empty himself. He is even estranged from his parents and is uneasy just being in their presence. The abundant misery of war and Army life gradually wears upon him. He turns quiet, with­drawing from all contacts that he can avoid. He comes to believe: "what he'd been feeling dimly for twenty-nine years—that to human life and striving there's no point whatever. That we are all of us bugs writhing under the eye of God, begging to be squashed. That as evidence of our mortality all we leave behind us is the green whey of a fly that is swatted to death." In Naples Hal sees that things are different; here there is a constant search for understanding and community. But he also sees that the gentle die in war and that the crass and the brutal survive.

He comes to understand that his exterior draws men to him for comfort, but he never can face the emptiness of his own soul. The Portrait ends with Hal in Section Eight of the Army Hospital, a complete paranoid who claims to be Jesus Christ, Savior of Mankind.

So that the point will not be missed, Burns draws another portrait, this time of Captain Motes who, unlike Hal, does not even have that spark of understanding that will permit him to see that he is lifeless. His Army duty is, appropriately, chief censor for the personal mail of all Army personnel in his area. He is a man who stands outside of life, who peeps at it through letters, and who razor-blades what he does not like or what he fears. His portrait is Burns' bitterest, for Motes is made a complete phony, a deliberately self-alienated man who is without a soul and who is inefficient, a tool for more ambitious men, but who nevertheless is repeatedly rewarded by the Army for his "service."

Without life, without empathy, there can be no love. American life, Burns suggests, is not only empty and void of empathy, it is also a denial or a perversion of love. In his "Fifth Portrait" Burns describes an Italian bar, run by Momma, an Italian woman who comes to love her clientele. The clientele is American, English and Australian homosexuals. They discuss their love affairs, their fights, the sterility of love in America, the false distinction
between public sin such as government corruption and war profiteering that hurts everybody but which is condoned and private sin such as homosexuality that hurts no one and is severely punished. They attack each other viciously with words, proposition each other out of petty jealousies. As the Portrait progresses it becomes clear that their supercilious, spiteful conversation is only a reflection of their sterile loveless lives.

Another Portrait, "Queen Penicillin," illustrates the American denial of love from a different angle. An unnamed soldier reports to the hospital for treatment for syphilis contracted from an Italian prostitute, Marisa. The soldier has loved Marisa. She has taught him to love with abandon, keeping nothing of himself in reserve against the time when love might end. But the shame of disease works at him, and as he undergoes the series of sixty penicillin shots he is finally forced to deny his love. The significance of the Portrait lies in the soldier's attitude and in the attitudes expressed by the men in the ward and the doctors and orderlies in charge of them. For the men love is lust that is vented upon the conquered body of a woman devoid of personality. It is an animal satisfaction that they must have even if it finally destroys them. They will accept the pain of sixty shots and leave cured, only to return with another "dose" until the cure is no longer effective. The doctors and orderlies sneer at such animalism, and warn the men to
stay away from "love," for it "gets into the blood" as a kind of natural depravity. The Sergeant in charge of the shots takes a particular liking for the unnamed soldier and encourages him to stay away from "slimy" love. There is another love, he intimates, that is not syphilitic; and he entices the soldier into a "dinner date" with him by secretly passing on to the soldier a vial of penicillin that the soldier demands. After his release the soldier takes the vial and hurls it against the wall where he met Marisa and where her ghost still lingers. The act releases him from the ties of love. He can not bear the pain and the threat of death that love brings him. He chooses the dinner date with the Sergeant. The Portrait thus becomes a metaphor for the denial of love; the price of love is high for it is only achieved through suffering and it makes the lover acutely aware of his own mortality. The price is too high for the shrewd, practical cost-conscious American.

Burns places Italian life at the opposite pole from American life. He makes its keynote affirmation upon which the Italian sense of community is built. Suffering, which characterizes Italian life in The Gallery, is really an affirmation of life, for the man who is not alive can not suffer. And over and over again Burns makes it clear that the Italian has suffered. His most extended statement of such suffering comes in the Portrait of Giulia. Giulia is a formal, proper girl of Naples who struggles to maintain
herself and her family in the American occupied city. German occupation did little to disturb her family's style of living. But with the American "liberation" there is a total breakdown of the economy. Her father can no longer support his family, although he is still performing the same work. Her mother breaks down and can not care for the home as she did previously. Her younger brother, of whom Giulia is very proud and fond, turns to the streets, to stealing and the black market, to help the family. Giulia finds a respectable job with the American Officers' Mess but she is poorly paid. It is because of her job that she meets her Captain, an ugly but unusually understanding American combat soldier on convalescence. He courts her formally, in her own language and observing her family's traditions. Before the marriage he is ordered back to the front. He asks for the consummation of their love, arguing that in war-time love is an affirmative expression of human value. Giulia gently refuses, even though she intuitively knows that he will never return and she will never love again; her traditions are too strong. In one way, Giulia's Portrait is confusing. Burns has established love (and he generally equates love with sex) as an affirmative value in the Italian way of life. But here he has the otherwise admirable Giulia deny her Captain, one of the few admirable and gentle Americans in The Gallery. Perhaps Burns is separating spiritual love and sex; certainly Giulia loves her Captain.
and he loves her. Perhaps he is attacking tradition, even Italian tradition, when it denies the fulfillment of love. At any rate, the important thing at this point is that Giulia has undergone a lifetime of suffering. Surely Burns' point is that suffering can only come to those who, like Giulia, are alive to life, who wrestle with it and take joy from their battle. The dead do not suffer.

Italian life is also characterized by empathy. The Italian has a capacity to feel the emotions of others. Because he has suffered so much, he is not a stranger to strong emotion. He even takes pride in his ability to empathize. Such is the case with Momma, the woman "host" of the homosexual bar. Momma survives by caring for others. She has had one child but it died early. She can have no more. Her husband no longer desires her love--the War has taken all passion from him. So Momma showers her love on her clientele for the three hours that her bar is permitted to remain open. She knows the pangs of rejection, the emptiness of unreturned love, the loss of natural love, and therefore she is highly qualified to empathize with the guilt and grief that her customers bring with them to her bar. Her entire day is only three hours long, and her life is made up of three hour days.

In The Gallery suffering, which produces empathy, results in love. Love is the most valued characteristic of the Italian way of life as Burns describes it. Such love is
illustrated in the final Portrait, that of Moe, a combat soldier on convalescence leave in Naples. Moe is not an Italian but he has learned their way of life. He is a peaceful man. He has come to know himself. Combat and two woundings have stripped him of his illusions about life and himself, but his loss of illusions has not left him bitter. He knows that American life is lived in a vacuum and that the American man is sheltered from the realities of birth and death. But combat has ended the vacuum for Moe, has caused him to suffer, has brought him to face directly his own death, his own mortality. With the knowledge of his ephemerality he is able to see his life as a chance to live affirmatively, to do and to be and to enjoy if only briefly. He is able to love Maria Rocco, a prostitute, even if it is only for one night, in a borrowed jeep. He is able to express anxiety about his buddies, still fighting to the north. He is able to weep unashamedly over the hunger of Adalgisa, a street orphan he meets. He can rage at the brutality of his platoon medic who shoots a wounded and self-pitying German prisoner. In other words, Moe takes joy in living while he can, accepting both the good and the bad as a part of life that is to be savored for its own flavor. Both love and rage is to be enjoyed, for both are qualities of the human condition.

The two poles are thus drawn by the Portraits. As Burns sees it, there is the waste land of denial, so char-
acteristic of American life, on the one hand; on the other hand there is the fertility and vitality of affirmation, so characteristic of Italian life. The Promenades trace the movement of the narrator from the one to the other and thus indicate the way to "salvation."

The "First Promenade," set in Casablanca, reveals the beginning of the disillusionment that the narrator feels for the life of denial he has lived in America. He observes that during the trip across the Atlantic with his countrymen in the hold of a troop ship, and then after seeing something of the "cancer of the world outside the United States," he died as an American. His sense of alienation from America, from life in a vacuum, has thus begun; and with it begins the suffering, for he also notes that he "first knew loneliness in Casablanca, the loneliness that engenders quietism" (Gallery, p. 24). The "Second Promenade" is set in Fedhala. The War has moved on and only headquarters and the wounded remain behind. American life in Fedhala has lost its veneer; it is a long riotous party with the men submerged in drunken revelry and lust. Seduction of the bodies and souls of the local French and the native Arabs is their amusing pastime. In such a depraved atmosphere the narrator discovers "the European idea of being sympathetic, an idea which doesn't exist in the American language" (Gallery, p. 50). He does not as yet understand the idea, but he does begin to muse about it, even to explore its operation.
During the "Third Promenade," while the narrator is briefly hospitalized, he sees and learns something about the real suffering of physical pain and mental anguish. He is still the observer, still alienated from his fellows, but he is learning. When he leaves the hospital, he is so shaken by the suffering he has seen that he goes to a favorite military bar to drink himself into forgetfulness. Algiers is the setting for the fourth and fifth promenades. These two interludes mark the lowest point of the narrator's despair. In the "Fourth Promenade" the narrator describes the empty gaiety of a first-class brothel and the purposeful drinking and surly solitude of those soldiers who, no longer tempted by the girls, seek to drown their despair. The "Fifth Promenade" is pivotal, for it records what the narrator calls the annihilation of his self, and it is followed by the stirrings of hope. The narrator, having learned something of the American's spiritual bankruptcy, having been alienated by what he has learned and having suffered the loneliness of alienation, now begins to experience a new kind of suffering. The suffering of alienation can be destructive; promenades four and five witness this. But suffering can also produce empathy and that is what the narrator begins to experience in the "Fifth Promenade." His empathy is built upon a sense of the unity of all mankind and the commonality of human experience, upon his discovery that "everyone was really quite like himself." Thus the
narrator is emotionally torn by the Arab children watching steadily the chocolate bar in his hand, or by the young French girl who is forced to live by selling herself. He has what Burns describes as "the disease of empathy," and he finds that he feels "like crying all the time." His suffering has now become constructive.

The following promenade is set in Naples, the novel's symbol of life and affirmation. The narrator finds Naples teeming with life, with children swarming through the streets, with girls openly peddling their services, with men and women eating, drinking, working, loafing, laughing, crying, watching or being watched.

The final two promenades, both set in Naples, attempt to explain how the suffering of empathy leads to love and how love is the only hope that the war-torn world has. The "Seventh Promenade" begins: "I remember that my heart finally broke in Naples. Not over a girl or a thing, but over an idea" (Gallery, p. 280). The idea is that America is not the hope of the world's future, that America's spiritual bankruptcy has made the conquerors little better than the Fascists had been before them. But the devastation that American occupation brings is countered by the "love of life and love" that characterizes the people of Naples. And love, which Burns generally illustrates as sex, proves the salvation of those who will let it perform its office. Thus the narrator concludes that "though my heart had broken from
one idea, it mended again when I saw how good most human beings are if they have enough to eat and are free from imminent annihilation" (Gallery, p. 285). The hope that "mended" his heart is, he explains, not hope in any collective salvation, but rather in individual conversion to love for human kind. One individual who learns to love another individual; that is the only hope that the world has.

The "Eighth Promenade" summarizes and loosely codefies what the narrator has learned and expressed before. If the world is to survive it must learn, from Italy, that man is "tears" and "art" and "love": the tears of empathy that involve men with men; the art that searches and reveals the depths of man's soul; the love that voids alienation, that heals by affirming both life's joys and miseries and that leads to a sense of community. Burns, almost against his will it seems, has been brought to assert that "man is more than a physical being" (Gallery, p. 336). He may have some of his spokesmen in The Gallery believe that life is to be lived fully and affirmatively because life is all that man has, that once it is gone all is gone; but when he asserts that "man is more than a physical being" he suggests far more. The Gallery affirms the mystery of man, that he is more than war materiel, more than the sum total of his drives, more than an instinct for survival. He is also tears and art; he can be self-seeking but he can also be sacrificial; he can create but to no good end unless he has
first sounded his own spiritual depths. To know himself is to love and to acknowledge his need for love.

To this view of man the war novels of sensibility subscribe. To the question "what is man?" they answer: man is not a machine to be manipulated, not materiel to be commandeered. He is a spiritual being, and, as Yossarian so bluntly puts it, when his spirit is gone he is little more than garbage. His actions must therefore reflect his spiritual nature. Therefore, to the question "how should man act?" the novelists under consideration reply: his ethic must be a spiritually oriented ethic. This has already been intimated in the above discussion of The Gallery. But since it is one of the two primary concerns of the novelists of sensibility it deserves more direct comment.

Since man is more than merely physical, his actions should be more than merely expedient or pragmatic and his motives should be more than merely biological or self-seeking. If these novels say one thing emphatically it is that love is the principle from which all of man's actions should spring. When man discovers that he is more than "garbage," that he is unfulfilled when standing alone, he also discovers that love is the source of right action. Such is the case in Myrer's The Big War.

The Big War works out the ethic built upon love in two ways; it presents a character, Danny Kantaylis, whose actions are an illustration of such an ethic, and it follows another
character, Al Newcombe, through the process of learning such an ethic.

Danny Kantaylis's ethic is based upon love. The evidence of this is three-fold. There is first his own statement asserting the fact. When his young wife asks him what there is in the world to hold on to, he responds: "'Love between people: and the love of God. The feeling in the heart and soul. I mean it'" (Big War, p. 81). Later, when his view is being put to the test, Kantaylis concludes: "'Maybe it was better to care with all your heart than be so crazed with frustration and abuse you didn't care about anything, not even what you did with your own life'" (Big War, p. 176). Kantaylis acts according to his expressed views. After long and selfless combat in the South Pacific, the Army awards him the Medal of Honor and several lesser medals. He is offered the opportunity to spend the remainder of the War conducting War Bond drives in the United States and soaking up the praise and honor and attention that is his due. But Danny refuses and instead requests return to active duty in the South Pacific where he can help other soldiers fight the War. He tells no one of the War Bond drive offer. And he refuses to wear the medals because he does not consider himself a hero, only a man who did what he could to help his men. He refuses to make any profit, in praise or in coin, from the War, for he believes that war is wrong, that anything which destroys the spirit is wrong.
There is, second, the testimony of his men to support Kantaylis's ethic of love. Newcombe, in a letter to Kantaylis's young wife concerning her husband's death, attempts to formulate the ethic:

What I am groping toward saying is that his life had--has--meaning for us: he stands for something in a time gone foul with raging. For he never lost his compassion. He never lost his sense of humanity. He walked without faltering through a hell whose terrors he knew all too glaringly. . . . And more: he gave focus to our desperate concerns, made of us an arm of righteousness--yes, I mean it, of righteousness--and when we set free the people [war prisoners] on the hill. . . . it was as the sword of the spirit. Without him we are lost indeed--a race of wrangling, discordant, brutish pigmies. (Big War, p. 413)

Finally Kantaylis's ethic is revealed as it works itself out in his actions. He believes that it makes little difference how you die, but that "'it matters a hell of a lot more how you live'" (Big War, p. 78). How he lived is accurately summarized by Danny himself. As he lies mortally wounded, he reviews his life: "You tried to do well, do all that was asked of you and maybe at certain times a little bit more. Then finally you ran out of gas--and one man's meat was another's poison, one succumbed one way, another another--and went down, after hanging on as sturdily as you could. That was life: accept your responsibilities, try to harm as few people as possible, and hope for the best" (Big War, p. 379). Accepting responsibilities meant, for Danny, thinking of his fellows before thinking of himself. When, before their first battle, his men worry about getting
wounded, the veteran Kantaylis tells them that it isn't im-
portant. They are incredulous and demand "'What the hell's
more important?'" Danny's reply: "'Staying awake at night.
... Staying awake, not letting your buddies down. That's
really important, the most important thing in some ways'"
(Big War, pp. 225-26).

Danny's ethic, lived as fully as it is believed,
becomes the model for one of his men, Al Newcombe; Kantaylis
acts as priest and Newcombe as novitiate.

Newcombe is established, early in the novel, as an
unhappy, unfulfilled disillusioned young man. He is Ivy
League educated, is from a wealthy New England family, and
is socially connected. But he scorns his privileged back-
ground as irrelevant in a world struggling with depression
and tyranny. He reminds himself: "Ah, what a farce it all
was--what a delightfully ridiculous parody!--society and
family and officer candidate school and parental love and
the wondrous, tenacious doddering blindness of humankind! .
. . The house is burning.--Really?--Yes: the house is burn-
ing.--Oh: draw the curtain a little, will you?--Splendid.
No sugar. Now: did you say the house--?" (Big War, p. 51).

He is sensitive by nature and has aspirations toward being
a poet, but life has deadened his sensitivity and suppressed
his emotions until he is little more than a cynical envelope
holding the dried reminder of a soul. He sees no purpose to
life: "'I mean taking existence as a whole--that's trying
Currently to palm itself off as existence, anyway. The whole stupid game of blindman's buff. When Everybody's wearing a handkerchief over his eyes it begins to lose its purpose" (Big War, p. 104). Only chance dictates the future and therefore the present is totally without meaning. He admires such modern composers as Block and Hindemith and Bartok because they reflect"'the modern world coming apart at the seams. . . . like a dozen madmen let loose in one of those huge hotel kitchens, running wild among all the rows of pots and pans. It's really like the end of the world, in a way''' (Big War, p. 186).

Newcombe's sergeant during training is Danny Kantaylis, the battle-scarred veteran returned from the Pacific Theater to train replacements to take back with him into combat. Newcombe is instinctively drawn to Danny, even though he can not understand him. An ethic built upon love lies outside his experience. On leave before shipping out Newcombe meets Helen, beautiful but flawed by a cast in one eye. Like Kantaylis, Helen affirms life as good and she is eager to give, to love, so long as she can maintain her self-respect. Having come to terms with life, she can see (in spite of the cast) order and purpose. Newcombe may like the modern composers; Helen likes the classical because the moderns "'don't make an order the same way: a simple, ordered form. . . . With Mozart there's such a simple, sweet little melody. . . . There's such a feeling of purpose under it: as
though they knew something so absolutely they didn't have to shout about it, they could just let it happen'" (Big War, pp. 186-87). Newcombe is drawn immediately to Helen as he is to Kantaylis; with Helen the relationship quickly burgeons into love. Having been conditioned by Kantaylis, Newcombe is drawn into life by Helen. She soberly informs him that "'You don't respect people, you don't listen to them when they're talking, you don't even listen to what you're saying half the time. You don't feel for people enough'" (Big War, p. 185). When he makes love with Helen, he discovers that "He was freed of something—he was freed of indifference; the realization was like the most enchanting, unhoped-for miracle, a supernatural dispensation bestowed on him long after he had given up hope" (Big War, p. 186).

Having been awakened by love, Newcombe begins to tentatively extend love himself. He realizes that his relationship with Helen is not just another escapade with a Vassar girl, but that he really cares for her. He recognizes, as his troop ship hurries toward invasion, that his fellow soldiers were "somehow bound up with his emotions, indissolubly welded to his heart with bands of steel," and he can write to Helen that he feels "bound to them all, for better or worse, as though by a laying on of hands: something I was never capable of until that splendorous day and night I spent with you. You awoke this in me, darling, broke the harsh crust around my heart." He also learns to love and to
trust Kantaylis. Numbed by fear as he awaits the amphibious
landing and his first combat, Newcombe finds strength in
Kantaylis. "Watching him I steadied as if by magic; took a
deep breath and exhaled--took another . . . All at once it
was borne in on me incontrovertibly that all our fortunes
were bound up in his: as long as he stands we will triumph;
if he falls we will all perish" (Big War, p. 243). The
novitiate has accepted the values of the high priest.

Having accepted love, Newcombe begins to work out an
ethic built upon it. When his platoon is trapped behind
enemy lines, the Sergeant weakens and breaks and Kantaylis
(who was earlier broken in rank because he went AWOL to see
his wife) reluctantly takes over the responsibility. New­
combe sees himself as sharing in Kantaylis's leadership.
He reflects: "Each of you is a leader . . . It was a prayer,
a war cry--a still, small affirmation in the face of dis­
aster. Out of all the horror and ignorance and exhaustion,
whatever was to come, he had salvaged this much: this one
thing he could hold pure as an emerald in the palm of his
hand" (Big War, p. 347). Thus he understands and accepts
his own responsibility for his fellows. He vows that, this
war over, he will forever denounce the hatred that brings
war and will "care and care and care. With passion. Care
desperately, indefatigably for our lives, our souls, our
individual dignity. For there will be no victory: the only
triumph is within--over our own murderous folly, our criminal
misprisons" (Big War, p. 366). He begins caring immediately. The squad, still caught behind enemy lines, stumbles upon a Japanese prison camp. The imprisoned natives are sick and starved and many are dying. He sees a small boy and "put his hand on the boy's head, looked into the deep-set trusting eyes. This is what it is all about, he thought with sudden, prodigious simplicity; his eyelids had begun to smart. All of it—in this one dirty, wasted, fearful ecstatic face of a half-naked child. He does not know me nor I him, ... but he is a part of me all the same. ... he needs my succor—and it is just as much my need to succor him" (Big War, p. 351). He looks about him and sees Kantaylis and another friend, Jay O'Neill, compassionately assisting the prisoners. He knows that this is "A fine moment: a moment of great affirmation and nothing can ever take this away from us: for this is what we can be. Ah—for we are all lost and all found, all fallen and all saved ... and there is no security in this world—none at all in heaps of weapons and war gear or splendid isolation or boundless wealth or knowledge—no security except what is in love and selfless succor and generosity of spirit" (Big War, pp. 352-53).

Newcombe has learned the lesson of love well, and has demonstrated his conversion to the ethic of love by his actions. But to assume from all of this evidence that The Big War is a paean of affirmation would do injustice to the
Kantaylis may stand as a symbol of love, but he is wounded, and wounded again, and finally killed. He leaves behind him a mother-in-law, his precise opposite, who denies life and love with her every breath and action. And it is with her, now that Danny is gone, that his young wife must contend. Moreover, Newcombe may be converted to an ethic of love, but Newcombe is gradually worn down and finally killed. He leaves behind him Helthal and Capistron, two members of his platoon and the author's representatives of brutality and inhumanity. Helthal is a cruel, morose, sullen man who takes pleasure in honeing his knife to a razor edge and who shoots, without compunction, unarmed prisoners. Capistron is the "blustering convex side of Helthal's dulled, morose concavity." There is little doubt about their significance to the novel for just before Newcombe is killed Myrer has him see "Capistron and Helthal walking stride for stride, straining forward, guns at their hips, bulging, bristling with grenades and cartridges and knives, their faces set in the same dulled, deadly intent: Ares' children . . . The war god. . . . The gentle and the noble died in war: the brutish survived and were increased" (Big War, pp. 444-45). What makes the future look worse is Capistron's promotion to sergeant; and Helthal is next in line for the position. The final page of the novel indicates that Capistron is gone, but Helthal remains, deadly and unconscionable. O'Neill, a second convert to Kantaylis's ethic, also remains; but more
combat looms ahead of him, he must contend with Helthal as his superior, and Helthal does not like him.

The hope that Myrer offers is real, but it is tenuous and is demonstrable only on the individual level. For as Newcombe knew as he watched Kantaylis with the released prisoners: "there will be no victory: the only triumph is within--over our own murderous folly, our criminal misprisons."

Victory in the war novel of sensibility may be tenuous and limited to the individual, but its impetus is toward a sense of community. Since all men are immersed in that common denominator of all human life, suffering; and since the correct response to this fact is empathetic and responsible action; then it follows that such correct action will lead to community. Almost all of the novels in this category show the soldier bound to his fellows by a common fear, a common goal, common hardships and desires. One of the novels, John Hersey's A Bell for Adano, develops the idea as its theme.

A Bell for Adano is set in the Italian village of Adano. The Allied invasion has just passed hours before as Major Joppolo, the novel's protagonist, enters the village to set up his headquarters. Joppolo's assignment is to establish a military government so that life in the village may proceed. The opening pages of the novel make it clear that Joppolo is an affirmer of life in the pattern of Burns's Italians and Myrer's Kantaylis, for he acknowledges
the two immediate needs of the depressed Italians: food for
the body and a replacement for their lost bell for their
spirits. Their bell was confiscated by the Fascist govern­
ment to be melted and recast as gun barrels. They explain
that the bell was the spirit of Adano, and Joppolo agrees
that a new bell is a priority concern.

As Joppolo sets up his new government, he follows the
ethic of love. He understands the people of Adono, and he
responds with humane action to their just requests. For
example, he countermands General Marvin's order to keep all
carts out of Adano because the General's order was given
out of personal spite and was cutting off the life of the
town. As Joppolo comes to know the Italians with whom he
is living, he comes to love them. His love is focused upon
Tina, the daughter of Tomasino, a fisherman. Their affection
for each other remains unspoken because of Joppolo's wife
in the United States, whom he loves very much also, and
because of Tina's betrothed, an Italian soldier who is
listed as an Allied prisoner. The scene that shows Tina
learning that her betrothed is dead reveals most clearly
Joppolo as a man of empathy and love.

Joppolo's ethic works itself out in his dealings with
the people of Adano. He demonstrates mercy by disregarding
the Fascist backgrounds of many people and by giving them
equal treatment. He only demands truth from them, and, for
that matter, from all others as well. When the former
Fascist Mayor, Nasta, comes back out of the hills where he has fled, the town cries for his blood; they know him as a murderer. But Joppolo's only punishment is to place him on probation. Joppolo opens the government offices to any who wish to be heard, and even takes the unprecedented step of going to the people when they refuse to come to him. Any one in the town can complain without fear of retaliation, and both the American MP's and the Italian Carabinieri are ordered to act with respect for the individual.

As time proceeds, a few of the people learn the lessons that Joppolo is so anxious to teach. The simple-minded cartman, Gaetano, learns it; even though General Marvin smashes his cart and shoots his mule for no reason at all, Gaetano discovers in the new Adano under Joppolo that there is more of "the laughing and the holding of hands" than at any time since his childhood. The children also seem to have learned it, almost instinctively, for they chase after GI candy, the children of the rich hand in hand with the children of the poor. And when one of them is accidentally killed by an American truck because in their greed they crowded him into the street, the children organize themselves so that the candy will be shared equally among them. Some of the new Italian officials express their affection for Major Joppolo in a party in his honor and by hanging a portrait of him with their other national and village heroes. But it is the bell that best illustrates the growing sense of community in Adano.
The bell that Joppolo "liberates" from the military is a symbol. Joppolo goes to the Navy in his search for a bell and the Navy locates a ship's bell. It is from a United States destroyer, the U.S.S. Corelli, named after an Italian American who was a destroyer captain during the First World War. Corelli had effected a dangerous rescue of the men on a sinking Italian freighter and thus became a hero of both the Italian and the American people. On the bell is the inscription America ed Italia. Clearly the significance of the history of the bell, as well as what the bell represents for Adano, is the spirit of community and human unity. Adano's bell represents the final effect of the personal ethic of love—the sense of community that is the denial of war and the only hope for man's future.

Once again, however, the novelist closes his novel with victory dampened by denial. General Marvin, through a series of semi-accidental events, learns that Joppolo countermanded his order to keep all carts out of Adano. Marvin, the ego-centric opposite of Joppolo, orders Joppolo out of Adano and to a make-work position in North Africa. The novel ends with Joppolo gone, with General Marvin's authority clearly ascendant, and the accomplishment in Adano at least threatened if not destroyed.

All of the novels in this final category, each of them in search of man's identity and his proper action, agree on several most important points. They agree that man is more than physical; he is spirit. They agree that evil is a
built-in fact of life, either in man himself or in his social environment. They agree that to live is to suffer. They agree that man's happiness, his completeness, indeed his survival, depends upon his acting out an ethic based upon love, an ethic that will restore a bloody world to peace. Finally, they agree that the prospects of such action are dim, for the spirit-denying, self-seeking inhumane forces that produce and perpetuate war are entrenched and overwhelmingly powerful; only a few scattered individuals find it possible to act out of love, and these are most often destroyed or made ineffectual by the forces of denial. They agree that man was the immediate loser in World War II; any victory won was won on a very limited scale by a few individuals. And if man can not learn from the victory of the few, he will be the ultimate and final loser as well. Thus this group of novelists is marked by what Eisinger calls "A determination to face the religious or philosophical issues brought to the surface by war. . . . [They] have been turning in upon themselves in the Kierkegaardian sense, confronting the problems of personal identity and of man's relationship to God. Or they have been probing the mysteries of man's inner resources in an effort to discover the springs of personal growth and individual and moral survival in periods of crisis."14

CONCLUSION

The World War II novelist wrote about what he knew best. On the most superficial level his subject is war. On a deeper level his subject is America. But on the most profound level he is writing about men--man's nature and man's future. The novelist knew of war, not just because all Americans knew war in the early Forties, but because he had been a soldier himself. He knew of America, not just because he was an American, but because he was educated in a decade when America was ailing and under everyone's public microscope. He knew of man, not just because three decades of world stress had revealed so much of man, but because he had looked inward when he himself was under the stress of war.

When he added up what he had learned and considered its implications for the future, the novelist could find little cause for hope. It was true that America had won the War and the novelists are in agreement that Fascism had to be stopped; but the cost of stopping Fascism was stunningly high and had been accomplished by an Army that at times seemed uncomfortably similar to the enemy. It was true that depression had been replaced by economic boom; but food on the table could not offset the empty chair at meal
time. It was also true that a divided America had been unified by a common enemy; but American unity came at the expense of individual freedom. And it was true that America had emerged from the War the most powerful nation in the world; but American power was immediately faced with political problems that mitigated its effective use. If the costs of the War were not cause enough for despair, there were the lessons of World War I to be remembered. The war to end wars had been followed twenty-two years later by a far more destructive war. The economic boom after the first war collapsed in depression. When the common enemy was overcome in 1918, national unity proved to be no unity at all. And there was one more cause for despair, worse, perhaps, than any other factor; Hiroshima and Nagasaki made it clear that a third world war might well mean the end of human history.

When they came to write their novels, the World War II novelists could hardly have been realistic and optimistic at the same time. Some found the facts of man's existence so bleak and the well established pattern of despair so akin to their own sense of defeat that their realism hardened into nihilism. A few refused to accept reality as cause for despair and reaffirmed with empty rhetoric what most rejected as no longer relevant or valid. Others accepted the hard realities of life as combat but still sought within man's dark soul for something of value. The first two responses
offer no acceptable future at all. The final response does offer the tentative possibility of a future built upon the frail hope of selfless human love; but love is shown as so tenuous, and so seldom discovered, and its opposition is shown as possessing such overwhelming power, that such love is a painful hope to hold. It can only be concluded that the vision of the World War II novelist offers little cause for comfort and much cause for despair.

Such a gloomy forecast has not proven highly inaccurate. The twenty-five years following World War II have brought America the sober facts of Cold War and "brinkmanship" diplomacy, the vicious attacks and bitter recriminations of the Joseph McCarthy hearings, the Korean "police action" with its high rate of defection to the enemy and its shockingly low Army morale, racial conflicts that have left men dead and cities burning, and repeated international crises that threaten to erupt into the next world war. Finally, Americans have suffered the Viet Nam war that has seriously divided the nation and so reduced morale that young men flee their country to escape military duty or, once drafted, resort to drugs for release from a reality that is too painful to bear. Such facts as these surely do not contradict what the World War II novelist saw in the American victory in 1945—that victory on the battlefield was really defeat for the soul.
LIST OF WORKS CITED
LIST OF WORKS CITED

GENERAL


Fiedler, Leslie A. "Irwin Shaw: Adultery, the Last Politics." *Commentary*, 22 (1957), 71-74.

__________ . "James Jones' Dead-End Young Werther." *Commentary*, 12 (1952), 252-55.


____________. *For Whom the Bell Tolls*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1940.


____________. *The Sun Also Rises*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1926.


Light, James F. "The Religion of Death in *A Farewell to Arms*." *Modern Fiction Studies*, 7 (Summer, 1961), 155-73.


WORLD WAR II NOVELS


VITA

Ira Eugene Hindman, Jr. was born in Butler, Pennsylvania, on February 17, 1931. His primary and secondary school education came in the public schools of Pennsylvania and Florida. He attended St. Petersburg Junior College and received his B.A. degree from Roberts Wesleyan College. After receiving the B.D. degree from Asbury Theological Seminary, he served as pastor of the Sanford, Florida, Free Methodist Church. He taught three years in the public schools of Florida. Stetson University awarded him the M.A. degree in English in 1965. In 1972 he completed the requirements for the Ph.D. in English at Louisiana State University. He is now at Mansfield State College, Mansfield, Pennsylvania, where he has been an Assistant and then Associate Professor since 1967.
Candidate: Ira Eugene Hindman, Jr.

Major Field: English

Title of Thesis: The Paradox of Victory: The American Soldier in the Novel of World War II

Approved:

[Signature]
Major Professor and Chairman

[Signature]
Dean of the Graduate School

EXAMINING COMMITTEE:

[Signature]

[Signature]

[Signature]

Date of Examination:

May 8, 1972