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A Critical Study of World War II Novels in American Literature

Wallace L. Woodcock

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A CRITICAL STUDY
OF WORLD WAR II NOVELS
IN AMERICAN LITERATURE

By
WALLACE L. WOODCOCK
B. A., University of Maine, 1949

A THESIS
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ABSTRACT OF THESIS

A CRITICAL STUDY OF WORLD WAR II NOVELS IN AMERICAN LITERATURE

By WALLACE L. WOODCOCK

In this thesis the writer has attempted to analyze the most representative novels of World War II with regard to content matter, styles, attitudes, values, language, and direction. In this survey forty-four novels concerning themes of the Second World War were studied. These novels represent the work of twenty-nine different writers.

The thesis is divided into six chapters, namely, Chapter I, Techniques and Styles; Chapter II, Subject Matter; Chapter III, Attitudes and Values; Chapter IV, Language; Chapter V, Humor; Chapter VI, Total Appraisal.

The authors of the various novels included in the thesis are as follows: Ludwig Bemelmans, Vance Bourjaily, Kay Boyle, Harry P. Brown, Pearl S. Buck, John Horne Burns, Ned Calmer, James G. Cozzens, William W. Haines, Marion Hargrove, Alfred Hayes, Basil Heatter, Thomas Heggen, Ernest Hemingway, John Hersey, Stefan Heym, James Jones, Norman Mailer, John P. Marquand, James A. Michener, Merle Miller, Irwin Shaw, Upton Sinclair, William G. Smith, John Steinbeck, Gore Vidal, Frederic Wakeman, Ira Wolfert, and Herman Wouk. In this selection of authors the writer of the thesis has been guided by two main considerations. First, he has attempted to select books that, taken as a whole, cover all phases of the war from the view-
ABSTRACT OF THESIS (Continued).

points of both the combatants and the civilians. Second, he has striven to include in the thesis authors representative of the newer group of writers to emerge from the war as well as the group of older, established writers.
To

Marie and Nora
Eight years have now elapsed since the end of hostilities in World War II. A vast bulk of literature has been produced already in relation to that war, and it seems likely that future years will see the continuance of literature based on themes of that war. I do think, however, that the output of fiction thus far has been sufficient for the purpose of drawing some definite conclusions about the trends in the novel with regard to content and technique.

I have attempted in this thesis to present the reader with a fair appraisal of the novels that have been written in America between the years 1939 and 1953 concerning World War II. It goes without saying that I make no pretense at having read and digested the contents of every novel that is concerned with a World War II theme; however, I do believe that I have studied those of the most importance. Numerous critics have acclaimed the virtues of the many novels included in this thesis, but it is not within the province of this writer to predict which of these efforts are to survive as acknowledged masterpieces in the eyes of future generations. Indeed, when one recalls that several of the best novels concerning World War I made a relatively tardy appearance, he realizes that perhaps the greatest novel concerning the past war remains to be writ-
I wish to express my deep gratitude to Dr. Milford Wience of the English Department at the University of Maine for his encouragement and guidance in the writing of this thesis. I also wish to extend my appreciation to those members of the library staffs at the University of Maine, the Bangor Public Library, and the Fort Fairfield Public Library for their assistance in providing me with the necessary research material without which this endeavour would have been impossible.
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CHAPTER I

Techniques and Styles

In this study of the World War II novels the writer has endeavored to select the books under consideration with a view toward incorporating a representative selection of the works of many of the older established writers as well as many novels of the younger crop of writers to emerge from the war. In this chapter of my thesis it will be seen in the discussion of the techniques and styles employed by the various authors of both groups that practically every literary technique of the past has been used in some measure by the several writers. It will be seen further that there has been a casting aside of the fetters and restraints imposed upon writers by the staid Victorian traditions, and the new writers especially have delved into every conceivable artistic form in search of the best medium through which to convey accurately and realistically the experiences which the GI endured in the course of his struggles on the battlefields of Europe and Asia. A careful analysis of these books, however, reveals that, for the most part, three distinct approaches to the writing of these novels are in evidence. For the purpose of clarity and simplification, therefore, the novels will be dealt with in a chronological order as they fall within these separate divisions.
The Collective Novel

Perhaps because of the fact that every hero of the World War II novels is necessarily a small cog in the gigantic scheme of operations and his life is inextricably interwoven with those of thousands of others, each one of whom contributes directly or indirectly to his development, one of the most successful approaches to the treatment of the World War II theme has been that of the "collective" novel. The term collective in this thesis is applied to those novels which, instead of concentrating on the development of a single character, deal instead with a whole group of characters. These characters are treated more or less equally with the purpose of presenting a panoramic scope of an entire group or situation. This is not a new device, of course, as any reader familiar with the writings of John Dos Passos, to mention only one author who has previously used this method, will recognize. The term admits of difficulties because of the variety of use to which it easily lends itself. There are ten books, however, which should be included in this category. The first among them which successfully adapts itself to the collective novel technique is a factual account of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima, John Hersey's *Hiroshima* (1946). Although this book is not one of fiction, it deserves mention here, because it helped to establish a pattern for
the collective novels which were to follow. This book consists of the recounting of the experiences endured by six people who are present on the morning that the atomic bomb is dropped on Hiroshima. In the unfolding of the theme each character involved traces his movements on the fatal day and proceeds to toll of his actions both during and after the catastrophe. Thus, the book actually is a series of sketches tied together by a single incident; and that incident becomes more vivid and realistic as a result of the technique used. Certainly it is doubtful if Hersey could have achieved a comparable success in capturing the drama and scope of the disaster with the use of any other medium for the telling of his story. All of the heartache and horror of war at its worst is recounted in this story with a simplicity of style and absolute disregard of fancy rhetoric that tends to emphasize the utter tragedy of the situation.

In 1947 two of the better novels of the war made their appearance and both of them used a collective technique which is highly reminiscent of the vein in which Hersey writes. These books are The Gallery, by John Horne Burns, and Tales of the South Pacific, by James A. Michener. The Gallery, because of its frankness and utter disregard for the sensibilities of the more squeamish readers, has become one of the most controversial stories to emerge from the war. Burns, unlike Hersey, carries the technique of
the collective novel one step further, because he writes
of a collection of characters whose lives and army careers
have no relation to one another. Their one point in com-
mon consists of the fact that at one time or another each
one of them spends some time on the famous, or infamous,
Galleria Umberto, a street in the city of Naples. The
author's selection of characters in this story ranges from
a nondescript corporal, permanently stationed in Naples,
to a major, whose chief function is that of censor of GI
mail in the North African campaign. Hence, with such a
diversified group of characters, bearing absolutely no
relation to one another, Burns introduces the method of
joining the separate experiences of these characters to-
gether by means of chapters called "promenades" in which
the corporal reflects on the values of life in a philosoph-
ical vein that would astound any corporal in real life.
This story, then, has no chief character and no main epi-
sode, unless one is willing to accept the personification
of the Galleria Umberto itself as the central character.
Burns does succeed admirably through using the collective
novel technique in creating an accurate, if disheartening,
picture of the strange intermingling of the varied nation-
alities that the flux of the war has brought together in
a war-torn city. A further appraisal of this book will be
made in the chapter dealing with sex.

It is questionable whether Kichener's story, Tales of
the South Pacific (1947), should be called a collective novel, an episodic novel, or any other kind of novel. Although his characters pop up frequently in various of the episodes dealt with throughout the book, they have little or no relation to one another. The story, in fact, comes perilously close to being a series of short stories describing the experiences of several GI's and natives in the South Pacific during the war. Like Burns' novel, Tales of the South Pacific includes a wide range of characters of different ranks and backgrounds, but, unlike the former novel, it is a more continuous story in that the author sustains a thread of continuity throughout the book, obviating the necessity of tying the tales together by means of any such device as the "promenades." Richner's technique succeeds in accomplishing his purpose; that is, it gives the reader a very accurate picture of the many hardships and difficulties as well as the pleasures encountered by the GI's in their travels throughout the South Pacific.

In 1948 there appeared two more novels of widely differing backgrounds which utilized the technique of the collective novel, namely, Norman Mailer's The Naked and the Dead and Stefan Heym's The Crusaders. There are many similarities existing between these two novels, including the attempt by both authors to describe the function of military command from top echelon to private in a military
operation that is directed toward a common goal. The Naked and the Dead has far outshaded the latter book in popularity, however, and, more than any other book to emerge from the war, it has established a new pattern for writing in a naturalistic vein. It is safe to say that The Naked and the Dead, because of its flagrant use of obscenity and its presentation of very questionable morals as the accepted mode of life in America, has caused a greater storm of criticism and protest among conservative readers than any other book with the possible exception of James Jones's novel, From Here to Eternity. In writing this book, Nailer makes skillful use of the collective novel technique and carries the pattern already established by the previously mentioned authors one step further by concentrating heavily on the pre-induction lives of the characters in the development of their personalities. His scope is more ambitious, too, for he attempts to embrace completely the inner workings of the minds of the personnel, from General Cummings down to the lowliest private, Private Roth, in their fierce travail and struggle for preservation on the tiny island of Anopopei in the general advance toward Japan. Through his use of the collective technique Nailer's presentation of the characters and the development of the plot are flawless; and there is little doubt that his method of delving into the backgrounds of his characters adds much to the understanding of the read-
er of the results that are affected on each individual in the denouement. The real flaw concerning this book is not one of style but rather of values—a topic that I shall discuss in a later chapter.

The Crusaders (1948), by Stefan Heym, is a novel that owes much of its success to the collective technique. Like that of Mailer the author's scope is very wide, for he also attempts to describe the mental attitudes and values of the group of men in a chain of command ranging from a general down to a private. The books differ in many respects after the initial resemblance is observed, the chief difference being that Heym is less concerned with the backgrounds of his characters and concentrates more heavily on the situation confronting them. There is lacking, too, in this novel, the deep penetration into the minds of the various personalities involved that is so vividly portrayed in Mailer's The Naked and the Dead. But, while the writing in Heym's The Crusaders does lack the penetrating analysis of the characters involved that Mailer's book encompasses, it is, nevertheless, a competent book that makes good use of the collective technique in unfolding a plot that surpasses many of the war novels in sheer story interest. There is a wholesome, optimistic tone pervading the whole of this book, despite the presence of several unsavory characters, that is refreshing to read after the gloomy pessimism so frequently encountered in the reading
of war novels.

Another popular novel which incorporates much of the collective technique in its form appeared in the year 1948. This is *The Young Lions*, by Irwin Shaw. Although I have chosen to list this book with those of the collective variety, nevertheless, it should be remarked here that it is less distinguished in that respect than the preceding novels. Shaw, in this novel, traces the careers of three separate individuals; namely, Noah Ackerman, Michael Whittacre, and Christian Diestl. The three characters do not even have the same army in common, for, while the first two are in the American Army, the last mentioned serves in the German Army. Yet, through the skillful handling of plot and episodes, these three are brought together logically enough at the climax of the novel. Shaw's purpose in using a variation of the collective technique is to show the conflicting ideas and ideologies represented by three distinct types and nationalities while engaged in a war for survival. The conflicts depicted are by no means limited to those ordinarily shared by opposing sides in a war; and, in the use of the collective technique, Shaw succeeds in encompassing a larger theme than would otherwise be possible. More will be said of this particular novel in the chapter dealing with attitudes and values.

In 1949 there appeared another book of the collective novel variety, namely, *Guard of Honor*, by James Gould
Cozzens. While this book lacks the sharp division between individual characters that mark the early novels of the collective type, it does treat of the lives of many separate individuals who are engaged in a common enterprise. The intense concentration on several of the characters involved and the lack of any one outstanding personality in the novel place it in this category of the collective type. This novel concerns the difficulties that beset a general in wields together a large group of widely differing personalities and characters into a compact fighting unit. All of the action in the novel occurs in the United States at an Air Force training base in Florida. The attempt by General Beal to overcome the problems of racial prejudice and the merging of professional and non-professional airmen are admirably envisaged by Cozzens in this novel; and its well-constructed plot and convincing presentation of the minutiae of army red tape make this one of the best books to come out of the war.

In 1950 a novel of far fewer pretensions than The Naked and the Dead and The Crusaders, but bearing a strong resemblance to both in scope and technique, Ned Calmar's The Strange Land, made its appearance. Here, too, the author is concerned with the presentation of an all-encompassing picture of a division of men ranging from the general down to the man on the fighting line together in a single action during the war. Bailor's book describes
the operations of units of the army in an attack on an
island in the Pacific; Heym's book takes the reader with a
division throughout its stormy struggle through France and
Germany, culminating in the occupation; and Calmer's book
concerns itself with the events leading up to a single
offensive against the Siegfried Line. This is definitely
the poorest book of the three from the standpoint of con-
struction and character analysis, although it makes use of
the collective technique in much the same manner as the
other two. Like the other two novels under consideration,
The Naked and the Dead and The Crusaders, The Strange Land
gives the reader many startling facts concerning the be-
havior of the GI during the strain and the stress of com-
batt operations with their attenuating results; but Calmer
does not display in this novel either Mailer's genius for
organizing a heterogeneous conglomerate of personalities
into a workable unit or Heym's ability to interweave a
fascinating story into the texture of war background. Calm-
er's use of the collective technique is one of the marked
failures, in my opinion, to achieve the author's purpose
in presenting an over-all, comprehensive picture of what
really happens to all of the characters involved—the
causes and effects of their struggle internally and ex-
ternally. Perhaps the real reason for this lies in Calm-
er's inability to delve into the recesses of the mind—a
factor which seems to be so common an accompaniment of the
collective novel. His characters fall neatly into pre-arranged grooves at the beginning of the story and no deviation from those grooves to the slightest degree is evinced in the unfolding of the story. The stock characters of good and bad, with no ameliorating traits included, do not lend themselves easily to the technique of the collective novel.

The last major book included in this discussion of the collective novel, James Jones' *From Here to Eternity* (1951), perhaps ought better to be described as falling between the collective novel and the episodic type; but I have included it in this group because, in a sense, it is a variation of the collective novel technique. In this voluminous novel Jones does have a single character that is developed to a fuller extent than the others involved, but the story of Prewitt is so closely interspersed with that of Karen Holmes, and her husband, Captain Holmes, that the novel is rightly classified in this category. Actually *From Here to Eternity* is one of the many World War II novels that show heavy evidence of being the literary descendant of Dos Passos's novel concerning the first World War, *Three Soldiers*. Prewitt, a direct counterpart of Andrews, is gradually destroyed by army life because of his unwillingness to conform to regulations. His struggle to maintain a separate identity in the face of the severe regimentation that army life imposes is the main theme of
this novel, but unlike Dos Passos's hero, Andrews, Prewitt represents a lower type in the social order and the reader does not feel the same degree of sympathy for him as one does for Andrews. Throughout the story Milton Warden, the first sergeant of Prewitt's company, stands out in sharp contrast to Prewitt as a symbol of a man who can create an individualized existence for himself while surrounded by a mesh of red tape. His liaison with the captain's wife, Karen Holmes, illustrates his final contempt for authority and this liaison forms a major part of the novel. Many favorable and unfavorable criticisms have been tendered concerning Jones's novel, and, after a careful perusal of the book, it is difficult to form an exact opinion. There is little question, whatever one thinks of the moral reasoning involved, however, that the technique of writing used in From Here to Eternity is admirably successful in producing the effect that the author intends. Judged from the standpoint of technique alone, there can be little to complain of in this story. The language Jones employs will be dealt with in a later chapter.

Episodic Novels

Most of the novels concerning World War II are of the episodic variety; that is, novels that concentrate heavily on the actual experiences of the chief character involved. These novels, then, are for the most part written in the
traditional manner in which the writer attempts to develop a logical plot in an orderly manner. In these stories, too, the development of character and the changes in mental attitudes on the part of the characters depend chiefly on their experiences during the war. Of course, there is no sharp dividing line between the novels of the one type and novels of the other. Most of the novelists of the war utilize at one time or another the literary devices that have been perfected or introduced by previous writers. I am concerned here, however, with novels that lay less emphasis on the collective technique than in the telling of a straightforward narrative.

One of the first books of this type to be published is John Steinbeck's *The Moon Is Down* (1942). This is a very short novel in which he describes the heroic resistance via sabotage of a tiny village against the might of an invading army. Steinbeck does not actually say so, but the reader has no difficulty in identifying the invaded country as Norway and the invading army as German. After a series of episodes in which the morale of the occupation troops is seriously undermined, the mayor of the town, Mayor Order, is shot in an effort to bring the unruly populace to heel. The mayor goes to his death reciting Socrates' final message, and he dies with the inner assurance that the resistance will be continued after his death. Although this slim novel is of the propaganda variety and
shows little of Steinbeck's creative genius, it is a power-

tract nicely calculated to spread hatred of the Nazi war

machine.

In 1943 John Marquand wrote a novel, which, while it
does not include a theme on the actual fighting of the war,
nevertheless, is included in this thesis as one of the best
novels written on the attitudes held by people who live in
the imminent threat of that war. Marquand's hero in this
lengthy novel is a veteran of World War I; and the plot
consists of the changes in values that his philosophy is
subjected to at the prospect of his son's fighting in
another war to end all wars. He finally comes to the de-
cision that whatever his son does with his life will be
perfectly all right, because in view of the alarming world
situation there probably won't be much time for him to
live. But the main appeal of this novel lies in the skill-
ful way in which Marquand satirizes the many types of
people in our social order. Particularly good is his de-
piction of the war correspondent who enjoys such a large
audience that hangs on his every word for a summary of the
world situation. The other stock characters of Marquand's
novels, such as the misunderstood husband and the socially
ambitious wife, are interesting, too, for the reader who
has not already encountered their prototypes in other
novels by Marquand.

Pearl S. Buck's novel, The Promise (1943), deserves
mention in this selection of books for the picture that she gives the reader of the relations existing between the Chinese and their Anglo-American allies. In a series of episodes culminating in the futile attempt of a Chinese army to rescue a British force trapped in Burma, the author portrays the simplicity of Chinese character as opposed to the scheming Occidental mind. The Chinese, in fact, come off very much the better in this novel with regard to moral character and integrity; and one cannot help wondering if Miss Buck does not allow her personal emotions to interfere too much with her artistic treatment of a war theme.

Another book treating of a foreign country's problems during the war is Kay Boyle's novel, *Avalanche* (1944). In this novel the author offers the reading public her version of the heroic resistance that the French underground movement is giving the Nazi occupation troops. Everything centers around an episode involving the thwarting of a Nazi agent in his attempt to uncover the identity of a leader of the underground forces. The reader obtains the impression from reading this novel that Bastineau, the underground leader, is a combination of Superman, the Invisible Man and Pimpernel. In this novel the author shows practically no talent for any kind of character development, either good or bad, and only her undoubted knowledge of the French customs and environment make this story ac-
ceptable in any sense. The plot is farfetched and absurd, since the Gestapo agent, who is posing as a Swiss merchant, is in charge of sufficient data concerning Bastineau's guilt and presence to have ended the story in chapter two by the simple expedient of having a company of German troops rout the hostile forces. As a propaganda novel pointing up the ingenuity and bravery of the French forces fighting the Nazi occupation troops, this book fails to convince.

Harry Brown's novel, A Walk in the Sun (1944), is one of the best examples of the episodic novel, although it contains many traits in common with the collective type. In this story the author recounts the ordeal of war endured by a single squad of men in an incident which involves the capture of a small farmhouse six miles inland from an invasion point in Italy. During the course of the struggle, many of the men are killed in action, including the leader of the squad; but the assignment is successful when a corporal assumes command and leads the men to their objective. There is little intensified character development in this novel; but the contents reveal better than most of the war novels the actual conditions of warfare as practiced in modern times. The story is recounted in a simple manner with no flights into philosophical discourses that would detract from the almost austere rigidity of the narrative. Yet, despite the horrors depicted
and the failure of some of the men to cope successfully with the mental fatigue to which they are prey, this book gives a wholesome picture of the American GI in battle.

In 1944 Frederic Wakeman's novel, *Shore Leave*, helped to prepare the reading public for the crudities and obscenities that were to become the vogue in the later war novels. In this story the author concerns himself with a frank portrayal of the shore leave spent by several combat fliers in the navy. These men have just returned from a tour of duty in the Pacific and their time ashore is spent wholly in the consumption of liquor and the consumption of a bewildering number of love affairs. The story purports in this episode to reveal what really happens to men during warfare and the variety of releases necessary to them when the opportunity affords. Although there is no doubt that the actual episode recounted in the book is not without duplication in real life, the fierce cynicism and contempt for good manners with which Wakeman endows his characters, the utter vulgarity and crudeness of tone pervading the whole book, and the utter pessimism of the characters make one wonder if the book incorporates a representative group of service men. The attitudes and values described in this book will be discussed in a later chapter.

John Marquand's novel, *B. F.'s Daughter*, appeared in 1946. The chief difference between this novel and others
by the same author is the fact that the main character is a woman. Other than that all of the familiar ingredients of a Marquand novel are present. The opposing views held by different characters in the social order, the misunderstood husband, the usual stock characters of various types are all included in this novel. The novel does, however, present the reader with a good picture of life on the home front during the war. The description of the chaotic state of affairs that exists in the Capitol is particularly well developed. Marquand's adroit handling of the flashback method of presenting his characters also adds to the quality of this novel.

Basil Hestter's novel, *The Dim View* (1946), is another attempt on the part of a veteran to describe the personal struggle to achieve a real sense of values that a combat man undergoes during the war. This novel has little to recommend it and the author's style of presenting the episodes recounted consists of a very amateurish imitation of Hemingway's style of writing. The short, crisp dialogue and almost conscious slurring of details, plus the minute description of a very torrid and very physical love affair, forms the chief characteristics of this novel. The hero, who is a PT boat commander, finally discovers his true self, with the able assistance of a young Australian girl, and returns to combat duty. He is permitted the choice of doing this or returning home on honorable grounds after
having incurred a serious wound. This definitely is one of the most poorly written novels included in this thesis.

In 1946 Gore Vidal's short novel, The Williwaw, made many critics hail him as one of the most promising writers to emerge from the war. Vidal was still in his teens when he wrote this novel, his first one. Without commenting on his subsequent novels at this time, I find it difficult to justify the lavish praise of the critics on the basis of this book alone. The story is one that is told much better in other books of the war, notable among which are Er. Roberts and The Caine Mutiny. The Williwaw concerns itself with the tedium and loneliness of a group of men aboard a ship making runs between islands in the Aleutians. The men have nothing to look forward to in this story except drinking and patronizing prostitutes, and, after the author has stated that fact, the story goes nowhere in particular. The climax of the story occurs when one of the men kills another at the height of a storm in which the ship has become involved. So great has the apathy of the crew and the officers become at this stage of the story that nothing is done to bring the guilty person to justice, even though one of the officers has good reason to suspect him of the killing.

William Sister Haines' novel, Command Decision (1947), is one of the better novels in so far as it gives the reader a clear insight into the difficulties that beset our
leaders in the air command in rendering a creditable performance without antagonizing public opinion during the early stages of aerial bombardment in Europe. This novel, written with a great deal of compassion and humor, deals with the specific problem of General Dennis in his determination to carry out Operation Stitch at all costs. Operation Stitch consists of the bombing of three strategic German cities which are involved in the manufacture of essential airplane parts. After two of the cities have been bombed, the cost of American lives and planes has been tremendous; but Dennis, in the face of hostile congressmen and fellow generals, determines to carry out his plan. He is prevented from doing so by his removal from command; but he has the satisfaction of knowing that his immediate successor, won over by his persuasion, is going to order the final attack. This novel is excellent in that it presents the reader with a clear picture of the delicate position that the air force occupied in the early stages of the war. The drama and suspense which the author incorporates in this novel contributes much toward the making of a successful play from the book.

Vance Bourjaily, another of the newer crop of writers, entered the field of letters in 1947 with his novel, The And of My Life. This novel is little more than a tiresome repetition of the old theme of a young man being ruined in his failure to cope successfully with military
forces which threaten to destroy his individuality. Like many of the younger writers, Bourjaily's style and manner of presentation of characters bear a strong resemblance to Hemingway's technique; but, after the initial resemblance is observed, there is little to compare with regard to quality. Skinner Galt, the chief character of Bourjaily's novel, despite the author's attempts to make him a sympathetic character, emerges as one of the most dismal characters to come out of the war novels. Even the episodes recounted in this novel bear a marked similarity to those in one of the Hemingway novels, namely, A Farewell to Arms. Skinner Galt, like his predecessor in the Hemingway novel, also serves as a volunteer worker in a British ambulance unit in Syria and later in Italy. More will be said of this novel in later chapters.

A very interesting book to come out of the war, although not one of the best books, is Last of the Conquerors (1948) by William Gardner Smith. Mr. Smith, a Negro himself, attempts in this novel to show that the American Negro has to go to Germany in order to find social equality. The story tells about a detachment of Negro troops serving in the army of occupation in Germany during the period immediately following the war. This episode in the lives of the Negro troops proves to be a cross between the Bacchanalian rites of ancient Rome and the New Orleans Mardi Gras, as far as the sex lives of the Negroes is
concerned. The story is interesting because it is a frank discussion of the reception of the repressed American Negro by the horrenvolk. Smith's technique in writing this story is very workmanlike and competent, and he does his best to present the situation in realistic terms. While this book has much in it that will not appeal to Southern readers, there is nothing in it that need be doubted. His characterization is vivid and penetrating, and the reader feels bound to accept and acknowledge the honesty with which the author writes. More will be said of this book in a later chapter.

Berle Miller's novel, That Winter (1948), has for its theme the difficulties of readjustment that veterans meet upon their return to civilian life. This novel is still another that bears many of Hemingway's characteristics of style and technique. But Miller writes with a cynicism and sense of bitterness that go even deeper than those displayed by Hemingway in his novel, The Sun Also Rises, for example, and there seems to be little justification for it in this case. By that I mean that the disillusionments suffered by the characters in That Winter do not seem to be the natural results of their experiences. I believe that this arises from the fact that Miller cannot project his characters beyond the range of his own cynical inclinations; and in many cases throughout the novel the reader feels that Miller is simply trying to even the score
against the army experiences which he himself has incurred. His war record would seem to belie the statement, however, since the author of That Winter did not actually participate in the combat conditions that he attempts to recall in the novel. His hero, Peter, and the other important characters in the book are all sadly disillusioned as a result of the war and Miller portrays their first attempts to settle down in New York during the winter of their discharge. Much will be said of this novel in a later chapter.

In 1949 Alfred Hayes wrote another war novel, The Girl on the Via Flaminia, in which he describes a love episode in the life of a young American soldier who tries to escape the tedium and boredom of the war by forming a liaison with a young Italian girl. Both the theme and the style of this story are highly reminiscent of Ernest Hemingway’s A Farewell to Arms; and it is a little surprising to find Hayes, who was better known as a poet before the war, writing in the simple, uncomplicated style that he employs in this book. Robert, the American GI, and Lisa, the young Italian girl, might be any two other people for all the introspective searching that Hayes does in this book. Despite this fact, Hayes successfully shows the reader the large gap in understanding which exists between the conquered Italian and the conquering American, even when good faith is shown on the part of the GI. This book is written
with much feeling and compassion for both sides, and the absence of the usual vulgarities and crudities that are so familiar in the war novels does not in the least detract from the realism that is evident in the story from beginning to end. This definitely is one of the better written books to come out of the war, although its theme is not strong enough to put it in the ranks of the more enduring novels.

Ludwig Bemelmans' novel, The Eye of God (1949), is a story that deals with the people in the little village of Aspen, Austria, at the foot of the Tyrolean Alps. The novel attempts to show the reactions of these segregated people toward the war that has disturbed even their remote habitat. Although Bemelmans writes of the serious aspects of the war and incorporates a few grim episodes concerning the war, this story is mainly that of one Tornegg, an innkeeper, and his son, Severin. They survive the war and pursue their lives just as though nothing has happened; and in them Bemelmans gives the reader an excellent account of the implacable Austrian character in the face of hostile forces. Considerable satire is evident in this novel, but it is of a kindly nature; and Bemelmans' knowledge of his subject combined with his very capable manner of presentation make this the best book of a non-militaristic nature to emerge from the war.

Finally, in this series of novels which I have termed
episodic in nature I shall include Herman Wouk's novel, The Caine Mutiny (1951). This best seller is, by all standards, one of the best books to come out of the war. The Caine Mutiny is an intimate study of the lives of the officers of the antiquated destroyer, Caine, in its combat operations throughout the South Pacific area. More specifically, it is the story of the growth of a young man, Willie Keith, from the time he enters the navy as a recruit until he emerges at the end of the war as a hardened veteran of combat duty. Wouk is scornful of the use of the many modern devices of writing, such as the stream of consciousness technique, in the writing of this story and proves successfully, I think, that there is no lack of character definition in the straight narrative technique, if this technique is used in the hands of a skillful writer. The series of episodes, culminating in the dramatic courtroom scene, are told in a forthright manner, and at the end of the story the reader is left with the most vivid of impressions relating to character portrayal. But, apart from the skillful writing technique of the writer, this novel possesses a great deal of story interest—an item that has been sadly overlooked by the majority of the writers on war themes.

Single Character Novels

There are a few war novels which, because of the
authors' intense concentration on the development of a single character, I have chosen to term "single character" novels. Of course, it is patently understood that there is no such thing in the literal translation of that term; but it is hoped that the relative use of the term will be understood to mean novels that have a single character whose actions and thoughts dominate the greater part of the books.

In this group of books must be included the popular Lanny Budd series of novels. Beginning with the year 1940 and continuing through the year 1949, Upton Sinclair published a new series of novels in which he attempts to portray the world situation of an era through the medium of fiction. Although the temptation to pass over these novels lightly is great, Sinclair's work cannot be ignored for the simple reason that he remains one of the most widely read American novelists abroad, and his work is felt by a wider audience in Europe than most American novelists can ever hope to attain. If one is acquainted with Sinclair's prejudices and antipathies, toward the Catholic Church and the capitalistic system, for example, and if one is able to suffer through many passages devoted to his pet theories concerning socialism and telepathy, then it is possible to agree with George Bernard Shaw that it is easier to read Sinclair's novels than the history books in order to obtain an accurate summary of events in
the world during the last thirty years. It is important, however, that the reader be able to recognize and discount these pet theories of Sinclair's, for they run rampant throughout the ten novels in this series. The novels in the order of their publication are as follows: *World's End* (1940), *Between Two Worlds* (1941), *Dragon's Teeth* (1942), *Wide Is the Gate* (1943), *Presidential Agent* (1944), *Dragon Harvest* (1945), *A World to Win* (1946), *Presidential Mission* (1947), *One Clear Call* (1948), and *O Shepherd Speak* (1949).

During the course of these ten novels, Sinclair's hero, Lanny Budd, runs a gamut of experiences that take him all over the world. In his travels he meets and interviews all of the important historical and political figures of practically every major country in the world. For example, in the first novel, *World's End*, Lanny, a mere stripling at the time, is employed as an attaché of the American delegation during the Geneva Conference. This position, of course, enables him to meet on familiar terms Woodrow Wilson, Colonel House, Lloyd George, Orlando, Clemenceau, and all of the other notables at the conference. Lanny's knack of hobnobbing with the great and near-great increases as the series progresses, and he interviews successively Mussolini, Hitler, Stalin, Churchill, and Roosevelt. In the book, *Presidential Mission*, Lanny even manages to interview Rudolph Hess, who is being held in confinement in England. This omnipresent characteristic of Lanny's, which
enables him, among other things, in the book Between Two Worlds to be present at the Munich beer hall putsch, the march of the black shirts on Rome, and the fall of the stock market in New York, is only one of the things that make him one of the most improbable characters ever to grace the pages of a book. But all of the characters of Sinclair's saga of Lanny Budd are just as incredible and unconvincing as the hero; and it is only fair to Sinclair to admit that his purpose in writing these novels is not to create a character of unforgettable dimensions (although he does in one sense of the phrase). Rather, he attempts to encompass a sizeable slice of world history in the form of a fictional narrative, and this he succeeds in doing admirably, within the limitations previously mentioned with regard to his own personal prejudices and whims. As a propaganda novelist and writer of social tracts, Sinclair clearly demonstrates in this series of the Lanny Budd novels that he has no peer in the ranks of American writers, but his wooden characters and inability to tell a story of interest in its own right leaves open the question as to whether he should be classified as a novelist at all.

John Hersey's novel, A Bell for Adano (1945), also should be included in this series of novels of the single character variety. This novel has been acclaimed by many critics as being a refreshing change from the rather
pessimistic novels that have appeared on war themes. Certainly its tone and moral atmosphere are such that the book offers much encouragement to the people in the United States, for it emphasizes the fact that a meeting of the minds between European and American is not altogether impossible provided that good faith and intentions prevail on both sides. The story concerns itself with the episode involving the attempt on the part of Major Joppolo to install a fair military government in the town of Adano, Italy. At first the people of Adano view the Americans with a suspicion that they have hitherto reserved for their Nazi allies; and it requires much patience on the part of the American major to win them over to his side. The book derives its title from the culminating event in the story which involves installing a bell in the church tower to replace one that the Germans have stolen to melt down for military use. As a result of this act Joppolo is relieved of his command, but he leaves the town with the thought of a job well done. The story is told with a simplicity of form and style that is characteristic of Hersey's two previous efforts on war themes; but he leaves himself open to some very pointed criticisms by those who themselves witnessed the relationship existing between the Italians and Americans. The validity of the story is acceptable only if the reader is willing to accept the fact that Major Joppolo is an unusual type. The romantic
flavor of this story contributes to a good tale told with
great skill; but one is left with the impression that this
is the way things might have been— not as they actually
were. One critic of repute, at least, has found John Her-
sey's book particularly notable. In his critical work,
The Shape of Books to Come, J. D. Adams has this to say:

One of the reasons why I look forward to the
future work of John Hersey is that there have been
few more delightful pages in fiction than those in
A Bell for Adano....

John Marquand's novel, Repent in Haste (1945), con-
cerns itself with the failure of a war-time marriage that
is entered into hastily. The hero of this story, Lt.
James K. Boyden, marries Daisy, whom he has met at Pensac-
ola while he is in training. She is "cute" and he marries
her, forsaking the love of his neighbor sweetheart back
home. He then leaves for overseas duty after finding
Daisy an apartment back in his old home town. She soon
becomes bored and starts cheating him. A baby son is born
and Boyden has never had a chance to see the child. A
correspondent, who is a friend of Boyden, discovers the
unpleasant nature of things and reports the facts to Boy-
den. This book is unbelievably simple and contains none
of the subtleties for which Marquand is famous. It is as
if the author is encroaching on territory that is foreign

1Adams, J. Donald, The Shape of Books to Come, The
to his nature. The story is very simply told and there is not an iota of depth to it; there is no character division or examination of motives, and the story is so well known that it need never have been written for all it accomplishes. Marquand's hero, Boyden, is portrayed throughout as being naive to the extreme, and he is supposed to represent the typical American boy of his age with a middle class upbringing. Marquand's patronizing attitude toward this class is unwarranted in this story, and one is inclined to reject the characterization of Boyden on the grounds that he is not at all typical of the average young man of his class.

Ira Wolfert's novel, An Act of Love (1943), one of the finest novels to emerge from the war, has for its theme the attempt on the part of a young Jewish pilot in the navy to resolve the emotional and mental conflicts to which he is prey. The characterization of Harry Brunner in this novel is one of the finest that I have encountered in all of the war novels that I have read. Wolfert's love for introspective searching and his flair for dramatic presentation of scenes throughout the story contribute to a very successful attempt to portray graphically the inner tension and struggle that many combat fliers endure. But, while this story includes some of the most thrilling accounts of warfare, among which the sinking of the American cruiser stands out, the story is chiefly one in which
the development of a single character, Harry Brunner, is of paramount importance. His actions and experiences during the battle scenes are of interest, of course, but the battle with his own sense of values is of far more interest. Wolpert's penchant for detail and the tireless probing of the chief character's motives and attitudes are well complemented by his flowery style of writing, which, other war novels notwithstanding, contributes much to the final success of the novel. The hero's struggles, physical and mental, are happily resolved in this novel, thereby breaking another of the unwritten rules of the war novel, and the reader is left with a general sense of well-being that is lacking in so many of the novels on this theme.

After mentioning the several stories that bear a marked resemblance to Ernest Hemingway's style of writing, it is only fitting that the next book to be discussed should be his own effort concerning World War II, Across the River and into the Trees (1950). This book has been described by various critics, but, after the first shock of its appearance is now dissipated, the best thing that can be said of this novel is that it was an unfortunate mistake on the part of Hemingway to have written it in the first place. Readers who are familiar with his great stories, A Farewell to Arms, The Sun Also Rises, and For Whom the Bell Tolls, will recognize easily the ingredients that are contained in Across the River and into the Trees.
These ingredients, which consist of drinking, swearing, whoring, a love for the outdoors, and a sharp, crisp dialog, are all present in his World War II novel. The chief cause for the dismal failure of this book, in my opinion, is the fact that Hemingway has absolutely nothing to add to what he already has said in his previous stories about war. The chief character, Colonel Richard Cantwell, a man of middle years, returns to Venice after the war. He is in love with a very young and very beautiful Italian Countess. Since the Colonel knows that he is about to die as a result of his bad heart, he spends most of his time recounting scenes of his past to the Countess, who, by the way, is as anemic a character as this writer has ever encountered in the field of literature. The Colonel's philosophizing about his wrecked marriage and his experiences in the two wars are unimpressive and at times downright maudlin. It is as if Hemingway himself is deploiring the fact that a new generation has fought a war about which he has nothing to say; and he feels terribly alone with his memories. About writers of war themes in general an interesting observation is made by Hemingway, speaking, of course, through the mouth of the Colonel:

I have lost three battalions in my life and three women, and now I have a fourth, and lovliest and where the hell does it end?

Boys who wore sensitive and cracked and kept all their valid first impressions of their day of battle, or their three days, or even their four, write books. They are good books but are dull if you have been there. Then others write to profit
quickly from the war they never fought in. The ones who ran back to tell the news. The news is hardly exact. But they ran quickly with it. Professional writers who had jobs that prevented them from fighting wrote of combat that they could not understand, as though they had been there. I don't know what category of sin that comes under.2

Even Hemingway's descriptive passages of the Italian scenery are faulty from an artistic viewpoint, for the reader receives the impression that Hemingway is acting as a tourists' guide and trying to convince one and all that he has really been to all of those places, which he assuredly has been, and is striving to convince his readers that he knows what he is talking about. The final effect of this novel falls flat, for the reader, try as he may, cannot sympathize with the fate of the colonel, who is guilty of attempting to gather a few too many rosebuds in one lifetime. He is in reality a sad hang-over from Hemingway's character, Jake Barnes, in The Sun Also Rises, but he possesses none of the latter's appealing characteristics. The poor Countess is neither fish nor fowl nor good red herring.

In 1951 John Narquand's novel, Kelpville Goodwin, U.S.A., appeared, and, in my opinion, this book is his best effort concerning the war theme. The story revolves

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around the single character of Melville Goodwin, a general in the United States Army, who is being given a publicity build-up by army authorities. Much of the story consists of the recounting of his past life by Goodwin to his interviewers who are to write his personal history for the press. Marquand's treatment of the general's character is one of the very few in the war novels that approaches an attempt to reveal the simple, human qualities that pervade even members of the top brass. At times this humane treatment of the general appears to present him as being unbelievably gauche and naive, but, on the whole, the general's better qualities overbalance his imbecilic tendencies, and the reader carries away a general impression of liking. Marquand's style, which features the flash-back method, is used to good advantage in this novel, for it enables the reader to become thoroughly acquainted with the general's background and character. I believe this book to be particularly successful in revealing the inner workings of the higher echelon of the army; and Marquand reveals an acute sense of knowledge with regard to the social and political life of that group. Marquand does not dispense with his sniping away at the existing social order in this book, but his subject in this case proves to be more amenable to this characteristic.

One point with regard to the styles of the preceding authors of war novels should be mentioned above all
others. This concerns the younger writers in this discussion. One cannot read books by such authors as Vance Bourjaily, Alfred Hayes, Basil Hewett, Norle Miller, Gore Vidal, and Frederic Wakeman without noticing the marked resemblance that their styles of writing bear to that of Ernest Hemingway. Without exception these six writers, consciously or unconsciously, adopt the technique of presentation, the stylization, and the unmistakable treatment of dialogue so familiar to readers of Hemingway's better novels. In each case it must also be said that their books read like very poor imitations of the real thing. Only Hayes in The Girl on the Via Flaminia approaches the true originality of Hemingway at his best.

Next to Hemingway's influence perhaps the most noticeable is that of John Dos Passos. In this instance, while it is possible to draw a faint parallel between his method of presenting a story with that of a few of the authors mentioned in this thesis, the influence is mainly that with regard to the type of characterization. Time and again one can detect similarities between main characters in the war novels and the chief character of Dos Passos' First World War novel, Three Soldiers. An excellent example of this type of character is Bourjaily's hero, Skinner Galt, who, although lacking the refinement of Andrews' character, nevertheless bears a striking resemblance to him in attitude. One can only wonder if
poor Andrews is destined to suffer a similar reincarnation in all of the future American novels dealing with war themes.

A word should also be said at this point concerning a popular technique which is used repeatedly in many of the war novels. This is the flash-back. This device is particularly well adapted to the telling of a war story, because it enables the author to reveal the background of the character that he is trying to depict. Among authors who make lavish use of this method of character presentation are Bourjaily, Burns, Calmer, Heatter, Heyns, Kailer, Marquand, Miller, and Shaw.

Along with the flash-back, and sometimes complementing it, is the stream of consciousness style of writing, which is employed intermittently and to varying degrees by the bulk of the writers of the war novels. The stream of consciousness style is relied upon heavily, however, by only a few writers. John Horne Burns, Vance Bourjaily, and Norman Mailer are perhaps the most notable in this respect. Those writers who studiously avoid this method are Pearl S. Buck, William W. Haines, Marion Hargrove, Ernest Hemingway, John P. Marquand, Upton Sinclair, John Steinbeck, and Herman Wouk.
CHAPTER II

Subject Matter

In the reading of the many war novels covered in this thesis, the writer has endeavored to present a selection of books which, taken as an aggregate, cover adequately the whole field of military and civilian life connected with the war. The war novels treated in this thesis have not been confined merely to those novels recounting the experiences of the GI's in actual combat conditions but also stories which cover the periods leading up to the conflict and immediately following it. The novels concerning the experiences of the GI's themselves have been selected with an aim toward embracing military life in all its phases. Thus, the novels which I have included treat of the army, the navy, the air force, and many contiguous branches thereof.

Actually this task has not been as difficult as might be supposed, for the authors included in this thesis are all inclined to write about matters with which they have had actual experience during the period of the war; and their experiences cover nearly all of the various branches of the services and the military theatres of operations.

The one author included in this thesis who embraces all phases of the war, including the periods leading up to it and the period immediately following it, is Upton Sinclair. Sinclair is not, however, concerned with the
actual combat conditions. As has been mentioned previously, Sinclair endeavors to present a panoramic account of world conditions during the thirty years' period preceding the outbreak of hostilities, and continuing throughout the war itself to a point culminating in the interval following the peace conference. Sinclair's ten books, popularly known as the Lanny Budd novels, present the reader with as good a background of conditions prevailing in the world during this long period as one can hope to obtain in the realm of fiction. Actually, Sinclair's novels, if one is willing to overlook the escapades of the anemic Lanny Budd, are history written in the form of fiction, and, as such, they are books that are well worth reading.

Some authors have written books that depict conditions in the United States in the period leading up to the war. One of these authors is John Marquand. In So Little Time Marquand portrays perfectly the anxiety and uncertainty of a parent who dreads the prospect of another war. The book derives its title from the fact that the hero in the novel comes to the conclusion that his son should do just what pleases him, since it appears that there won't be much time left in which to enjoy life.

Marquand's novel, B. F.'s Daughter, also treats of the atmosphere on the home front both in the period preceding the conflict and the time during it. This novel gives the reader an excellent view of the confusion and
business of Washington, D.C., at the time of the struggle; and it also describes the worry that civilians suffer in the waiting for word of their loved ones who are actively participating in the battles on the front line.

One novel in particular helped to prepare the American reading public for the rash of war novels that were to follow the entrance of the United States into the war. This novel, Steinbeck’s *The Moon Is Down*, describes the fate of a small Scandinavian country, unnamed, which has been invaded by the forces of another foreign power. There is little difficulty in associating the two countries with Norway as the invaded land and Germany as the invader.

Other novelists who concern themselves with writing about the war from the viewpoint of foreign countries are the following: Kay Boyle, Ludwig Bemelmans, Pearl S. Buck, and John Hersey. Kay Boyle, in her novel, *Avalanche*, treats of the valiant resistance with which the French underground forces combat the Germans. Ludwig Bemelmans, in his novel, *The Eye of God*, presents his readers with a picture of life in a small Austrian village bordering the Swiss mountains during the period of Nazi triumph and defeat. Pearl S. Buck, of course, in her novel, *The Promise*, writes about the war from the Chinese viewpoint. This novel attempts to show the difficulties that arise between the Chinese forces and the Anglo-American forces fighting in Burma. Finally, John Hersey, in his excellent novel, *The
Wall, outlines the persecution of the Jewish people in Poland from the years 1939 to 1945. This book is notable for its completely candid revelation of Nazi philosophy and behavior with respect to the Jews.

Of the novelists who treat of the life of the GI's in the army, the following are notable: Vance Bourjaily, Harry Peter Brown, John Horne Burns, Rod Calmer, James Gould Cozzens, Marion Hargrove, Alfred Hayes, Basil Heatter, John Hersey, Stefan Heym, James Jones, Norman Mailer, John P. Marquand, Irwin Shaw, and William Smith. Although these authors all write about the GI's in the army, it is to be remarked that considerable differences exist among them in their subject matter and the treatment thereof. For example, a few of these authors, Hersey, Marquand, and Heym, are more concerned with themes that deal with officers. Hersey's two novels, A Bell for Adano and Into the Valley, are, for the most part, concerned with the account officers' lives. James Jones and Norman Mailer, in their two novels, From Here to Eternity and The Naked and the Dead, respectively, treat the two classes, officers and enlisted men, about equally. Stefan Heym, while he does not completely neglect the treatment of enlisted men in his novel, The Crusaders, nevertheless, does concentrate more heavily on the officers in this story. Vance Bourjaily's characters, in the novel, The End of Life, are almost entirely of the officer class. This same may be said of John Horne
Burns and Basil Heatter, in their novels, *The Gallery* and *The Din View*, respectively.

Those novelists who deal with the lives of the men in the navy are as follows: Thomas Heggen, Gore Vidal, Frederic Wakeman, Ira Wolfert, and Herman Wouk. It should be noted that of these authors' novels a strong resemblance exists with regard to content matter and theme. All of them, with the exception of Vidal, deal mostly with men of the officer class; and even Vidal is as much concerned with the officers in his novel as with the enlisted men. Again, three of these novelists, namely, Thomas Heggen, Gore Vidal, and Herman Wouk, write stories that revolve for the most part around the theme of monotony aboard a small ship which sees little or no action during the war. Heggen's novel, *Mr. Roberts*, and Vidal's novel, *The Williwaw*, are practically identical with respect to type of ship and general setting of boredom and ennui. In both cases the things that happen never would happen if the ships were combat ships. Wakeman, Wolfert, and Marquand write stories that concern the difficulties of naval pilots, but there is little other resemblance to be noted in the plots and themes of these three novelists' stories, *Shore Leave*, *An Act of Love*, and *Reunion in Raintown*, respectively.

Other authors have written novels that deal with conditions affecting the Air Corps exclusively. The following authors may be included in that category: James Gould...
Cozzens and William Halsey Haines. Cozzens' novel, *Guard of Honor*, deals with the lives of an airbase squadron's members stationed in the United States. Haines' novel, *Command Decision*, which later was developed into a successful play, tells of the hardships that the Air Corps' high command endures in trying to operate effectively from their bases in England. These two novels have this much in common—both of them are chiefly concerned with officers and both of them deal with problems of a political nature that commanding officers in the Air Corps have to contend with.

Two authors have written novels that concern themes of a post-war nature. They are James Michener and William Gardner Smith. Michener's novel, *Return to Paradise*, is another collection of tales based on life in the various islands of the South Pacific after the war. Finally, William Gardner Smith's novel, *The Last of the Conquerors*, recounts the experiences of a detachment of Negro troops in occupied territory in Germany.

Thus, it may be seen that the three major branches of the service, the homefront, the foreign front, and all phases of the war are adequately covered by the many authors writing on war themes.

If one may be so bold as to draw a composite picture of the typical hero of war novels as depicted in the list of books that this thesis incorporates, he would appear
something like this: a young man in his middle twenties; psychologically of the cerebrotonic variety; physically of the mesomorphic strain with many ectomorphic characteristics; a lieutenant of one of the major military branches; and, finally, of a mildly introverted character.
CHAPTER III
Attitudes and Values

In this chapter I propose to examine the attitudes and values disclosed by the writers of the World War II novels. Since it goes without saying that each writer differs from his fellows in some degree in this respect, I should like to state that my conclusions are based on an over-all survey of the books read; and these conclusions will tend to be of a general nature, although I shall quote specific examples to illustrate my points in each case. Therefore, it should be understood that when, for example, this writer speaks of the negativistic attitude toward life so clearly demonstrated in the books of the authors as a whole, he is fully cognizant that such a criticism is not in the least applicable to such a writer as John Hersey, to mention only one exception to the generalization. There is a danger in such generalization, but I believe that certain very definite conclusions can be drawn from the books that I have read; for a clear and definite pattern for the bulk of the war novels seems to have been established with regard to direction and purpose.

Human Values

Writing of the values evidenced in the war novel, one eminent critic has this to say:

'Intellectually, these novelists seem less naive
about war than were their elders of another war generation. They are victims of a kind of ideological battle fatigue; the cynicism of their characters is less the result of world-weariness than of ignorance. If the propaganda mills grind less thoroughly, the generation writing about the second World War are less naively abused by the collapse of values, as they are less impressed by values of any sort. There is in these novels an explicit and implicit criticism of American culture that reaches deep into the leftist attitudes of the thirties.3

This "collapse of values" is, I think, the most notable feature concerning the World War II novels. The majority of the writers seem to have adopted an air of futility and depression that is reflected in the cynical attitudes of many of the major characters in their stories. In The Naked and the Dead, for example, there is scarcely one character depicted throughout the lengthy volume of 721 pages who can be called a healthy exponent of our democratic way of life. This is true not only of the intellectuals, such as Lt. Hearn and General Cummings, but also of the lower type, such as Red Valsen and Roth. All of these characters seem to have become embittered toward life. It is significant, however, to note that Mailer, in his careful scrutiny of the backgrounds of his characters, reveals the true nature of this cynical attitude. His characters are not what they are as a result of their war experiences, but rather of their early environments and experiences.

The war merely provides an excellent setting in which to

make these characters conscious fully for the first time of their real selves. General Cummings' lust for power and his domineering attitude toward the men with whom he is associated is given encouragement and opportunity for self-expression during the brutal campaign on Anopopei; but his whole philosophy of life, which he carefully expounds to his aide, Hearn, is that of the typical Fascist. Even while engaged in the struggle against the Japanese, Cummings looks forward to the day of peace, not so that the world may progress in a democratic fashion, but that the United States may openly declare herself a nation of imperialistic desires, ruled by men of Cummings' own inclinations. His Nietzschean concept of the superiority of a chosen few is revealed in this passage which he directs at the sceptical Hearn:

...the only morality of the future is a power morality, and a man who cannot find his adjustment to it is doomed. There's one thing about power. It can flow only from the top down. When there are little surges of resistance at the middle levels, it merely calls for more power to be directed downward, to burn it out. 4

Lt. Hearn, who acts as the foil for the power-ridden General Cummings, is finally destroyed because he dares to defy the general. Just as the general's fascistic notions are a result of his experiences before the war, so too are the attitudes of all the men in his command that are des-

cribbed in the book. Private Gallagher's dilemma is caused not so much by the horrible experiences which his platoon endures as by the guilt feelings which assail him because of his wife's untimely death. Even the seemingly courageous Sergeant Croft is what he is in this story because of the wrecked marriage which he has left behind him, rather than because of the exigencies of combat circumstances. All of these characters display an unhealthy attitude toward life, and one is inclined to question whether they would behave otherwise were it not for the war.

Another story which points up the absence or futility of human values is The End of My Life by Vance Bourjaily. Bourjaily's hero, Skinner Galt, is supposedly ruined because of his inability to cope with the military situation which confronts him. Throughout the story, however, we see no great change in the development of Galt's character, for at the beginning of the story he prides himself on the fact that he believes in nothing and at the end of the story he still believes in nothing. There is not even the subtle waverings and changes in temperament which one might expect if the reader is to sympathize with the hero. Skinner's inability to attach himself to any real values in life, his scoffing refusal to take the war or himself seriously make his final downfall more ludicrous than tragic.
Again, in John Horne Burns' *The Gallery* the reader is confronted with a set of similar characters whose inability to form some sense of permanent values leads them to fail miserably in the crisis of the war. Louella, the Red Cross worker, in this story, is a good example of a frustrated American woman who, unable to find anything of happiness in peacetime, seeks to find some kind of harbor in the turmoil of war. She fails to achieve this, and the results are as might be imagined, for she turns to drink as the only compassionate companion of her solitary life. Major Notes, the censor of GI mail, in this story, also reveals the emptiness of his civilian life and the pathetic shallowness of his character in his almost crazed determination to achieve perfection that will raise him in the estimation of his wife, whose love he is afraid of losing. Thus, he spends hours in composing letters recapitulating the many hardships and dangers that he is enduring, when, in reality, he has never been exposed to an enemy bullet. With few exceptions, Burns, in this book, depicts a group of characters whose lives have been wrecked not by the war, but by their inability to attach themselves to any permanent set of values.

That *Winter*, by Merle Miller, purports to be an examination of the troubles which beset the returning veteran on his return to civilian life after the war. His hero in this story reminds one strongly of Skinner Galt in the
There is no question that many of the war veterans in real life have found the task of rehabilitation a difficult one; but it is questionable whether Miller's hero, Peter, with his self-pitying attitude and empty set of values is typical. Peter expresses his attitude toward life, which he blames on the army, as follows:

I'm sure it wasn't the Army's intent, but while I was a soldier, I learned to drink too much too often and not too well; I found that it doesn't pay to volunteer; only suckers volunteer; and I was convinced, after the first few weeks, that work doesn't pay unless someone is looking. I also was taught that death can be casual, so why worry.

Like the other authors that I have mentioned in this chapter, Miller fails to convince that his characters are what they are as a result of their war experiences. Throughout this entire novel, in fact, the author defeats his own purpose by using the flash-back technique in order to reveal the characters as they had been before the war. I could find no appreciable difference in any of them at any stage of their development. The war merely intensifies those character traits that were present in the characters before their war experiences.

It is true, however, that some authors, such as Ira Wolfert, in his *Act of Love*, produce characters that rise

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above their former stature in life as a direct result of their war experiences. In Act of Love we are given a character, Harry Brunner, a young combat flier in the navy, who manages to find an inner assurance and peace of mind that he lacked at the beginning of the war. Even in such books as these, however, the reader is able to detect the lack of values that pervades the area of the American mind as a whole. Brunner succeeds in conquering the attitude of cynicism to which he is prone, but in doing so the author reveals that many of Brunner's comrades fail to accomplish a like success. We are given to assume then that he is the exception rather than the rule.

One could go on at length quoting passages and details of many books to show the contempt for human values that exists in the minds of many of the men in the services as depicted throughout the novels of World War II. In The Young Lions, by Irwin Shaw; Shore Leave, by Frederick Wakeman; Report in Haute, by John Marquand; The Strange Land, by Ned Calmer; Across the River and into the Trees, by Ernest Hemingway; From Here to Eternity, by James Jones; and The Girl on the Via Flaminia, by Alfred Hayes, we are confronted with this absence of human values which most of us have learned and been taught to cherish from an early age. The younger writers of novels concerning the war have done their best to live up to the traditions of their predecessors of the "lost generation," and one obtains the
impression that this new lost generation is striving with
right and main to go their forebears one better in the cre-
ation of a host of characters, all of whom bear some par-
ticular grudge against life for their fate. Writing under
the mask of realism, these authors have asked us to be-
lieve that the American GI didn't know what he was fight-
ing for, didn't care, and wouldn't have understood if he
had been told. The sheer emptiness of the lives of Prem-
itt, Warden, and Mrs. Holmes in From Here to Eternity
might well find duplication in the lives of many army
commands, but to ask the reader to believe that these
people are typical of their environment is an attestation
to the complete lack of faith on the part of the author in
those human values which most people live by.

Attitude toward Sex

The World War II novelists' attitudes toward sex and
the treatment thereof in literature is also worth discus-
sion. Many of these novelists have shown an intense con-
centration on the aspects of physical love to the degree
that it has become almost the distinguishing feature of
the war novel. In their desperate desire to leave no
phase of the sex act to the reader's imagination, the
World War II novelists are completely without peer. All
of the reticence on the part of the Victorian novelists to
portray graphically and without shame the natural conse-
quences of physical attraction between the sexes has at last been eliminated to the point where the author who doesn't include at least a chapter devoted to the intimacies of the sexes is the exception.

Frederic Wakeman's *Shore Leave* (1944) and Alfred Hayes' *All Thy Conquests* (1946) were among the first of the major war novels to set the pattern with regard to preoccupation concerning sex. Both of these novels have little to recommend them except for the fact that they were two of the first books to appear in which the authors try to convey a realistic picture of events and experiences in the lives of the GI's as they actually are. As often as not, the reader of these two stories is given an eyewitness description of the physical relations between the men and women involved. In *Shore Leave* Wakeman even condescends to describe the passionate feeling of a woman in the throes of climax during coital relationship. Hayes is just a trifle more subtle in his depiction of the lechery and depravity of American GI's and Italians in his story *All Thy Conquests*.

After the example of those two novels there remained little to exploit in novelty as far as sexual intimacy and promiscuity is concerned, but most of the later novelists have treated the subject with equal candor. In *From Here to Eternity* and in *The End of my Life* the authors, Jones and Bourjaily, respectively, give the reader a complete
description, with no slighting of details, of the experiences of soldiers in brothels. Jones even goes so far as to have Prewitt, his much-abused and misunderstood hero, fall in love with one of the inmates. This alliance is never consummated in marriage only because of Prewitt's untimely death.

After the reading of the first few war novels, it becomes apparent to the average reader that if a woman is introduced into the narrative, it is simply a question of time, usually not much time, before she will submit willingly or unwillingly to one of the GI's in the story.

Writing of this phenomenon, J. Donald Adams makes the following observation:

Indeed, I think there has been a growing tendency, in American fiction by male novelists particularly for heroines to assume one of two predominant forms: either that of the docile but passionate dream-girl who lives to do her lord and master's bidding, and whom we might describe as the naive but negative type; or her more positively motivated sister—the one with the Toni—who shares with dogs of the female gender a short and somewhat unpleasant-sounding name. 6

Notable among books which concentrate heavily on the sex activities of the GI's to arouse interest are the following: Guard of Honor, The Strange Land, Across the River and into the Trees, The Crusaders, The Girl on the Via Flaminia, From Here to Eternity, The Naked and the Dead.

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Tales of the South Pacific, That Winter, The Young Lions, The Last of the Conquerors, Delville Wood (U.S.A.), and Repent in Haste. Of course, in such a list of books and authors there is admittedly a great variation in the handling of the sex theme; but, taken as a whole, all of them reveal the same tendency to lay heavy stress on the physical relationship between men and women. The techniques vary from the brutal, animalistic descriptions of the sex act encountered in Bailer's The Naked and the Dead to the more subtle treatment of the subject which is found in Marquand's Repent in Haste. In the former book Bailer copies a bit from the pattern already established in Leave to give the reader a most detailed description of Sergeant Croft's relationship with his wife—not once but several times. In Repent in Haste Marquand prefers to omit the more intimate details, but the whole theme of this book consists of the infidelity of a wartime bride. The reader will notice, too, different shadings and intensities concerning the intimate relationships depicted between the sexes in the other books, such as Guard of Honor, The Strange Land, The Crusaders, etc., but invariably he is confronted with the bedroom scene. In the majority of these cases the authors are concerned with the illicit love between GI's and foreign women, such as that depicted in The Girl on the Via Flaminia or in From Here to Eternity. But this attraction is closely seconded by
the description of the promiscuity between the GI's and women of the various branches of the women's services. In Guard of Honor, for example, the author, Cozzens, presents a detailed account of a love scene between Amanda Turck, a WAVC officer, and a young lieutenant in the Air Corps. In The Strange Land an identical scene is presented as occurring between a WAVC captain, Clare Drake, and a combat infantryman, Lt. William Keith. In most of these stories the authors make a sincere effort to work the love theme into the general pattern of the stories in order to add plausibility, but in some cases the reader is struck with the impression that the author uses the bedroom scene with the single intention of creating a little interest for the reader when the general thread of the narrative becomes tedious. Such a book, in my opinion, is That Winter, by Merle Miller. In this novel about the first winter at home after the war has ended for three GI's, Miller is constantly striving to hold the reader's interest by incorporating a love scene between his hero, Peter, and any number of women, one of whom Peter has never seen before, and never sees again after the physical act is consummated. A careful reading of this novel reveals no connection between the various love episodes on the part of the hero and the main plot of the story, and the reader is left to conclude that these scenes are present for the sole purpose of creating interest where there is none.
One might say that much of the foregoing criticism easily applies to novels of the First World War as to those of the Second World War. With the memory of *A Farewell to Arms*, *The Sun Also Rises* and *The Three Soldiers* still fresh in our minds, there will have to be an admission that this is true with but one exception. While this writer makes no pretence at having read all of the World War I novels, he has been unable to find in the several that he has read, the careful descriptions of the minutiae and details of the sex act that so many of the World War II authors permit themselves to use.

The World War II novelists, however, add one distinguishing aspect of sex that is mentioned but briefly in the novels of the First World War. This concerns the treatment of the problem of homosexuality that occurs and recurs throughout the novels of World War II. To be sure, Hemingway and Dos Passos both mention characters of the homosexual type, but nowhere does one find the frank and uninhibited treatment of this rather delicate theme that is present in several of the novels under consideration. In this connection five books in particular deserve mention, namely, *The Gallery*, *From Here to Eternity*, *The End of My Life*, *That Winter*, and *The Naked and the Dead*. It is to be noted here that the books in this group, without exception, belong to that section of authors in this thesis who form the newer crop of writers to emerge from the war.
In The Gallery, by John Horne Burns, the reader is presented with a scene in a bar on the Galleria Umberto, in Naples, in which a whole group of servicemen, who go there for the sole purpose of making contacts with other men of a homosexual inclination, are depicted as overt homosexuals. In this scene Burns includes members of the British and Australian forces as well as the ever-present American and Italian characters. Nor does the author draw the color line. One of the most prominent characters in this scene is a Negro, whose chief distinction in the novel lies in the fact that he wears nail polish. Burns devotes a sizable section of the novel to the recording of the conservations of the characters in this episode. Those conversations are so intimate as to reveal the fact that these servicemen are completely and unashamedly devoted to the practice of homosexuality.

Following closely on the heels of this novel in the treatment of the homosexual theme among the GI's is James Jones' From Here to Eternity. In this story Jones describes the habit of men in the army stationed in Hawaii of obtaining money by selling themselves to native homosexuals. In one scene in this book Jones gives the reader a full account of the approach and technique of a rich homosexual toward two enlisted men. The account proceeds to a discussion of the principles pertaining to the life a homosexual leads and the reasons for his actions. With a
restraint quite uncommon to his nature, Jones does not permit his heroes to be seduced in this instance; but he leaves no doubt in the reader's mind that this practice is not a bit unusual on the part of the enlisted man. The chief reason for the addiction to this practice is that the man pander to the desires of their seducers, because they are thus able to obtain spending money with which to visit the more desirable prostitutes in the neighboring brothels. Jones gives a very dramatic portrayal of one enlisted man, Corporal Bloom, whose disgrace at exposure in this practice ends with his suicide. Just before he pulls the trigger of the gun with which he kills himself, Bloom ruminates:

You're a queer, Bloom thought bitterly, a monster. Let's face it all, while we're facing. You did it, and you liked it, and that makes you a queer. And everybody knows you are a queer. You don't deserve to live. 7

Hardly less candid in the treatment of the problem of homosexuality in the war novel is Vance Bourjaily in his book, The End of My Life. In this story one of the characters, Rod, becomes frustrated to the point where he finds it necessary to desert in the hope of making a new life for himself among the Arab tribes in Syria. Two of the minor characters in the story have been fully described as active homosexuals working in an ambulance unit;

7 Jones, James, From Hare to Eternity, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, (1951), p. 573.
but the reader is unprepared for the disclosure that the virile Hod makes as his reason for deserting. He has been acting mysteriously for a long time and his companions have made many fruitless efforts to determine the nature of his worries. Hod reveals the full extent of his dilemma in this passage, which he directs at his friend, Skinner Galt:

This outfit's full of fairies. And this thing's been following me for a long time. I've been afraid of it, and I've fought it, and I'm lost. I'd be a pushover for any fairy, anyplace. They'd sense it in me in five minutes. This kid knew he could get me right away. 8

Rod then goes on to explain that for some time he has been practicing the part of the passive partner in the homosexual act and that he has reached the point where he derives more pleasure from that relationship than he does in the normal sexual contacts with a member of the opposite sex. His first experiences with homosexuals had been born of curiosity and he has degenerated to the stage in which he can no longer help himself. This attempt on the part of Bourjaily to reveal the nature of the passive homosexual is interesting for the simple fact that it is, to the best of my knowledge, unique.

Herle Miller shows a passing interest in the subject of homosexuality in his book, That Winter. I have men-

tioned previously that whenever the narrative of this novel falters, the author displays a remarkable propensity for placing a willing female in Peter's path for the purpose of seduction. Not content with this device for arousing interest, Miller adds two scenes in which the innocent Peter is approached by homosexuals. Peter repulses their advances with considerable aplomb, to his everlasting credit; but again it should be remarked that Miller has little reason for introducing these incidents other than to stir up a little interest in a very uninteresting book.

I include The Naked and the Dead in this category, because of the relationship that exists between Lt. Hearn and General Cummings in this novel. Although Miller does not treat the subject with the candor that the other novelists display, he nevertheless makes it plain enough that General Cummings has designs of a homosexual nature on the rather anemic Lt. Hearn, and Hearn's awkward efforts to discourage this interest results in the final breach between the two men. Cummings' interest in Hearn is then ended, and, shortly after this episode, Hearn is sent to his death by the General.

It should be mentioned that, while this interest in the subject of homosexuality first received frank attention in these novels of the war, the interest has by no means waned. Many of the younger writers especially have incorporated variations of the homosexual theme in their
novels since the war, and in some cases this theme has been the main one of the novel. In this connection I refer the reader to two novels written by authors of war novels mentioned in this thesis, namely, Gore Vidal's *The City and the Pillar* and John Horne Burns' *The Cry of the Children*. This interest in the homosexual has been one of the most startling features of several of the war novels, and it is another indication of the extremity to which the American novelists' penchant for naturalism has taken the reader. It would almost seem that, having explored every possible avenue of approach to the treatment of conventional love themes, the authors, in desperation, have taken to the exploitation of the abnormal and vie with one another in presenting the most shocking disclosures.

**Race Conflicts**

Another prominent theme that appears in many of the war novels is that concerned with the problem of racial antipathy. In this section of my thesis I shall be concerned with those conflicts that appeared in the services between members of different races who served together.

The first striking fact that appears in the reading of the war novels is that the problem of Jewish prejudice appears again and again. Very few novelists mention any antagonism directed against the GI's of the Protestant or Catholic faiths, and fewer still incorporate incidents
which show prejudice against any GI's nationality. But a
great many of the novelists include at least one character
of Jewish descent who suffers hardship because of his race.
The following list of books contains those novels in which
the authors stress the difficulty of the Jew in finding an
acceptable niche in the various services: *The Gallery,*
*From Here to Eternity,* *That Winter,* *The Young Lions,* *An Act
of Love,* *The Caine Mutiny,* *The Crusaders,* *The Dim View,*
and *The Naked and the Dead.*

Irwin Shaw's book, *The Young Lions,* presents the most
brutal account of the result of prejudice against a mem-
ber of the Jewish race. In this story the hero, Noah Ack-
erman, a timid Jewish lad, finds himself discriminated
against by members of his company; and when this discrimi-
nation takes the form of petty thievery directed against
himself, he feels compelled to win the respect of his com-
rades by issuing a challenge to fight the ten toughest
members of the company at spaced intervals. This challenge
is quickly accepted, although the weight difference be-
tween Noah and his opponents is in every case tremendously
in favor of the latter. After nearly every fight Noah re-
quires hospitalization for serious injury of some kind,
and his face becomes brutally distorted as a result of the
punishment that he absorbs. In only the last fight is
Noah finally victorious. The complete hopelessness of his
situation becomes apparent when even this act of courage
fails to make him acceptable to his comrades. Instead, he finds himself more of an outcast than ever. This realization makes him flee the army as a deserter in despair, but he finally returns to go overseas with his company. During the course of the novel, Noah rises above his hostile environment and performs acts of heroism that in another might win the praise of all but which only succeed in making him barely acceptable to the others. In this story Shaw presents the reader with an account of the effects of race prejudice as this writer has ever encountered.

Another story in which the chief character is of Jewish descent and suffers undue hardship because of it is Ira Wolfert's story, An Act of Love. The brutal treatment of the theme that distinguishes Shaw's The Young Lions is missing in this exceptionally well-written novel about the experiences of a young lieutenant in the naval air command, Lt. Harry Brunner's battle in this story consists of two types, physical and mental. He, too, as is so common in the novel of World War II, has lost his sense of values at the beginning of the story. When his ship sinks and he finds himself the sole survivor on a tiny island in the Pacific, he at last finds the time and the courage to fight his first inner struggle. He is helped immensely in this struggle by Julia Anderson, the daughter of a planter whose home is on the island; and in the end Harry conquers
the despair into which his deep, brooding sense of loneliness has taken him. His troubles stem from the fact that he cannot make himself accepted by his fellow men because of his Jewish descent. His mental struggle can end in one of two ways for him. Either he can decide to love people for what they actually are, accepting their blind prejudices and jealousies in stride, or he can determine to hate the world and everyone in it. By surviving the mental struggle, Harry is given the courage to face the reality of war. There is one passage in this book which summarizes Harry's final attitude and sense of values:

Harry had been a man of religion; but the world of men in which he lived had not become religious. He had become at last a Jew, but the world was not Jewish. He had become the kind of Jew that Jesus Christ was, but the world was not Christian, and was not Mohammedan and was not Buddhist and was not anything but individual animals, each driven by fear against his own spirit. The love in the world had no chance. Fear thwarted and corrupted its every expression. It betrayed brotherhood. It made the world of men a place of lonely refuges grouped into herds of lonely refuges, a place of animals who had raised themselves up on two legs to pit fear against the love in themselves. So, for Harry, it had to be Julia. In loving Julia he loved the world, but he knew he could not love the world, without his love for Julia. 9

Since the story ends on this encouraging note, the novel, An Act of Love, deserves further commendation as being one of the few novels which succeed in upholding the essential

dignity and inherent goodness of man.

In *The Naked and the Dead*, Hailor presents a very disheartening picture of Jewish persecution and intolerance in the ranks of the army. Two Jewish characters in this novel, Roth and Goldstein, suffer from the barbed comments and attitudes of the other men who make it very plain that Jews are not desirable companions in combat. One of these Jewish soldiers, Roth, is an unsavory character in every sense of the word; and his constant defeat and rebuttal in attempts to make himself accepted are finally terminated in his adoption of the attitude that "a Jew was a punching bag because they could not do without one." The author's treatment of the Jewish character in this novel seems to carry the implication that there were no Jews in the army who succeeded in overcoming the racial antipathy to which they were subjected. The other Jewish character in this novel, Goldstein, is a thoroughly praiseworthy type of individual, but he is accorded the same reception as that given to Roth. This constitutes a very disturbing factor in Hailor's book to the average reader, for he is left with the impression that regardless of how exemplary a character a Jewish soldier might have been, he was still excluded from the normal social intercourse open to the soldiers of Gentile lineage.

The fact that Hailor is not the only author to spread this idea is adequately proved by Kerle Miller in his novel,
That Winter. In this novel one of the main characters, Lew Cole, has changed his name from Colinski to Cole in an attempt to hide the fact of his Jewish parentage. Lew Cole's persecution is presented by Miller as having been endured in civilian life as well as in the military. Cole's struggle in this instance is much the same as Harry Brunner's except that Cole is a much less noble type than Brunner. He has tried to escape from the fact of his race and this has led to a life of torment and frustration. At the end of this novel Cole decides to abandon the attempt to hide his true identity and to return to his parents' home to continue life as an avowed Jew. One incident in particular that occurs to Cole makes him determined to cross the barrier into the Gentile world. He describes the incident in the following passage:

When I was at OCS in Miami, I asked my mother to come down to see me become an officer and a gentleman. I tried to make a reservation for her at one of the hotels. And the clerk picked up his pen and called me sir and said what's her name. I told him. He put down his pen and said he was sorry. He was terribly sorry. He hoped I understood his position. It wasn't any rule he'd made. But the clientele was strictly select. And my mother wasn't.

The reader finds it difficult to sympathize with Cole in his effort to erase the heritage that his forebears have bequeathed him. His attitude throughout the novel is a

10Miller, Verle, op. cit., p. 108.
strictly negative one, and the author's obvious attempt to excuse his actions by inserting such passages as the one quoted only make Cole's spineless submission to a hostile environment provoking to the extreme.

Another author who lays great stress on the subject of racial prejudice is James Jones in his novel From Here to Eternity. In this story he presents the reader with a thoroughly unpleasant character, Corporal Bloom, who also fails to make himself acceptable to the rest of the men. Bloom, however, is endowed with great physical strength and gains prominent stature in his company as a boxer. This does not help him to win his personal battle against discrimination, however, but in this instance the explanation lies in the obnoxious attitude that he adopts. Even Bloom is characterized as a man apart because of his race though, for throughout the book one continually is confronted with the evidence of Bloom's sense of inferiority in such passages as the following:

There were two kinds of Jews. There were the Jews like Sussman, him and his goddam motorcycle, who would rather be Gentile and therefore smiled queasily and sucked the ass of every Gentile who would drag his pants. And there were the Jews like his old man and his mother, them and their goddam unsalted butter and Kosher meat the Rabbi had to bless before they could eat it, who would rather be Jews than anything else in the world.

11 Jones, James, op. cit., p. 571.
This passage, although it contains the distinctive touch of Jones' terminology, is a fair estimate of the attitude held on the part of the Jewish characters, as they are depicted in many of the war novels. Bloom gives ample evidence in the novel of attempting to associate himself with the gentile group, but his repeated failure to find the good will of that group results in the philosophy that courses through his mind in the quotation. He commits suicide finally because the taint of homosexuality in addition to his burden of race consciousness proves to be intolerable.

Two more noble types of the Jewish characters are to be found in the novels, The Caine Mutiny and The Gallery. Although Lt. Greenwald and Koo, the shadowy character of one of Burns' portraits, both feel the discrimination that plagues the other Jewish types mentioned, both of these men adopt a positive course in combating their circumstances. Both succeed in winning the respect and admiration of the reader, although in each case the author makes it plain that complete acceptance on the basis of their individual traits by other GI's is impossible because of the widespread feeling of animosity that prevails.

Thus the stock character of the Jewish type is to be found in many of the war novels. The treatment of this character varies with the viewpoint of the author; but whether the character proves himself to be as honest and
as decent as those of other lineage or whether he proves to be corrupt and unlikable on the basis of his individual personality, he is generally described by the authors as being deprived of the feeling of belonging that is tendered to the lowest type of Gentile character.¹²

Perhaps because of the fact that Negro troops were segregated during the Second World War to a great extent, the number of authors treating of the conflicts arising in the services between members of the white race and the Negro race is few. Only one author, William G. Smith, a Negro himself, in his novel, The Last of the Conquerors, makes this problem the major theme of his story. While the novel itself is a very readable effort, it does not attempt to suggest that the Negro GI encounters problems that he is not already conversant with in civilian life. In fact, just the opposite is true, for the setting of the story is placed in occupied Germany, and the author concerns himself mainly with showing that the Negro GI is better treated by the Germans than he has been in America.

¹² Flying in the face of this universality of opinion among the authors of war stories, I contend that the theme of the persecuted Jewish soldier gives the reader a somewhat distorted picture of the services as a whole. Certainly this writer witnessed occasions in his army career of incidents brought on because of prejudice displayed toward members of the Jewish race by bigotted and untutored types. But these incidents were the exception, and in a personal survey in which more than twenty GI's were consulted, I could find not one person who could recall a situation such as that recounted in The Young Lions.
but Mr. Smith, in this novel, avails himself of an opportune situation by which to bring home to the American reading public a vivid contrast between European and American thinking toward the American Negro.

James O. Cozzens is the sole white author to devote a considerable portion of a best selling novel, *Guard of Honor,* to the conflict arising between the Negro and white GI's. The typical Southern soldier's attitude toward the Negro is expressed very succinctly in this quotation taken from Captain Wiley's discourse on the subject:

> What you're trying to say is that a Negro is equal to a white man. Don't you see that if he was equal, you wouldn't have to be demanding 'rights' for him? Like you say, he'd have them by force, if no other way. He hasn't got them, though they gave them to him, and more, after the War Between the States, but he couldn't keep them; he wasn't up to it. That's where the North was wrong then, and that is where you're wrong now. The two races just aren't equal. Anyone who says they are, either doesn't have good sense, or doesn't know Negroes.  

The basic animosity between the Southern Whites and Negroes in this novel is brought into the open when Negro officers attempt to use the facilities in the officers' club. The novel ends without any solution being reached with regard to the betterment of relations between the two groups.

None of the other novels treats of themes in which this problem of the Negro is dealt with at length. There

are, however, fleeting incidents occurring in a few others in which the reader is made aware of the fact that this might have been a major issue if the Negroes and the whites had not been separated. Such an incident occurs in The Gallery when a Negro GI on pass to Rome is maltreated by two Southern M.P.'s who attempt to beat him up.

Officers versus Enlisted Men

Another point on which there is practically unanimity of opinion on the part of the various authors of war novels is that concerning the relationship existing between the officers and enlisted men. A definite antagonism exists between these two groups in virtually all of the novels listed in this thesis. This basic animosity, of course, while it is described in detail, seldom vents itself openly because of the inequality of positions. This situation is referred to again and again in the novels; but once more I should like to state that considerable difference exists in the many cases as to the treatment of the subject. Those authors, such as Jones andMailer, who served as enlisted men are inclined to paint a blacker picture of this feature of army and navy life than those who served as officers.

There is contained in John Horne Burns' book The Gallery an excellent passage which summarizes the attitude of the enlisted men toward officers. The general strain
of this cryptic comment on the components of the officers' qualities is a fair indication of the same trend of thought entertained by the average GI as depicted throughout the war novels. In this instance a corporal makes the following observation:

I know my army officers well, having observed them for years from the perspective of a pebble looking up and squinting at the white bellies of the fish nosing above it. Americans usually go mad when by direction of the President of the United States they put a piece of metal on their collars. They don't know whether they're the Lone Ranger, Jesus Christ, or Ivanhoe.14

This same corporal makes this further observation:

American officers fall into three easy slots of the doughnut machine. The feminine ones, I mean those who register life and are acted upon by it, become motherly, fussy, and on the receiving end of the GI's under them. If they rule at all, it's by power of their gentleness, which can fasten a GI in tight bonds once his will consents and admires. Second there are the violent and the aggressive, who as commissioned officers assume a male and fatherly part ranging from drunken pa's who whale their sons on Saturday nights to the male and nursing tenderness of an athletic coach. Yet those most masculine men aren't always the best officers in a crisis or showdown. Third, there are those commissioned nonentities who as civilians were male stenographers, file clerks, and x-ray technicians. They are neither neuter, masculine, nor feminine.15

In the novel, The Naked and the Dead, General Cummings describes this feeling of unfriendliness on the


15Ibid., pp. 140-141.
part of the enlisted men as a healthy situation for all concerned. In a passage directed at Lt. Hearn he explains it as follows:

The Army functions best when you're frightened of the man above you, and contemptuous of your subordinates.16

Throughout the novel That Winter the reader is aware of the deep-seated grudge that the author holds against former officers by constantly encountering such passages as the following:

The copy boy, who had been a captain in the Marine Corps, was standing outside the office.17 Miller loves to place his hero, Peter, in the position of patronizing a former officer of his who once assumed airs toward him during their acquaintance in the army. By doing this, Miller fulfills, in a sense, the wish expressed by Kinetta, a character in The Naked and the Dead, who, at the end of the story exclaims:

I'm gonna walk up to every sonofabitch officer in uniform and say, 'Sucker' to them, every one of them, right on Broadway.18

Numerous other quotations could be lifted from the pages of the various war novels to illustrate this point, but I believe that it would serve no useful purpose. The books which are particularly vehement in the expression of

17Mailer, Kerle, op. cit., p. 114.
18Mailer, Norman, op. cit., p. 711.
the dislike of the enlisted men for their superiors are
the following: *The End of My Life*, *The Gallery*, *Mr. Roberts*, *Across the River and into the Trees*, *From Here to
Eternity*, *The Naked and the Dead*, *That Winter*, *The Young
Lions*, *Shore Leave*, *An Act of Love*, and *The Caine Mutiny*.

Of course, there are instances in which the opposite
is true. In the novel, *A Bell for Adam*, a very healthy
relationship exists between the hero, Major Joppolo, and
various enlisted men under his command. Even in such a
book as *An Act of Love*, in which the basic imminibility
of the two classes is underlined, there exists a very
wholesome relationship between Sergeant Foglese and Lieu-
tenant Brunner toward the end of the book. But these re-
lationships are the exception rather than the rule, and
one obtains the impression that the most satisfactory ar-
angement for both enlisted men and officers is one such
as that described in the novel, *Mr. Roberts*.

He had strayed onto an area which few of the
officers ever violated, a buffer area of good feel-
ing between officers and men constructed painstak-
ingly of mutual tolerance, compromise and taut un-
derstanding. The officers left the men alone, and
the men did the same. 19

The novel, *The Young Lions*, is interesting in this
connection, in so far as the author attempts to describe
the workings of the German mind with regard to officers

19 Haggan, Thomas, *Mr. Roberts*, Houghton, Mifflen and
and enlisted men. Diestl, the fiendish Nazi officer, evokes very much the same emotions from the men under him as those displayed by their American counterparts in like circumstances. The natural conclusion to draw after reading this novel is that all armies are alike with regard to the basic suspicion and animosity displayed by the enlisted men toward their officers.

Attitude of GI toward America

Another interesting feature that cannot escape the reader's attention in the reading of the war novels is the attitude which the American GI displays toward his own country. In many cases the GI's, during the stress of combat conditions, give utterance to their dislike of the reasons for fighting and air grievances directed at their own country. One detects this feeling over and over again, and it is interesting to compare the complete lack of chauvinism on the part of the GI in the last war with that of his forebears in the First World War. The almost cynical contempt for values in general with which the authors endow the World War II GI is nowhere more apparent than in the emptiness of feeling expressed by so many of the characters toward their native land.

Too many of the GI's feel that they are fighting a battle to make safe a system of government and a ruling class that is out of sympathy with their own particular
fates. One of the GI's depicted in The Strange Land expresses his feelings in the following manner:

American Blow it out. What did America ever do for me? Or you? America is guys like them. And they see to it that guys like us do what they want us to do. Peacetime and wartime. Do you know what happens when one of those guys retires from business? His son gets it, and there could be a thousand guys like you or me wrapping up bundles in the shipping room or somewhere and twice as smart as the guy's son, but do we ever got a chance to work our way up? No, you know God damn well we don't."^20

Most of the war novelists are more subtle than this, of course, in the expression of this hostile feeling, but there is the same undercurrent of feeling running rampant throughout the war novels. Books like From Here to Eternity, The Naked and the Dead, The Crusaders, The Gallery, Guard of Honor, The Last of the Conquerors, That Winter, and The End of My Life, in particular, and practically all of the war novels in general, contain a multitude of characters whose attitudes parallel that expressed in the quotation. Witness this gem taken from the novel, The End of My Life:

"I'll tell you how I feel about the American Army," said the sergeant. "How I feel, and every guy feels, who isn't an officer or some other kind of moron. If I had it to do over again, I'd rather spend the time in a clean jail. It's a great career, the Army. For pigs. If I ever have a son,

and he wants to join the U. S. Army, I'll do him a big favor. I'll say, 'Turn your back, my boy,' and when he does, I'll kick him in the spine and cripple him so he won't be able to make the physical." 21

Attitude of Foreigners toward Americans

Hardly less disturbing than the pessimistic attitude that the American GI adopts toward his own country and his role in fighting the war is the attitude of foreigners directed toward the GI and his country. After reading the many war novels, the reader is left with the impression that the American GI is something less than the ambassador of good will that many civilians in this country think him to be. Again I should like to make it clear that there are books which, like John Hersey's A Bell for Adano, sound an optimistic note with regard to the relationship of the GI to foreign peoples, but these books constitute the exception. In many cases the actions of the characters speak for themselves and the author does not express-ly state that a feeling of ill will exists; but it is a very undiscerning reader that does not conclude that a feeling of hatred for America results from those actions.

Perhaps the book which best describes this disturbing aspect of the role that the GI plays is The Gallery, by John Horne Burns. In this novel Burns devotes much space

21 Bourjaily, Vance, op. cit., p. 249.
to the problem of portraying the feelings and attitudes held between the conquered Italians and the GI's. In one instance in this book a young Italian boy shouts the following passage from the depths of his tortured soul at an American GI who actually has treated the boy with much kindness:

You Americans taught me everything I know of evil and hate.... You taught me that hate is stronger and lasts longer than love. For all the things you Americans have done to me and wish to do to me and with me are hateful. Every time I see you or touch you I hate you more... 22

The cause of the feeling expressed in this outburst is the fact that this young Italian boy has been forced by the exigencies of the war to make his living by pandering to the depraved sexual appetites of some of the baser American GI's. If the situation in Italy was as Burns describes it in his novel, then the reader has no choice but to conclude that the American GI through his actions in that war-torn land laid up a store of resentment and hatred that might well affect the future political relations between the two countries.

Another author who maintains throughout his novels that the situation in Italy was much as Burns describes it is Alfred Hayes, in his two novels, All Thy Conquests and The Girl on the Via Flaminia. Of the two novels I

believe that the latter better describes the hopelessness of the attempt to bridge the gap existing between the conqueror and the conquered. In The Girl on the Via Flaminia the central theme concerns the illicit love affair between an American GI, Robert, and a young Italian girl, Lisa. Robert, tired of the loneliness and the weariness of Army life in a conquered land, has decided that the answer to his problem is to effect a liaison with an Italian girl of decent background. He expresses this need in the following passage:

I don't think I wanted love. I wanted a girl because I didn't like to have to stand under the trees on the Via Veneto or to go under the bridges. I wanted to get away from the army. I wanted to have a house I could come to, and a girl there, mine. 23

Lisa, a fundamentally decent type of girl, agrees to the arrangement with Robert on the advice of a friend, who addresses her as follows:

We are all unlucky in the same way. We were born, and born women, and in Europe during the wars. Ah, Lisa, it's all the same I tell you—for you or the contessa in her elegant apartment, sleeping with some English colonel or some American brigadier! That do you think the contessa calls it? It's an arrangement—it's love...but she, too, needs sugar and coffee when she wakes up in a cold room. Everything now is such an arrangement. Besides, who will it harm? Adele will have her rent—and if you won't be happier, at least you won't be hungrier...24

I have quoted these passages from The Girl on the Via

Flaminia at length, because I believe they express the motivations from the two different viewpoints that are the underlying factors in all of the cases of promiscuity that are dealt with in the novels of World War II. In this novel, despite Robert's innate kindness, we are shown the contempt that the average American GI, as depicted in the war novels, holds for the subjugated peoples. On the other hand, the acquiescent attitude of the foreign women toward the Americans might well be accounted for to a great extent in the attitude that Lisa adopts toward Robert. She takes her friend's advice, needless to say, and the "arrangement" is effected, but her basic sense of honesty leads her to confess to Robert that she hates all Americans and their wealth that enables them to disgrace her people. While her animosity is of a passive sort, her acquiescence to the liaison engenders in the heart of a young Italian admirer an avid hatred for all Americans, and he likens them to the Germans in their ruthless desires and in their unconcern for the downtrodden.

Another author who is particularly vehement in his denunciation of the degenerate acts of some GI characters toward foreigners is Stefan Heym, in his novel, The Crusaders. His account of the liberation of Paris and the complete depravity of an American major who, in the carefree passion of momentary triumph, seduces an innocent French girl, who has thought to welcome him as a liberator,
is another example of why Americans are not regarded with trust and admiration by the conquered or liberated peoples of the world. Heym, in this novel, reveals another cause for the distrust of the European toward the Americans quite apart from the sexual liberties in which the latter indulge. Colonel Willoughby and Major Loomis, two of the important characters in the book are guilty of operating a ten per cent racket in occupied Germany. At the time they are the top NO officers in the city of Kremmon.

If the war novels are a true criterion, the distrust and hatred that the GI's spread before them was by no means limited to the peoples of Europe. The same contempt and sense of superiority are adopted by many of the characters in war novels pertaining to the Pacific theatre of operations as well. Perhaps one of the best examples of this fact is James Jones' novel, From Here to Eternity. Jones reveals all too clearly that the average GI stationed in Hawaii regards the natives of that land as being little above the level of animals. Even though the Americans in this story are able to indulge their sensual appetites by dint of their comparative wealth, there is ample evidence in the book that this ability does not compel respect or affection on the part of the exploited. Even in such comparatively conservative novels as those of James Lichtenor one finds this underlying theme of racial superiority depicted in the attitude of the Americans.
toward the peoples of the islands in the Pacific.

This writer finds this constant depiction of the GI as displaying a harsh and patronizing attitude toward his allies and their peoples a very disturbing factor in the war novels. At times the reader is made to wonder if the American soldiers really understood who it was that they were supposed to be fighting. Certainly his view of the enemy troops is not marked with the contempt and disgust that he so frequently displays toward the civilians of England, France, Hawaii, etc. On the whole his regard for the enemy troops is characterized by respect and a sense of equanimity. If, then, the war novels consist of a fairly accurate report of the facts that were present in the various lands in which the GI traveled, it would seem that one result of his presence in those lands would be a harvest of hate that may have to be reaped some day.
CHAPTER IV

Language

Perhaps one of the most controversial questions to develop as a result of the war novels studied is the one concerning the profusion of profanity which the reader encounters. The reader of the war novels is presented with a choice of language and terminology that in many instances is indelicate to the extreme. The average reader, unacquainted with the actual situation, must be plagued with two questions in particular. First, is the language attributed to the GI's as their habitual mode of speech an accurate representation? Second, granting that the language of the average GI does deteriorate upon his induction into the services, should those words of the four-letter category be used by authors for the sake of realism? The first question can easily be answered in the affirmative by any veteran of World War II. The second question, however, is not so easily dispensed with, and in the final analysis it remains for the individual reader to decide for himself. Writing about this question before the appearance of such extreme examples of the use of profanity and vulgarity in such novels as From Here to Eternity and The Naked and the Dead, one noted American critic has this to say:

As for freedom in the choice of words (and here the only debated areas have been those of
profanity and sex) there are, I think, only two considerations that we need bear in mind. One is that frankness of language, as employed in books will generally go no further than the limits which ordinary, non-priggish people impose upon themselves in social intercourse at any given period; nor is it possible to set standards which hold for everybody, because just as some people are more strongly sexed than others, so they differ widely in their sensitivity to words, as they do to smells and sounds and tastes, and what is offensive to one is not at all to another.25

It is interesting to observe in the reading of the war novels that many of the authors themselves differ in their opinions as to whether the actual profanity of G1 characters should be employed. Two such examples of authors, both of whom have written best-selling novels, are Norman Mailer and Herman Wouk. Mailer's The Naked and the Dead contains innumerable expressions of profanity and vulgarity which undoubtedly are shocking to the more timid readers, while Wouk's The Caine Mutiny carefully avoids the use of the more flagrant terms. Mailer has been quoted as saying that he believes such terms are no longer objectionable after the first ten or fifteen pages because they have lost the quality of unexpectedness. Wouk, while he refuses to employ such terms, acknowledges in the foreword to his book that the absence of such expressions is by no means to the credit of the seaman of whom he writes. He simply prefers to convey the idea of swearing on the part of his characters in more delicate terms than those on-

25 Adams, J. Donald, op. cit., p. 66
ployed by Mallor. In a sense Vouk's foreword is a practical exoneration of those novelists who are less considerate of the delicate feelings of their readers as far as the accuracy of their language is concerned.

As far as the GI terminology used is concerned, books may be divided into three general categories. In this instance I shall deal with the authors rather than their books, for, in most cases, the authors are fairly constant in their use of profanity. Either they do or they don't.

The first category consists of those authors who avoid the use of vulgarisms and profane terms and content themselves with the use of substitute expressions that convey the meaning of the speaker. In some cases there are a few lapses from the general practice of using words of a non-profane nature, but these lapses are relatively few and the authors listed would qualify, on the whole, in this division. Actually the list of authors who use no profanity of any kind in their attempts to write a novel about the war is very short. Only five of the authors considered in this thesis qualify as purists in this respect. They are as follows: Kay Boyle, Pearl S. Buck, Marion Hargrove, Upton Sinclair, and John Steinbeck. In this connection two striking facts are apparent. First, three of these authors have written their war novels about foreign peoples, namely, Kay Boyle, Pearl S. Buck, and John Steinbeck. The second factor of importance is that two of these
authors are women. They are, in fact, the only women included in this discussion of war novels. None of these authors attempts to describe the GI under actual combat conditions; and the possibility exists that if they were to do so, they would also use expressions and terms more consistent with the vocabulary of the American soldier.

The second category consists of those writers who avoid the use of the actual terms that many readers find objectionable but employ substitute expressions. In many cases these expressions are little more polite than the actual vulgarisms and profanities. I like to think of these writers as that group which adheres more or less to the polite cussing that has characterized so many of the American novels in the last half century. Under this second category I would include the following authors: Vance Bourjaily, Harry P. Brown, Ned Calmer, James G. Cozzens, Alfred Hayes, John Hersey, Stefan Heym, John P. Marquand, James A. Michener, Erle Miller, Irwin Shaw, William Smith, Gore Vidal, Ira Wolfert, and Herman Wouk. It must be remembered that some of these authors, such as Alfred Hayes, John Hersey, John Marquand and James A. Michener, have written more than one book under consideration. Of those books some are less characteristic than others. Alfred Hayes, for instance, uses far more objectionable terms in his story, *All Thy Conquests* than he does in his novel, *The Girl on the Via Flaminia*. 
Finally, the third category consists of those authors who make little attempt to salve the inhibitions of the more squeamish readers by toning down the language used by their characters. These authors would include the following: John Horn Burns, James Jones, Thomas Heggen, Ernest Hemingway, Norman Mailer, and Frederic Wakeman. Even in this group of authors there is considerable difference in the handling of the problem. James Jones, in *From Here to Eternity*, would, in my opinion, have to be awarded the grand prize for the incorporation of the longest list of obscenities, vulgarisms and expressions of profanity that any author attempts in the writing of war novels. Perhaps it is for this reason that the noted author and critic, Bernard DeVoto, writing in *Harper's*, makes the following observation:

> There is no provision, statutory or literary, that requires you to go on reading *From Here to Eternity*. I quit at about page 50 and the sense of well-being that ensued was terrific. Of the friends who have borrowed the book from me, only one got farther than I did. He reached page 104 and then gave up with the flu, which he preferred.

Norman Mailer's book, *The Naked and the Dead*, would follow a close second to Jones' novel in the uninhibited use of objectionable terms. Other authors avoid the over-all pattern of obscenity such as that encompassed by the two preceding novels; but they do from time to time insert

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passages that are as objectionable as anything in those novels. Such an example of the latter type would be Ernest Hemingway, who has always been known for his slightly off-color expressions, such as his "godammit." These he had sprinkled liberally throughout his novels long before some of the authors in this thesis were out of short pants. His language, while always calculated to draw a gasp or two from the more timid readers, has seldom degenerated into the outright obscene category until the penning of the ill-fated *Across the River and into the Trees.* In reading this novel, one is continually being shocked by the inclusion of several passages that are difficult to explain from the standpoint of good taste and honesty of characterization. After reading the first ten pages of Jones' novel, *From Here to Eternity,* it would be difficult to find anything shocking in the rest of the book, because the average reader, who possesses more stamina than the critic, DeVoto, is beyond that stage. The same thing does not apply to the colonel in Hemingway's novel, who has limited himself to the customary Hemingway off-color language before addressing the refined Contessa thus:

I never stole anything except the compass because I thought it was bad luck to steal unnecessarily, in war. But I drank the cognac and I used to try to figure out the different corrections on the compass when I had time. The compass was the only friend I had, and the telephone was my life. He had more wire strung
than there are cunts in Texas.\textsuperscript{27}

To me, such a passage, coming unexpectedly as it does, is patently more offensive in every way than the profusion of similar terms encountered everywhere in the novels of Jones and Mailer.

As I have said previously, the individual reader must decide ultimately for himself what constitutes the inartistic use of language in a novel; and, as Mr. Adams expresses it, there will be considerable difference of opinion as to the individual judgment in this respect. Yet, this writer cannot help questioning the necessity of such flagrant violations of the accepted mores in language use that so many of the World War II novelists feel obliged to employ for the sake of realism. Certainly there is considerable doubt that Mailer succeeds any better in depicting the conditions of war than does James Michener or Irwin Shaw; yet the use of obscene language on the one hand and the lack of it on the other is striking in comparison. On a larger scale of observation one wonders if our modern war novelists, with their penchant for physical detail and realistic language manage to convey any better the total impact and impression of war than another writer far removed from them in time and style. I am referring, of course, to Tolstoy and his novel, \textit{War and Peace}.

\textsuperscript{27} Hemingway, Ernest, \textit{op. cit.} p. 222
However one feels about the subject, the fact remains that in the writing of the various war novels, the World War II writers have managed to shed the last vestiges of restraint and inhibition, which had been the legacy of their Victorian forebears; and they have carried the frankness and reality of the Andersons, the Hemingways, and the Fitzgeralds to their logical conclusion. If it is true, as Anderson said in 1916, that crudity is an inevitable quality in the production of a really significant present-day American literature, then even Mr. Anderson may rest assured that the peak of crudity in expression and form has at last been reached. The only question that remains now is whether, having reached the peak, naturalism has any further destiny in American literature. Where can it go?
CHAPTER V

Humor

Since most of the World War II novels are admittedly of the realistic variety and since they deal with such a grim subject, there is little of the humor that prevails throughout much of American fiction as a whole. Indeed, one can read most of the World War II novels without encountering a shred of humor, but occasionally he finds a book, such as Thomas Haggens' Mr. Roberts, which is characterized in many instances by a sort of grim humor arising from the monotony of army or navy life.

This almost total absence of humor in the war novels is one of the most remarkable features of the novels, in my opinion, for there were many instances of humor in real army or navy life. The recounting of these instances are purposely avoided, it seems, for fear that they may detract from the over-all impression of pessimism and gloom that pervades the war novels as a whole.

One exception to this generalization, however, is a book that was published in the very early stages of the war, and which confines itself to the life of a single American soldier and his cohorts during the basic training phase of his career. This book is not a novel in the strict sense of the term, but it is worth mentioning here because of the effect that it had on the civilian popula-
tion. Hargrove, with his riotous account of the blunders and idiosyncrasies of the civilian newspaperman turned soldier, does much to assuage the anxiety of parents who have witnessed the first peace-time conscription of their sons in our history. Private Hargrove's experiences during the period of basic training are much the same as those of all the other GI's who follow him into the service. Since there is little difficulty in projecting oneself into the role of Private Hargrove, the book enjoyed great popularity and success, although the author's craftsmanship and technique did not evoke the praise of the critics. The author's conscious lack of literary pretensions makes this book what it is—a simply written, humorous account of the many vicissitudes endured by the average civilian trying to adjust to military life. As such, it is supremely successful. It is notable, too, for being the only book to come out of the war which does not have a serious central theme. Shortly after its publication the United States was too much embroiled in the struggle for survival, and the novels that followed See Here Private Hargrove are all of the more serious type that concern themselves with that struggle.

The other authors of war novels are far too busy trying to depict the savage mental and physical turmoil that the GI's endure to be concerned with humor. Thomas Hoggan makes perhaps the most successful attempt to combine humor and tragedy in the writing of his novel, Mr. Roberts. In
this story Lt. Roberts' attempt to relieve the overpowering sense of boredom and frustration that impales him in being assigned to a cargo ship that sees no action provides the setting for many humorous incidents that ensue. Yet, although one can derive much satisfaction at the spectacle of the Captain's being shot in the seat of the pants by Mr. Roberts, who uses a web of lead foil for his noble purpose, or in the debate in which some of the men indulge as to whether they can properly identify the nurse who possesses the distinguishing birthmark on her derrières, this book is essentially one of a serious nature. Mr. Roberts is not a comic character, but a tragic one. He is the epitome of all those soldiers and sailors who enlist in order to take an active part in the war only to find themselves assigned to a monotonous, but essential, job, far removed from the scene of actual combat.

Throughout the war novels one is continually amazed that the novelists disregard the possibilities for humorous incidents that prevail. One author who recognizes that GI's in their most serious predicaments never totally abandon their American penchant for humor is Harry Peter Brown, who, in A Walk in the Sun, provides many an outlet for emotions in the wisecracking remarks of his machine gunner. John Hersey is another novelist who recognizes the implicit humor in several situations in which his hero, Major Joppolo, becomes embroiled in the Italian dilemma.
Noteworthy also in this respect are the general's orderly in *Command Decision*, the subtle humor pervading much of Kichener's *Tales of the South Pacific*. John Marquand's satirical humor in *Melville Goodwin, U.S.A.*, Houlk's satirical treatment of war novelists in *The Caine Mutiny*, and the crude humor of the pilots in *Wakeman's Shore Leave*.

Humor, as such, then, appears to be a luxury that the war novelists cannot afford. The main reason is that the realistic accounts of the war as embodied in the war novels can admit of no lightening effects for fear of spoiling the general impression of horror. Yet, this writer again questions the absence of humor in the war novels that purport to be of a realistic nature, for by eliminating this feature of GI life, the authors leave themselves open to one criticism that has to do with the very realism that they seek to preserve. Certainly if one leaves the realm of fiction and surveys the strictly authentic accounts of the war and GI life given in Ernie Pyle's many interesting articles about the subject, he does not have to search far to find instances of GI humor. And if he reads Audie Murphy's personal account of combat conditions in the book, *To Hell and Back*, he will be readily assured that, although the life of an infantryman in combat is indeed synonymous to a trip to hell, the road there-to is paved with many humorous incidents.
CHAPTER VI

Total Appraisal

In summarizing my findings on the World War II novels, I should like to caution the reader again that there are exceptions to the general impression made upon the writer in the reading of those novels.

On the whole, however, certain definite conclusions can be drawn with respect to the World War II novels. There is little doubt that the readers of the war novels in question are given a complete and inclusive picture of modern warfare at its worst. Almost without exception the novelists leave no stone unturned in their attempts to acquaint the readers with all of the atrocities and evils that total war entails in our civilized world. For the most part these authors are men who were on the scene of battle, either in the capacity of combat soldiers or as war correspondents. What they have seen and experienced they put into the pages of their novels, and they write with a frankness and sincerity that cannot be questioned. In their attempts to fix the scenes of warfare and military life firmly in the minds of their readers, they carry the realistic and naturalistic modes of writing to their most extreme forms. In doing so, they have erased whatever inhibitions formerly associated with the medium of the novel; and they have paid little deference to the more conservative group of readers in the choice of language.
and style used in presenting the episodes of their novels.

Since these authors, then, are well informed on the topic of modern warfare as viewed from the GI's scale of observation, and since they all do make strenuous efforts to present the facts as they actually were, these novels of World War II are, on the whole, first rate jobs of the reporting type. None of the romanticism that now prevails in the writing of other wars in our history, notably the Civil War, is present in these novels. The American reading public is still too close to this war to entertain any romantic illusions concerning it; and the authors faithfully have avoided the glossing over of the more unsavory aspects of the war.

As first-hand reports of the scenes of combat, these novels are a success. But where the authors fail and fail miserably, it seems to me, is in the creation of realistic characters. Most of the characters treated in the World War II novels are of the same type and vintage. Stock characters, such as the oppressed Jew, appear constantly throughout the novels, and few deviations from the accepted norm are noticeable. Then, too, the absence of the exploration of the more positive characteristics in the people depicted in the novels is a major factor in this failure to create convincing men and women. Even accepting the premise that soldiers facing the hardships of combat are inclined to be of a morose and pessimistic nature when
time permits them to delve into the political and philosophical implications of the war, it is difficult to accept the almost complete absence of characters who incline toward a more salutary viewpoint of life. One searches in vain for a handful of characters in all of the World War II novels who turn to prayer and faith in their physical and mental struggles. In their attitudes and sense of values regarding sex, our American system of life, and the relative importance of human dignity, the characters of these novels are painted in the most damning colors. After all, even the worst GI's must have had a pleasant thought for home and country at times, and even the most hopeless derelicts in the services must have met some people in their travels who inspired some emotions other than the general contempt that is described too often in the war novels.

It would appear that these writers, in their feverish attempts to outdo the writers of the so-called lost generation in the depiction of characters with no sense of moral and intellectual values, defeat their own purpose of creating a realistic picture of war characters. Certainly there were men like the forlorn and inept characters in The Naked and the Dead in the ranks of the soldiers in combat. There are men like that everywhere. But for every one of the above-mentioned types, I am sure that there must have been at least one of the more wholesome
type, who did, or thought he did, believe in something; and I am optimistic enough to believe that there was a much greater ratio in favor of the latter type.

Speaking now as a veteran of combat conditions in the European theatre of operations in World War II, I should like to assert emphatically that, while the authors of the war novels are accurate in their descriptions of conditions that prevail in combat, they are completely unjust in their concentration on the spiritually and morally bankrupt characters that they attempt to foist off on the American reading public as being typical examples of the GI in combat.

Finally, I should like to point out also that except for being accurate novels of the reportage type, these novels, with few exceptions, have no story quality per se. Anyone reading these novels for the stories alone might just as well give up after the first two or three, for he will find endless repetition of the hardships of combat on individuals and little else. This point leads this writer to wonder if many of the first novelists who emerged from the war will be able to continue writing novels on themes other than their actual experiences during that war. The unusual dearth of imagination displayed by the majority of them in writing about a subject so close to them would seem to belie that hope. Writers such as John Horne Burns, Gore Vidal, and Vance Bourjaily, for example, will bear
watching in this respect once the vein of war lore has been exhausted. The final verdict in this respect, of course, will have to be delayed for many years.

Another question that cannot be answered, even after the lapse of eight years since the end of the war, is that concerning the most representative novel of World War II. It is my personal belief, however, that the *Gone with the Wind* of World War II has yet to be written.
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Wallace L. Woodcock was born in Lewiston, Maine, on November 13, 1923. He received his grammar school education at Saint Patrick's School in that city.

In 1939 his family moved to Bangor, Maine, where he entered John Bapt High School. He graduated from high school in 1942; and, in the fall of that year, he entered the University of Maine.

He completed one semester at the University of Maine, and then he entered the army, where he served for three years. While in the army he served as a "medic" in the Third Armored Division.

Upon his discharge from the army in 1945 he once more entered the University of Maine. He received his B. A. degree in English from that school in 1949.

Since his graduation from college he has served as head of the English department at Fort Fairfield High School in Fort Fairfield, Maine.

In 1950 he married Marie Perry, a classmate of his at college, and they are the parents of three children.