'It's duty boy.' Masculinities, masculine subjects and their representation in the twentieth century American war novel.

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Abstract

This thesis examines and explores twentieth century literary representations of American masculinity at war. It aims to demonstrate the manner in which American novels responding to the First and Second World Wars and the Vietnam conflict reflect symbolic, mythic and material anxieties regarding America's masculine identities. The thesis examines in particular the pervasive myth of the American Adam and its influence on behaviours, ideologies and narrative. Each text and each conflict operates under the influence of Adamic myth. I argue that prose fiction offers a space in which to scrutinise, engage and ultimately resist such mythic singularity.

The incorporation of gender theory into such a study provides an original critical perspective with which to read crucial artistic responses to major events of the American twentieth century. Its central arguments engage with anxieties existing between ideological representations of hegemonic American masculinity and the graphic truth of experience for the corporeal and psychological subject.

As well as thematic aspects of the literature, the thesis analyses shifts in narrative technique and the manner in which they reflect the growth and pluralising of wider narratives within the fields of modernism, American naturalism and postmodernism. The contemporary era is marked by commemoration and reflection regarding twentieth century conflict and by anxiety regarding the unstable post 9/11 world. In addition to this, there is resurgence in scholarly, political and popular interest in gender and its representation. These factors mean that this is a timely and vital study that reflects on literary history and current literary debates.

The authors and their work in this thesis are considered in chronological order and cover a significant part of the American twentieth century. Chapter one examines John Dos Passos' *Three Soldiers* and Ernest Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms*. Chapter two engages with two Pacific war novels; Norman Mailer's *The Naked and the Dead* and James Jones' *The Thin Red Line*. Chapter three explores post-war existential angst and early postmodernism in Joseph Heller's *Catch-22* and Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five*. The final chapter offers analysis of Larry

Heinemann's *Close Quarters* and *Paco's Story* and Tim O'Brien's *Going After Cacciato* and *The Things They Carried*.

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Introduction

In January 2015, I spent an afternoon in London visiting Tate Modern's *Conflict. Time. Photography.* Exhibition (2015). The Tate's premise was to engage with the 'great challenge of looking back, considering the past without becoming stuck in the process' (np). The photographs in the exhibition did just that. It made looking back a temporally fluid process. War and conflict were locked into their historical place yet the very act of historicising them also offered a commentary on the cultures that produce such memories. The event and the memorial of the event overlapped and intermingled. The manner of telling was as revealing of national symbolism and myth as the subject matter itself.

The same revelation was evident this year in the polarising responses to Clint Eastwood's adaptation of US navy seal Chris Kyles' memoir *American Sniper* (2015). *The Guardian*'s Lindy West (2015) claimed that Kyles' text suggested he was a 'racist who took pleasure in dehumanising and killing brown people' (np). *Variety*'s Scott Foundas (2015) added that Kyles 'saw the world in clearly demarcated terms of good and evil' (np). Eastwood's film, however, was more divisive. West explained that it was treated by the American right with 'unconsidered, rah-rah reverence' (np) and by fans of Eastwood as 'a morally ambiguous, emotionally complex film' (np). Alex Horton, also writing for *The Guardian* (2015) and himself an Iraq veteran, argued that the film was simply an attempt to 'capitalize on our insatiable hunger for stories about unstoppable commandos' (np). David Kaiser, (2015) meanwhile, contended in *Time Magazine* that the controversy 'echoes the aftermath of the Vietnam War' (np) as 'observers on both the right and the left suggest that one's attitude towards our soldiers must mirror our attitude towards the war in which they fought, and vice versa'(np). What is clear from this debate is that narratives themselves are rarely stable. As well as the demarcation between written memoir and cinematic adaptation, there is also the relative reputation of each voice to consider. Throw in the blinkered manner in which both ends of the political spectrum appropriate creative material and what you are left with is confusing and contradictory plurality. If any single conclusion can be drawn from this mass of conflicting opinions then it is surely that war narratives and their responses often reveal more about their speaker or the speaker's cultural context than about the war itself.

This is also the case for the texts examined in this thesis. American history is bound together with war. Its resultant narratives help to navigate the liminal spaces that exist between polarised cultural and philosophical positions. David Hogan (2011) writes of a 'nation proud of its military prowess, aroused by martial imagery, and if not necessarily quick to turn to arms at least emotionally and even structurally prone to military approaches to intractable problems' (1023). For Hogan, the reading of American war is complex and 'differing views on man's basic nature produce widely varying attitudes on warfare and its place in human affairs' (1024).

Such variance is a thread that runs through this work. The intention here is to analyse shifting attitudes *to* and representations *of* American masculinities in American war novels. Texts by John Dos Passos, Ernest Hemingway, Norman Mailer, James Jones, Joseph Heller, Kurt Vonnegut, Larry Heinemann and Tim O'Brien offer their own way of looking back. The American masculine subject slips from a position of supposed autonomy and self-determining agency to one of powerlessness and terror. War is a chance to symbolically enact mythic American masculinity yet is the very experience that challenges and subverts it. The American masculine subject, therefore, is both a material presence and a symbolic agent. He engages in material behaviour to symbolically perform masculine myths and ideals yet those same material acts also have corporeal and psychological consequences. The tension between masculinities' material plurality and the singularity of myth drives the content of this discussion.

This thesis, then, explores the relationship between symbolic, mythic and material versions of the American masculine subject. Each novel discussed consciously and unconsciously presents a pluralised and complex set of paradoxes that jar with the simplistic codes inherent in hegemonic systems of gendered taxonomy. The novels are simultaneously social critique, historiography, memoir and commentary on narrative itself. All of these diverse and contradictory issues drive analyses that revel in paradox and uncertainty. John Beynon (2002) defines masculinities as 'always interpolated by cultural, historical and geographical location' (1). In a material sense, there is no one overriding masculinity but a series of competing and shifting masculinities. The plural form is a key in addressing this. The tension in each text, however, is that such plurality exists alongside singular and powerful mythic constructions of

masculinity. It is at this point that I need to offer some explanation for a term that I will use frequently in this thesis. I use *American masculine subject* in a somewhat paradoxical fashion. It is, of course, a singular form, but I intend it as a representation of a plural phenomenon. American masculinities are bewilderingly diverse and encompass all manner of social, cultural, sexual and ethnic identities. Such plurality poses a grammatical problem and so when I use the aforementioned term it is intended to reflect many competing masculinities. What unites each of these masculine identities is that they are subject to pressure to perform a mythic singularity.

Also important at this stage is an outline of the manner in which war-as-symbolic and war-as-material cohabitate in this thesis. War is a symbolic act that sustains dominant mythic narratives. Yet, it is also a material act in which those same constructions are repeatedly debunked and problematised. Therefore, the American masculine subject exists in a paradoxical state in which his own actions are at once symbolic and material. The relationship between symbolic acts and material acts in war is not dialectic. The two are intertwined and inseparable yet still pull in opposing directions. Similar complex analyses must be applied to war narratives, even when they are ostensibly anti-war. It is important to resist what Sacvan Bercovitch (1993) names 'oppositional reading' (16) of American war and its textual narratives. War narratives resist and propagate war as an American mythic trope in what Bercovitch describes as a 'cultural symbology which not only tolerates but elicits resistance' (17). Thus, the war narrative is both a response to war and is embedded in war. The texts studied in this thesis do not offer an authoritative counter narrative to war. They are simply one of the plural narratives that accompany it. As such, they also embody the complexity of American masculinities. They do not offer an authoritative counter to singular masculinity, they instead offer complicated and pluralised masculine identifies.

Of course, novels written about a whole range of masculine issues could have been suitable for this study. Narratives about family, the workplace, sex or education certainly share thematic commonalities with the material examined here. However, American war novels contain narratives that touch upon all of these issues simultaneously. In some senses, American war novels are really just American novels. As such, twentieth century American war acts as

metonym for twentieth century America. It is prescient at this stage to outline my reasoning here. As with every topic in this thesis, the discussion is complex and to begin, I must look to American myth. Richard Slotkin (1973) claims that America's 'myth consciousness' (4) sets it apart from other modern nations. Its 'continual pre-occupation with the necessity of defining or creating a national identity' (4) means that its subjects always feel the weight of their mythic past. Slotkin describes America's narrative beginnings as a process of 'mythogenesis' (4) in which 'the founding fathers […] tore violently a nation from the implacable and opulent wilderness' (4).

This American beginning is the basis, Charles Fiedelson (1959) argues, for 'a mode of perception that united past and present' (81) and 'ideas and material fact' (81). America is a nation fully aware of its mythic origins and, therefore, every material act is a conscious effort to symbolise those myths. Jacques Waardenburg (1980) proposes a behavioural model in which ostensibly material acts are read as evidence of a search for and enactment of myth.

> In nearly all societies, communities and groups certain symbolic words, actions or other expressions betray the existence of mythical elements by which the people symbolically give a real foundation to their way of life, legitimating their right of independence, undergirding their struggle for survival, strengthening their desire for fulfilment. (55)

The dichotomy of real and mythic is complicated by such behaviour and activity. Bercovitch writes of a uniquely American 'historicity of myth' (7). It is a system that underpins all 'national rituals' (1) and 'strategies of symbolic cohesion' (1). Thus, national myths are treated with material reverence. They do not belong in a forgotten and misty past but in a recent and often secular history. The American masculine subject seeks to perpetuate and propagate American myth through symbolic actions evident in material endeavour. Active participation in capitalism and all that it entails, for example, involves labour, consuming media and products and the ownership and cultivation of land. These are material acts that exist within a tangible real. Yet, they are also conscious efforts at supporting and propagating America's founding myths. However, in the case of mechanised war, material actions actively undermine the power and hold of such myth. The daily particulars of capitalism are replaced by violence and destruction. The instigator of such behaviours is no longer a creative force

displaying a self-determining agency. The combatant acts violently not through choice despite the violent act itself attempting to display such free will. To return to Fiedelson, he contends that any 'theory of symbolism is really a theory of knowledge' (50). Therefore, the American relationship between materiality and myth is 'a point of departure outside of dualism' (50). The American masculine subject uses the relationship to 'recapture the unity of a world artificially divided' (51).

The American masculine subject's gendered identity is constituted of a huge and wildly divergent range of cultural artefacts. He is, amongst many other things, a *bricolage* of art, historiography, consumer choice and frenzied media debate. He is evidently plural yet incessantly pulled back to a singularity. The dissonant constructions and shifting hegemonies suggest fluidity and complexity. However, underneath all of this is a single monomythic construction of American masculinity. Culturally, the American masculine subject takes many forms but, rather than this being evidence of a wide base of historical loci, it suggests repeated attempts and simulations of a single moment of formation. The arrival of the Puritans and Independence, for example, are treated with a singular and heroic reverence. Indeed, it is such singularity that comparative mythologist Joseph Campbell (2008(1949)) famously refers to as the 'nuclear unit of monomyth' (23). He argues that all cultural and national identities base their formation on a singular mythic narrative. The 'mythological adventure of the hero' (23) with its repeated tropes of 'separation, initiation and return' (23) is the narrative that can 'carry the human spirit forward' (7) into 'a world of solid matter' (8). The universal hero myth sees a usually masculine subject embark on a 'series of adventures beyond the ordinary, either to recover what has been lost or to discover some life giving elixir' (62).

John Lawrence and Robert Jewett (2002) argue that American popular culture has 'not yet moved beyond mythic consciousness' (6). It is in thrall to the 'classical monomyth' (5) of 'superheroic redemptive violence' (5). They draw links between 'American historical experiences and fictional representations of them' (11) and suggest a cyclical process of myth, myth demonstrating symbolic action and reassertion of myth. When the symbolic action has a negative impact on the veracity of the mythic narrative, it asserts itself even more strongly and in doing so is able to 'disguise empirical reality' (22). Thus the American hero is a

pervasive and singular narrative manifest in popular stories of 'redeemer figures on powerful horses [and] impartial outsiders whose zeal for right and sympathy for the underdog […] triumph over evil' (30). Lawrence and Jewett list qualities and traits that constitute the idealised heroic masculine figure. He has 'pure motivations' (47), 'extraordinary powers' (47), a 'selfless zeal for justice' (47), 'moral infallibility' (47) and a 'body incapable of suffering fatal injury' (47).

For the American masculine subject at war, the mythic American hero looms large. Heroism and associated virtues of duty, patriotism and physical courage provide an idealised template dissonant with material experience. The notion of heroic courage in the face of corporeal and emotional powerlessness is a thematic and philosophical concern that is visited frequently in this thesis. Protagonists privately ruminate on the elusive nature of courage while simultaneously doing all they can to enact a convincing performance of it. American war has been historically sold on the hero myth. The American masculine subject hears a call to arms and leaves his domestic safety to travel to unknown foreign lands. He is asked to demonstrate bravery and unflinching duty to a noble cause and to return victorious to a rapturous welcome. Of course, this is an oversimplification of complex historical events but, as this thesis will demonstrate, participation in conflict operates as a way to sustain the hero myth. In fact, the title of this thesis is taken from an example of such discourse.

As America prepared to enter the First World War in 1917, George Creel's unprecedented propaganda campaign included 75,000 volunteer *Four Minute Men*. Their job was to use the four minutes that it took to change a film reel in cinemas to deliver galvanising messages that, as Alfred Cornebise (1984) describes, were designed to 'enthuse and inspire the audience' (35). Creel used the new language of advertising, Cornebise continues, to ensure that the conflict was 'packaged or sold' (35). Duty, patriotism and heroism were evoked as tools to increase recruitment. Just as a particular brand of tobacco would make a statement regarding the consumer's sophistication and taste, signing up for military service would signal membership of a desirable yet singular American masculinity. The poem 'It's Duty Boy' (Bender et al., 2012) was performed in 1917. Cornebise dismisses it as 'high minded romantic doggerel' (61) evoking the 'striking willingness of fathers – and mothers – to sacrifice sons

in holy causes' (61). The poem is voiced by a father concerned that his son will 'bring disgrace' (np) if he fails to re-enact the heroism on display at 'Valley Forge' (np), 'Lexington' (np) and 'Gettysburg' (np). America's military history is, therefore aligned with paternal pride and personal family history. If the son 'cannot hear the call' (np) then his father would rather he 'had died at birth or not been born at all'. (np)Participation in the war, therefore, is both material and symbolic imperative.

Lawrence Coupe (1997) argues that 'myth is paradigmatic, but there is no pure paradigm' (5). This statement suggests the paradoxical nature of the American masculine subject's relationship with his symbolic actions and identities. Myths provide a possible model for living yet it is a model that always falls short. The problem here lays in what Coupe terms a 'drive towards completion' (6). As a result of mythic narrative, the American masculine subject develops eschatological focus. He seeks the 'complete answer to […] theoretical problems' (7) by 'seeing things through to as near their full completion as is practicable' (6). The material and experiential reality that accompanies such eschatological desire has the potential to 'create powerfully imaginative stories' (8) but also for 'systemic violence' (8) directed at 'the perfect victim or scapegoat' (8). Twentieth century American conflict sees this suggestion in action. The drive for symbolic completion creates the need for a constructed *other*. This binarised figure – whether they are German, Japanese or Viet Cong – is an inverted reflection of the American masculine subject. Their supposed barbarity and immorality provide symbolic justification for war. They are the antithesis to the American masculine subject and, therefore, a rationalisation for violence. The problem, again, is that these acts of violence are symbolic yet also corporeal, organic and traumatic. Acts of violence sustain myth whilst simultaneously refuting it.

The construction of the American masculine subject, therefore, is based on the nation's self-conscious relationship with its own myth. He is a patchwork of ideas that can be traced back to a singular narrative. Unlike other processes of mythogenesis, this is narrative very closely linked with recorded history. Bercovitch contends that the break with Europe 'relocated the seat of Empire from the Old World to the New' (7) and 'reversed the very meaning of newness from its colonial status of dependency to a declaration not just of independence

but of superiority' (7). Michael Kimmel (1996) reads American independence as a historical moment full of gendered symbolism. He ascribes a constructed masculine identity to the new nation, arguing that 'the Declaration of Independence was declaration of manly adulthood […]" (14). Until this break, Kimmel argues, America was in a state of perpetual and frustrating adolescence. Colonial America, despite the protestations of its Puritan heritage, was still 'a boy' (14). The European father was 'independent, self-controlled, responsible' (14), whereas the American son was 'dependent, irresponsible and lacked control' (14). The American Revolution was an act of war that 'resolved this tension' (14) as 'it freed the sons from the tyranny of a despotic father' (14).

Independence meant newness and the myth of the *American Adam*. This term was coined in the 1950s by R.W.B. Lewis (1955) and is an example of the American masculine subject's paradoxical relationship with myth. Lewis defines his term as 'a figure of heroic innocence and vast potentialities, poised at the start of a new history' (1). It is this sense of *newness* that underpins the mythic framework. The American Adam is 'unsullied by the past' (4) in a country that 'has no past, but only a present and a future' (5). Jonathan Mitchell (2013) explains that 'the American Adam is a masculine privileging paradigm' (5) and that 'to commit oneself to the Adamic belief is to create an ideological space in which a specific type of masculinity can emerge as *the* American identity' (6). Mitchell adds that self-determination is central to this dominant form as 'the failure to define society is to become defined by society' (6). His newness, therefore, manifests itself as autonomy. This is a quality that this thesis will return to frequently. Lewis writes that the autonomous subject is 'an individual emancipated from history, happily bereft of ancestry, untouched and unedified by the usual inheritances of family and race, an individual standing alone, self-reliant and self-propelling' (5). Autonomy and the desire to perform it is the driving force behind the American masculine subject. His actions domestically and, crucially for this study, at war are a constant return to this singular identifying notion.

However, as argued above, paradigmatic myths are often there to be problematised. Viorica Pâtea's (2001) analysis argues that the American Adam is only ever metaphorical and, therefore, divorced from material life. It is, she argues, 'an analytical, synthetic and cultural construct' (19) and evidence of a

desire to 'impose metaphor on an otherwise meaningless reality' (19). Pâtea also sees the potential for violence and 'usurpation' (33) in the maintenance of a myth 'enacted on the massacre of Indians and on the […] benefits of slavery' (33). As with America's twentieth century wars, the careful construction of the other is crucial to the performance of this myth. Mitchell argues that the masculinised Adam requires a feminised Eve figure to be 'secondary' (5) and 'subjected to his rule' (5). In twentieth century war unknowable others determined to stand in the way of Adamic completion are feminised and placed in a binarised system. To sustain and complete the Adamic myth, such figures must be overcome. The material and experiential reality of this in mechanised warfare is, of course, corporeal trauma and, as Pâtea describes, 'emasculating anxiety' (36). Pâtea also contends that the Adamic myth is deceptively atemporal. What should be a narrative akin to a *bildungsroman* of 'ritual passage and initiation into maturity' (23) remains 'unachieved' (36). Indeed, the subversion of the *bildungsroman* is a notion that will be addressed throughout this thesis. The American masculine subject is caught in a cyclical loop in which he acts to sustain myth but is kept away from successful completion by those same acts. In twentieth century war, each time the core values of American masculinity are called into question domestically, the masculine subject can embark upon an Adamic hero's quest. Yet, it is one that leaves him as far from symbolic completion as ever. The American masculine subject is never new or free from history. He is burdened by the very concept of newness and his actions – ostensibly looking forward to completion – are always in clamour to his past.

In order to organise these complex arguments into literary analyses, I have identified six thematic issues that this thesis revisits: landscape, the male body, the search for autonomy, the codified masculine group, the relationship between sex and violence and the act of narrating masculine identities and experiences. Each chapter will examine the manner in which these thematic commonalities shape each text and, in turn, how each text shapes their representation. The texts exist as singular works of art but there are undoubted intertextual patterns that emerge from a study such as this. As the chapters that follow will show, the texts chosen here operate in what Roland Barthes (1967) refers to as a 'multi-dimensional space' (146). As each text becomes

progressively more explicit regarding its fictionality, the thematic commonalities resonate and shift. What follows, then, is a thematic overview that places each commonality in the context of the text itself and that of broader theoretical and historical discourse.

American masculine identities are inextricably linked with their relationship to material and symbolic landscapes. The American masculine subject partially defines himself through searching for a tangible knowledge and dominion over land that he inhabits. The reduction of the American frontier to an entirely symbolic notion means that the American masculine subject seeks a material relationship with landscape that recaptures his mythic origins. Each depicted conflict takes place in an alien and foreign landscape. As such, there are concerted efforts to shape landscape to a familiar epistemology. However, the landscapes in which each novel tales place resist this process. From the trenches of the First World War through the ravaged European cities of the Second World War to the clawing jungles of the Pacific and Vietnam; each text examined here demonstrates that control and conquest of a hitherto unknown landscape is a key to understanding American autonomy.

Each chapter of this thesis tackles this issue and the way that it interconnects with the lived experience of conflict. The landscape of twentieth century American war is both physical reality and symbolic puzzle. Its dissonant complexity is at odds with singular mythic narratives. For the American masculine subject, the conquest of their own continent operates as analogue for symbolic completion. Tony Tanner (1987) describes America's westward conquest towards an ever receding frontier as an 'attack' (9) carried out with 'aggressive delight and almost sadistic savagery' (9). Bercovitch explains such frenzied desire through claiming that 'the frontier itself had been transformed from its colonial sense of barrier into an imperial summons to expand' (7). Here again the paradoxical relationship with completion is evident. The American masculine subject must continue to expand and bring, as Tanner claims, 'civilised structure to the shapeless wilderness' (9). The symbolic is made material by this expansion. The landscape provides evidence of expansion in its geographical changes and settlements and the autonomous masculine subject is central to this. Tanner genders such a process by aligning expansion with phallocentricism. The conquest of land is a 'rape' (9) on an 'endlessly brutalised

female body' (9). As will be seen in the chapter exploring Vietnam fiction, this conflation of female body and landscape is deeply problematic. The feminised landscape is interchangeable with the feminised other. Both need to be dominated as a symbolic means of enacting myth. Tanner concludes that the 'sign of the axe cannot mingle with the scene of nature' (10) and therefore, 'it must deface and destroy' (10). Thus, the conquest of landscape is a symbolic moment of construction and development yet played out through material destruction and debasement. For Pâtea, when the 'bounds of the continent' (31) had been reached, the frontier shifted to a mythic space in which the American Adam sought a 'quest to exceed other limits, those of unrestrained opportunity, ambition and enterprise' (31). Material and symbolic conquest, then, are a means of demonstrating autonomy and sustaining Adamic newness.

Notions of dominance are also reflected in the cultural construction of the masculine body. It is an extension of Tanner's axe and represents conquest and machine-like impenetrability. Symbolically whole and full of potential virility, the male body as represented in this thesis experiences a range of corporeal trauma either directly or as witness. In twentieth century conflict, mechanised weaponry renders the male body organic and vulnerable. Therefore, war promises the opportunity for autonomy through acts of physical and moral heroism but is a material experience that demonstrates how powerless the American masculine subject actually is. Each novel grapples with the complexities of narrating corporeal damage and the intellectual and emotional consequences of such an immediate experience. The male body becomes subsumed into the larger social body and the more each masculine subject pursues an increasingly illusory autonomy, the further he is dragged into a vast system of institutional hierarchy. The American masculine subject arguably cannot see or define the system that entraps him and so has little hope in resisting its force. As autonomy recedes, the American masculine subject experiences a profound crisis of identity.

In the texts examined in this thesis, corporeal damage is frequently followed by long passages in which characters attempt to shape injury and trauma through reflection on their mythic roots and national hegemonies. E. Antony Rotundo (1993) observes that the twentieth century's 'new virtues and obsessions' (222) regarding the male body 'emerged' (222) in the mid-nineteenth century when

'the male body moved to the centre of men's gender concerns' (222). Rotundo explains that 'embodiment of mind, spirit and character' (224) is necessary in a nation that equates 'military build-up' (224) with 'moral force' (224). This idea is dependent on the construction of the American masculine body as machine-like and whole. Victor Seidler (2006b) argues that, in 'modernity' (100) it is crucial that 'men learn to relate to their bodies as machines that they need to control' (100). In the conquest of landscape and at war such symbolism is crucial. The male body is equated with weaponry and, in turn, weaponry is imbued with a phallic potency. The male body is destructive but cannot be destroyed. The organic nature of the material body is relegated behind its symbolic nature as powerful and endlessly rejuvenating. Thus the conquest of land and the conquest of a foreign enemy are both symbolically organised as a binary opposition between the machine-like whole male body and the fragmented feminised other. The problem here, of course, is that twentieth century war sees the rapid rise of mechanised and technological power. The male body is revealed as vulnerable and powerless when faced with machine gun, flak, or rigged booby trap. Thus, the Adamic hero's mythic body is fatally undermined.

Constructions of the symbolic male body move this introduction toward gender scholarship. R.W. Connell (1995) argues that 'social constructionist approaches' (50) to gender and representation offer evidence that 'gender is seen, above all, as performance' (51). She refutes that 'social arrangements' (50) are set in place by the 'body machine' (50) and that 'the body is a field on which social determination runs riot' (50). This is a two way process: as gender is determined socially, the masculine subject aims to make his body perform to socially ascribed norms and ideals. The longer this happens, the more it seems as if the body and biology are the source of gendered identity. Yet, Connell stresses, 'bodily performances are called into existence by these [social] structures' (54). An experiential 'vulnerability' (54), therefore, is evident when 'performance cannot be sustained' (54). As the texts in this thesis demonstrate, this is often the case in twentieth century American war. Popular images of muscular heroism clash with the subject's own fragile and organic body and create tension. The male body is powerless at war; yet has been told it is impenetrable. Such muscularity as a trait, so popular in American propaganda discussed in later chapters, is an example of what Connell terms *hegemonic*

masculinity. This is a theoretical model that much of this thesis relies on. Connell writes that the term 'refers to the cultural dynamic by which a group claims and sustains a leading position in social life' (77). The qualities required to inhabit this position are fluid and dependent upon social and economic context. Connell describes hegemonic masculinity as a 'gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy' (77). The hegemonic form's propensity for change means that 'new groups may challenge old solutions and construct a new hegemony' (77); all that they have in common is a 'successful claim to authority' (77). Despite this 'historically mobile' (77) nature, however, there are certain qualities that appear again and again in American hegemonic masculinities and these are clearly tied to mythic origins. It may well be that autonomy is found in a nineteenth century landowner or in the nefarious activities of a Wall Street banker but it still autonomy nonetheless. It may well be that rugged individualism is found in Daniel Boone or John Wayne but it is still rugged individualism nonetheless. Ultimately, despite the variety and transient nature of American masculinities, the hegemonic form is always tied to mythic values. The autonomous and heroic figure that operates in a self-determining and courageous fashion will remain dominant as long as the myth is embedded in cultural and gendered constructions of identity.

As with mythic constructions of a singular American masculinity, it is important to understand that Connell's hegemonic groups may be 'normative' (79) but are not the norm. Certainly, 'not many men actually meet the normative standards' (79). However, Connell argues that despite the relatively low numbers of masculine subjects able to enact hegemonic qualities there is a pressure to be 'complicit' (79) with dominant value systems. This may take the form of performative or symbolic action or in the simple act of acquiescence to their existence elsewhere. Christopher Kilmartin's (1994) psychological study of masculine identities pinpoints core qualities that are continually and consciously attached to the 'stereotypical real man' (6). He claims that such a figure demonstrates strength, toughness, independence, aggression, achievement, dominance and heterosexuality. These are remarkably close, then, to those qualities ascribed to the heroic American Adam. Therefore, conscious

performance of such traits suggests a desire to enact singular hegemonic ideals rooted in myth.

As a result of such performance, there exists a difficulty in distinguishing sexual desire from violence. The imperative to conquer and dominate landscape is evident in attitudes to sex and violence. The reliance on weaponry and military hardware to enact dominance is evidence of pervasive phallocentric symbolism. The American masculine subject takes his sexual lead from such symbolism. In a metaphorical about turn, the phallus no longer represents the penis and this subversion is evident in each text discussed. The American masculine subject strives to perform a sexual identity for which the violence of the phallus becomes a focal point. Masculine sexuality, therefore, mirrors acts of dominance enacted upon feminised foreign land and enemy. This notion is evident throughout this thesis. In Mailer and Jones' Pacific novels and Heinemann and O'Brien's Vietnam fictions, the landscape and the enemy soldier present a complexity that can only be answered through enactment of brute masculine force. In Heller and Yossarian's responses to the European Second World War, such force is witnessed in the guise of massive technological power and its destructive potential.

One of the tensions experienced by the American masculine subject at war is the difficulty in publicly expressing doubts that contradict performances of heroism. As will be demonstrated in analyses of each text in this thesis, the key aspect of such performative behaviour is the response or perceived response of other men. The exclusively masculine groups in each novel reveal a fragile veneer masking deep and complex emotional responses to war and its various traumas. Kilmartin's term 'restrictive emotionality' (156) refers to a socially constructed and maintained imperative to repress visible signifiers of anxiety.

> Masculine gender roles often encourage men to resist the awareness of affect, avoid emotional vulnerability and to disguise their feelings, especially when those feelings involve hurt, fear, sadness, or any experience that signals weakness or lack of control. (156)

The pressure to perform in this manner comes from a cultural preference for the masculine subject to 'devalue' (163) traditionally constructed feminine qualities such as 'emotional expression' (163). 'Self-disclosure' (163), Kilmartin

concludes, 'involves vulnerability' (163) and, therefore, 'males tend to avoid it, especially in the company of other males' (163). This state of unfemininity is best expressed as a hypermasculinity. Beynon speaks of a range of hypermasculinities that range from the demonstration of 'institutional power' (20) to 'macho identities' (20) such as 'drinking' (20) and 'physical dominance' (20). The performative preference is, Beynon contends, down to class, age and status but is united and underpinned by the urge to 'mask […] powerlessness' (20) or, in Kilmartin's words, to 'compensate for male insecurity' (77). As a figure seeking to perform a hegemonic version of his masculine identity, the American masculine subject repeatedly represses fear and uncertainty. To operate with a morality that runs against the dominant mode is to be viewed as deviant. There is, therefore, an increasing awareness in each novel that gendered and national identities are sustained by acquiescence to established normative modes. To perform mythic autonomy, the American masculine subject must paradoxically conform to the group. His self-determination can only be demonstrated by abandoning that very thing. The group demands performance of a very narrow hypermasculinity in which outward aggression and machismo mask emotional vulnerability.

The American masculine subject, then, is susceptible to a combination of urges to perform a singular version of masculinity. He must reject associations with the feminine other and embody the overarching presence of a mythic hero figure. What this demonstrates is the omnipresence of masculine narrative. The fictionality of the masculine archetypes of American myth does not preclude them from becoming a model for material behaviour. The American masculine subject is always conscious of his mythic past and its weight on his shoulders. Yet, paradoxically, he is often unaware of the fictionality of his own performance. Despite plural and complex material experiences, the American masculine subject falls back on a hegemonic and mythic ideal when vulnerable to corporeal or psychological trauma. A self-perpetuating narrative of domination and submission is used to sustain this version of American masculinity. It is a narrative that drives warfare and one which the texts studied here consciously resist. This act of resistance is enabled by systematic acts of deliberate artifice in narration. The texts build toward a metafictional discourse that demonstrates the fragility of masculine narrative. War and experience of

war traumatise the American masculine subject and his ability to narrate. As such, the very process of narration is thrown into doubt. Narratives that pronounce their own artificiality and futility find a paradoxical truth in fictionality. The relationship between social narratives that place American masculinities at the centre of war and literary narratives that seek to explore this process is one of parity. The texts here do not claim authority; they openly state that theirs is just one more narrative in a plural system of flux and indeterminacy.

The methodology employed in this thesis is fittingly plural in its approaches. I employ a wide range of theoretical perspectives to forge a basis that allows for extended close reading of each text. I have found Michel Foucault's writing on the body, on power structures and on heterotopian landscapes particularly useful in opening up debate on the American masculine subject's relationship with himself and with large social systems. The tension between a corporeal subject and a subject composed of hegemonic cultural and social constructions exposes a liminal space in which to participate in complex commentary. This theoretical platform is added to through engagement with diverse thinkers and ideas. These include (but are not limited to): Jacques Derrida's debates regarding liminality, Erich Fromm's observations regarding the American existential crisis and Frederick Jameson's analysis of late capitalism and postmodern representation. What connects these examples to Foucault is the uncertainty of the American masculine subject. He is a patchwork of pluralised social and cultural constructions and, as such, commentary on the relationship between social power and the powerless subject opens up literary representations of that very issue.

I see the literary text as both social critique and social product. Therefore I take an interdisciplinary approach that incorporates historiography, cultural studies and the social sciences. Using this variety of theoretical and critical approaches helps to avoid binarised positioning of social text and social system. Of course, central to this study is what Harry Brod (1987a) terms *gender scholarship*. As demonstrated above, R.W Connell's hegemonic model is central to my own analyses. Additionally, I have made repeated use of Michael Kimmel's cultural histories of American masculinities and qualitative studies made by, among others, Christopher Kilmartin, Antony Clare, John MacInnes, Arthur Brittan and John Beynon. These texts share a view that the study of masculinities is vital in

work that seeks to challenge the simplicities and reductive nature of patriarchal power and its discourses. These works of social science are also relevant in two further ways. First, they offer analyses of masculinities based on field work and lengthy engagement with other scholarship. Second, and perhaps more importantly, the novels examined here, despite offering conscious critique regarding the American masculine subject, are embedded in their own American social contexts. They are as susceptible to the pressures of social construction as the characters and scenarios they depict. Therefore, an analytical base that makes use of a wide variety of social and critical theory creates engagement with conscious *and* unconscious representations of masculinities at textual and metatextual level. Of course, as this is a literary study, literary theory is vital. This thesis examines novels published over a period of roughly 70 years. This means that each chapter must take into account the literary mood of the era and the critical reception garnered by each text. I examine developments in American modernism and naturalism in the first half of the twentieth century and the shift towards postmodernism taking place between the 1960s and the 1990s. This involves identifying the relationships between text and social condition and providing links between the two. There is, of course, a risk of teleology here, but there is ample evidence that the shifting symbolic and material experiences of war and gendered identities require narrative technique that consciously and unconsciously mirrors such a shift.

Chapter one, ''I had seen nothing sacred': Dos Passos, Hemingway and the First World War', examines two modernist novels written in the decade that followed America's involvement the First World War. John Dos Passos' *Three Soldiers* (1997 (1921)) and Ernest Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms* (2004 (1929)) offer literary responses to Woodrow Wilson's call to 'make the world safe for democracy'. They are narratives that gradually reveal uncertain and indeterminate identities beneath the monomythic imperative to perform heroic duty. Contextually, the First World War arrives at a time in which American masculinities are defined as very much unfeminine. The First World War and its propagandist narratives suggest a singular American masculinity that speaks to mythic tradition. The European theatre becomes material analogue for the now mythic American frontier. It is also an opportunity for the American son to return to the European father and demonstrate his adulthood and independence.

However, the experience of trench warfare and the arbitrary violence associated with that war's mechanised weaponry are entirely dissonant with such constructions. The American masculine subject at war is not an autonomous and heroic figure. He is powerless in the face of violence and as a part of a well-established social hierarchy magnified by military protocol. The mud and smoke of militarised northern Europe and the cyclical and petty bureaucracies of the American military return the American masculine subject to an infantilised figure. Dos Passos' leftist novel uses a tripartite structure to demonstrate the machine-like nature of the war effort and the manner in which it reflects a nation that has moved far from the Jeffersonian ideology he favours. The titular three soldiers come from very different regions and social classes yet their aspirations and subsequent failures share a root in their search for an illusory American autonomy. Hemingway's novel, meanwhile, examines the war as a series of masculine ideologies and tropes. Heroic endeavour and the supposed camaraderie of the masculine group are revealed as empty and unedifying for the American masculine subject. Hemingway's love of ritualised masculinity finds no place in technological war. His protagonist seeks a separate mode of self-determination through the material and symbolic acts of travel and sexual intercourse. He finds that a consciously symbolic relationship and engagement with European landscapes provides a narrative alternative to the singular discourses of patriotic heroism. His famously terse and economic prose barely masks repressed anger and loss of faith in what will be termed later in the century as grand narratives.

Chapter two, ''Fitted into a fear ladder': Mailer, Jones and the Pacific Second World War', examines Norman Mailer's *The Naked and the Dead* (1998 (1948)) and James Jones' *The Thin Red Line* (1998 (1962)). Both texts are graphic depictions of America's Pacific campaign during the Second World War. The novels are panoramic accounts of company life and encompass every strata of the American military hierarchy. The novels look to the American naturalist tradition and its focus on social determinism. The Great Depression and its emasculating impact on the public face of American masculinities acts as a contextual framework for each text. The resultant fragmentation of the American masculine subject and his continued vulnerability are dealt with through the construction of a dehumanised Japanese enemy. Racist discourse dominates

each text until protagonists are exposed to a visceral corporeal destruction of male bodies that removes such constructed distinctions. Heralded opportunities for fraternity and male bonding are revealed as dishonest. The novels expose instead the isolation and repressed terror felt by men alien in an unfamiliar and hostile landscape. Mailer's novel is the more politically charged of the two. His early career leftism is apparent when he structures the army as lumpen and disillusioned proletariat and privileged officer class. The bodies of enlisted men operate as a canvas on which the inherently unfair machinations of American society and its military equivalent are worn. Mailer's characters embark in a wide range of performative public gestures that fail in efforts to mask private anxiety. Jones' text is arguably more nuanced in its characterisation. Whereas Mailer's protagonists tend to represent social archetypes, Jones' combatants experience much more complex processes and psychological responses to emotional and corporeal trauma. As with the novels examined in Chapter one, there is a palpable sense that the autonomy promised by American myth is illusory.

Chapter three, ''Nothing intelligent to say': Heller, Vonnegut and the European Second World War', examines a crucial narrative shift in representations of American masculinities and their experiences at war. Joseph Heller's *Catch-22* (1994 (1961)) and Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse Five* (1990 (1969)) demonstrate the failure of singular mythic constructions of American masculinity through humour, experimentation and the conscious failure of narrative itself. Both novels are as much a social critique of America's postwar malaise as they are representations of war experience. War and America's growing technological economy are interchangeable and the American masculine subject enters a new period of existential crisis as a result. Alienation from Adamic myth is complete and a new set of popular narratives spring up in its place. The relentless and crushing logic of free market capitalism and the cosy aspirations offered by obedient consumerism provide a new model for masculine success. Public performance is now a matter of unquestioning acquiescence to a social system that rewards safe conformity over intellectual self-determination. Such a confusing world is addressed by Heller and Vonnegut through experiments and innovations in narrative. The corporeal and emotional trauma of war is explored in novels that combine black humour,

moments of visceral tension and narrative structures and innovations that draw attention to their metafictional strategies. Heller's novel is set on an Italian air base as the war draws to a close. Its central conceit regards the double bound logic of its titular policy and the manner in which it stacks the odds against the lonely subject. As with the novels in Chapters one and two, it portrays a stratified military in which the officer class acts with singular self-interest. Acts of grandiose careerism are of far greater motivation than vague military strategy. This, of course, means that the brutality and arbitrary violence of mechanised war goes unnoticed as a side issue. Heller's novel gradually reveals that corporeal trauma and its unmitigating materiality is the only constant in war. The rest of the novel, therefore, spirals and circles around this pivotal revelation. The male body is organic and vulnerable. It exists in a world in which the pursuit of power for its own sake results in this very vulnerability. His central protagonist cannot fight such a massive and absurd system. Thus, the only sentient acts are those which ostensibly make no sense. Vonnegut takes the notion of sense making as his own starting point in *Slaughterhouse Five*. His novel admits its own narrative failure from the outset. As such, the narratives that underpin singular American masculinities are systematically revealed as nothing more than fictive processes. Historiography, fiction, popular film and the promises of consumerism are rejected in a novel that, like Heller's, combines the materiality of war with an inherently human inability to understand it. For Vonnegut, the American masculine subject can only begin to understand himself when he realises that such understanding is futile. Vonnegut explores multiple modes of narration in his novel. Science fiction, autobiography, biblical fable and black comedy are introduced, intertwined and revealed as failures. Vonnegut avoids privileging one form over another. For him, all narrative is at once doomed yet necessary.

Chapter four, ''This is true': Heinemann, O'Brien and the Vietnam War' is the culmination of this thesis. The analyses in this section demonstrate that the fiction produced in the wake of this conflict brings together the disparate strands evident in the previous three chapters. Both novelists look back to their literary forbearers while simultaneously pushing forward with further experiments and narrative innovation. The Vietnam War's unknowable nature and its plural and contradictory narrative depictions open up a series of liminal spaces for critical

examination. The American masculine subject's performance of a singular hypermasculinity is driven by a hegemonic ideal present in cinema and replicated in the discourses of Compulsory Basic Training. The Vietnamese people – both enemy and ally – are constructed as a feminised other and their submission to American muscle fits with the traditional sexual binary of dominion and passivity. The Vietnamese landscape too is feminised and attempts at conquest are enacted through the phallic power of American technology and mechanised weaponry. However, such symbolic attempts at conforming to singular and mythic masculinity repeatedly and inevitably fail. Thus, the American masculine subject's actions are little more than a consciously futile performance and this is reflected in the fiction chosen for this chapter.

Unlike the previous three chapters, this section of the thesis explores two novels by each writer. The justification for this is that there exists a narrative continuum between Heinemann's *Close Quarters* (1990 (1974)) and *Paco's Story* (1990 (1986)) and between O'Brien's *Going After Cacciato* (1994 (1978)) and *The Things They Carried* (1991). Heinemann's visceral approach to narration speaks back to Mailer and Jones while also making use of a more experimental register of hallucinatory and nightmarish imagery. *Close Quarters* is a first person account of a single tour of duty and the moral and corporeal descent it produces. The novel details daily life as a drafted grunt. It touches on landscape, labour, masculine grouping and, most notably, the traumatic impact of Vietnam's unnarratable violence and atrocity. Such trauma is explored further in *Paco's Story* as Heinemann depicts the experiences of a veteran returning to America after horrific injury in Vietnam. His return is at odds with the traditions of American heroism. He is seen as both military failure and as an embodiment of the brutality and barbarism associated with the war after the violence of the Tet Offensive was beamed into American living rooms. The novel is an exercise in exploring trauma and the fragmented self. Its structure and wildly oscillating narrative voices demonstrate that Vietnam is a personal and national trauma that resists linear or lucid narrative capture.

Tim O'Brien's novels, in turn, approach this narrative uncertainty and make it a central feature. Both *Going After Cacciato* and *The Things They Carried* are exercises in sustained metafiction. The narrative doubt that exists in every text

examined in this thesis is systematically reiterated in O'Brien's writing. This is not to say, however, that the novels are simply postmodern experiments. O'Brien insists that narrative and the literary imagination are vital in a configuring a humane response to violence and consequent trauma. The American masculine subject is constructed of a patchwork of narratives and O'Brien faces this notion head on. If the self is constructed, O'Brien argues, then there must be a conscious and sustained effort to participate in this process. Only in this way can the American masculine subject have some agency in what he is and begin to resist damaging singularities.

Thus, the act of performance is of less importance than the act of creativity. If narrative is at the core of plural identity then this must be made clear in narrative fiction. Fiction's role is to be one of many narratives. The American masculine subject's plurality is reflected in such a process. What follows are a series of analyses and criticisms that aim to demonstrate the manner in which these texts complicate, challenge and expose limiting and singular constructions of American masculinity. The intention, therefore, is to underline the role that narrative has in this process.

Chapter One

'I had seen nothing sacred': Dos Passos, Hemingway and the First World War

There is a temptation when writing about the First World War and masculinities to imagine that, prior to America's entry into the conflict in 1917, the country had a settled and unquestioned sense of what masculinity was and how it should be performed. Unquestionably, the America of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was a nation in thrall to patriarchy. Consequently, life was certainly better for men than for women. However, this is too simplistic an approach; analysis of the First World War and masculinities requires a more nuanced appreciation of the anxieties and myths that combine to construct American masculinities of this period. In this opening chapter, then, I propose that the masculine crisis so often associated with the latter part of the twentieth century is also visible prior to the First World War.

To fully understand the seismic shifts in how the American masculine subject saw himself in the wake of the war's trauma it is necessary to examine the impact of nineteenth century industrialisation on the construction of masculine identities. There is movement from a dualistic masculinity in which the influence and significance of the domesticated feminine is palpable to an absolute rejection of the feminine. This leaves a masculinity that valorises force, aggression and searches for symbolic completion of myth. Such an imperative leads to nostalgia for a simplistic and singular masculinity that lies in celebration of the conquest of wilderness and the creation of the American frontier. I argue that such myth is utilised in Woodrow Wilson and George Creel's pervasive recruitment campaign and that participation in the war was an opportunity to fulfil a singular masculine destiny. Of course, the war did not supply such an opportunity and John Dos Passos' *Three Soldiers* and Ernest Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms* are literary responses to the tensions between myth and the material actuality of experience. Dos Passos eviscerates the American *machine* and his Jeffersonian philosophy, itself based in American myth, results in a search for alternative imagined and real landscapes. Hemingway, in turn, rejects (yet paradoxically laments) the power of symbolic masculinity in mechanised war and, like Dos Passos, searches for a newly constructed space.

Each novel allows for an investigation of American modernism's ambivalent engagement with singular masculinity and, crucially, masculinity's relationship with creativity and art.

The roots of what this chapter explores are located in the American nineteenth century. Gregory Forter (2011) argues that the last twenty years of this century were a period in which publicly displayed masculine virtues such as 'aggressive assertiveness and competitive vigour' (1) were necessary to 'make oneself in the capitalist marketplace' (1). He also contends that such virtues have links to a lost 'white manhood' (1) of 'autonomous self-making' (2) no longer possible in an America experiencing rapid industrialisation and corporatisation. To unpack the notion of self-making it is useful to turn to Michael Kimmel's work (1996) on masculinity's relationship with American economic and cultural history. He identifies the 'self-made man' (23) as a figure that 'embodied economic autonomy' (23). Linked to agriculture and the harnessing of natural landscape, the 'self-made man' operates as an autonomous individual. Certainly, Kimmel argues, he is part of a competitive economy but the rules of engagement in such competition are down to individual moral codes and performance in the gendered public sphere, or as Kimmel notes, 'equal opportunity to either succeed or fail' (23). The self-made man is essentially free to pursue success in the public sphere and, as both Kimmel and Forter recognise, such masculine freedom is tempered by the feminine domestic sphere. Forter contends that such a relationship, despite falling into what gender scholars would quite correctly label as a 'gendered binary' (1), is essentially one of stasis and stability.

> [masculine values] had to be countered by a range of softer virtues – moral compassion, self-restraint, emotional sensitivity […] transmitted to men only by women in the domestic sphere […] a mechanism for socialising men by giving them a place to develop their compassionate interiors. (3)

Kimmel also identifies such an alignment, suggesting that it is based on an essentialist notion of women's ability to act as 'moral restraint' (54) on men who, due to a combination of biology and the American economic system, were 'not capable of restraining their baser emotions' (54).

However, the period from 1880 onwards was, Kimmel explains, one of massive economic and industrial change. The American workplace changed from a site of autonomy to one in which the American masculine subject was 'oppressively crowded, depersonalised, and often emasculated' (83). Metaphorically, the American masculine subject moves from a lone figure dominating landscape to a simple cog in an impossibly large corporate bureaucracy. The mechanisation of the workplace and systematic processes of ascertaining efficient productivity replaced skill and the associated virtues of physical masculinity. The resultant anxiety in how American men saw themselves and, crucially, were seen by other men, led to a frantic rejection of the feminine. Masculinity then, Gerald Izenburg (2000) argues, enters modernity defined as 'not feminine' (7). The loss of masculine autonomy in the workplace, he continues, 'delegitimised the authority he claimed at home over his wife and children' (8). This was previously a home in which masculinity and femininity existed in a relatively harmonious symbiosis but now, for masculinity to retain autonomy, the feminine is either entirely rejected or reduced to an idealised (and therefore controlled) construction. The fluidity and plurality of the early nineteenth century is replaced by a determination to 'recover […] the truly masculine self' (4).

To consider the location of such a mythic construction of American masculinity requires analysis of landscape and its centrality to the masculine American self. At the close of the nineteenth century, Frederick Jackson Turner (2008) argued that the western frontier was the 'true point of view' (2) in America's historical identity and the 'meeting point between savagery and civilisation' (3). Turner ascribes both mythic and material qualities to the frontier. It is a physical site whose 'wilderness' (3) initially 'masters the colonist' (3). 'Little by little' (4), Turner continues, the American settler 'transforms the wilderness' (4) and creates a 'new product that is American' (4). Consequently, the conquest of wilderness is 'a steady movement away from the influence of Europe' (4) and a 'steady growth of independence on American lines' (4). Dominion over land, therefore, is a symbolic demonstration of mythic autonomy. The American masculine subject defines himself through the control of a feminised landscape. The land is a female body and conquest a phallic and eschatological process. John Rennie Short's (1991) psycho-geographical reading asserts that, for early Puritan settlers, 'transforming the wilderness was a sacred act of redemption as

well as a secular act of survival' (8). Thus, American obsession with landscape has roots in both practical survival and in a manner in which to define itself as a new and growing nation. Short's analysis of the eighteenth and early nineteenth American centuries contends that, as well as the necessary process of nation building and cultivation, 'the westward expansion of America in the nineteenth century was a cause for celebration […] it was a move away from contact with an effete Europe' (19). This corresponds with Kimmel's Freudian notion that the early years of the Republic were essentially 'a revolt of the sons against the father' (18); what better way to demonstrate independence from paternal Europe than to move into wilderness located literally in the opposite direction? Westward expansion, then, at its very root is both symbolic and material. Short argues that, by 1890, this was no longer the case. By this time the frontier was 'purely myth' (93). Yet, he adds, 'Americans' view of themselves continued to pivot around this myth' (93) and it was a 'recurring theme in social criticism and popular culture' (93).

The conquest of landscape is a highly gendered narrative. Short claims that the historical taming of wilderness 'is a signal of human achievement' (6) and, in this instance, equates human with masculine. Doreen Massey (1994) argues that gendered constructions of space and place[1] allow an analysis of the 'the spatial organisation of power' (4) in that there exists a 'radical polarisation into two genders' (6) in defining the qualities of space. Massey states that 'woman stands as metaphor for Nature' (10) whilst 'the need for the security of boundaries, the requirement for […] defensive and counter-positional definitions of identity is culturally masculine' (7). This is a key point that drives the manner in which this thesis understands and interprets landscape and masculinity and it will be revisited in subsequent chapters on the Pacific and Vietnam. For now though, this notion also provides a way to partially unpick the mythic aspects of westward expansion. Massey contends that feminine associations with nature as signifier of potential masculine conquest shift to 'that place called home' (10) as signifier for realised conquest. This is a return to notions of autonomy and control. As established, such masculine autonomy shrinks in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century and, consequently, the conquest of wilderness and

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[1] Massey differentiates space and place by arguing that the former is essentially a reality and the latter is an imaginative construct. Such constructions are 'integral to the production of the social' (3) and 'reflect and affect the ways in which gender is […] understood' (179).

the establishment of the frontier take on a powerful nostalgic symbolism. The period between 1800 and 1880 saw opportunities to enact fantasies of moving west such as the California Gold Rush of 1849. However, the end of the century, Kimmel claims, offered such escapism only 'through fantasy' (63) in the form of wilderness narrative figures such as Daniel Boone, Davy Crockett and Kit Carson who embodied the mythos of the west.

Richard Slotkin's (1973) reading of the significance of the frontier is based upon an understanding of the processes underpinning what he refers to as mythogenesis. The creation, or *genesis*, of myth is 'the continual preoccupation with the necessity of defining or creating a national identity' (4) through an 'intellectual or artistic construct that bridges the gap between the world of the mind and the world of affairs' (4). American national identity is arguably as much about defining what it is not – European, aristocratic, feminine – as what it is. It is here, as landscape and masculinity intersect, that Slotkin claims American myths regarding heroism are created. The conquest of wilderness and the creation of the frontier are acts of heroism. Slotkin claims that frontier heroism and its myths are 'an initiation into a higher level of existence and power, echoing the movement of the boy from childhood into manhood; the departure from the world of parental nurture and law into the world of maturity and independent responsibility' (10). J.B. Jackson (1979) adds to the sense of frontier as masculine when he refers to Newtonian or rationalist organisation of new space. As American landscape shifts from wild space to cultivated place, he argues, the 'new order first manifests itself and inspires a society based on the predictable and orderly movements of independent, equal individuals, each occupying a portion of the infinite, undifferentiated space' (155). This too suggests that masculine identity is central to idealised autonomy. Control of landscape equals control of self. Control of public place, then, results in control of the feminised domestic sphere. Masculine space is constructed as controlled and linear; a wilderness brought under control by phallic conquest. The wilderness is thus binarised as feminine. It is fragmented and disorderly and requires domination. Thus, masculine control of American landscape enables a performance of symbolic completion.

Myth establishes the basis for hegemonic American masculine values. Kimmel explores what happens when such values can no longer be materially enacted

by the American masculine subject. He suggests that as a *fin de siècle* masculine crisis loomed, the answer lay in a 'stockpile of symbols' (119). For Kimmel, a reserve of established myth is a 'secret symbolic treasure chest we can occasionally raid to recreate those earlier moments of fulfilment' (119). It does not matter if such symbols ever existed in any material reality. Their culturally embedded narrative value creates the possibility that the masculine subject can 'again feel secure and without anxiety' (119). However, this sense of security is built on fragile foundations. Material challenges to the American masculine subject are faced by immersion in symbolism and myth. This inevitably leads to a schism between the mythic-symbolic and the shattering anxieties of daily experience.

To connect such anxiety with landscape is possible through reference to Foucault's (1986) *heterotopia*. He argues for a human engagement with the construction and codifying of space. Such an 'intersection of time with space' (22) leads to the imaginative creation of a 'hierarchic ensemble of places: sacred places and profane places; protected places and open, exposed places; urban places and rural places' (22). Foucault establishes the human subject's need to imbue open space with meaning and create place. Consequently, he argues, heterotopian place is both imagined and real. It is 'a sort of mixed, joint experience' (24); a 'simultaneously mythic and real contestation' (24). For societies in which experiential actuality is disordered, unsatisfying and dissonant with national myth, the heterotopia provides opportunity to reconcile and reconstruct; to form, as Foucault concludes, a system of spatial and temporal compensation.

> [..] their role is to create a space that is other, another real space, as perfect, as meticulous, as well arranged as ours is messy, ill constructed, and jumbled. This latter type would be the heterotopia, not of illusion, but of compensation, and I wonder if certain colonies have not functioned somewhat in this manner. (27)

In the context of early twentieth century American masculinities then, the landscape of the country exists both as one of potential opportunity for masculine realisation through westward movement and as one of stasis and emasculation through fixedness in increasingly large corporate systems.

Thus, the masculine American subject is simultaneously a liberated and autonomous individual and one that lives a life that contests such myth. Indeed, Thomas Beebee (2008) argues that Foucault's suggestion contains a 'cognitive dissonance' (2) that 'focuses readers' attention on nation or region' (2) and, as such, 'territory and boundaries […] are not ontological givens' (2). Dana Rus (2011) develops such thinking into an analysis of the frontier as mythic-symbolic construct. She argues that the association that the American masculine subject has with the mythic frontier 'both creates a subject and then that subject takes this to other spaces to either propagate/rebuild an America or use such a paradigm to impart new constructions of a new place' (217). Therefore, when the American masculine subject cannot physically exist in the imagined frontier, any new space becomes a potential heterotopia. New space is imbued with mythic and imaginative constructions yet exists in the material world. It is Foucault states, a reality 'absolutely not superimposable' (23).

Such a heterotopian notion, then, is applicable in analyses of the early twentieth century masculine American subject and the manner in which participation in the First World War was advertised. Woodrow Wilson won the 1916 presidential election with promises of keeping America out of Europe's troubled political landscape. However, as participation in the war became increasingly likely, Wilson and his master manipulator George Creel embarked on a propaganda campaign of unprecedented intensity. As the man in charge of the Committee on Public Information (CPI), Creel used newly developed methods of mass advertising to convince America's diverse population that crossing the Atlantic to Europe was not only a dutiful American imperative, but was also an opportunity to assert a lost and romanticised masculine identity upon a new frontier. In Creel's own postwar account of his campaign *How We Advertised America* (1920), he depicts America's masculine population as an industrial singularity.

> What we had to have was no mere surface unity, but a passionate belief in the
> justice of America's cause that should weld the people of the United States into
> one white-hot mass instinct with fraternity, devotion, courage, and deathless
> determination. The war-will, the will-to-win, of a democracy depends upon the
> degree to which each one of all the people of that democracy can concentrate and
> consecrate body and soul and spirit in the supreme effort of service and sacrifice.
> (5)

Thus, the fragmented and isolated American male, disillusioned and emasculated by industry and corporatisation, can be manipulated by Creel into seeing themselves not as subject to such pressures but as an empowered version of industry itself.

The problem for Creel and Wilson was not so much whipping up a state of unified war hysteria; it was how to convince this newly empowered masculine construct to travel to Europe. Kimmel refers to Europe as 'the despotic father' (14).To return, therefore, would be to admit that American independence had failed, the estranged son returning to the father for guidance. Creel, however, positioned Europe as a new version of wilderness with its own ever shifting frontier. He evoked notions of the savage other that had long been held as one of the central victories of westward conquest. Short argues that it is the people of wilderness who form the real boundaries to success. The multitude of Native American peoples removed from lands and engaged in violent struggle are, for Short, 'a mirror against which we hold our own values and our own society' (24). Short adds that the 'very term wilderness' (22) was a metaphor for 'an attack on the inhabitants, their culture and their rights' (22). The frontier then, as America was defining its nationhood, was 'the dividing line between civilisation and barbarism, a line which marked the balance of power between the republic on one hand and untamed nature and savage Indians on the other' (92). Thus, Creel's job was to recreate such myth in a return to the European father. His solution was to use a culturally resonant language of savagery to depict the atrocities of German soldiers.

Creel's mass produced *Red, White and Blue* pamphlet series were written with 'much care and scholarship' (106) and were produced to expressly 'to tear the mask of civilization and modernity from the medievally minded, medievally organized Prussian militaristic state' (107). An example of the hyperbolic construction of a savage German other can be found in the pamphlet 'Why America Fights Germany' authored by Stanford academic John S.P. Tatlock. (1918).

> We were horrified [...] by their conduct in Belgium-by their needless destruction of precious things, by their vile and filthy treatment of the Belgians, by their robberies, by their numberless murders. A German soldier fell off his bicycle and his gun went off; he declared he had been shot at, and all the inhabitants of the village were

burned to death in their homes. Feeble old Belgian priests were forced to walk in
front of the marching German armies as screens, so that if the Belgians fired they
might kill the priests first. Babies were stabbed with bayonets [...] Indignation at
such barbarities brought hundreds of generous-hearted young Americans to fight
on the Allies' side long before the American nation entered the war. (5-6)

As can be seen in this extract, barbarism and savagery is juxtaposed by the
fraternity and togetherness of the collective American masculine subject.
Indeed, the war is not just a new imagined space for establishing a civilised
order over the savage other; it also provides opportunity to enact nostalgic and
codified masculine signifiers such as moral certainty, selflessness and physical
courage. Wilson's war declaration of April 1917 (2002) famously established a
'challenge to all mankind' (np) to 'make the world safe for democracy' (np). In
other words, he presented an opportunity to return to the European father not
as an admission of failure, but as a means to assert the Republic's hard won
independence and adult manhood. Thus, to return to Foucault, the war is
presented to the American masculine subject as a 'heterotopia of deviation' (25)
in which 'individuals whose behaviour is deviant in relation to the required mean
or norm are placed' (25). To physically travel to such a site is to enact myth by
conquering an imagined space in order to assert a mythic and singular
masculine morality.

Of course, the material reality of the war contested such an idealised
construction. Its landscape as imagined was a place to reassert American
masculinity but, experientially, was a place in which such masculinity was
challenged and thrown into a disillusioned crisis. N.J. Saunders (2001) argues
that the dissonance between mythic constructions and physical realities in the
Western Front create 'metaphysically unstable [...] overlapping, multi-vocal
landscapes' (37). The imagined spatial experience of war contested the material
and experiential reality as the landscape of the First World War was not a
landscape in which conquest was possible. The savage other turned out to be
merely a reflection of the masculine subject's own organic vulnerability.
Assertion of masculine autonomy was not possible in a strict and bureaucratic
military system.

The disillusionment associated with the First World War as masculine
experience is what drives and underpins my analyses of Dos Passos and

Hemingway. I establish that their American modernist novels offer a third space in which to search for a redefined masculine self. Forter's work on modernism's engagement with the early twentieth century's masculine crisis argues that is a literature of mourning. The growth of industry and corporation is added to the experiences of the First World War and leaves a 'sense of dependence and disempowerment' (2). As established earlier, Forter and others contend that the hegemonic ideal for men of this era had shifted to one of 'primal male force' (4) and, consequently, writers and artists of American modernism mourned the masculine subject's 'compassionate interior' (4). It is with reference to this argument that Forter raises the issue of creativity and the literary space. He defines the distinctions between modernity and modernism by arguing that the former sees an 'increasing subordination of creativity to instrumental reason' (4). Creativity forms a 'pivotal part of what modernity imperilled' (4). Modernism, he continues, 'yearn[s] for a masculinity less rigidly polarised against the feminine' (4) There is a conscious 'effort to rewrite, reclaim and celebrate the feminine as a repository of residual and potentially resistant value' (4). Such reasoning is an opportunity for masculine creative and literary space. If masculinity has been defined as profoundly not feminine then, modernists claim, this has failed. For a masculinity to succeed, it needs to accept its plurality. A creativity aligned with the feminine provides the space to do so. In literary space, there is a self-conscious recognition of its imagined properties and of its artifice. This is not to say that Dos Passos and Hemingway were engaging in some kind of proto-metafiction. It is more that they recognise the importance of seeing the symbol and the mythic as exactly that. A masculinity that has tried to align itself with its own symbolism in a material sense has failed domestically and at war. Therefore, their writing – and Hemingway's own fictionalised existence – becomes self-consciously symbolic. The novels examined here embrace the symbolic as purely symbolic. Their writing explores and ultimately accepts the failure of masculinity to live up to its own myths and, equally, recognises that place is essentially imagined. Yet, through such associations, each of the protagonists has opportunity to reject the primal, not feminine male. Instead, they are flawed, uncertain subjects that do not conform to hegemonic versions of heroism but do show courage in pursuing intellectual freedoms.

Both novels here exploit a literary and self-conscious heterotopia. It is helpful to consider that the site of production for such creative activity can also be considered as a place imbued with mythic and imagined qualities. Dos Passos and Hemingway wrote the novels under consideration in this chapter while resident in Paris. Much has been made critically of the so-called Lost Generation of expatriate writers in the 1920s, so much in fact, that the Paris of this era is now itself a highly romanticised space and central to popular engagement with American modernism. However, it is not just retrospectively that such mythogenesis has been attached to Paris. Donald Pizer (1996) argues that it was this very opportunity to both live in a mythic space and to add to that myth that attracted so many American artists there in the first place. In Paris, he claims, its 'Edenic power' (142) attracted a postwar generation who had experienced 'alienation from the norms of […] culture' (xiv). Such alienation is primarily intellectual and, consequently, material Paris becomes 'mythic Paris' (xiv). Pizer concludes, therefore, that Paris is experienced less as a physical city than as a creative spatial construction.

> […] because Paris to the expatriate writer is above all a state of mind – that is, a
> response to a place and its way of life by a consciousness – the form of expatriate
> writing tends towards the spatial [..] to exhibit the variety and richness of a place so
> far as the place exists as a condition of thought, emotion and memory. (142)

Thus, to come back to Foucault, the experience of the spatial in modernity is a 'network that connects points' (22) and a 'fatal intersection' (22). The imaginary and mythical connect and overlap with the material and physical to form spatial relationships that blur at the edges. Paris, then, is both a real and imagined city. Its literary constructions form a new imagined version of American space, itself based upon much older and established forms of myth. Dos Passos and Hemingway embrace the symbolic as a paradoxical manner in which to comment on the material. Brooke Blower (2011) contends that the intended purpose of Americans in Paris in the 1920s was to 'discover overseas just how they wanted to be American' (38) in a 'new frontier after the war' (34). Paris also provided a manner in which to escape from stultifying constructions of masculinity. It is a place in which to reject singularities and embrace what Blower terms 'vibrant national idioms' (41) and 'new aesthetics and attitudes' (41). These new cultural forms combine with profound disillusionment regarding

America's participation in the war and provide the grounds for examining masculinity through narrative and poetic innovation.

John Dos Passos' *Three Soldiers* is described by Jeffrey Walsh (1982) as 'the original example, subject and tone of the American war novel as thereafter developed by Hemingway, […] Mailer and James Jones' (69). The novel's experimentation with form, George Becker adds (1974), 'set the pattern of […] war novels for the next thirty years' (24). Indeed, the novel's portrayals of boredom, incompetent medical care, careerist officers and hapless enlisted men are echoed in novels that address the twentieth century's other conflicts. The novel employs a characterisation that focuses on the intersecting military experience of bourgeois New York composer John Andrews, blue collar San Franciscan Dan Fuselli and innocent Hoosier Chris Chrisfield. Each character represents different aspects of the dehumanising experience of war. Andrews, racked with class-bound insecurity and self-loathing, joins the army, Robert Rosen (1981) claims, 'to escape the burdens of freedom and of responsibility' (17). The privileges offered to him by his class are a paradoxical form of imprisonment. He views the army as 'an individual act of self-purification' (18). Fuselli, meanwhile, embodies an incessant desire for upward social mobility. Linda Wagner-Martin (1979) argues that he represents self-worth sacrificed in exchange for the possibility of material gain. His determination to move through the military hierarchy means that he must 'relinquish much of his human sensibility' (19). Chrisfield, however, signifies a much broader attempt at discussing the innocence of American masculinity and its sullying through military experience. He is connected to American landscape much more explicitly than Andrews or Fuselli. His inability to process material military experience leads to an imagined and nostalgic dependence on fantasies of Indiana soil. These fantasies prove incompatible with material reality and give way to a barely articulated anger. Therefore, as Rosen concludes, 'it is through Chrisfield that we are shown […] the barbarity of war' (17). He copes with anxiety and confusion by becoming all that 'the army wants to arouse and channel' (17). The novel's representation of crass hierarchical bullying and subsequent dissolution of masculine identity within its key protagonists has positioned it as the thematic starting point for this study of American combat novels.

The initial critical response to the novel focused on its perceived attack on patriotic ideals. Romantic novelist and veteran of the Canadian Expeditionary Force, Coningsby Dawson (1997 (1922)), was unequivocal in his view. 'It is either a base libel or a hideous truth' (27) he rages. 'It is so savagely explicit in its accusations that it deserves no quarter at the hands of the reading public' (27) he continues, adding that the reader of his review 'must be either for it or against it' (27). A further review comes from Norman Shannon Hall (1997(1922)), the biographer of aviation hero Frank Luke. His lyrical attack makes the work of Dawson seem timid by comparison. Hyperbolic terms such as 'Gibberish!', 'Bunk!' and 'Nonsense!' litter the review as well as a rather stark warning to Dos Passos regarding a possible return from his exile in Paris. 'He is urged to remain abroad', Luke states, 'America wants bigger men' (40). Such negative reviews are essentially accusations of deviance from the ideals exploited by Creel and Wilson. Stoical silence and uncomplaining endurance are the elements of masculinity which ensure efficient military success. Not only is there a social pressure to perform stoicism but much of Creel and Wilson's recruitment campaign was based on cheerful enactment of duty.

The polarisation between the need to explore emotional and intellectual opposition to the war and dutiful acceptance of the war's gendered and moral value drives the conflict of Dos Passos' text. The nostalgic exploitation of lost American masculinity through what Kenneth Lynn (1973) describes as 'the manufactured romanticism of patriotic slogans,' (178) and dehumanising experiences of drudgery, degradation and isolation are sharply juxtaposed. Dos Passos' view of the language of ideology, particularly manifest in the work of Creel, is much more explicit in the pages of his trilogy *USA* (1966). His satirical bite is evident in the characterisation of JW Moorehouse, the ambitious and well-connected public relations doyen and a thinly veiled caricature of Creel himself. Moorehouse is aware that the American public can be manipulated into emotional and financial support of the war effort through effective public rhetoric. His attitude illuminates efforts made to persuade America that the war was not merely an international conflict but an apocalyptic battle to save the civilised Christian world from devilish savagery.

> 'Even at this moment, my friends, we are under fire, ready to make the extreme
> sacrifice that civilisation shall not perish from the earth,' […] 'You see,' said Major

> Moorehouse eagerly, his blue eyes snapping, 'that is what we must make people
> feel…the catch in the throat, the wrench to steady the nerves, the determination to
> carry on.' (518)

Such cynical manipulation of the massed public is evident in the ethos of the burgeoning public relations industry that grew out of Creel's activities before and during the war. One of his employees at the CPI (and the nephew of Sigmund Freud), Edward Bernays, would go on to become, as Alan Axelrod (2009) claims, 'the youthful doyen of American public relations' (115). Bernays' influential text *Propaganda* (1928) is forthright in its assumptions regarding the 'mental clichés and the emotional habits of the public' (28) when faced with the 'alleged atrocities, the terror and the tyranny of the enemy' (28). Here, the American masculine subject is coerced into action through the creation of a simple binary and the opportunity to enact heroism. Bernays references Freud's argument that 'many of man's thoughts and actions are compensatory substitutes' (52) for desires that are no longer a tangible possibility. For Bernays, manipulation of the American masculine subject is possible as 'his mind retains the patterns which have been stamped on it by the group influences' (49). Group can be read here in a number of ways: the family, the community, the masculine group and, of course, the weight of shared national myth.

In *Three Soldiers* manipulative propaganda is very much a part of daily army experience. An example of the effect of such discourse is witnessed as a reel of anti-German cinema is shown to a large group of soldiers whose response is positively Pavlovian.

> […] the movie had begun again, unfolding scenes of soldiers in spiked helmets
> marching into Belgian cities full of little milk carts drawn by dogs and old women in
> peasant costume. There were hisses and catcalls when a German flag was seen ,
> and as the troops were pictured advancing, bayonetting the civilians[2] in wide Dutch
> pants, the old women with starched caps, the soldiers packed into the stuffy YMCA
> hut shouted oaths at them. Andrews felt blind hatred stirring like something that
> had a life of its own in the young men about him. He was lost in it, carried away in
> it, as in a stampede of wild cattle. The terror of it was like ferocious hands clutching

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[2] Dos Passos here refers to propagandist reports regarding German soldiers' alleged brutality during the invasion and subsequent occupation of Belgium. As Axelrod describes, the truth of the matter was quickly masked by misinformation: '[…] which thickly sowed with literal rapes and the wanton bayonetting of children and babies'(56).

at his throat. He glanced at the faces behind him. They were intent and flushed, glinting with sweat in the heat of the room. (22)

The viewers' subjective and overtly physical reaction suggests boundaries between heightened physical responses are blurred. It becomes hard to distinguish fevered vengeance for perceived atrocity from a sexualised lust for physical and violent domination of a caricatured other. The myth of conquest so central to masculine American identity is again of use here. The scenes create a sense that the Front really is a new frontier and the perceived degeneracy of the German enemy provides opportunity to relive the imagined heroism of the westward movement of American history. Additionally the victimised dogs, peasants, women and children represent innocence and this speaks to constructions of protective paternalism. H.D. Lasswell (1971) contends that such gendered manipulation was a common feature of Creel's propaganda. The 'wounding of woman, children, old people, priests and nuns, mutilated prisoners and mutilated non-combatants' (82) he explains, 'yield a crop of indignation against the fiendish perpetrators of these dark deeds and satisfy certain powerful hidden impulses' (82). Here, again, is evidence of a savage other whose acts are manifest in the devastation they cause to the powerless. The symbolic suggestion made by such narrative is a call upon masculine heroism: conquer the new frontier, defeat the savage other and make the new space safe for the feminised domestic sphere. There is a binary opposition at work here in that the moral good of the American masculine subject is dependent upon the equivalent moral degeneracy of his enemy.

Stanley Cooperman (1967) argues that Dos Passos explores the impact of propaganda through Fuselli's 'tail-wagging geniality' (154). His desperation to climb the military ladder results in frequent susceptibility to gendered manipulation. Fuselli responds to a fictionalised version of one of Creel's pamphlets and its depictions of mutilation with a determined effort to perform masculinity.

Fuselli remembered the pamphlet "German Atrocities" he had read one night in the YMCA. His mind became suddenly filled with pictures of children with their arms cut off, of babies spitted on bayonets, of women strapped on tables violated by

soldier after soldier[3] [...] He wished he were in a combatant service, he wanted to fight, fight. He pictured himself shooting dozens of men in green uniforms. (59)

Fuselli is driven by an abject desire to reject the savagery and corporeal degeneracy of the constructed other. His determination to 'fight' is a conscious desire to perform. He wants to demonstrate his ability and willingness to conform to a singular and gendered morality. Due to his willing subservience, he adheres to moral absolutes and is shaped by propagandist discourse. This is also clear in the behaviour of several of the novel's incidental characters. The dialogue of soldiers reporting rumours from the front reveals conformity to a singular narrative of American moral superiority. On hearing reports of Americans captured as prisoners-of-war, a jingoistic drunkard responds with vacuous mimesis.

'That's a goddam lie,' shouted a black-haired man with an ill-shaven jaw who had just come in. 'There ain't never been an American captured, an' there never will be, by God! [...] I say that any man who says an American'd let himself be captured by a stinkin' Hun is a goddam liar!' (73)

The reproductive performative power inherent in the language of propaganda is evident here. Judith Butler (2011) argues that 'speech acts' (13) operate to 'enact' (13) or 'produce that which it names' (13). Language here then is both cyclical and intertextual. The propaganda itself is designed to appeal to mythic constructions of American masculinity. This in turn is propagated in acts of speech that Butler names 'injurious terms' (15). The intertextual nature of this linguistic transaction can be read, Butler (1997) suggests, as 'citing' (50) or 'making linguistic continuity with a history of speakers' (50). As with the evocation of space and place, the imagined and narrated enemy coexist in the consciousness of the soldier but are dissonant. Ultimately, then, the imagined version of the enemy is privileged as it best fits with the powerful semantic field created in propagandist discourse.

Of an equally problematic nature in this text is the construction and portrayal of masculine heroism. Interestingly, it is not brutality or the physical vulnerability of

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[3] Images of the dismembered body and the observer's consequent revulsion can be traced through the visual arts from Hieronymus Bosch's *Garden of Earthly Delights* in the fifteenth century, Goya's *Disasters of War* and four hundred years later, Picasso's *Guernica* (1937) all the way through to the controversies surrounding the Chapman Brothers' *Hell* (2000) in which 'war atrocities recur, the horror never stops' (Jeffries, 2010).

combat that demonstrates this debate. Unlike much of the fiction discussed in subsequent chapters, actual combat only forms a tiny fraction of this novel. It is instead the monotony of barrack life, painted by Dos Passos in increasingly sombre tones, that suggests heroism as an unlikely absurdity. Again, the heterotopian evocation of space is a useful analytical tool here. The new frontier suggested by participation in the war is not one of free movement and glorious conquest. It consists instead of drab olive uniforms, exhausting parades, squalid accommodation and menial chores. This is aligned with the petty vindictiveness of army hierarchy and consequent mutual resentment between military strata. The opening chapters detail the early stages of barrack life and indicate a systematic quashing of individuality through ritualised and insistent drudgery. The adherence to army protocol as a means of maintaining hierarchal structure is a constant presence in barrack existence.

The promise of relocating a lost mythic masculine identity is nullified by the presence of a much more tangible signifier of gender through clear adherence to a hierarchical system. As established earlier, the lost and now nostalgic American masculine ideal is centred upon notions of autonomy. The masculine subject in this context is able to see relationships with other masculine subjects through the prism of such mythogenesis. Indeed, Dorothy Hammond and Alta Jablow (1987) refer to the 'myth of male friendship' (240) in their analysis of culturally represented male relationships during war. This construct 'idealises men's capacities for loyalty, devotion and self-sacrifice' (241) and 'implies men's potential for commitment to larger causes and their readiness to fight for them' (241). It is a performative relationship in which '[m]en are most manly when they are fighting side by side in a world without women' (241). Of course, it is valuable to consider such relationships as examples of the homosocial. Kimmel claims such relationships are at the heart of constructed and formative masculine identity in the American male psyche. He argues that it is through the 'evaluative eyes of other men' (19) that 'men [are] tested' (19). This is a paradoxical situation as a construction of friendship that ostensibly suggests equality, egalitarianism and mutual benefit is actually a deeply competitive and potentially destructive confirmation of the culture of dominance and conquest. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (1985) confirms that homosocial 'structures' (25) exist mainly for 'maintaining and transmitting patriarchal power' (25). Male friendships

in this context are less the mythical bonhomie of jovial fraternity than the prescribed conditions of a continual struggle for dominance over other men. Chris Haywood and Mairtin Ghaill (2003) place the culture of dominance in a central position when describing shifting historical patterns of hegemonic masculinity.

> A hegemony of masculinity is established by the domination of one masculinity over another [...] Men occupying a hegemonic masculinity are asserting a position of authority. They do this by 'winning the consent' of other males and females in order to secure their hegemonic legitimacy. Men are able to position other men by way of their subordinated, complicit or marginalised friendships. (10)

This implies that male relationships exist partly to establish dominance and hierarchy. Indeed, to return to Hammond and Jablow, this is never clearer than in the 'dehumanising bureaucracy of the army' (253). They argue that the 'misery of war' (253) is often and necessarily offset by the narrative construction of 'heart-warming friendship' (253).

Dos Passos works hard to dispute the mythic notion of friendship and autonomy. His novel demonstrates the strict hierarchical structure of the barracks through repeated instances of signified dominance and power demarcation. The distinctions in rank are never clearer than at mealtime. Officers enjoy the comparative luxury of fried steak and jovial conversation. For enlisted men, food is 'splashed' (8) into mess kits by a 'sweating KP in blue denims' (8) and the air is thick with 'garbage mixed with the smell of [...] disinfectant' (7). The early chapters of the novel are also punctuated by striking visual depictions of parades. Conformity stretches into infinite relief as each solider stands in a 'khaki row that was one of hundreds of khaki rows, identical' (18). The Janus faces of authority are exposed as officers arrive to supervise each parade. They are demeaning to those below and maddeningly sycophantic to their superiors. Dos Passos applies the adjective 'obsequious' (20) to each member of the chain of power as they switch from bellowing command to trembling subordination. The required precision of the parade is undermined by the physical discomfort of marching. The pain caused by ill-fitting uniform and weighty packs is depicted through accumulative description.

> He could feel vaguely the steam of sweat that rose from the ranks of struggling bodies about him. But gradually he forgot everything but the pack tugging at his

shoulders, weighing down his thighs and ankles and feet, and the monotonous
rhythm of his feet striking the pavement and of the other feet in front of him, behind
him, beside him, crunching, crunching. (31)

The male body is no longer a unitary phenomenon but fragmented into
alienated facets. Connell (1995) positions the physical domination manifest in
acts of actualised or potential violence as central to the maintenance of
masculine hierarchy. She argues that within 'the ideology of supremacy' (83)
there is a systematic process of using violence and physical domination as 'a
way of claiming or asserting masculinity in group struggles' (83). In this
particular text, violence mostly remains a latent threat communicated through
ritualistic bureaucracy. The aforementioned parades and hours of repetitive and
mundane labour take place under the watchful eye of an officially sanctioned
superior. They serve to demonstrate the validity of Arthur Brittan's (1989) claim
that any 'dominant form of masculinity'(128) must be 'imposed, negotiated and
legitimated' (128). Thus, physical violence is not as Connell suggests 'explosive'
(84) in this instance but accumulative, constant and manifest in enforced
servitude.

Dos Passos is especially virulent when depicting military bureaucracy and,
given his political outlook at the time of *Three Soldiers'* publication, it is no great
leap to read such depiction as a metaphor for a rapidly mechanising western
world. Robert Rosen (1981) describes Dos Passos in the early 1920s as a
writer who took great care to present the 'consciously political nature of his
alienation' (4). For him, the war was not just a moment of profound
disillusionment (although he certainly believed this) but, more troublingly, it
suggested finality to discourses of industrialism as progress. Indeed, Rosen
adds that the greatest irony for Dos Passos to come out of the war was that its
'technological destruction in Europe' (6) irreparably damaged the 'value of
industrial progress itself' (6). Dos Passos' own experience of the First World
War was, Rosen continues, intellectually and morally challenging on a number
of levels. He was 'an intellectual, repeatedly offended by wartime lies' (9), an
'ambulance volunteer, spied on, harassed and finally driven out of Europe by
officials' (9) and a 'a member of a privileged class, unaccustomed to taking
orders' (9).

His literary depiction of the war captures this philosophical malaise through the extended use of the figurative machine. Becker reads *Three Soldiers* as chiefly a vehicle for Dos Passos to express his angst regarding the army as 'a machine that dehumanises men' (25). The war saw a systematic reduction of 'desires' (28) and 'memories' (28) to 'robot life' (28). The titles of *Three Soldiers'* six sections – 'Making the Mould', 'The Metal Cools', 'Machines', 'Rust', 'The World Outside' and 'Under the Wheels' – reflect the industrial process from metallic forgery through to eventual abandonment. The American masculine subject as machine is a broader concern of American modernism and Tim Armstrong (1998) sees a contradiction in this. For him, the male body can never be fully aligned with the effectiveness of the machine. Its essential vulnerability 'signals lack rather than efficiency' (96). Therefore, the metaphorical machine acting as experiential materiality will inevitably 'ground itself in the fragmented body' (96). The male body is unable to withstand industrial society's dehumanising power and breaks apart. For Dos Passos, therefore, the war's mechanised hierarchy will break down the male body. Such disintegration consequently leads to profound psychological and philosophical crisis. Perhaps the most sinister occurrence of bureaucratic dominance is evident in the death of the incidental character Private Stockton. Despite several attempts to tell his superiors of his increasing ill health he is told, with escalating impatience, to rise from his bunk or face disciplinary proceedings. His inability to comply with orders is viewed as 'mere insubordination' (102) and a 'court martial offence' (102). His death is only noticed as he is dragged out of bed to be marched to the guardhouse. The deceptively simple statement, '[t]hey covered his head with a blanket,' (103) hints strongly at the dehumanising force of bureaucracy driving Dos Passos' narrative.

The hollow absurdities inherent in bullying bureaucracy are clear in an early section of the novel in which a 'naked' (15) Andrews is 'prodded and measured' (15) by a recruiting sergeant. His body is required to meet particular and seemingly inflexible classifications. Consequently Andrews is reduced to the status of a 'prize horse at a fair' (15). The scene is carefully punctuated by the sounds of a typewriter 'clicking spasmodically' (15) that effectively align the dehumanised body with bureaucracy. Language is broken down as the typewriter's operative thinks out loud.

> "Scores ten years…in test B," went on the voice of the man at the
> typewriter…."Sen…exual ment…m-e-n-t-a-l-i-t-y that of child of eight. Seems
> unable…to either….Goddam this man's writin'. How kin I copy it when he don't
> write out his words?" (15-16)

The reduction of language into such meaningless fragments is echoed by
Andrews' body as he is assigned the job of cleaning barrack windows. The
physical monotony of the task is communicated through his aching body and
the drudgery soon limits his intellect to a 'hard meaningless core' (16). Andrews
own fragmentation has an impact on how he perceives his environment as each
window begins to repeat itself in an 'endless afternoon' (17). Soon, Andrews is
taken over by the dehumanising insistence of bureaucracy.

> As he worked a rhythm began pushing its way through the hard core of his mind,
> leavening it, making it fluid. It expressed the vast dusty dullness, the men waiting in
> rows on drill fields, standing at attention, the monotony of feet tramping in unison,
> of the dust rising from the battalions going back and forth over the dusty drill fields.
> (17)

Such rhythms and fragmented repetitions suggest an intersection between
experiential narration and the more innovative abstractions associated with
American modernism. Pizer (2012) argues that, although initially unheralded,
'Dos Passos' modernism has received consideration […] with particular
attention given to its relationship to early twentieth century painting' (np). Dos
Passos employs a written response to the visual discourse of Cubism in order
to communicate the fragmented corporeal and psychological self. Certainly, the
fragmented images of *Three Soldiers* speak to Cubist attempts to create
multiple spatial planes in two dimensional media. Pizer identifies a commonality
in approach between Dos Passos and the Parisian artists he encountered as an
expatriate writer; most notably the figure of Picasso. He comments on
'simultaneity and fragmentation' (np) and a 'reality stripped to its basic
fragmentary components as these exist in space and time' (np).

Certainly, this innovative aspect of Dos Passos' narrative technique is much
more explicit in his later work such as *Manhattan Transfer* (2003 (1925)).
However, *Three Soldiers* has notable instances in which the visual discourse of
Cubism is a clear influence on the manner in which the mechanistic twentieth
century is interrogated. For example, much later in the novel in yet another

military office, Dos Passos' description makes use of the optical alienations created by mirrors.

> The major's office was a large, white painted room, with elaborate mouldings and mirrors in all four walls, so that while Andrews waited, cap in hand, to go up to the desk he could see the small round major with his pink face and bald head repeated to infinity in two directions in the grey brilliance of the mirrors. (285)

Again, bureaucracy and protocol are depicted as endless and self-generating. Such imagery encapsulates an immeasurable expanse of army hierarchy and refutes the linear promises of a new frontier. Once more, Foucault's notions of heterotopia are useful here. He establishes the mirror as a key site of 'heterotopology' (24) and one in which the subject's relationship with the world is at its most contradictory.

> […] it makes this place that I occupy at the moment when I look at myself in the glass at once absolutely real, connected with all the space that surrounds it, and absolutely unreal, since in order to be perceived it has to pass through this virtual point which is over there. (24)

The mirror in this instance is used to mark Andrews' own experiential confusion. His fragmented self exists both as a suggested and a concrete presence. He has control over space yet is unable to define precisely where that space is. This, when broadened out to the novel as whole, is a way to define the masculine subject's shift from mythic autonomy to material uncertainty. The promises of a new masculine space made in recruitment prove to be dishonest. The American masculine subject's relationship with the spaces of war is at best a flirtation with the uncanny.

For Chrisfield, experience of such an inflexible and brutalising hierarchy is markedly different to that of Andrews or Fuselli. A native of rural Indiana, he is considered by some critics as the least convincing of Dos Passos' three protagonists. Cooperman (1976), for example, describes him as, 'a mere cultural stereotype' (24) and 'a creature of pulp magazines and cinema' (24). Wagner-Martin adds that his 'primitivism only mocks the idea of the noble savage and leaves the reader sceptical at best' (20). While I would agree that Chrisfield feels too far removed from Dos Passos' cultural sphere of knowledge, it cannot be denied that he presents a valuable opportunity to observe the effects of army oppression on rural masculinity; a social identity 'buttressed by

[…] patriarchal ideology.' (Dekeseredy et al., 2007: 296). Chrisfield views the world in simple, binary terms and his agricultural upbringing, romanticised by Dos Passos, has instilled an infantile sense of justice. Hard work is rewarded and deception dealt with via swift physical punishment. He recounts, in a rather reductive attempt at rural dialect, a tale of muddled violence.

> Ah don't know what ah done next, but before ah knowed it ah had a hold of a shuckin' knife and was slashin' at him with it. A knife like that's a turruble thing to stab a man with. (34)

He is aware of vaguely traversing a moral code but the complexity of the incident is alien to him. In fact, the young rural soldier is an embodiment of the simple, self-sustaining America that arguably lies at the heart of Dos Passos' own idealism.

Becker argues that Dos Passos' early writing reveals a 'political/philosophical bias that may simply be identified as Jeffersonian […] a simplistic vision of the Enlightenment let loose in the dynamic chaos of the twentieth century' (3). Indeed, Chrisfield's agricultural life is redolent of the prose of Crèvecœur's celebrated eighteenth century evocation of the autonomous agrarian in the New World, *Letters from an American Farmer* (2003 (1782)). This is particularly the case when the idyllic landscape of his Hoosier youth is sharply juxtaposed by the shell pocked mud of the Western Front. Crèvecœur's natural world was 'marked by a visionary idealism' (Frazier, 2003: 1) that conditioned the reader's visual relationship with American landscape. Dos Passos has Chrisfield dreamily recall physical spaces whilst imprisoned arduously in a rail carriage moving, significantly, eastwards. He recalls 'flowering locust trees' (109), 'mockingbirds singing in the moonlight' (109), 'his mother's housework' (109), and 'a heavy day's ploughing' (109). Such evocation of a nostalgic mythic masculinity during combat experience clashes with and ultimately transcends conscious and material experience. Chrisfield recedes into recollection of a stable landscape and the relative simplicity of American myth.

The posturing bureaucracy Chrisfield experiences in his relationship with Sergeant Anderson offers a challenge to his understanding of the world. Cooperman explains that he is unable to process or articulate his experiences rationally as he 'has been exposed to continual violation of every code in which

he has been taught to believe' (26). Consequently, he experiences a 'growth of slow irresistible anger, unfocused violence and a need for assertion, through violence, of manhood itself' (26). Anderson, a physical caricature of army authority with his, 'eyebrows that joined across the nose and the jaw,' (111) represents to Chrisfield the arbitrary nature of authority. His simplistic moral code is challenged and Anderson is the focus for his resultant anger. Chrisfield's descent into rage reaches its nadir as he becomes isolated from his fellow soldiers during a fatiguing march to the front. Alienated by landscape and demeaned by powerlessness, he chances upon Anderson, still the focus of his fury. The sergeant, seriously injured, maintains his bullying authority prompting Chrisfield to kill him with the simple toss of a grenade.

> Suddenly he found he had pressed the spring of the grenade. He struggled to pull it out of his pocket. It stuck in the narrow pocket. His arm and his cold fingers that clutched the grenade seemed paralysed. Then a warm joy went through him. He had thrown it. (156)

The action occurs without thought or rationale. Iain Colley (1978), contends that this is an instance in which Chrisfield chooses to, 'strike back with instinctive savagery' (43). This is a fleeting moment of catharsis for the young soldier. It is an opportunity to respond to anxious and alienating complexity with a simple assertion of his rural manhood. Emptied of spite, he now allows himself to be pulled along by the tides of army life. He no longer resists the military machine. Now he will 'do as the others did' (157). This act of violence means that his limited understanding of masculine identity has been legitimatised. The mythic constructions that have informed him – autonomy, simplistic codes of justice and the awful clarity of mortality – are confirmed in this act. The act of completion frees Chrisfield from rationalisation. He no longer has 'to think' (157). His 'feet' (157) can 'beat the ground in time with the other feet' (157). Of course, the irony here is that through a supposedly autonomous act Chrisfield becomes mechanised.

Fuselli's desire for upward mobility means that he is more susceptible to patriotic constructions of masculine duty than the other protagonists. His eagerness to forge a successful military career results in an eagerness to absorb rhetoric. Consequently, Colley argues that he has a higher tolerance for the bullying and procrastination that enrages Chrisfield. He 'sinks himself into

the group personality, lives the lying fantasies of the anti-German propaganda movies and partly inhabits a fools' paradise of individual opportunity' (42). His attempts, therefore, to make himself successful and potentially autonomous are ironically pursued through obedient compliance. Ian Harris (1995) claims that deference is key to gender conditioning within the armed forces. He explains that, '[m]en who join the armed forces are rigorously inducted into hierarchically structured organisations which train them to conform to the dominator paradigm' (109). This fits with Connell's hegemonic system in which 'cultural dominance' (78) shapes 'the society as a whole' (78). Fuselli chooses not to see contradiction in the relationship between his motivation and his conformity. He allows himself to be dominated and forced into a subordinate role. He believes that his best chance of upward mobility and subsequent autonomy is here.

Fuselli's repeated fear of 'getting in wrong' with authority ensures that he is preoccupied with a performance of conformity. As his company settles into new barracks awaiting their ocean crossing to the heterotopian front, he swings between fear regarding corporeal safety and the hatching of plans to ingratiate himself with officers.

> Fuselli was excited. He kept thinking of the night before, when he had helped the sergeant distribute emergency rations and had carried about piles of boxes of hard bread, counting them carefully without a mistake. He felt full of desire to do things, to show what he was good for. "Gee," he said to himself, "this war's a lucky thing for me. I might have been in the RC Vicker Company's store for five years an' never got a raise. An' here in the army I got a chance to do almost anything." (33)

Of course, the inherent irony here is that the further Fuselli's demeaning efforts at upward progress go, the more isolated he becomes. Brittan argues that western twentieth century masculinities are valued by the 'ability to achieve at a job' (84). Certainly, the social pressure Fuseli feels to report news of his successful career trajectory to his San Franciscan family serves to illustrate this claim. As he crosses the Atlantic, however, his ambition turns to disorientated scepticism. Increasingly contending heterotopian constructions of space alienate him. Foucault's notion and its implications for masculine identity are clear as the sea crossing serves as an anxious liminal space between imagined experience and disillusioning actuality.

The fiction examined in this thesis frequently makes use of water and crossing water as a metaphor for psychological change. Hemingway's Frederic Henry undergoes a baptism as he flees military obligation and the Pacific Ocean serves as an uncertain space between the American known and its polarised unknowns in Mailer and Jones' novels. Heller's Yossarian confronts mortality above an unfathomable Mediterranean and the swamps and paddy fields of Vietnam defy Tim O'Brien's protagonists' determined attempts at rationalising their experiences. As a classical element, water is associated with femininity. Ana Munteanu (2014) argues that water is 'life giving' (np) and 'fertile' (np) It is 'changing and mysterious' (np) and such ambiguity means that it 'has long been equated with the feminine aspects of creation, nature and spirituality' (np). Munteanu also associates water with the womb and maternity. Its uterine complexity sits in a binary opposition with the phallus and the eschatological drive of mythic and singular American masculinity. Combatants such as Fuselli are from an American landscape in which the unknowable feminine has been conquered and masculinised. The journey across water is uncertain and, as Herman Melville makes clear in *Moby Dick* (1981 (1851)), is a wilderness beyond the control of the American masculine. As such, Fuselli's simplistic and singular confidence crumbles once at sea. The officers that he is so keen to emulate – to the point of physically impersonating their confident and easy bravado – gradually transform in his eyes. Military ideals of leadership, courage and skill fade into a hazy sense of uncaring and distant opulence. The officers' residence on the vessel is sound tracked by clinking glasses and furnished by lush red carpet. It is in sharp contrast to the squalor, illness and degradation of the enlisted quarters from which news of meningitis emerges and Fuselli's own constant sea sickness develops.

It is at this stage of the novel that Dos Passos introduces the marginalised intellectual figure of Eisenstein. Despite his relatively few appearances in the novel, Eisenstein's significance lies in representation of a decidedly leftist antagonism toward military hierarchy. His appearance in the novel can be traced to the growing number of Jewish intellectuals based in New York City in the early decades of the twentieth century. Neil Jummonville (2007) argues that 'Jews from Russia or Eastern Europe […] carted with them their socialism, trade unionism, respect for literary culture and familiarity with ideological battles' (2).

As a defined group, these men were far more prominent in the 1930s but the germination of their intellectual and political activities was there in the first two decades of the century. As with Chrisfield, there are issues regarding Eisenstein's rather unconvincing characterisation. His insistence that his colleagues all read 'Tolstoy' (38) and his petty squabbles regarding seating positions fall rather to close to north-eastern Jewish stereotypes. Nevertheless, his pollicised anger regarding 'the system' (37) offers a clarity lacking from Chrisfield and Fuselli. His activism distinguishes him from the indecision that defines Andrews' process of rebellion. Eisenstein agitates against the military, viewing it as essentially a microcosm of industrialised America. The dehumanisation that troubles Dos Passos drives Eisenstein's rhetoric. He claims that for dominance over men to succeed they must first be turned 'into beasts' (37). He appears sporadically in the early parts of the novel and provides a counterbalance to Fuselli who, despite the trauma of his sea voyage, still harbours ambitions of climbing the system. In a French café Fuselli's internal conflict is clear. He interprets Eisenstein's claim that conscription is equal to 'bein' a slave' (89) with a 'disgusted interest' (89). Ultimately, the army's hierarchy asserts its physical and ideological dominance over Eisenstein. He is court martialled for, in the words of a nameless lieutenant, being 'low enough' (97) to 'hold such ideas' (97).

For Fuselli, masculinity can only be confirmed through external agency. He seeks the approval of those he initially believes are superior to him which, of course, does not transpire. Soon he perceives instead a wilful ignorance to the physical and emotional suffering of the enlisted men. He is left alienated not only from his military colleagues but from a clear understanding of his own constructions of masculine success. Everything he has been told will make him manly fails him: the army, compliant behaviour, loyalty to his family and girlfriend and obedient subordination. Indeed, within weeks of his stationing in France, his optimism has been replaced by defeat and knowledge of his insignificant role in an overwhelmingly large system. Again, Dos Passos uses language suggestive of a mechanised society; language that underlines how far this experience is from the autonomous masculine subject of American myth.

> Despair seized hold of him. He was so far from anyone who cared about him, so
> lost in the vast machine. He was telling himself that he'd never get on, would never

get up where he could show what he was good for. He felt as if he were in a treadmill. Day after day it would be like this, the same routine, the same helplessness. (54)

The young Californian tries to find some glimmer of masculine success in his sexual liaison with Yvonne, a seductive employee in a local café bar. However, his romantic idealism creates a fantasy of domestic tranquillity in which the war seems distant. Having failed to achieve a public version of masculine success, Fuselli falls back on another aspect of hegemonic masculinity in his efforts to pursue the relationship.

John MacInnes (1998) explains that in times of perceived masculine crisis the masculine subject is likely to fall back upon hegemonic or, at least, normative ideals and constructions. These include what he refers to as the 'fetishism of gender' (31); the 'imagined properties of masculine and feminine, materially represented by male and female' (31). MacInnes argues that in 'transitional' environments there is an imperative to 'imagine' (31) the conditions of 'the previous era' (31) in order to 'prevent psychic insecurity' (31). In the case of this text, Fuselli's transition is that from ideological certainty to one of profound disillusionment. As a means of evading the inevitability of his powerlessness he turns to the subordination of a feminine archetype and symbolic control of a feminised domestic space. Yvonne represents hope of fulfilling the hegemonic masculine imperative to sexually and intellectually dominate a submissive feminine archetype. As the relationship develops Fuselli revels in his position in the domestic space. Dos Passos describes him 'smiling importantly (85) as he performs his role 'keepin' house' (85). Once more though the power of military hierarchy defeats him. A nameless 'top sergeant' (102) effortlessly replaces him in Yvonne's bedroom. The innocence that Fuselli has perceived proves to be something of a delusion as Yvonne reveals instead a savvy survival instinct. His final appearance in the novel as a court martialled KP, punished for contracting syphilis, is a poignant picture of defeat. His downward journey achieves closure with a simple statement of his greatest fear, 'I guess I got in wrong.' (254)

The most articulate exploration of the army as a dehumanising utilitarian nightmare is through the embittered interior of John Andrews. An archetypal liberal north easterner, his voice is by some distance the most developed of the three protagonists. Analysis of Andrews' characterisation benefits from an

awareness of the role of the Ivy League educated intellectual in the early part of the twentieth century. Thomas Sowell (2009) argues that the unprecedented nature of the First World War invited intellectual analysis 'in the abstract' (204). Division, Sowell continues, existed between 'intellectual and moral elites' (204) and the 'population at large' (204). The elite saw themselves (and were seen by others in a less flattering sense) as 'anointed' (204) figures with a conscious role of 'imposing an over-arching common purpose' (204). The result of such division is that the role of the intellectual is a site of much contestation. Dos Passos, for example, appears to have been caught in a paradoxical position of enjoying the advantages of educational privilege whilst simultaneously critiquing those very advantages. Richard Hofstadter's (1963) Pulitzer Prize winning work on American anti-intellectualism cites Dos Passos' writing on Harvard graduates and their elevated public profile during America's entry to the war in 1917.

> I think we are all of us a pretty milky lot with our tea-table convictions and our radicalism that keeps so consistently within the bounds of decorum […] I'd like to annihilate these stupid colleges of ours and all the nice young men therein, instillers of stodginess - every form of bastard culture, middle-class snobbism. (295)

Such ambivalence regarding intellectualism is manifest in Andrews' fractious self-loathing. His aesthetic interpretation of the world provides him with detached objectivity and cynicism lacking in the lesser intellects of Chrisfield and Fuselli. Unlike those two, he enters the war with moral and political scepticism already well developed. His experiences merely extend views already well on their way to formation.

The divisions between Andrews and his fellow protagonists can be read along gender lines. Hofstadter argues that the supposedly effeminate nature of intellectualism was generally viewed with suspicion. Those involved in agriculture and the industrial working class considered the intellectual minority lacking in 'heavy masculinity' (294) and that 'practical and masculine demands […] contrasted with the futility of aestheticism' (294). Certainly Andrews' intellect provides him with distinct moral uncertainty regarding the war and his role therein. His disaffection stems from palpable interior conflict similar to that of Dos Passos cited above. Interestingly, his scorn is not only directed at authority and perceived abuses of arbitrary power but also towards those of his peers

lacking conscious awareness of their own degradation. He defines himself by a determination not to 'sink too deeply into the helpless mentality' (25) of his peers and a desire to 'keep his will power' (25). From these details alone it is easy to conclude that Andrews' somewhat condescending attitude to those he considers intellectually inferior stems in part from a need to remain autonomous and resist dehumanisation. Yet, there is a polarity at work in his thinking. While critical of those 'not […] appalled by the loss of their liberty' (26), Andrews is also haunted by bourgeois self-loathing and guilt. Persistent self-analysis and the inclination to over-intellectualise his life have left him 'bored with himself' (25). His self-loathing has its root in memories of his privileged childhood 'among old oaks and chestnuts' (26) in which he 'had so many dreams' (26). He too is subject to heterotopian construction of place but here the spatial is made complex by temporality. His perception of experience is that of a life lived in spatial and temporal ignorance; ignorance brought into sharp relief by the 'certain terror' (26) of barrack life. His conflict then, lies between 'the great structure of his romantic life' (26) and the 'void' (26) in which he feels intense moral ambivalence. In the early sections of the novel, Andrews repeatedly indulges himself with such intellectual debate. His isolation is self-inflicted; a sense of artistic and philosophical superiority informs his inter-personal activities with perhaps only the aforementioned Eisenstein as his equal.

As with Dos Passos, the only benefit that Andrews feels that he may gain from his military experience is an exposure to visceral experience that he can draw on in his role as aesthete. Dos Passos takes great care to signal Andrews' appreciation of the aesthetic world. He picks flowers from bullet-scarred woods, examines the patterns and behaviour of frogs and indulges himself in a moment of reflective narcissism at a river's edge. The behaviour reveals an intellect lacking concrete experience to match its heightened reading of the world. Andrews' initial brand of disillusioned cynicism is an affectation. It is a philosophical obligation borne of his liberal education and selective alienation. However, the realities of corporeal injury and recovery create genuine anger and are a trigger a more concrete rebellion. His recuperation in a military hospital is a disheartening picture of a care system. The military hospital is riddled with operational flaws and disregard for the individual suffering of its patients and this is something that addressed repeatedly by the novels in this

thesis. In this case, the medical system wields a power inversely proportional to its competence.

To turn to Foucault (1991) again, he contends that the role of medicine, 'assumes an increasingly important place in the administrative system and the machinery of power'(283). He establishes (1989) that the ever expanding demands of bureaucracy force medical systems to view illness or corporeal damage as 'pathological fact'(109) and 'singularity' (109). The individual subject and their illness or injuries are 'reduced to the homogenous' (110). Such notions open up reading of the unquestioned authority of medical staff. In *Three Soldiers* their status is elevated to a position above the powerless patients that they are treating. The squalor and farce within combat medical facilities is a frequent trope in war literature. Indeed, the work of Hemingway, Heller and Heinemann features protagonists spending lengthy periods in hospital. Their treatment is often substandard and lacking in humane care. The injured male body is dehumanised and controlled by medical taxonomies. Pathological diagnosis is predicated on what Foucault terms 'the genesis of the manifestation of truth' (110) which in turn becomes 'the genesis of the knowledge of truth' (110). Each hospitalised subject is 'innumerable' (111) and 'infinite' (111) yet the demands of the system require 'boundary, form and meaning' (111). Of course, this jars with the mythic autonomy of the American masculine subject. Injuries sustained during military service are an opportunity to demonstrate bravery, duty and sacrifice.

In the American war novel, however, they reveal the corporeal masculine subject as little more than logistical headache. In *Three Soldiers*, the challenging complexity of pain and bureaucratic processing of the injured are juxtaposed. Andrews attempts to impose order on his corporeal experiences but finds that linear language is inadequate. He slips in and out of opiated hallucination and struggles over the course of several pages to make sense of pain. He has 'legs […] on fire' (162), an 'agony of pain' (162), 'strings of whining oaths' (163 and 'flaming agony' (163) His numerous attempts to describe pain are met with a prosaic and blunt response from a hospital orderly who simply states 'Andrews, 1.432.286' (163). With regards to attempts to convey pain in language, Elaine Scarry (1985) suggests that such a process is essentially futile due to what she refers to as 'the inexpressibility of pain' (3). She contends that

pain's 'resistance to language' (4) exists because it has 'no referential content' (5). Regarding those injured or caused pain by war, Scarry suggests that one must look to the body as a site of narrative, rather than search through the arbitrariness of the signifier. For her 'the incontestable reality of the body' (60) is a counterpoint to the falsity of 'ideology' (60) and 'political authority' (60). Of course, engagement with literature is rendered a frustrating process if 'the artist […] falls silent before pain' (10). However, what Dos Passos offers is a shift in self-knowledge precipitated by the body in pain. Andrews' intellectual conflict leads only to ever decreasing circles. Once injured, however, the primacy of pain ultimately leads to an epiphany of sorts. Pain remains nebulous and liminal but the process of attempting to impose order on it leads to much-needed decisiveness. For Andrews, physical pain is a catalyst for productive self-analysis. After injury, his intellect seeks to dominate the corporeal. The western philosophical tradition is that intellectual reason occupies a position primary to the body. Elizabeth Grosz (1994a) describes the inherent somatophobia of patriarchal philosophy. She claims that in work ranging from Plato to Descartes that, '[…] the body has been regarded as a source of interference in, and a danger to, the operations of reason' (47). Grosz goes on to articulate the tendency to reduce the relationship of the mind to that of the mechanistic body as a demarcated interaction. Intellectual processes are 'in a position of hierarchical superiority over and above nature, including the nature of the body' (48). Andrews' hospital experience certainly suggests such a relationship. Corporeal damage and pain become useful only when considered as a harbinger of intellectual emancipation.

As he gradually regains his awareness and begins to analyse his surroundings, Andrews initially returns to moral conflict. He occupies his mind with thoughts of his abandoned orchestral composition in homage to the Queen of Sheba and symbolically aligns himself with Flaubert's Saint Anthony '[s]tanding in the dark in the desert of his despair' (170). He experiences a brief moment of epiphany as he interprets the injury as a possibility for emancipation from the 'slavery' (166) of army life in which he can 'give up this cowardly cringing' (166). However, thoughts of action are soon replaced by a realisation that his body is now merely a 'querulous piece of hurt flesh' (166). Moral clarity requires connection with his fellow patients. Applebaum is a New York taxi driver and a

blue-collar figure who Andrews valorises. His amputated arm has rendered his occupation impossible. His views (and those of a nameless, incapacitated undertaker) add shape to Andrew's previously amorphous opinions.

> What right had a man to exist who was too cowardly to stand up for what he thought and felt, for his whole makeup, for everything that made him an individual apart from his fellows, and not a slave to stand cap in hand waiting for someone of stronger will to tell him to act? (173)

Passive acquiescence fills him with galvanising disgust and a 'sudden nausea' (173). The word slavery, still so redolent to an American readership, functions as rhythmic punctuation for his thoughts. The mythic autonomous masculine subject provides hope for Andrews. He proposes a self-determining course of action in which he will 'desert' (174) to Paris. The decision makes 'the excited blood surge gloriously in his body' (174). Autonomy, therefore, is linked to masculine sexuality. To control one's own fate is to enact the ideal where myth and hegemony intersect. The male body is aroused by potential realisation of singular American masculinity.

However, the noble tone of this plan is undermined by Andrews' eventual activity in Paris. He experiences a heterotopian relationship with the city that, as discussed, was familiar to Dos Passos (and indeed to Hemingway). Adam Gopnik (2004) argues that '[e]very world America thinks up is a world we think we've discovered [...] and the line between illusion and reality is even finer in Paris than it is elsewhere' (14). Paris exists for Andrews as such an illusion. It is both imagined and experiential. The urban temptations, so suitable for a modern day Saint Anthony, are depicted as opulent Dionysian indulgences. Dos Passos' pages explode with vibrant city life. Paris is a rich contrast to the drab monotones of army existence. Andrews is in Paris at a time of political radicalism and he perceives a performative opportunity to rail against the slavery he remarks upon so fervently. Yet, he becomes awash with the Parisian social scene and bourgeois self-centredness. Walsh argues that this planned self-sacrifice remains 'uncodified' (76) and 'detached' (76). Indeed, his radicalism is as implausible a construction as that of the patriotic and dutiful soldier so frequently depicted in propaganda. Despite these criticisms, Andrews remains the only one of the three protagonists to take considered action, regardless of its ineffectiveness. Perhaps it is his training in the liberal arts that

means he can identify the symbolism of his eventual arrest and the scattering of his newly composed score. Perhaps this is also why he is objective enough to term his own inactivity as the 'psychology of the slave' (287). Ultimately though, it is questionable whether his desertion is effective as either resistance or radicalism. Ironically, only Andrews has the intelligence and education to articulate his anger. Yet he remains too inactive to implement real social change.

While *Three Soldiers* is an influential American war novel, its uneven narration of masculine war experience is rather unsatisfying. Each protagonist, even the articulate Andrews, functions as a carriage for Dos Passos' distinct Jeffersonian politics. Eight years after Dos Passos published *Three Soldiers*, his friend Ernest Hemingway unveiled *A Farewell to Arms.* Frederic Henry's first person narration reveals a character who, according to Gary Sloan, (1993) 'is baffled by the inefficacy of moral resolve.' (449) Hemingway's story of disillusionment and desertion is a deceptively complex narrative in which he harnesses the narrative experiments of modernism. The opaque nature of Frederic's voice echoes that of Hemingway's other war torn narrators. In *The Sun Also Rises* (2006 (1926)), Jake Barnes' own war trauma exists almost exclusively in the novel's subtext; his impotence operating as material injury and symbolic representation of the damage done to singular American masculinity. While Robert Jordan's experiences of the Spanish Civil War in *For the Whom the Bell Tolls* (1994 (1940)) are embodied by the deteriorating Spanish landscape and the urgency of his sexual affair. Frederic Henry, a volunteer ambulance driver for the Italian army, recounts a gradual yet profound disillusionment with the war. A serious leg injury and the brutality of the Caparetto retreat result in an act of desertion and immersion in an intense relationship with the British nurse Catherine Berkley. Frederic's narrative ends bleakly. He walks away alone from the Swiss hospital in which Catherine has died during the delivery of a stillborn child.

The novel simultaneously confronts the moral dilemmas facing combatants exposed to technological mass slaughter and whose previous philosophical certainties are metaphorically blown apart. Aimee Pozorski (2004) claims that, prior to the First World War, modernism had approached the new 'as a radical break from past history and literary predecessors' (75). Technology and the

clean, metallic lines of the future [4] were a means to escape the self-serving narratives of the nineteenth century. Pozorski adds, however, that the events of the war were a catalyst for change in modernism's relationship with the early twentieth century.

> The trench combat of the First World War […] complicated modernists' interest in "the new" as these atrocities were only modern insofar as they employed killing machines and systemic warfare. Instead of confidence in this new approach to literary valuation, ambivalence came to the forefront […] (75)

To reiterate, the war provides a key distinction, as Forter confirms, between 'modernity' and 'modernism' (4). For writers of the period, the former is associated with 'increasing subordination of creativity to instrumental reason' (4). Consequently, modernity completes the separation of constructed masculine objectivity and the more slippery navigation of feminine subjective creativity. For American modernists this is a false dichotomy. Forter identifies an 'effort to rewrite, reclaim and celebrate the feminine as a repository of residual and potentially resistant value' (4). This results in a 'masculinity less rigidly polarised against the feminine' (4). Forter concludes that Hemingway's notorious public performances of 'rugged manliness' (54) are, in effect, a conscious yet 'compensatory' (54) manner in which to explore the empty rituals of masculine symbolism., *A Farewell to Arms* is a narrative space in which to demonstrate that masculinity as unfeminine can only ever be symbolic.

Hemingway's subtextual innovations communicate an incomplete masculine voice. It suggests that moral certainty is essentially unobtainable. Influenced by Stein, His prose is described by Gopnik as a 'tone of malicious simplicity' (21). It is ambiguous, elliptical and invites exploration of its potential subtext. Like Dos Passos, Hemingway employs heterotopian constructions of space. As such, *A Farewell to Arms* is a complex evocation of remembered space. Recollections of the imaginary and the experienced are consciously jumbled. Each moment of trauma results in psychological and physical escape to new spaces that are defined by what they are not. Of course, Hemingway is a central figure of the so-called Lost Generation and Gopnik contends that his distance from America allows greater freedom to construct his critique of American values and the

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[4] This notion was reflected in the artistic and aesthetic desires of the period, particularly in the popularity of *streamline moderne* and its successor *art deco*. Arthur Marwick (2003) claims that the art reflected middle class desire for, '[…] new cityscapes, fast transport and […] a new spirit.' (29)

American psyche. Indeed, Gopnik adds, Hemingway's prose rejects the sludgy and complex morality of the *fin de siècle* crisis by offering 'the great cleaning-up of American writing' (22). His highly stylised prose, then, is itself a manner in which to offer thematic comment and a complex response to the American masculine subject's participation in warfare.

Dos Passos may have started a textual lineage of anti-war literary discourse but Hemingway recognises that the experiences of soldiers cannot be explained in absolute terms. This notion provides the theoretical paradox explored throughout this thesis that indeterminate artifice is the only authentic narrative response to trauma. Hemingway's construction of masculine expression displays guarded emotionality and an inability to achieve reliable self-definition. Frederic falteringly depicts his movement from the unquestioning masculine world of the European battlefield to the anti-heroism of active desertion. His experiences resist rational analysis. Craig Kleinman (1995) asserts that Hemingway saw war as 'the biggest absurdity of all: an encounter based on the myths of linearity, civilisation, winning and losing (62). These are the same qualities, of course, associated with the Adamic singularity of mythic American masculinity. Participation in war is aligned with the opportunity to perform and embody this construction.

A Farewell to Arms is superficially a tale of attempted heroism, injury, desertion for a love affair and the loss of a new born child. The novel's complexity lies in Frederic's limited reflexive recollections. His narration is a self-consciously limited response to national and personal trauma. Catherine's death and the stillbirth are metaphors for the changes to the manner in which Frederic understands his relationship with modernity. Narrative tension exists in gaps between the ideological narratives of gendered American propaganda and Frederic's own experiences. The novel frequently revisits these liminal spaces. Consequently this is a narrative that only allows glimpses of lucid recollection. The literary response to trauma is a key feature of this thesis and will be returned to frequently in each chapter. Hemingway's carefully ambiguous approach provides an appropriate starting point for such discussion. Trauma theorist Cathy Caruth (2007) develops Freudian notions regarding traumatic experience. For her, textual responses are 'always the story of a wound that cries out' (4). She argues that the trauma text 'addresses us in the attempt to

tell us of a reality or truth that is not otherwise available' (4). For Hemingway, the response to trauma exists in the text's elliptical and liminal gaps. Of course, this is a celebrated feature of Hemingway's innovative prose. Speaking at the 2011 PEN Hemingway Keynote address, novelist Colm Tóibín (2013), for example, addresses the 'great Hemingway invention' (11). He describes 'the emotion lived between the lines' (11) and meaning that exists 'within the cadences and rhythms of the sentences' (11). 'Emotion' (11) is never worn 'on his sleeve' (11). Thus, his novels maintain 'the grandeur of its ambiguous and mysterious power' (11). Interpretation of the response to trauma and of the traumatic event itself is only possible once the limitations of *A Farewell to Arms'* prose are accepted. Metaphor and symbolism veil Frederic's anxieties and reflective traumas and are systematically revealed as inadequate. After all, the deaths of young soldiers and the death of Catherine and her child cannot be viewed solely as symbolic. To do so would involve an undeniably callous approach to text. What is left then is a text in which language cannot superficially respond to trauma. As with the metafiction of postmodern writers, Hemingway's prose is clearly and systematically artificial. As such, the text is a rejection of masculine linearity. It embraces the imagined and creative act as a means of response to trauma.

Despite this ambiguity, Hemingway's novel repeatedly attempts to communicate the destructive materiality of war. Chief amongst his literary arsenal is repeated and understated commentary on European landscape. The novel's narrative is punctuated by descriptions of space in which the damage caused by mechanised progress of the twentieth century is tangible. As the war continues, rural and urban Europe becomes increasingly scarred by relentless shelling. The opening paragraph of the novel provides an immediate example of the manner in which Hemingway represents such altered landscape. It is a passage narrated with subtlety and care. Each word resonates with gradual yet irreversible decline.

> In the bed of the river there were pebbles and boulders, dry and white in the sun
> and the water was clear and swiftly moving and blue in the channels. Troops went
> by the house and down the road and the dust they raised powdered the leaves of
> the trees. The trunks of the trees too were dusty and the leaves fell early that year
> and we saw the troops marching along the road and dust rising and leaves, stirred

by the breeze, falling and the soldiers marching and afterward the road bare and white except for the leaves. (5)

It is a lyrical opening to a war novel. Like the army of *Three Soldiers* there are no individual faces just a mass of feet tramping over a previously fecund landscape. In its frequent and multiple repetitions lies further evidence that Hemingway is shaping his text around the traumatic event. Caruth identifies 'inadvertent and unwished-for repetition' (2) as central to the psychological processing of the traumatic event. Within such repetition, she contends, a 'sorrowful voice […] cries out' (2). Certainly, within this heterotopian construction of the war's landscape, there is a sense that the traumatic event itself is somehow out of focus. The narrator's eye must switch to landscape as the traumatic event itself has yet to take – and may never take – linear form. As an opening passage, Carlos Baker (1953) points out, it 'helps to establish the dominant mood, plants a series of important images or future symbolic cultivation' (94). Its ambiguity and melancholy immediately suggest that this is a novel of loss, a lament for certainty.

Just as Hemingway's constructions of landscape are sites of trauma, the masculine corporeal self is equally significant in such narrative. When geographical landscape is harmed, the same happens to the corporeal landscapes of the novel. Hemingway repeatedly foregrounds the scars of war upon masculine health. The symbolic wholeness of the Adamic American masculine subject is disrupted and fragmented. The impenetrable male body is broken and its organic materiality clashes with its symbolic indestructability. Soldiers' injuries – either through the direct impact of weaponry or malnourishment and exhaustion – are omnipresent. A significant early example comes from Catherine Barkley, the novel's isolated symbol of constructed femininity. She provides a recollection of her lost fiancé's corporeal destruction. She assumes that he will arrive at the hospital in which she is employed with a noble injury, 'something picturesque' (19). But this is juxtaposed by the stark impact of mechanised weaponry on the masculine body. She remembers how 'he didn't have a sabre cut […] they blew him all to bits' (19). As with Dos Passos, the masculine body is presented as a site of fragmentation. The certainty of the mythic and singular American masculine subject is replaced by the frail organic nature of corporeal modernity. Initially, Catherine's statement

stands in isolation and is rejected. It is an innocent feminine response to war that lacks comprehension of modern conflict. Frederic reassures her that male bodies 'won't crack here' (19). As the novel progresses, however, it becomes clear that exposure to such a forceful and violent death has given her insight. It is knowledge that Frederic, in a similar vein to John Andrews, will only gain through his own experiences of corporeal pain and slow recovery. As Scott Donaldson (1990) comments, Catherine 'has come to their relationship painfully wiser to the world than the young man who happens into the war thinking it has nothing to do with him' (85).

Much like Dos Passos' protagonists, Frederic moves from a status of innocence, moral certainty and trust in national ideology to a position of disillusionment, moral confusion and eventual cynicism. Andrews, Chrisfield and Fuselli certainly follow this path yet Frederic displays the most overt indication of a descent from unthinking, masculine archetype to a reflexive and complex subject. He commences the novel, in much the same manner as Dos Passos and Hemingway did in their own combat experiences. He is a volunteer ambulance driver with the Italian army on the Austrian front. As the only American, he is culturally marginalised.

Key to the establishment of American masculine identity on a personal and national level is the conscious demarcation of the effete European from the rugged American. This process is signified in Adamic American myths of westward conquest. Slotkin argues that the literal movement away from Europe has symbolic value in constructing a binary morality in nation building.

> [...] where the European stood amid the ruins of established society and used its fragments to build a new house, the American felt himself to be the creator of something new and unprecedented [...] where the European craved confirmation of older values, the American saw himself as exploring new moral grounds, returning to the primary sources of value for a new beginning, a new creation of the moral universe. (370)

 As such, Frederic's return to Europe as the solitary American signifies such division. Frederic's elliptical narration of his group interactions suggests difference and division. For example, the postcards that Frederic sends back to America are 'strange and mysterious' (35) and contain very little. Superficially, there is 'nothing to write about' (35). Frederic's inability to carry out this act of

writing suggests his distaste for his Italian peers. His superiors are described as 'fat and prosperous' (35). One of them is 'tiny man with the long thin neck and the goat beard' (35). His peers 'talk too much' (36) and only through the consumption of 'wine' (36) is Frederic able to 'feign acquiescence' (36). Masculine group activities and rites such as visits to the local brothel, the competitive sharing of amusing or heroic anecdotes and hedonistic drinking rituals fill the hours and days in which the men wait for meaningful military action.

Such a group dynamic fits with Drury Sherrod's (1987) claims regarding the paradoxical isolation felt by men in exclusively masculine groups. He argues that male groups privilege a 'nonemotional union' (214) and 'ideals of comradeship and brotherhood' (215). It values 'unquestioned acceptance rather than unrestricted affirmation' (220). Marco Mondini (2014) explains that this type of group dynamic was a 'powerful leitmotif' (1) in the Italian military. These groups of men embraced a performance of 'comradeship and solidarity' (1). Their relationships contained the 'intensity of a homoerotic relationship' (1) without such ever being 'made explicit' (1). The heteronormative ideals of western patriarchy insist that the homoerotic is repressed. The masculine group in this novel performs, to use Mondini's term, a 'disinterested' (1) fraternity that masks isolating anxieties regarding deviance.

There are other indications that Frederic finds the forced conformity of army life as deleterious to his well-being. His uniform requirements are a clear visible signifier of military conformity. Yet they also betray his perception of the cumbersome nature of codified obedience. The 'steel helmets' (32) are too heavy to be worn with any comfort. Endless lines of soldiers in uniform are, 'sweaty, dusty and tired' (32). As well as clothing Frederic recalls the absurdity he feels when faced with using a pistol.

> I aimed at twenty paces and then the ridiculousness of carrying a pistol at all came over me and I soon forgot it and carried it flopping against the small of my back with no feeling at all except a vague sense of shame when I met with English speaking people. (28)

Hemingway boldly subverts the power of such an iconic symbol of American military muscularity. The pistol is usually imbued with symbolic phallic potency.

Thanks to the success of the Western in the nation's cinemas[5] it is evocative for an American readership. Yet here it is, reduced to 'flopping' and eventually ignored. The men are 'required' (29) to carry a holster as a means of uniform and to display their military status. It is an instruction further undermined by Frederic's associate Rinaldi who insists on filling it with 'toilet paper' (29) rather than the weapon itself. Schoene-Harwood, cited by Knights (2004), argues that the early twentieth century witnesses a damaging shift toward phallic symbolism that stresses 'the hard and erect over the malleably soft and vulnerable' (29). He contends that such an inaccurate signifier of male genitals 'effects a selective disembodiment of man' (29) and 'obscures the integrity of femaleness' (29). Thus, Hemingway's subversion of the phallus' power indicates the failure of masculine symbolism. On a broader scale it also signals the failure of such symbolism as a means to encourage participation in mechanised war.

Such moral uncertainties regarding mechanised war are further explored in Frederic's recollection of the notorious and chaotic Italian retreat at Caporetto[6].The passage demonstrates fragmented military incompetence and isolating pressure on the individual subject to evade the resultant hierarchical scramble for power. It also sheds light on the complexity of masculine attitudes to violence during conflict. Reductive binary simplicities are wholly inadequate rationalisations when dealing with brutality. Frederic's shooting of a recalcitrant Sergeant is narrated in a sparse register. Delbert Wylder (1969) reads the understated narration as a tacit admission of guilt. Frederic enacts his 'spite and frustration' (77) upon the body of the young soldier. Yet, the man is killed 'seemingly without emotion' (77). The violent event is left to speak for itself.

Frederic omits his own response and moral rationalisation exists only in such gaps. This reading corresponds with the novel's thematic treatment of disillusionment. Frederic is angry with the war as an experience of horror and betrayal and with the American masculine subject's inability to enact popular

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[5] The iconic figure of the cowboy and his weapon in early Hollywood productions is described by Wright (1977) in evocative terms. 'He wears a tattered wide brimmed hat, a loose hanging vest, a bandanna round his neck and one gun rests naturally at his side in a smooth well-worn holster' (4). This well-established uniform is subverted by Frederic's narration of the unwieldy nature of his own.

[6] The devastating Austrian attack on the Italian front line happened on 24th October 1917 and is described by Giovanna Procacci (2002) as, 'an event without precedent on the Western Front' (141). He goes on to detail the chaos of the subsequent retreat. 'The mass of humanity – men, women and children – fled in total confusion from the advancing enemy often without a clear destination, the civilians without a plan and the stragglers without orders' (141).

constructions of heroic decency. The anonymous bullet that suddenly kills the good natured and humorous young Italian soldier Aymo is emblematic of the arbitrary nature of combat mortality. Aymo's vitality, youthful innocence and loyalty are instantly replaced with empty, ruptured flesh. Yet again, Frederic's narration omits explanation for the incident beyond the corporeal realities of a fatal bullet wound.

> The three of us squatted over him in the rain. He was hit low in the back of the
> neck and the bullet had ranged upward and come out under the right eye. He died
> while I was stopping up the two holes. Piani laid his head down, wiped at his face
> with a piece of the emergency dressing, then let it alone. (190)

Heroic constructions of masculinity are challenged by Aymo's death. Stanley Cooperman (1967) argues that the arbitrary nature of his fate relates to Hemingway's 'fear of the unknown or unmanageable' (184). There is a need for life's incisive moments to be imbued with ritual. Hemingway's fiction, of course, covers such ritual with great frequency. Stories of bull fighting, big game hunting and boxing demonstrate his love for ritualised demonstrations of masculine vigour. The mechanised nature of modern war removes such ritual. Violence is no longer a performative and active process. It is an arbitrary and dehumanised instance. Cooperman contends that 'the bull ring' (184) is a space in which 'men can defeat death even while dying because they surround it with form' (184). Ritual is a 'bulwark against passivity' (184) and 'one of humanity's basic psychological needs' (184). 'Technological warfare' (184), he concludes, 'eliminated the battlefield as a source for ritual' (184). Hemingway is conscious of the fact that his use of ritual is symbolic. By privileging the symbolic nature of ritual he is able to expose its falsity and artifice. After all, as Forter claims, Hemingway ultimately sees the First World War as 'final proof of male symbolic power's impotence' (55). It is in the chaos of the retreat that Frederic chooses to end his military involvement. It is significant that Frederic makes his escape by submerging himself in the Tagliamento. The 'cold' (201) and 'icy' (201) river marks a contrast to the chaos of the retreat and abuses of the 'executing officers' (200). The water acts as a cleansing agent for Frederic. He allows the current of the river to 'take me along' (200). Water is again aligned with the feminine. The masculine world of war is destructive and a narrative finality. Water provides baptism and rebirth through its uterine complexity. The failed

singularity of the American masculine subject as hero is replaced by pluralised feminine potentiality.

Frederic's desertion is the novel's central act of alternative heroism. His bravery exists in an act traditionally labelled as cowardly. It lies in the moral resolve to walk away from conflict. He rejects the masculine imperative inculcated by the discourses of propaganda and recruitment. Perhaps unsurprisingly for a novelist, and as a foreshadowing of the metafictional experiments of his literary successors, Hemingway reserves his most venomous ire for the abuses of language made in such discourses. Frederic communicates a rarely seen lucid anger at the dishonesty inherent in recruitment and in reportage of the war itself.

> I was always embarrassed by the words scared, glorious and sacrifice and the expression in vain. We had heard them, sometimes standing in the rain almost out of earshot so that only shouted words would came through, and had read them on proclamations that were slapped up by bill posters over other proclamations, now for a long time, and I had seen nothing sacred, and the things that were glorious had no glory and the sacrifices were like the stockyards at Chicago if nothing was done with the meat except bury it. (165)

Hemingway dismantles language that he sees as inherently and systematically dishonest. He links such dishonesty to corporeal decay and decline. The wholeness of the male body is replaced by the organic fetidness of deceased livestock. This approach to the discourses of patriotic fervour is the novel's clearest commonality with *Three Soldiers*. Language of this nature is void of meaning. Claims for its authenticity only serve to emphasise this further. Diane Herndl (2010) argues that the 'patriotic fervour to embrace military service as a path to masculine feats of heroism' (245) jars with the material reality of 'waiting in a trench to be shelled' (245). The war, she continues, is 'anything but heroic' (245).

Frederic's debilitating leg injury is, as Herndl describes, 'sustained while eating spaghetti in a dugout' (246). Its comedic anti-heroic circumstances are drawn upon several times in the novel as a means of undermining idle constructions of heroism Frederic faces whilst recovering in hospital. The visit of his 'war brother' (60), the vainglorious Rinaldi, is a study in the emptiness of such constructions. Rinaldi is unsatisfied with Frederic's prosaic assertion that he was, 'blown up

while we were eating cheese' (59). He desires a heroic tale of 'valorous conduct' (59) that can be reproduced in the *Lancet* as proof that Frederic should receive military decoration. Rinaldi's attitude to the masculine world of combat is an unquestioning celebration of symbolic and performative masculinity. His is a world of good natured mocking, alcohol abuse and the liberal use of local prostitutes. He is a man of sensuous pleasure, a slave to Bacchus and hedonism.

As juxtaposition, Hemingway offers the thoughtful and isolated figure of the Priest. He is a character with traits that re-emerge most noticeably in Joseph Heller's chaplain in *Catch-22*. His visit to the hospital lifts Frederic. Kind, eloquent and gentle, he is the antithesis of the boorish and giggling masculine group. Consequently he is the object of derision and mockery. He often cuts a desolate, lonely figure. Yet he engages Frederic in a manner that his other peers cannot. His devotion to spirituality and the idyllic life of his native Abruzzi intrigue Frederic. This is an alternative to the damaging superficialities of military habitation. However, despite promises to the contrary, Frederic neglects to visit the priest's family in Abruzzi while on leave. Instead, he indulges in a decadent Milanese weekend of promiscuity and inebriation. His memories are a blur of 'the smoke of cafes and nights where the room whirled' (12) and 'nights in bed, drunk, when you knew that was all there was and the strange excitement of waking and not knowing who it was with you' (12). Just as with the contrast of the clear and cleansing water of the river and the chaos of mechanised violence, Baker draws great significance from the 'clear cold' (11) of the Abruzzi mountains and the relative squalor of urban Milan. This distinction is a central opposition in *A Farewell to Arms*. Frederic's eventual escape from the rain and mud of the front is to the cleansing expanse of Alpine Europe. Hemingway juxtaposes images of 'clear dry cold and snow' (103) and 'polite and kindly people, with hospitality and with natural beauty' (103) with 'cheap cafes, one-night prostitutes, drunkenness, destruction and the war' (103). As with Dos Passos, the heterotopian imaginings of landscape provide the basis for examining American masculinity. The liminal anxiety between experience and constructed identity is approached by Hemingway's self-conscious evocation of symbolic landscapes. Frederic asserts an Adamic

newness as he crosses of the Alpine frontier. His comforting blanket of symbolism exposes the destabilising impact of mechanised war.

Having established that the war is no longer for him, Frederic can choose action akin to John Andrews' symbolic yet ultimately futile act of anti-heroism. Or he can replicate Chrisfield's violent insubordination and subsequent reluctant compliance. In fact, he chooses neither of these. Frederic embarks on a literal and figurative escape. He chooses the exhausted wisdom and femininity of Catherine Barkley. Consequently, it is necessary to reflect on Hemingway's representation of femininity in *A Farewell to Arms*. Masculine heterosexual gratification and boasts of sexual virility and performance permeate the early stages of the novel. Foucault (1978) argues that discourse of this nature results from the need to quantify sexuality and sexual experience through 'the nearly infinite task of telling' (43). Sex is represented and constructed by a discourse that explores 'the interplay of innumerable pleasures, sensations and thoughts which, through the body and the soul, had some affinity with sex' (43). Thus, attitudes to and experiences of sex are controlled by language. As a result, heterosexuality becomes normative through dominant narratives. The passive feminine sexual subject is part of the same process. Female sexuality is defined by a narrative controlled by its masculine speaker. Nurses and prostitutes are the dominant representations of femininity in *A Farewell to Arms*. Nurses are unobtainable and sexually pure while the prostitutes are corrupt. A reduction of the feminine to this binary is, Clare argues, indicative of masculine fear that biological woman 'has it within her sexual power to enable or degrade him' (200). Clare concludes that this split between 'princess' (199) and 'witch' (199) is highly damaging as it is 'never resolved in favour of either' (199). Marc Hewson (2003) discusses the inclusion of this attitude in Hemingway's novel as evidence of narrow masculine attitudes to sex. He suggests that 'male satisfaction is the sexual order of the day' (54) and that sex 'be there when the men want it' (54). The large number of prostitutes mentioned in the early stages of the novel 'indicate that the soldiers perceive women as possessions' (54).

Catherine's presence in the novel signifies the other side of this construction. Her submissiveness and sexual acquiescence help Frederic reject the chaos of the front and embrace a carefully constructed relationship. Catherine's

profession as a nurse is indicative of feminine ideals that form a binary coupling with the hypermasculinity of the military. Frederic and his colleagues are expected to be violent, detached and focused on victory. Catherine, however, is nurturing, emotionally responsive and focused on the healing of wounds. Destructive masculinity is countered by life giving femininity. She helps Frederic to blanket his trauma by taking her place in a nostalgic male–female dynamic. Their relationship is consciously ritualistic and is systematically revealed as artifice. She is, to return to Forter and Kimmel's claim, the domestic feminine presence that tempers the endeavours of public masculinity. This is consistent with fears associated with the emerging New Woman of the early twentieth century. Izenburg claims that the masculine American subject of this period is driven by anxiety regarding the potential legal and social empowerment of women. He argues that 'many men were terrified by them far out of proportion to their size or the threat they realistically posed' (10) and that such disproportionality leads to sustained efforts to 'reduce femininity to nothing but that role and its attendant requirements' (11).

Clearly then, Catherine chiefly operates as a constructed counterfoil to the ritualised masculinity that Frederic retreats to. Frederic, cleansed by water and moving through landscape, can complete his immersion in myth through this relationship. Yet, it is important to remember that Catherine also requires the comfort of such construction. She has already made her decision to oppose the violence of the war. Her relationship with Frederic blankets her from a world that she cannot bear or understand. Sandra Whipple Spanier (1990) reads Catherine as a character that consciously decides to 'submerge herself in a private love relationship' (86) in a 'courageous effort to construct a valid alternative existence to a hostile and chaotic universe' (86). Catherine's wilful subservience manifests itself in her adoption of a clearly demarcated domesticity. She adopts her role consciously rather than buckling under the pressure of social obligation and group expectation. Just as the pain killing gas protects her from pain during her fatal labour at the denouement of the novel, so her blissful cocoon of romantic tranquillity cushions her from memories of her eviscerated fiancée and the brutality of mechanised conflict. Repeated images of protective layers – the warmth of a heated room, the privacy of a shared bed and, perhaps most telling of all, the intimacy of sexual engagement –

accumulate throughout Frederic's memories of their relationship. At the extreme of her behaviour is the wish to disappear entirely into the identity of the unified couple. She expresses a desire to be immersed in the preservation of Frederic's contentment. Hemingway's economic prose offers a binding symmetry. Catherine states, 'I want what you want. There isn't any me any more. Just what you want' (96).

It is important to remember, however, that Catherine's devotion to Frederic is narrated by Frederic. These are the recollections of a reticent and opaque voice. Frederic too wants to abandon the masculine constructs of war for a consciously polarised version of safety and happiness. He is fully aware of the artifice of his new reality and this is reflected in Hemingway's elliptical and deceptively complex prose. His transformation from soldier to civilian is merely the shedding of one constructed identity for another. Frederic's determination to perform a new construction is evident in Hemingway's declarative narrative. Frederic convinces himself that 'I was going to forget the war' (217) and that 'I had made a separate peace' (217). The act of forgetting and symbolically shedding his identity is a conscious decision. Forgetfulness, so often a passive occurrence, is chosen as an anti-heroic assertion. It's questionable whether Frederic ever truly believes in the construction of a loving relationship in the same manner that Catherine has achieved. Hers is a determination to stop thinking altogether. It is an active delusion. Frederic, however, demonstrates reflectiveness in his narration of their relationship. This is feature absent from his memories of the front.

As the narrative progresses, there are more and more instances in which the deadening register of Frederic's voice gives way to lyricism. At the bleak climax of the novel, the deaths of Catherine and their stillborn child are engaged with in a way that the deaths of soldiers never are. Despite Frederic's own rebirth in the waters of the Tagliamento, the deaths of mother and child provide a stark rebuttal of his efforts to believe in his construction. His rebirth is symbolic but, as Pozorski contends, 'the choking death of Hemingway's stillborn infant is not a gratuitous symbol' (78). The corporeal reality of the two deaths show again that Hemingway's novel presents a paradox. Only symbolism can help the American masculine self to reach any kind of grip on his own sense of self. Yet,

these deaths and the deaths of soldiers earlier in the novel reveal that Hemingway is aware of the futility of such symbolism. This is a liminal novel, caught between a constructed, imagined landscape and that of material experience. For Hemingway, the war reveals emptiness in modernity. Clarity is finally evident in Frederic's fatalist response to the deaths.

> Now Catherine would die. That was what you did. You died. You did not know what it was about. You never had time to learn. They threw you in and told you the rules and the first time they caught you off base they killed you. Or they killed you gratuitously like Aymo. Or gave you the syphilis like Rinaldi. But they killed you in the end. You could count on that. Stay around and they would kill you. (289)

To refer to Baker again, he claims that the deaths are an 'immediate catalyst for his thematically crucial realisation' (92). While I would agree in general with this sentiment, I would state that the realisation is far from immediate. It has been germinating in Hemingway's careful reconstruction of memory from the very early stages of the novel. In this way *A Farewell to Arms* is a more complex document than *Three Soldiers.* One cannot escape the feeling that Dos Passos' protagonists are somewhat implausible. Their role is as archetypes that document his resistance to national and military ideologies. Hemingway's protagonist, on the other hand, contains shifts and nuances. Crucially, he lacks authorial omniscience or infallibility. His voice grows and shrinks in terms of its authority. The narrative ultimately grows to something approaching self-awareness.

What is clear in each of these novels is a profound sense of disillusionment. Of course, this is a term that is readily associated with the First World War and I claim no great originality in its use here. However, what these texts suggest is that the disillusionment is rooted in far more than the direct experiences of participation in conflict. Prior to the war the American masculine subject has looked to myth and symbolism as a means of negotiating his own identity. In times of masculine crisis such myth has provided tangibility paradoxical to its obvious artifice. Dos Passos and Hemingway reveal that literary responses to war must now begin to view symbolism as no more than that very concept. The novels in question here display a weary cynicism regarding rhetorical exploitation of American myth and, as such, symbols of masculinity only mask

emptiness. Yet, simultaneously, there is recognition in the power of myth and symbolism in constructing an alternative to the abject materiality of mechanised war. Without such self-conscious adoption of myth, the American masculine subject is powerless and horrifyingly organic. It is these issues and the relationship between power and the male body that carry through in to the work written by Norman Mailer and James Jones in response to the Pacific theatre of the Second World War.

Chapter Two

'Fitted into a fear ladder': Mailer, Jones and the Pacific Second World War

This chapter examines power and its influence upon the male body and the behaviours and relationships of the masculine group. Foucault's ideas regarding power and the subject are a platform on which to read Norman Mailer's *The Naked and the Dead* and James Jones' *The Thin Red Line*. Each novel is a document that explores this relationship in the historically particular setting of the Pacific Second World War. In addition to Foucault, the arguments here are developed from a range of texts that focus upon the war as experience and offer theoretical, sociological and psychological perspectives on the masculine subject. John Dower's *War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War* (1986) examines the manner in which this conflict was built on racial division. He identifies acts of dehumanisation as symbolic motif and material atrocity. Christina Jarvis' *The Male Body at War: American Masculinity During World War II* (2004) is a study of the corporeal American masculine subject at war. The text exposes tensions between the mythic wholeness and impenetrability of the male body and its material vulnerabilities exposed in mechanised war. Gerald Lindermann's *The World Within War: America's Combat Experience in World War II* (1997) demonstrates the totality of American experiences in this conflict. It exploits the gap between mythic imperatives and material terror. The war is an opportunity to assert mythic American masculinity yet also an example of how empty such constructions are. Combined, these texts and others create a contextual and theoretical framework on which to base analysis of two canonical American war novels.

Each novel contains characters whose corporeal and emotional identities are weighed upon by systems of power. The resultant hierarchies are visible in the manner in which Mailer and Jones represent the struggles and absurdities of the military ranking system. This feature of each text opens up analysis of the masculine group itself and its stifling imperative to conform to normative codes of violence, morality and sexuality. Such conformity manifests itself through the performance of violence toward a dehumanised enemy that ultimately reflects back upon the organic frailty of the male body. As with the previous chapter, the

gaps between symbolic representations of the mythic American masculine subject and the actualities of experience are what drive the inherent tensions of each text. In each novel the epistemological shift from optimistic invulnerability to embittered fatalism is clear. Both novels mark stylistic shifts in the intertextual progress of the American war novel. The graphic reportage that Mailer and Jones employ and the naturalism that they evoke adds visceral weight to the symbolic tropes used by Dos Passos and Hemingway.

Mailer's *The Naked and the Dead* and Jones' *The Thin Red Line* run counter to the popular American celebration of the Second World War as a historic success. Their portrayals of the violence, isolation and resentment that accompanied combatants involved in the Pacific campaign are a stark rebuttal of the 'Greatest Generation' (Duke, 2002b). This popular narrative is embodied in Felix De Weldon's 1961 sculpture erected in memory of the Pacific campaign. Weldon's sculpture is housed outside Arlington National Cemetery in Virginia and is based on Joe Rosenthal's iconic photograph[7] of marines raising the American flag on Iwo Jima. Christina Jarvis argues that the 'towering bronze' (1) sculpture's 'visible muscles' (1) and the way that they 'bulge through […] uniforms' are weighty 'symbols of American power and military might' (1). Popular memory and cultural representation of the Pacific campaign asserts American exceptionalism. It supports a binary opposition between a moral, humane west and an immoral, inhuman east.

The 1941 attack on America's Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbour was, of course, the trigger for America's involvement in the Second World War. It is why the war was purportedly fought upon simplistic moral absolutes. Burl Burlingame (2004) describes Pearl Harbour as 'a seminal and singular event' (np). John Dower explains that the attack reduced American perceptions of the Japanese enemy to a people of 'inherent treachery' (36). Consequently, it left a national 'thirst for revenge' (36) fuelled by 'exterminationist rhetoric' (37). The conflict became 'a holy war for national survival and glory, a mission to defend and propagate the finest values of their stock and culture' (3). Thus, Pearl Harbour and the subsequent Pacific conflict are commonly viewed in popular American culture in such reductive and simplistic terms. Michael Adams (1994) argues that this

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[7] The photograph is described by Louis Masur (2006) as the 'the most recognizable and widely reproduced photograph in history' (np).

stems from a reluctance to see the conflict as 'complex' (2) and 'problematic' (2). American popular culture prefers a version of events that enhances the 'shining legend of the Good War' (2). Adams compares the American public of the 1950s and 1960s to Thurber's Walter Mitty (1939), choosing to engage in 'large dreams about the glamour of war without ever having to challenge their assumptions' (13). In terms of popular narratives in fiction and cinema, Paul Duke observes an inclination toward the 'grand and glorious adventure' that 'accentuates the positive and softens the negative' (20). The mythic American hero, therefore, is again visible. The movement west extends into the Pacific and the savage other is personified by the constructed Japanese enemy. Mailer and Jones' stark accounts of the Pacific campaign exist as complex counter-narratives. They sit between uniformly positive cultural representations of heroic duty and material combat experience. *The Naked and the Dead* and *The Thin Red Line* speak to the relationship between American masculinity as myth and material phenomenon.

Just as the *fin de siècle* masculine crisis discussed in the preceding chapter provides useful context in reading the American masculine subject, the Great Depression of the 1930s does so in this section. The value of work cannot be underplayed as a signifier of masculine success in America's early twentieth century. John Beynon (2002) argues that 'work is central to masculinity' (87). It provides 'money, power, [and] the opportunity to develop and exercise skills, expertise and authority' (87). The public face of American (and for Beynon, most western) masculinities then, is defined by employment. The qualities associated with Connell's (1995) hegemonic masculinity, despite continual historical shifts in nuance, demonstrate that the autonomy and power offered by employment are always desirable as measurable indicators of success. Indeed, Beynon contends that, when reading the historical masculine subject 'nothing has proved more damaging […] than unemployment' (87) and that 'unemployed men suffer intense feelings of disempowerment, emasculation and loss of self-esteem' (87). In the specific case of the Great Depression, the consequence of sudden and indefinite unemployment is clear for a huge number of American men. Michael Kimmel (1996) describes the 'massive […] system-wide shock' (128) for 'one in four American men' (128) as profoundly 'emasculating' (128). It was a moment in which 'the workplace could no longer be considered a reliable

arena for the demonstration and proof of one's manhood' (128). This is a gendered shift evident in Steinbeck's social realism and Mailer's own response to the social climate. As mythic constructions of American masculinity faltered, there was also a perceived growth in the public presence of femininity. Jarvis argues that because 'many women had entered the workplace' (18) there was a general fear amongst American men that they were to become a 'soft, feminised nation' (18). This was a situation that led to a toxic combination of misogyny and performative hypermasculinity. Thus, the mythic heroism of the autonomous and dominant American masculine subject was, as Kimmel states, 'possible only in mythic fantasy or in daytime reverie' (140).

At home and at work, it seemed, the materiality of American masculinity was again in crisis. For most of the decade American government, under the leadership of Franklin D. Roosevelt, attempted to make symbolic opportunities for masculine performance a material reality. Jarvis explains that his was achieved through 'various New Deal programs such as the Civilian Conservation Corps and the Works Progress Administration' (11). Such schemes sent young men to work upon the American landscape. This was an activity full of symbolic significance. Jarvis argues that it 'offered [...] heroic images of male workers' (11) that could potentially 'reconstruct images of masculinity and [...] strengthen Americans' confidence in their nation during the Depression' (11). Jarvis adds that these programmes were, therefore, considered 'important locations for building American manhood' (21). They supplied a symbolism matched by the president's[8] own 'careful distancing between his actual disabled, often infirm body and his skilfully orchestrated body politic'. (29).

American masculinity of this period exists in two such parallel ways: the American masculine subject is corporeally and psychologically weakened by unemployment yet looks for materiality in a national masculinity that operates largely on a symbolic level. Just as the subjects discussed in the previous chapter looked to the American frontier as means of gendered heterotopia, the president and national muscularity offered an imagined national masculinity to

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[8] Susan Burch and Ian Sutherland (2006) describe Franklin D Roosevelt's 'extensive efforts [...] to hide his paralysis from mainstream view' (135) as taking advantage of 'the role of technology such as radio' (135) in addressing the threat to president's symbolic power from 'the pervasive social stigma of disability' (136).

aspire to. As the idealised masculine worker receded from material possibility to the extent that even its symbolic analogue was refused credence, the military offered salvation. This worked in a material sense, as Lindermann explains, in 'the search for a job' (49) and as fulfilment of the role traditionally performed by American industry. Military service was viewed very much as 'an industrial process' (51) which worked against the 'menace of joblessness' (48). Kathy Phillips (2006) adds that the war, as with American society, was working on two levels. The pragmatism of 'simply needing a job' (85) was coupled with symbolic opportunities for 'adventure, travel [and] an escape from boredom or domestic entanglements gone wrong' (85).

The persistent anxiety and stress felt by the American masculine subject during the Great Depression can be read as something of an epiphany. American myth is built upon the notion of masculine autonomy and freedom of choice. The revelation that such values were perhaps illusory that marked the *fin de siècle* masculine crisis was solidified in the 1930s.The American masculine subject was no longer able to assert his actions to any demonstrable effect. He was essentially a tiny component in a vast social machine. Foucault's writing on power and autonomy is of great use in analysing this relationship. His arguments regarding the illusory nature of supposed free will are hugely revealing of the process working in the American 1930s. He argues (1994) that power is much more subtle than simple displays of force or 'totalisation' (532). In the wildly complex twentieth century a 'modern matrix of individualisation' (534) 'assert[s] the right to be different and underline[s] everything that makes individuals truly individual' (350). Yet, the system also 'attack[s] everything that separates the individual, breaks his links with others, splits up community life, forces the individual back on himself; and ties him to his own identity in a constraining way' (350). Foucault contends (1980) that power succeeds through the illusion of free will and autonomy. Power 'doesn't only weigh on us as a force that says no, but […] traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms knowledge, produces discourse' (119). American hegemonic masculinities are built upon mythic autonomy and the self as a free subject who pursues the very social factors that Foucault lists. The American masculine subject during the Great Depression no longer had control over his economic or cultural life and saw power as vast and incomprehensible. He was part of a

system that Foucault describes (1980b) as 'machinery that no-one owns' (119). In a system of this nature, the subject perceives the social with a determinism that segues into fatalism. He has no manner in which to elicit change or to achieve the symbolic success so important to American identity. To counter this, the discourse that surrounded American involvement in both World Wars was that of the American masculine subject achieving victory over a subjugated and corrupt enemy. This was an opportunity for the American masculine subject to make his mark. Paradoxically, he saw the potential for autonomy through submitting to the discourses found in recruitment and propaganda. He swapped one vast social system (the economy) for another (the military establishment). Ironically, the pursuit of symbolic and mythic qualities only serves to allow power to assert itself more efficiently and thoroughly.

During the Great Depression, the American masculine subject lost faith in the notion of autonomy. However, the prospect of war and military success returned plausibility to this concept through the American male body. Jarvis explains that the symbolic American body of the late 1930s and the 1940s was constructed with an 'ideologically inscribed American rhetoric of muscles and health' (14) that ran counter to physical deprivation caused by economic conditions. In an ironic echo of Nazi discourse regarding militarised masculinity' (Timm. 2002: 226), recruitment and propaganda for America's involvement in the Second World War involved, Jarvis adds, the 'general utilisation of young, heroic male bodies' (14). It was a 'fierce battle of competing nationalities and ideologies' (38). The American male body became a nostalgic celebration of American masculinity and an opportunity for each young recruit to shake off economic failure and enact his mythic potential. Of course, such promises proved to be empty and, as shall be seen in analyses of each novel here, experience of the Pacific campaign actively shifted perceptions of the American male body from heroic invulnerability to an acute awareness of the body's inherent organic frailty.

To return to Foucault, he states (1980) that to truly understand the machinations of power, one must look to the 'social body' and to the 'very bodies of individuals' (55). He describes (1979) the 'docile body' (135) as one that 'may be subjected, used, transformed and improved' (136) through choices made by the subject in pursuit of illusory autonomy and freedom. The irony here in terms

of army recruitment is the subject is convinced he can potentially embody a mythic ideal. Thus, he willingly enters into the very conditions that actively imperil material autonomy. Foucault comments specifically on the body of the soldier and the manner in which the traditional 'bodily rhetoric of honour' (135) is in fact a 'calculated manipulation' (138). It seeks to put the body into a 'machinery of power that explores it, breaks it down and re-arranges it' (138). Mention of machinery speaks back to the previous chapter and modernist fear regarding the male body's fragmentation into mechanised components. Pacific recruitment addressed such fear by employing discourse that celebrated the galvanising potential of American technology. Jarvis describes 'man fusing with machine to create American steeled bodies' (48). The corporeal masculine subject is, therefore, not a fragmented cog. He is instead constructed as symbolically impenetrable.

However, the male body was not viewed by military authority as anything quite so whole. The processes of classification during recruitment reduced the American masculine subject to a component. He was ready to be tested for his base level of operational functionality. As such, Jarvis explains, each recruit was 'physically examined, classified, categorised, disciplined, […] sexualised via venereal disease screenings and subject to numerous other processes' (5). All of this was carried out to establish 'usefulness' (59). Here too, Foucault states that the exertion of power rests upon 'meticulous control of the operations of the body' (137). In addition to the taxonomies of corporeal classification, he identifies 'discipline' (158) in the form of 'inspections, exercises and methods of training and conditioning' (159) as key in establishing and maintaining the 'distribution of power' (158). Discipline through hierarchical control runs contrary to mythic American autonomy. Consequently, military action is a dissonant experience. Lindermann observes that the 'American individualistic ethos' (186) has great difficulty in yielding to 'easy subordination' (186).

Much of what Mailer and Jones depict in their respective novels (such as Mailer's 'fear ladder' (181) or Jones' 'incredible march' (51)) reflects the workings of discipline and hierarchy within codified masculine groups. They offer opportunity to examine the masculine group in the light of Connell's hegemonic model. The battle for dominance in the masculine group is explored

and played out on the male body. Mailer in particular sees such confrontation as central to the manner in which the American masculine subject defines himself.

American construction of masculine dominance and superiority are measured against the Japanese enemy. Jarvis argues that the discourse used in defining the Japanese is a key 'register against which to constitute American masculinity' (124). 'Foreign and exotic' (125), the Japanese are depicted as sub-human and frequently animalistic. Joanna Bourke (1999) contends that this is a process of classification. In a chain of dominance and subordination, the emasculated American soldier is encouraged to regain, consolidate and perform singular mythic masculinity by measuring it against his Japanese enemy. Said's *Orientalism* (1995), although ostensibly discussing the West's relationship with the Middle East, helps in analysing the manner in which American dominance is cemented through construction and careful manipulation of a Japanese *other*. Orientalism regards the 'basic distinction between East and West' (2) created by 'contrasting image, idea, personality, experience' (2). Said argues that 'representation' (21) of the west's cultural and moral mirror results in a discourse that enables 'dominating, restructuring and […] authority' (3). The reduction of the Japanese combatant to simplistic and repetitive symbols and images allows for the propagation of 'cultural hegemony' (3). The process of dehumanisation, Bourke adds, rationalises warfare and killing because the Japanese enemy become 'fair game' (204). Racist language rooted in fear and uncertainty (such as Jones' repeated use of 'fucking yellow Jap bastards') is frequent in both novels. In addition, each text details displays of power enacted in souvenir hunting among Japanese dead as well as the conflation of Japanese enemy and the Pacific landscape.

The perceived malevolence of the Pacific landscape will be discussed at length as this chapter proceeds. Further attempts through language and action to control and limit the Japanese other are witnessed in this relationship. Robert Thompson (2001) describes the landscape of Guadalcanal[9] as 'mountains that rose to 8,000 feet' (211), 'dense tropical forests that descended to the sea' (211) and 'a grass called kunai, whose tall, stiff blades were as sharp as the edge of a jigsaw blade' (211). As in Vietnam fiction, the jungle acts as metaphor for the unknowable and feminised Asian other. Dower explains that 'the jungle

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[9] This is the setting for Jones' novel.

conjured darkness and danger, stealth and predation; it was forbidding, even impenetrable' (170). It is in landscape that an explicit process of feminisation takes place. The jungle resists ordered and linear rationalisation. Its wildness, its labyrinths and its mystery run contrary to the mythic American desire to control and imprint identity upon landscape. In Mailer and Jones' novels, the jungle witnesses acts of extreme violence and spite.

The novels are distinct from their First World War predecessors in their narration of graphic violence and devastation upon American and Japanese male bodies. Both Mailer and Jones look to the traditions of American naturalism as a means of narrating the Pacific campaign. Thus, they abandon many of the formal innovations present in American modernism of the 1920s. Of course, prior to the 1920s American naturalism – inspired by the work of European writers and thinkers such as Darwin, Zola and Ibsen – found its voice in the work of Frank Norris, Jack London and (a little later) Theodore Dreiser. Donald Pizer (1984) defines this writing as 'social realism laced with the idea of determinism' (x). Thematically it addressed a 'biologically and socially conditioned world' (x). The sense of powerlessness created by the economic turmoil of the Great Depression meant that the individual subject could not influence their world. As such, naturalism again found favour in the 1930s; most notably in John Steinbeck's social realism. Pizer explains that the novels of this period were met with 'antagonism' (ix) regarding their 'basic assumptions' (x) about 'innate moral sense' (x) and man's 'responsibility for his actions' (ix). Despite such objections, social realism produced in the wake of the Great Depression moved away from formal innovation and protagonists with agency. Morris Dickstein (2004) describes this resurgent naturalism as one of 'journalistic curiosity, radical commitment and gestures of solidarity with the poor and dispossessed' (105).

Mailer[10] and Jones look to American naturalism and its descendent social realism as a narrative framework for exploring and representing American war. Despite promises to the contrary, combatants in the American army shared the powerlessness of the migrant poor of the 1930s. The economic super structures

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[10] Lennon (2013), Mailer's archivist and biographer argues that, while at Harvard, Mailer grew increasingly enamoured with Steinbeck's leftist politics and the manner in which they were manifest in his narratives of the Great Depression.

responsible for economic peril and their toll on the bodies of individuals are mirrored in the hierarchies of the armed forces and their impact upon the bodies of individual combatants. The corporeal is central in Mailer and Jones' naturalism. Their visceral treatment of male bodies that are torn open by mechanised, industrial warfare forces a confrontation with the illusory nature of masculine autonomy and the invulnerable male body. Tony Tanner (1971) speaks of naturalism's inclination to adopt reportage that captures 'something of the actual horror […] the violence, the misery, the squalor and the pathos of […] innumerable incomplete and degraded human beings' (344). Malcolm Bradbury (1992) adds that the combined impact upon the American masculine subject of the Great Depression and the trauma of war requires a fiction that explores a 'world of new historical horror, moral pain and rising alienation' (374). The innovations of American modernism, therefore, are indulgences. They are inadequate for detailing the experiences of this era. Consequently, Mailer and Jones' naturalism signals a shift in representation of the American masculine subject at war.

Mailer's *The Naked and the Dead* is a novel borne of the author's own experiences in the American army[11]. A young Jewish New Yorker with progressive beliefs, Mailer found the hierarchies of power and overt divisions of the American army intolerable. He states in interview (Grobel, 2008) that he was 'very angry' (432) upon his discharge and that he was left with 'hate' (432) for the officers he encountered. There is a link here between Mailer's personal dislike of the military strata and the Foucauldian contradictions discussed above. Pizer, for example, sees the novel's central theme as 'the problem of man's belief in his freedom in an increasingly restrictive world' (89). The novel evokes this anxiety for the American masculine subject. Its representation of the military is of a top heavy hierarchy. Pizer adds that it is a social system in which 'enlisted men are the crushed masses' (91).

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[11] Jennifer Petersen (2005) writes that 'Mailer served as a rifleman in World War II after being drafted into the American Army in 1944. He served in the Philippines until his discharge in 1946. His experiences in the Philippines inspired his first novel, *The Naked and the Dead* in 1948, fifteen months after his discharge' (4).

This thematic concern is certainly evident in the novel and is a view shared in much mid twentieth century criticism[12]. However, Mailer's representation of the Pacific campaign is far more complex than a straightforward left wing allegory. He trains his authorial eye on the physical and emotional realities of war. The novel's 700 plus pages depict countless instances of suffering, fear and doubt, narrated in minute and careful detail. The war is certainly utilised by a politicised young author as social critique but it also remains a material lived experience. Whereas there is a temptation in the fiction examined in the previous chapter to privilege allegory and symbolism above the concrete, Mailer's representation is both highly symbolic *and* situated within a tangible and visceral historical locale. The male body and the masculine psyche exist in a constant state of fear and utter fatigue. Corporeal devastation and arbitrary deaths occur frequently in lengthy depictions of combat and in the gruelling struggle with landscape. The novel comments on the machine that is his contemporary society but his representation of military life is not an abstract parallel for such society. Mailer's narrative insists upon its own authenticity despite offering up questions regarding the very symbols that he rejects. Therefore, in this analysis I aim to address both of these aspects. I will continue to apply Foucauldian theory regarding power and hierarchy. This will support analyses of the novel's officers with particular focus on General Cummings, the crypto-fascist 'monstrous figure' (Tanner.1971.350) of the base on Anopopei and Lieutenant Croft, the pathologically troubled and 'sadistic' (Waldron. 1972: 274) leader of the recon platoon. The analyses make connections between broad concepts of national power and the dynamics of the masculine group in the light of Connell's hegemonic model of dominance and subordination. Additionally, Mailer's Time Machine narrative device introduces the pre-war lives of both officers and enlisted men. These sequences are evidence of a latent determinism made explicit by war experience.

Hierarchical systems of power and their transference from officer to enlisted man drive great swathes of *The Naked and the Dead*. Algis Valiunas (2009) describes Mailer's officers as 'tyrannical' (71) and 'bloody minded' (71)

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[12] Frank McConnell (1977) and Ihab Hassan (1966) focus upon the novel's parallels with American society. McConnell argues that the novel is essentially a narrative of 'the underlying qualities of everyday peacetime personality and politics' (69-70) while Hassan examines 'the discrepancy between public policy and individual motive' (149).

careerists with 'no regard for the soldiers' humanity' (71). Again, it is important here to note that Mailer's representation of military hierarchy and the masculine group is not merely symbolic of the subject's struggle in a determinist social universe. It is microcosmic and emblematic of such experience. John Limon (1994) suggests that the novel makes it difficult to perceive of a 'world beyond war' (134). Civilian society operates as analogue for war as opposed to the reverse.

The novel provides evidence for such ideas in the characterisation of the officers and their relationship with enlisted subordinates. Relative luxury, opulence and indulgence are juxtaposed with squalor, filth and discomfort. Mailer addresses this opposition repeatedly when depicting the great lengths that are undergone to construct the officers' living quarters. Meanwhile, enlisted men are expected to unroll a blanket in a poorly erected tent. The hierarchy in this instance mirrors the historical subordination of women through the division of labour and the separation of domestic and public spheres. In the exclusively male world of Mailer's novel, however, the absence of women means that transference of power creates subordination between officers and enlisted men. An early indication of such division is evident as Lieutenant Hearn makes his first appearance. Taking his mealtime seat in the officers' mess, he hears boorish discourse redolent of Fitzgerald's hypermasculine Tom Buchanan.

> For the last two weeks they had been eating in this tent, he had sat with seven other lieutenants at a table adjacent to the one where Conn was talking now. And for two weeks he had heard Conn talking about the stupidity of Congress, the inferiority of the Russian and British armies, the treachery and depravity of the Negro and the terrible fact that New York was in the hands of foreigners. (77)

This racism serves two purposes. It establishes the hegemony of white American privilege and serves as an example of the manner in which this is repetitively performed as a means of ensuring its propagation.

Not only are the officers physically demarcated from those subordinate to them but they also ensure that their supposed peers are fully aware of their commitment to the ideological necessities involved in maintaining such dominance. This behaviour is also witnessed later in the novel when the officers enjoy a day relaxing on the beach. Their posturing, name dropping and

competitiveness suggest an anxious desire to remain within the confines of power.

> That's right, many's the time I've had in Washington, Brigadier General Caldwell and Major General Simmons – do you know them – old friends of mine. And there was that that Navy feller, Rear Admiral Tannache, got to be good friends with him too. Damn fine man, he was a good officer. (243)

In representing their efforts to persuade others that they are members of the upper strata of the social and gendered hierarchy, Mailer offers a rare moment of explicit satire. The officers' performance says much about their pomposity and willing subservience to the system of hierarchy.

It is prescient at this juncture to establish the manner in which hierarchy and the masculine group dynamic operates in *The Naked and the Dead* and map this against salient theoretical and literary perspectives. There is a friction evident in American war fiction between nostalgia for a lost mythic masculinity and the restrictions of material experience. As Foucault argues (1980a), this is symptomatic of an irony inherent in western power. To reiterate: the more the subject uses the social system to pursue individual autonomy the more the subject is subsumed by the limits of that very system. Arthur Brittan (1989) discusses the manner in which the foundations of western capitalism are driven by 'scarcity' (87) of sexual and economic resources. He proposes that 'men have come to believe that they are entitled to own and control economic surpluses' (90). As a result scarcity, competition and the formation of hierarchies are 'defined as a law of nature' (90). This process leads to the economic subordination of women and to intense competition within exclusively masculine social groups. He draws links between late capitalism, patriarchy and masculinity by concluding that 'the enterprise society' (98) sees 'competition as a moral good' (98) that 'validates the virtues of a masculinity which men […] have internalised' (98). Christopher Kilmartin (1994) takes this argument further. He locates the embedding of masculine competition and the 'necessity' (194) of establishing hierarchical dominance in the Industrial Revolution. Men come to see as natural the separation of domestic and public spheres. This is followed by a 'renewed rigidity of the antifeminine element of masculinity' (193). Thus, the workplace becomes a site of exclusively masculine competition in which the rapid mechanisation of industry in the late nineteenth and early twentieth

centuries increases the pressure to 'be a good provider' (194). This creates the conditions in which men are 'vulnerable to exploitative employers' (194). Kilmartin includes the military in his analyses and concludes that 'the least powerful males in society' (196) are the subjects most endangered by the violence of battle.

To understand the manner in which workplace hierarchies form it is useful to look in detail at Connell's hegemonic masculinities. She looks to power as the organising principle (the term 'hegemonic' is borrowed from Gramsci's work on class) for when a 'group claims and sustains a leading position in social life' (77). Such hegemony not only guarantees the 'dominant position of men and the subordination of women' (77) but also creates an arena for 'dominance and subordination between groups of men' (78). Hegemonic masculinities shift and change due to their 'historically mobile' (77) nature and, as such the dominant power of any particular historical moment must battle to maintain their position. Connell suggests that 'violence' (83) is an intrinsic feature in maintaining a 'system of domination' (84) yet is a sign that the hierarchy in question is not a 'legitimate' system due to its 'need to intimidate' (84). Such transience in dominant models coupled with the omnipresence of threatened or actual violence creates deep anxiety for the masculine subject. As well as the threat of violence inflicted upon himself he must always perform aggression and competition to avoid being viewed as deviant or outside of the system. BertholdSchoene-Harwood (2000) argues that 'legitimately employed' (49) violence and aggression and the impossibility of actually attaining qualities deemed hegemonic create a 'a permanent state of paranoid uncertainty about […] personal adequacy and competence' (48). Thus, Ben Knights (1999) explains, a system of hierarchical transference develops within the masculine group. It 'symbolically' (128) demonstrates 'invulnerability' (128) by 'exporting[ing] vulnerability to someone else, preferably someone whom it is culturally acceptable to turn into a victim' (128).

Hearn's relationship with his immediate superior General George Cummings further reveals Mailer's fascination with power and how it manifests in masculine domination and subordination. Their power struggle is one of homoerotic paternal bullying. It also explores the paradoxes of America's moral war against the rise of totalitarian fascism. McConnell describes Cummings as a

figure who delights in the 'callousness with which he takes part in the dance of power and death' (74). Mailer ensures that his role in maintaining power is one that he fulfils with outspoken pride. He enacts a determination to achieve psychological and intellectual victory over Hearn. Cummings systematically challenges and unpicks Hearn's rather flimsy political convictions while simultaneously enforcing his authority through a succession of bureaucratic power games. His admiration for power as its own end is explored in a series of diatribes in which he relentlessly attacks Hearn's own politics of privileged liberal guilt. He speaks with relish of the 'reactionary's century' (93) and how 'historical process' (327) has been 'working toward greater and greater consolidation of power' (327). Cummings represents Mailer's fear that, as Limon explains, 'the army is fascist and the army is everywhere' (135). He raises the alarming notion that war is essentially its own end. It is an exercise in the performance and ultimate establishment of vast and unchallengeable power. Of course, Cummings' fascism is not merely philosophical posturing. He sees his position in the hierarchy as opportunity to add a material practicality to his beliefs. It is here that the ramifications for the American masculine subject in a quasi-fascist system are clear.

> [...] to make an army work you have to have every man in it fitted into a fear ladder. Men in prison camps, deserters, or men in replacement camps are in the backwaters of the army and the discipline has to be proportionately more powerful. The Army functions best when you're frightened of the man above you and contemptuous of your subordinates. (181)

As a metaphor for masculine hierarchy, the 'fear ladder' is perhaps rather unwieldy. But, what it achieves here is a rebuttal of the autonomy and freedom at the heart of mythic American masculinity. Cummings is not interested in offering even an illusory or imagined space for the American masculine subject to enact his lost masculine destiny. This marks a significant shift from the more subtle and manipulative promises in recruitment and propaganda.

Cummings' celebration of power and the defeat of the subject are placed in opposition to Hearn's Ivy League intellectualism. As with Dos Passos' critique of fey liberalism in his characterisation of John Andrews, Mailer is disparaging of Hearn's frustrated politics. Hearn's 'guilt of birth' (84) and uncomfortable relationship with his social group's 'assurance' (84) and 'privilege' (84) creates

uneasiness regarding power. His closeness to Cummings – a man he admires, fears and 'resents' (85) in equal measure – is emblematic of the contradictions inherent in American hierarchies. Hearn is grateful for advantages and opportunities to learn from the 'brilliant' (85) Cummings yet experiences an ambiguous imperative to find moral fault in the 'tyrant with a velvet voice' (86). Cummings, in turn, sees Hearn as something of a philosophical challenge. He wants to convince him that privilege and its accompanying advantages are part of a natural order. Moral objections to this are futile. Hearn, like John Andrews, is in limbo. He is contemptuous of his equals yet scorned by those further down the 'ladder'. The exchanges, though at times jovial and good natured, are underscored with power, rank and hierarchy. There are several instances when Cummings languidly suggests to Hearn that he follow military protocol ('suppose you salute me?' (91)). Forcing Hearn to perform such practices is an attempt to debase and humiliate him and to remind him of rigid hierarchical ritual.

This aspect of their relationship fits with much of what Kilmartin observes regarding masculine relationships in the hierarchies of work. There is a tacit recognition that both Cummings and Hearn are fulfilling 'masculine roles' (199). Hearn is willing to 'subjugate his behaviour' (198) while Cummings attempts to 'vanquish' (198) potential challenges to dominance from his subordinate. The novel details the manner in which Hearn is fully aware of his 'position as a servant' (87), of Cummings' various 'poses' (89) and his 'mixture of the genuine and the sham' (89). A series of routine yet emasculating tasks are laid as traps for Hearn. He is asked to prepare daily arrangements of flowers for the General and arduously construct a games tent. They are a challenge to Hearn. He is prodded and provoked until he snaps. Hearn resents Cummings' treatment of him and the seemingly inescapable world that he inhabits. Hearn is 'the pet, the dog' (319) to his 'master' (319). He is 'coddled and curried, thrown sweetmeats' (319) until he has the 'presumption to bite the master once' (319). This epiphany manifests itself in a symbolic performance of insubordination. Hearn challenges the General's dominance through the simple act of discarding a cigarette on the floor of his immaculate tent. This gives Cummings the opportunity to display a more vindictive authority. Hearn is calmly told of the punitive consequences of his insubordination as well as the broader social

ramifications of challenges to established hierarchy. Hearn's rebellious act is to Cummings a 'symbol' (324) of the potential 'independence of his troops' (324). It is a 'threat' (324) and a 'denial of him' (324). His response, as he carefully explains to Hearn, is to engage in 'immense and disproportionate power […] directed downward' (330-1). The maintenance of masculine hierarchy requires power that is significant in concept and material application.

Mailer indicates at several points that Cummings' desire for power is due to his latent homosexuality. Indeed, the novel has drawn negative criticism for its homophobia. Phillips, in particular, observes that Mailer 'seems to accuse homosexuals exclusively of harbouring an excessive need to control others' (102) and of having a desire to hide their 'ingrained self-hatred' (103). Mailer's characterisation of Cummings is filled with the stereotypes and popular psychological discourse of the era. A distant father, an over indulgent mother, 'anguish and a troubled excitement' (412) around the uniformed 'crushes' (411) of his youth are all included. Additionally, Hearn observes that the General's 'affectation' (88) masks his 'trace of effeminacy' (88). Allan Bérubé (1990) describes the screening procedures involved in recruitment for the Second World War as a drive to 'discover and disqualify homosexual men' (2) through constructing homosexuality as a 'distinct phenomenon' (15). Attempts at positivist analyses of 'personality disorders' (15) included focus on 'boys or men who seemed to be effeminate, sensitive or immature' (17). Kilmartin argues that connections made between male homosexuality and femininity are rooted in the socially constructed imperative for men to demonstrate their masculinity by 'behaving in opposite ways from females' (226). Thus, homophobia is linked to the misogyny that underpins much of the behaviour observed throughout this thesis. Phillips argues Cummings' performance of control is an example of a homosexual man trying to both disguise a taboo sexual desire and reject the possibility of the feminine within his psychological make-up. However, while such criticisms of Mailer are certainly valid and his attitudes to homosexuality in *The Naked and the Dead* are objectionable, to reduce Cummings' role in the novel to merely a homophobic attack is to miss the much broader condemnation of the maintenance of masculine power by those who hold it. Yes, Cummings is clumsily portrayed in terms of his repressed sexuality but as a figure of authority and power he also represents Mailer's 'great fear' (Begiebing et al., 2012: 50)

regarding universal fascism's potential victory over the autonomy of the American masculine subject.

In Cummings and Hearn's relationship, violence is potential and ritualised. Such potential segues into material physicality in sections that are spent with the recon platoon. The central masculine group of the novel are led by the coldly driven Croft. To gain an understanding of his leadership, it is useful to examine the backstory that Mailer constructs for him in his Time Machine passage. These sections are included for each significant character and act as a subverted form of *bildungsroman*[13]. The movement from childhood innocence to experienced early adulthood chimes with America's view of itself as a young country still in the process of achieving adult autonomy. It also reflects on the pervasive nature of the Adamic myth and the constructed innocence of the American masculine subject. Kenneth Millard (2007) writes that the *bildungsroman* 'appropriates and refurbishes […] mythology for its own contemporary purposes' (6). These narratives often feature protagonists who 'participate in their own individual creative interpretation of that original innocence which harks back to the beginning of the nation' (6). Peter Jones (1976) suggests that American war novels of the twentieth century should be read in this light. He identifies 'contemporary and traditional motifs' (21) regarding masculine development such as 'a violent tension between father and son' (21) and cases in which 'the father is absent' (21). Such trying circumstances are supposedly present as a means of educating a child through adversity so that ultimately a salient and autonomous adult is produced.

The links here between the subject's own childhood and the mythic childhood of the American nation are clear. Disparity between the mythic American father as inspirational and wise and the materiality of abusive or alienating experience unite the personal and the national. Victor Seidler (1988) argues that twentieth century capitalism has seen a shift in which the disciplining domestic father is 'replaced by bureaucratic state institutions' (278). This means that the education provided in the formation of an adult male is no longer about the best way to harness and make use of freedom. It is instead about accepting 'conformity to

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[13] Literally translated from German as 'formation novel', the *bildungsroman* genre includes twentieth and twenty-first century American fiction such as Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn* (1998 (1885)), J.D. Salinger's *Catcher in the Rye* (1994 (1951)) and, more recently, John Irving's *A Prayer for Owen Meany* (2001 (1989)).

external standards' (279). Ultimately this leads to a system in which masculine subjects can 'learn to love their own chains' (279). The pressures of industrial capitalism force the material father figure to be absent from the domestic sphere. This leaves a gap which is filled by the national father in the form of 'media, education and science' (278). The problem here is that the American masculine subject is looking for nostalgic and mythic qualities associated with fatherhood that enable him to move into a successful and autonomous adult manhood. However, instead of this process he is left with a vast social structure that offers conformity as the only choice, and alienation and unhappiness as the only outcomes. Brittan attributes this process to the 'separation of the public and private spheres' (133). He argues that prior to mass industrialisation the family was a source of moral guidance and 'economic self-sufficiency' (133). The father figure was forced to leave the domestic sphere in order to provide his 'labour power' (133). The family are subsequently determined 'by state functionaries who set the limits of appropriate gender and socialisation practice' (134). The American masculine subject as child searches for his education from a national father figure. Consequent moral guidance is at odds with the nostalgic autonomy associated with mythic national identity.

In *The Naked and the Dead*, Mailer's characters, although shedding innocence, rarely learn anything positive from their formative experiences. As such, the Time Machine sections offer warning that nostalgia for a lost and mythic past will not necessarily inform and improve a potential future. Violent abuse from parents, witnessing cruelty toward women and experiences of sexual failure combine and leave each subject alienated and confused. Military service, therefore, is less a calling and more a chance of sanctuary from demeaning humiliations and disappointments. Mailer demonstrates how powerless the American masculine subject is in controlling his own destiny and shaping his own development. The back stories are narratives of ceaseless travel necessitated by poverty and a desire for happiness and human connection. Mailer depicts the lives of a broken generation of men and their families and communities whose spirits are wrecked by the economic circumstances of the 1930s. They demonstrate the failure of American myth and experience an isolated misery to which the army offers some hope of diminishment. Despite

some stylistic failings[14], the passages offer a welcome experimental juxtaposition from long periods of reportage. They are a route into understanding Mailer's interrogations of masculine identity.

Croft's flashback begins with a physical and psychological description that characterises him as 'efficient and strong and usually empty' (161). He holds 'a superior contempt toward nearly all other men' (161) and his conscious self-awareness is limited to 'a crude, unformed vision in his head' (161). Croft's father describes his son's alienation with frequent references to the manner in which he would 'beat the piss out of him' (162). As a youth searching for autonomy and control he learns to hunt and consequently develops a significant and bloody kinship with weaponry. This is evident when he kills a trade unionist while working for the National Guard. The killing has a distinct psychosexual effect on him. He experiences a visceral arousal in which he feels his 'heart […] beating' (166) and his 'hands […] very dry' (166). His marriage is a trail of infidelity and violence and this, coupled with absolute rejection of the other, is a man whose determination to perform autonomy and control creates hatred of the exterior.

> He pushed and laboured inside himself and smouldered with an endless hatred.
>
> You're all a bunch of fuggin' whores
>
> You're all a bunch of dogs.
>
> You're all a deer to a track.
>
> I HATE EVERYTHING WHICH IS NOT IN MYSELF. (169)

Mailer's capitalisation draws attention to the final clause here. Its simplicity is suggestive of advertising and the subsequent desire to define oneself through such straightforward discourse. Thus, Croft's self-determination and his leadership of the platoon are driven by an urge to dominate others and demonstrate their relative inadequacy. McConnell observes that such violent socialisation makes armed conflict the 'ideal sphere of action' (74). It 'allows him to exercise his baffled violence without fear of retribution or the threat of having to face his own moral responsibilities' (74). For Croft the enemy and his own

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[14] Pizer refers to them as 'superficial exercises' (9) and is highly critical of the manner in which they communicate 'stereotyped' (9) political expression with 'insufficient individuality of characterisation' (9).

comrades' lives are a necessary part of his desire for supremacy and conquest. Violent death is a moral certainty in which he finds rare 'order' (446) and 'grim and quiet satisfaction' (446). His desire for control and moral certainty are evidence of fears and anxieties resulting from socialisation in the prevailing conditions of the era.

Croft enters the conflict as a masculine subject who has repressed the casual abuse meted out by his father. He constructs a dehumanised enemy whose deaths represent an opportunity to usurp the power represented by this relationship. Bourke argues that killing in war differs from murder due to its 'lawful' (2) status. It provides the opportunity to demonstrate an 'essential self' (38) and an autonomous masculinity. However, such killing is carried out 'on behalf of the nation' (7) and the 'hierarchical military establishment' (7). As such, a continual discourse of 'rationalisation' (226) accompanies sanctioned killing. Ultimately, this leads to the dehumanising of the enemy through reductive racism and a nationally inscribed mood of 'revenge and retribution' (227) for the attack on Pearl Harbour and corporeal damage inflicted on supposed 'wartime companions' (227).

In addition to the demonstration of an essentialist masculine identity, there is the subject's material fear for his own mortality. Lindermann explains that many American combatants entered service in the Second World War with a sense that combat was to provide entry into male adulthood. He argues that young men saw the war as 'the ultimate test of the soldier's courage and manhood; that it tried the soul but would purify successful participants; that it confirmed character by strengthening the strong and diminished further the already weak' (8). However, Lindermann continues, for each combatant there was rapid 'abandonment of invulnerability' (13) and growing 'fatalism' (84). They became aware of a 'new and unconquerable conviction of their own expendability' (31).

Jarvis situates this anxiety upon the male body. In myth, American male bodies are 'physiologically intact, well-muscled, steeled entities that represented national strength' (87). Central to such cultural construction is the significance of the 'whole strong body' (87). War, however, produces 'countless' (5) numbers of 'war wounded bodies' (5) that serve to 'undermine the notion of the impenetrable male body' (89). In a situation in which control over the corporeal

self has been ceded to a dispassionate hierarchy, the combatant sees the dehumanisation and effective killing of a constructed other as a means of regaining some semblance of control. Dower speaks of subjects in the Pacific campaign 'obsessed with annihilating the foe' (53). He writes of 'graphic and contemptuous' (9) racism and the reduction of the enemy to 'stupid, bestial even pestilential subhuman caricatures' (89). Victor Seidler (2006a) speaks of the desire in western masculinities to 'aspire to being moral/spiritual beings through rising above […] their animal natures' (22). Jonathan Abel (2005) takes this further by claiming that 'the enemy, particularly a dead enemy, cannot be acceptably compared to the living self if the self is to continue killing' (75) and that 'replacement of self for other or of other for self is taboo' (75). Lindermann concludes that the dehumanisation of the Japanese enemy created in the American soldier a 'coarsening brutalisation' (82) that inevitably and ironically set men 'on the path to their own dehumanisation' (184).

An example of this process is evident in the capture and killing of a Japanese soldier who is the only one of four to survive a grenade explosion. Croft's treatment of the prisoner is a performance of callous sadism and gratuitous cruelty. Once more, the sexual aspect of Croft's violence is evident. The fact that the enemy has not yet been killed creates 'an intense sense of incompletion' and 'dissatisfaction' (199). He desires to witness 'quick lurching spasms of the body' (199) and fantasises about the moment 'when the bullets would crash into it' (199). Croft toys with the Japanese soldier. He enjoys his begging and pleading and the sense that the very breath in his lungs is dependent on Croft's trigger finger. He offers him drink and tobacco and encourages him to show photographs of his wife and children. Humanising the soldier in this manner is just a prelude to abruptly ending his life. Indeed, once the head-shot has been fired, Croft's physical response is again sexual. He finds his 'pulse slowing down' (201) and 'tension easing in his throat and mouth' (201).

Mailer's equation of sexual desire and violence is a key aspect of this novel and one that continues to thread its way through his oeuvre. Hitchens comments that sex and violence are 'two of the great American themes' (115) and that Mailer 'sought to integrate them and the various points at which they intersect' (115). Mailer's views on masculinity and its fraught relationship with sexual

activity and violence attained heightened controversy between the 1950s and 1970s with the publication of 'The White Negro' (2007 (1957)) *An American Dream* (1965) and *Why Are We in Vietnam?* (1993 (1967)). These texts contain significant instances of sustained sexual violence towards female characters and its role in essentialist constructions of masculinity. Despite more subtlety in *The Naked and the Dead*, the novel attracted detailed analyses by mid-twentieth century feminist critics; most notably in Kate Millett's *Sexual Politics* (1971). Millett describes Mailer as, 'paradoxical, full of ambivalence, divided conscience and conflicting loyalties' (315).

Such complexity and contradiction is frequent in analyses of Mailer as writer and as public figure. Lennon's recent authorised biography (2013), for example, is titled *Norman Mailer: A Double Life*. Millet argues that central to such *doubleness* is the apparent confusion over how he views the very masculinity he portrays. She argues that 'what is most dangerous in the masculine sensibility' (315) is his self-conscious 'attachment to the malaise' (315). Her commentary on the novel itself contends that Mailer's combatants cannot distinguish sexual conquest and violence. The 'connection between sex and violence appears not only as metaphor, but seems to express a conviction about the nature of both phenomena' (316). Millett argues that Mailer fails to offer sustained and objective critique on the ways that 'sexuality and violence are so inextricably linked' (319). He presents instead a thinly disguised celebration of 'the fantasy of virility' (319). She rejects completely Mailer's essentialist claim that 'violence is an innate psychological trait in the male' (331) and that 'repression can only lead to greater dangers' (331). She finds his claims regarding 'throttled violence' (331) and illness to be nothing more than 'hypochondria and pseudo-medicine' (331). Indeed, such essentialist claims certainly jar with notions of social construction and performance of gender and, as such, appear entirely anachronistic. However, more recent criticism from Scott Duguid (2006) and Susan Faludi (2000) has, while still critical of the violence of Mailer's language, applauded his insistence in generating much needed debate regarding the ideological imperatives and sexualised power games of the militaristic American administration. Duguid, for example, comments on the 'tendency to productively engage his work in terms of historical shifts in constructions of postwar masculinity' (23). For these critics,

Mailer is challenging restrictive ideologies. He is engaging with the increasing complexity of American masculinities in a country immersed in dual celebrations and condemnations of sex and violence.

Violence, sexuality and sexual performance are clearly issues that create anxiety for protagonists in *The Naked and the Dead*. There are multiple instances of sexual frustration manifest in self-loathing and outward aggression. The Time Machine sections repeatedly recount unhappy physical relationships and discourse portraying women as 'bitches' and 'whores'. Willie Brown, for example, is a Midwestern boy from a middle-class family who lives a lifestyle of reasonable economic privilege. He has a car, a college education, fraternity, a marriage and well-paid employment. Yet, none of this satisfies him. His slowly deteriorating marriage renders his constructed masculine success numb and meaningless. Brown's misogyny toward his wife is a thinly veiled admission of his own sexual insecurities. He reflects on 'marrying a two-timing bitch' (127) as a 'mistake' (127). Their sexual failures are due to his wife's continual 'holding out on me' (127). Female sexuality is described in threatening terms. Brown claims that there 'ain't such a thing as a clean decent woman' (127) and recalls that 'I picked up a piece from a married woman with kids' (127).

Such misogyny opens up broader analyses of the crisis of masculine identity in the Great Depression and the manner in which this can be read through performative misogyny. Kimmel observes that the economic failures of the 1930s 'forced men to abandon their faith in the marketplace as certain to confirm their manhood' (136). In its place they turned to the empirical discourse of contemporary psychology[15] to locate 'specific […] attitudes, traits and behaviours' (136) that would provide essential proof of masculinity as an 'inner sense of oneself' (136). The period was a time in which masculinity was subject to unprecedented 'scrutiny' (137). Brod (1987b) comments that individual failure to demonstrate the attributes that determined gender hindered the opportunity for 'individuals to become psychologically mature as members of their sex' (21). Deviation from normative and empirical definitions of masculinity had the potential to bring great shame and, coupled with the social conditions of the

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[15] Kimmel includes descriptions of the tests carried out by psychologists of the 1930s such as Terman and Miles who developed the 'M-F scale' to determine 'the successful acquisition of gender identity' (140).

time, led to what Brod simply describes as 'trouble meeting male role demands' (21).

Effeminacy was feared as it indicated homosexuality and a departure from the era's hegemonic ideals. Chris Haywood and Mairtin Ghaill (2003) report that the era saw new pressure on the masculine subject to perform 'strength, power and sexual competence' (9). John MacInnes (1998) expands this to being 'hard, aggressive […] dominant, remote powerful, fearful of intimacy rational, unemotional, competitive [and] sexist' (14). The rejection of femininity has, as Roger Horrocks (1994) argues, manifested itself in 'many cultures' (89) as a 'great male fear and envy of women' (89). He describes misogyny as 'a hatred of the inner feminine in men' (90) that 'must be crushed for men to be men' (90). Kilmartin adds that the masculine group dynamic 'encourages men to resist the awareness of affect, avoid emotional vulnerability and disguise their feelings' (156), particularly those that indicate 'hurt, fear, sadness or any experience that signals weakness or lack of control' (156). Connell explains that men avoid being seen as deviant from such codes by marginalising the feminine and feminised other. This includes biological females, homosexual men or, in the case of much of the war fiction analysed in this thesis, the enemy combatant and their culture.

Philips identifies the ironic fault lines in essentialist masculinities at war. Despite the promises of propaganda and recruitment, war essentially 'exposes human beings as naked, trembling, blundering' (90). Therefore, war provides the opportunity to symbolically enact American myth and its masculine analogue while simultaneously revealing the material emptiness of those very myths. Mailer's own *naked* protagonists provide the complexity that makes the novel such an invaluable aid in exploring the nuances of masculinity.

As I have discussed elsewhere (2012), Private Gallagher provides an isolated counterpoint to the group's performative misogyny. Initially, he is little more than a thuggish anti-Semite who has been manipulated by a far-right group in his native Boston. Mailer describes an alienating childhood spent 'terrified of his violently alcoholic father' (329) followed by descent into the 'group mentality of political fanaticism' (329). Upon first inspection Gallagher is a character employed by Mailer to 'embolden […] his attack regarding the dangers of

fascism' (330). But news of his young wife's death during childbirth reveals a heretofore hidden depth to his character. The slow process of grief is played out in excruciating detail. Most torturously of all, he receives letters from his wife sent before her death. Memories of his domestic life and rare moments of connection with his wife allow his interior to surface. The impenetrable and invulnerable masculine subject is breached as the solidity of masculine emotional restriction gives way to a fluid and unstable interior signified by Mailer's use of liquid imagery.

> She had been very small and he thought of how she had seemed like a little girl to him at times and how he had been amused by her seriousness. He laughed softly and then abruptly, with no defences raised, he realised that she was utterly dead and he would never see her any more. The knowledge flowed through him without any resistance like a torrent of water when a floodgate is lowered. He heard himself sob and then was no longer conscious of the choking sounds of his anguish. (291)

Such visible vulnerability is infrequent in this novel. His emotional state causes consternation and awkwardness among colleagues who are unsure of how to respond to his unusual display of emotion.

As discussed, emotion and affect are dangerously feminine traits to display. His colleagues regard them as somehow infectious. If they are too close to Gallagher or are complicit with his grief then they risk deviation from the codified norms of their group. Gallagher's grief should ideally precipitate support from his peers and perhaps provide an opportunity to articulate his emotional vulnerability. However, the response of the platoon is one of creeping resentment. Unsure of the most appropriate manner in which to act, the group instead feign ignorance of his grief so as not to disturb their superficial equilibrium.

> The men tried to feel sorry for him, but the event had given a variation to the monotonous sweep of their days on the road. For a short time they sustained a quiet compassion when he was near and spoke in soft voices, uncomfortable in his presence. They ended by feeling merely uncomfortable and were resentful when he sat by them, for it inhibited their speech and made them acutely uneasy. (285)

Kilmartin explains that reluctance to establish emotional connections in the masculine group is a well-established behaviour. He states that 'the

establishment of intimacy' (265) is feared. It is an admission of 'weaknesses and vulnerability' (265). Instead, the 'gender role demand' (265) is for 'self-sufficiency' (265) that 'inhibits self-disclosure' (265). Other than anger[16], the masculine subject is expected to enact a 'restrictive emotionality' (264). He must 'solve his problems on his own' (265). The recon platoon's group dynamic certainly supports this observation. In the intense climate of battle and in traversing energy sapping terrain there is an absence of unity or solidarity. The men exist in quiet misery, ruminating inwardly on their dislike of each other. As Leonard Lutwack (1971) observes, this is 'no band of devoted men; the recon patrol never functions as a fighting unit, each man being an isolated, distrustful enemy of his neighbour' (146-7).

The only case where a genuine connection is made is in the unlikely pairing of the Christian farm boy Ridges and the Jewish outsider Goldstein. The two men find themselves carrying the dying and incoherent Wilson through the jungle to the beach to be taken back to headquarters. The fact that there is a task-based objective for them to share, no matter how futile and arduous, serves to unite them. Viewing combat experience as productive labour helps them to perform a more acceptable masculinity. Ridges and Goldstein have a sense of control unhindered by the patent absurdity of their task. David Buchbinder (1994) claims that men reaching maturation during the Great Depression who faced unemployment were eager to seize any opportunity to 'demonstrate […] necessary skills' (11) and be 'self-sufficient' (11). Kilmartin argues that tasks have a beneficial impact on collaborative masculine relationships. Their 'cognitive nature' (264) and 'outcome' (264) creates scenarios that 'enable men to affiliate with one another in co-operative ways' (264). Ridges and Goldstein are constantly aware of the physicality of their task as the 'muscles in their calves and around their shins […] knot painfully' and 'their thighs quiver' (618). The male body's aches are a signifier of labour. Each man relishes his physical exertion. This is a chance for the corporeal subject to enact masculinity away from the dangers of mechanised weaponry. Wilson is clearly not going to survive but the futility of the trek is of no importance. Their alliance is not one

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[16] Peter Stearns (1987) describes the 'masculine style toward anger' (87) as the only socially accepted 'channel' (88) for masculine emotion in late nineteenth and early twentieth century America. He argues that restrictions upon other modes of communicating emotion created 'tremendous tensions' (86) for young American males of the era.

that is verbally sealed or tangible in their conscious minds. It lies in co-operation and joint enterprise. They are determined that they will 'never let […] go' of their 'burden' (643). They 'must move on'. (643).

The corporeal experience of the Pacific campaign is an issue at the heart of Mailer's novel. The ideological aspects of conflict are eventually revealed as hollow. The minutia of corporeal sensation replaces such discourse as a means of understanding and organising material experience. Lindermann explains that American soldiers initially looked to 'principles and aims' (24) as rationalisation for their presence in the war. However, this 'diminished drastically' (24) and was replaced by a state of crisis in which 'focus narrowed […] to whatever they deemed would sustain continued existence' (44). As such, 'larger military success and failure were almost equally subordinate' (44) to material survival. Writing war in this manner is not exclusive to the texts discussed here. Awareness of the male body also drives the memoir genre with Eugene Sledge's *With the Old Breed at Peleliu and Okinawa* (1990 (1981)) being a notable example. A biologist, Sledge's perceptions of the Pacific campaign frequently come back to the manner in which male bodies respond to fear. He writes of a 'bladder that would surely empty itself and reveal me to be the coward I was' (55). When under fire, his muscles are 'tight as a piano wire' (63) and subject to 'mild convulsion' (63). He refuses to engage in the dehumanisation of the enemy and is 'agonised' (63) by an encounter with the 'glistening viscera' (63) of an enemy corpse.

Mailer's microscopic narrative also focuses on clinical muscular sensations and the male body's responses to anxiety. Even the ruthless Croft cannot escape his body's anxiety as he stands guard at the machine gun mound.

> Croft swallowed once. Tiny charges seemed to pulse through his limbs and his head was as empty and as shockingly aware as if it had been plunged into a pail of freezing water. He wet his lips and shifted his position slightly, feeling as though he could hear the flexing of his muscles […] Something seemed to move in the grove. A new trickle of sweat formed and rolled down his back. His twisted uncomfortably. He was unbearably tense. (155)

The economy of prose here demonstrates the influence of Hemingway. Mailer creates a tension that communicates the manner in which corporeal anxiety freezes time into a singularly material present.

Mailer's recon platoon measure their bodies and war experiences through encounters with the injured, dying and dead enemy. As I have discussed in an earlier publication (2013), one such confrontation comes when several of the platoon have been drinking moonshine and search dead Japanese soldiers for war souvenirs. Jarvis attributes this practice to a 'hunt metaphor' (130) that speaks back to masculine nostalgia for 'the Old West and America's various Indian wars' (130). Dower explains that souvenirs included 'gold teeth, ears, bones, scalps and skulls' (64). The act itself demonstrates 'deterioration in the characters' notions of human empathy' (Mann: 165). It dehumanises and objectifies the bodies of their Japanese enemy. This view is heightened by the 'ludicrous contrast of a group of giggling, stumbling drunkards and a field of charred flesh and twisted machinery' (Mann: 165). Mailer's language is forceful and direct when describing the visual aspect of a Japanese corpse with his 'head […] crushed from his ear to his jaw' (216) and 'his legs […] thrust tensely through the shattered glass of the windshield' (216). The corpse is fractured and fragmented and his severed limb is 'lopped off at the thigh' (216). It is a far cry from the symbolic impenetrability of the whole male body.

Dehumanisation of the enemy dead is potentially an important psychological coping mechanism for individuals complicit in, and surrounded by, so much violence. Mailer 'forces an empathetic confrontation with the enemy through his inclusion of the face as a means of symbolic re-humanising' (Mann:166). The enemy body is no longer a site of dehumanised fragmentation. During a tense passage of combat, the intrinsically decent Red Valsen sees the face of the Japanese soldier who he is expected to kill.

> He could see the face of the man who was sitting up and it added to the unreality;
> he felt as though something were choking him. The Japanese soldier had a
> pleasant bland face with wide temples and a heavy jaw […] Red had for a moment
> an odd detached pleasure which stemmed from the fact that he was unobserved.
> And yet all of this was mixed with dread and the certainty that none of it was real.
> He could not believe that in a few seconds the soldier with the broad pleasant face
> was going to die. (194-5)

Mailer's simple description of the man suggests a shared humanity. It heightens Valsen's awareness of the violent and abrupt nature of his potential act. He is further troubled by the identity of the enemy when he sees a headless corpse.

The absence of the face causes Valsen to reflect upon his own vulnerable mortality. He engages in 'symbolic *re-humanising'* (Mann: 166). The 'impossibility of ever […] seeing the man's face' (222) leads to Valsen imagining a 'man who had once wanted things and the thought of his own death was always a little unbelievable to him' (222). The enemy is a man that 'had had a childhood, a youth and a young manhood' (222) with 'dreams and memories' (222). More than anything, Valsen's epiphany tells him that 'man was really a very fragile thing' (222).

As mentioned in the concluding remarks of the previous chapter, the shift in corporeal awareness from a position of symbolic invulnerability to knowledge of the male body's organic frailty is a key thematic development of the fiction studied in this thesis. Hemingway and Dos Passos' protagonists achieve epiphanies regarding their place in the social machine and, in Heller's *Catch-22* (analysed in chapter three), 'Snowden's Secret' regarding the manner in which war rips apart the male body is the pivot around which the absurdity of the novel spins.

Elizabeth Grosz (1994b) observes that the difficulty in aligning mythic representations of the body with its material corporeality is akin to the image of the 'Mobius Strip' (xii). Perception through representation (what she refers to as 'mind' (xii)) and the material body are not 'two distinct substances or two kinds of attributes of a single substance but somewhere in between' (xii). Thus, the male body of American myth and the corporeal materiality experienced in mechanised combat do not exist as a binary opposition. They are in ambiguous and paradoxical flux. The 'unquestioned norm' (188) of the male body as whole and invulnerable, therefore, bleeds into the damaged and porous corporeal identity of the masculine subject in combat. The organic rupturing of skin is, Grosz explains, 'an affront [to] a subject's aspiration toward autonomy and self-identity' (195). Jarvis' analysis builds on Grosz. She comments on the specifics of the mythic male body's transformation in combat. The 'war wounded male body' (88) results in the simultaneous yet paradoxical existence of an established masculine 'body politic' (87) as well as 'alternative or abject masculinities' (88). Jarvis and Grosz look to Julia Kristeva (1982) and abjection theory when discussing what Jarvis describes as war's 'production of corpses, filth and injured bodies' (89). Grosz describes the mythic male body as 'clean

and proper' (192). Therefore, the encounter with the dirt of corporeal injury and death is dissonant. Kristeva speaks directly of the corpse and its 'wound[s] with blood and pus, [its] sickly, acrid smell of sweat, of decay' (3) and the manner in which the encountering subject is 'violently' (3) altered. The corpse, Kristeva suggests, 'does not signify death' (3) but an unthinkable and taboo version of the corporeal self that stretches the subject to 'the border of my condition as human being' (3).

Throughout Mailer's novel, Japanese corpses are described in visceral detail. Frequently, the contained interior of the male body leaks and decomposes. One corpse discovered by the recon platoon 'had a great hole in his intestines' (216) and his death is marked by 'hands' (216) that 'in their death throes had encircled the wound' (216). More troubling is the sight of an indeterminate number of corpses whose flesh has combined in a stark rebuttal of masculine corporeal borders and autonomy. The 'ruptured flesh' (218) is covered in 'maggots' (218) to the extent that it is 'impossible to see any longer where the wounds had been' (218). This is a version of the male body that challenges the symbolic ideal and, as such, elicits the dehumanising processes discussed above. If the combatant does not define what he sees as human then he can avoid the sense that this is his own potential corporeal destiny. These challenges to the invulnerability of the American masculine subject's body are mirrored by the manner in which the invulnerability of the national body is challenged by the attack on Pearl Harbour. The American landscape is a site of mythic American conquest and subsequent control. For it to be violated in such a way removes its supposed impenetrability. Foucault speaks in *Discipline and Punish* (1979) of injuries to the 'sovereign' (48) and the manner in which the 'king takes revenge for an affront to his very person' (48). For the 'momentarily injured sovereign' (48) to be 'reconstituted' (49) punishment enacted against his 'enemies' (49) must be a 'ceremony' (49). The 'unrestrained presence of the sovereign' (49) is confirmed through an 'exercise of terror' (49). Pearl Harbour operates as a symbolic attack on America's sovereign in the form of its invulnerable body politic. The vehemence of America's revenge and retribution is evidence of their need to make its punishment 'spectacular' (33). Of course, the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki demonstrates such spectacle to a degree unprecedented in war's long history.

Violence on such an unprecedented scale is echoed in the way that both Mailer and Jones repeatedly depict the attempted extermination of the Japanese enemy. Indeed, the male body's relationship with landscape and conquest is borne out in Mailer's novel as a struggle symbolic of the control that underpins America's national myths. As discussed in the introduction, the Pacific Islands on which combat took place consisted of a landscape that made the endurance required for combat a significant difficulty. The heat of the jungle and the clawing quality of muddy ground were debilitating when considered alongside thick uniform and heavy kit. The recon platoon's ultimately futile mission to Mount Anaka includes passages of gruelling physicality as the men move inch by inch through jungle.

> The density of the jungle, the miasmal mists, the liquid rustlings, the badgering of the insects lost their first revulsion and terror. They were no longer conscious of the foreboding wilderness before them; the vague unnamed stimulations and terrors of exploring this tunnel through the jungle became weaker, sank at last into the monotonous grinding demands of the march. (459)

Mailer's descriptions of jungle draw fluid and uterine imagery antithetical to the imposed order of America's mythic frontier. The jungle is ambiguous and unknowable; its edges blurred and spaces liminal. The fluids that leak from corpses are echoed in the uncertain liquidity underfoot. The jungle resists symbolic wholeness and rationality. It is, Jay Boyer (2003) argues, 'primal, a force unto itself' (1). Strategy and military hardware are redundant in a landscape that 'is instinctive, pre-verbal, almost visceral' (1) and in one that 'precedes what the rational mind can codify, what the reasonable mind can articulate' (1). The phallic certainty of westward conquest in which control is achieved with specificity of location and the logic traditionally associated with masculinity is resisted by the jungle's lack of tangible shape. Aquatic and fluid imagery is of great significance in western cultural constructions of Japan and, indeed, in Japan's own artistic, literary and cinematic traditions. The certainties of land contrast with what Thomas Schnellbacher (2002) describes as the Pacific Ocean's 'boundary with the unknown and unconscious' (6). Water resists linearity and logic as it 'reconciles the known and unknown by making them interchangeable' (6). The ocean offers a deceptively knowable surface that masks a potentially malevolent depth. The jungle too offers the benefits of fertile land yet the hidden dangers of rotting, twisted uncertainty. As such, the

unknowable landscape is inevitably feminised so that a process of phallic conquest can take place. It is through Croft that such a process is performed in his determination to scale and conquer Mount Anaka.

The topic of landscape has been discussed at length in the previous chapter and will be revisited in chapter four but it is still worth spending a moment reiterating just how central the conquest of wilderness is in American myth and nostalgia. The sheer size of America and the huge diversity of geographic features ensured that early white settlers faced enormous effort to cultivate agriculture and establish sustainable communities and social identities. Pearce Lewis (1992) comments that landscape 'consumes much of the nation's energies' (41). It 'powerfully grips its collective imagination' (41) ensuring that 'the struggle to conquer America's physical geography looms […] large in the nation's memory' (41). Lillian Schlissel (1992) adds that, as well as forming a significant part of America's cultural myth, the conquest of landscape is an important factor in the nation's material history through its 'imprint upon American manner, economics and society' (83). Therefore, the American masculine subject's yearning for a lost autonomy is manifest in the culture of individualism that Nathan Glazer (1992) suggests 'has emphasised the American as pioneer moving out into the wilderness among savages and making his way alone' (293).

For men in combat such a cultural trope sees the creation of an imagined heterotopian landscape in which the savage other finds form in the unknowable and feminised enemy and their inscrutable landscape. For Croft, this manifests itself in hypermasculine assertions of his individual will. The attempted climb up the imposing slopes of Mount Anaka is a mammoth physical struggle. They encounter 'rocks […] slippery with mud and vegetation (696)' and 'vicious thorns of bamboo thicket' (696) all 'blended into one vast torment'(696). The indifferent landscape remains entirely unaffected by the efforts of Croft and his platoon. As with corporeal epiphanies, certainties located in myth are revealed as empty constructions. The futility of their ascent on the mountain is thwarted not by human resistance or collective refusal but by the simple act of kicking a hornets' nest. Croft's attempts to conquer his enemy (animate or otherwise) suddenly appear absurd. It is impossible to resist the parallel between the exhausting and futile battle with nature and the gruelling and dehumanising facets of physical

combat. Both offer nothing but a rebuttal of the American masculine subject's mythic wholeness and the banality of symbolic attempts to enact conquest.

James Jones' *The Thin Red Line* opens with similar challenges to the notion of American conquest. 'C for Charlie Company' enters the novel in transit as 'cargo' (1) about to be 'confronted with the physical fact' (1) of Guadalcanal. Immediately, the island is ascribed its own ambiguous power. Far from a site of potential conquest, it is revealed to be a place that may 'turn out to be a friend's grave' (2). The island's physical features are described in detail through the eyes of Jones' combatants as they move from their ship to the island's beach. The beach is both fluid and solid. It is a liminal space in which the imagined heterotopia of a site that has been read 'about in the papers' (1) clashes with material reality. Each man moves through water in a moment of 'baptism' (1) again suggesting the symbolic importance of water in each of the war novels studied in this thesis. C for Charlie Company, like Mailer's protagonists, experience subversion of the American traditions of conquering new land. Their baptism is not to a life of progress and potential autonomy but to one in which the landscape will engulf them. As the Landing Craft Infantry member that greets them on land states rather prosaically, they are not here to conquer but simply as 'canonfodder for the Nips' (3). The futility of symbolic conquest is brought home by the disordered chaos of the beach with men 'all moving somewhere' (39) and the omnipresent threat of mechanised attack in the guise of Japanese air strikes. Corporal Fife considers their initial movements are 'like a business' (38) undercut with inevitable 'blood, mutilation and death' (38).

Jones' novel is of great interest when considered alongside Mailer's. His officers have varied responses to hierarchy and this analysis will begin by examining them. The fact that they enact their positions of power in nuanced ways demonstrates the subtlety and complexity of the novel itself. Jones' distinction between the publically performed self and the emotional interior are helpful in understanding the anxiety existing between symbolic representation of the American masculine subject and the actuality of experience. The self-conscious narratives employed by characters hint at the postmodern subjectivities discussed in chapters on Heller and Vonnegut as well as the Vietnam writing of O'Brien and Heinemann. As with Mailer, the Japanese enemy is dehumanised and a signifier of the brutality each combatant adopts

during the course of the conflict. However, Jones' novel adds a sense that the masculine group and its codified norms also enforce a performative barbarity upon the enemy body. Such fears create isolation and loneliness which Jones addresses through the inclusion of dynamic homosocial relationships. Sexuality and friendship blur and shift in the context of war and Jones acknowledges this. His narrative treatment of homosexuality is markedly different from that of Mailer and underlines the deceptive complexity of his writing.

Published in 1962, *The Thin Red Line* is the second in Jones' trilogy of war novels. The sequence begins with *From Here to Eternity* in 1952; a work that captures the loss of Adamic national innocence when Japanese bombs destroy Pearl Harbour. The third novel *Whistle*, published posthumously in 1978, deals with post-combat malaise and emotional degeneration in American veterans. Taken as a continuous narrative, the novels explore the 'evolution of the soldier': Jones' model of the psychological journey undertaken by the average American combatant. A process J. Michael Lennon (2009) describes as 'green soldiers becoming trained, hardened by combat and then turned into fearless automatons who know that they will die' (9). As documents of the Pacific campaign, Jones' novels equate with Lindermann's analysis of the manner in which notions of control and free will are quickly abandoned as illusory and implausible. Autonomous ideas are replaced, Lindermann explains, by 'fatalism' (84) necessary for 'those in battle' (84). The enormity of the war and of those vast nameless systems that appear to control twentieth century life bear down on the body of the soldier and, Lindermann stresses, fatalism allows the individual subject to create 'a distance between the self and the unsupportable experience' (74).

The Thin Red Line forms the central part of this evolution through the acts and processes of combat. Like Mailer, Jones attempts to construct experience of Pacific combat through verisimilitude. The novels share many elements: an author experienced in the Pacific campaign[17]; a group of soldiers in varying degrees of physical and psychological condition; the greed and incompetence of a posturing officer class; the hostility of unfamiliar and unforgiving landscape;

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[17] Muste (2003) confirms that Jones 'was stationed at Schofield Barracks in Hawaii when the Japanese attacked on December 7, 1941. He remained in Hawaii until late in 1942, when he was shipped to Guadalcanal. Wounded in January of 1943, he was sent to hospitals in California, Tennessee, and Kentucky before being discharged in July, 1944' (np).

and bloody and graphic series of violent encounters with the machinery of modern weaponry and the dehumanised Japanese enemy. However, to see the two novels as essentially the same is too simplistic a reading. Jones' novel, Limon argues, is 'the war book that comes closest to having no context' (136). The social lives and backgrounds of the characters play little or no part in their fates. So, instead of an equivalent to Mailer's Time Machine sections, Jones provides an unflinching and relentless representation of combat's psychological minutia. John Carpenter (2000) establishes that the key difference between the texts is that Mailer's method is essentially one of 'sociological schemata' (22) whereas Jones engages in 'remarkably thorough and nuanced […] psychological observation' (22).

The psychological development of his characters as masculine subjects owes something to Jones' own engagement with the war through American myth and narratives of glorious duty. Lindermann cites Jones reminiscing about an encounter with veterans of the Battle of Coral Sea while stationed in Hawaii waiting for active service. Jones claims that the soldiers' stories suggested they had 'passed on into a realm I had never seen' (5). What they had to say was 'immensely romantic' (5). However, his experiences on Guadalcanal radically altered such perception. He commented in interview (Aldrich, 1958) during the writing of *The Thin Red Line* that combat is rarely 'written about truthfully' (9). It is always couched in the simplistic binary of 'bravery and cowardice' (9); words that 'modern warfare' has rendered irrelevant to 'human reference' (9). James Giles (2010) claims that the novel is a 'serious investigation' (3) into the 'American male' (3) and the 'adolescent cult of masculinity' (3). Phillips adds that the novel's primary success is that it 'reveals contemporary definitions of masculinity as both artificial and unobtainable' (91-2). Yet, she continues, even knowledge of this is not enough to deter men from going to war. The performative requirement 'to prove manliness' means that men are faced with 'no other social position' (92). Thus, when war calls, 'men of all ranks […] go […] and stay in it' (91). The novel's content certainly supports such a view. Jones' frank treatment of combat experience and engagement with vulnerable and anxious American masculinity offers much to this thesis.

Jones' novel demonstrates that power offers the potential for advantage. But it is a power that generates anxiety and alienation through what Jarvis describes

as the 'performance of masculinities' (167). For Sergeant Edward 'Mad' Welsh, Captain James 'Bugger' Stein, and Colonel Gordon 'Shorty' Tall, performance is the most efficient manner of remaining in control. Between them they cover a complex range of hidden weaknesses, professional incompetence and monstrosity. Such nuance is one of the factors that marks Jones' novel as distinct from *The Naked and the Dead.* Unlike the excessive quasi-fascism of General Cummings, the officers' flaws and inconsistencies make them rather more sympathetic as portraits of American masculinity. Sergeant Welsh embodies an instrumental power that is manifest in his displays of brutality, coarseness and domination. There are times when Welsh's gin guzzling, foul mouthed presence borders on caricature but, over the course of the novel, his character provides insight into the hypermasculine culture of the Pacific campaign.

The opening section of the novel demonstrates both sides of Welsh: his self-indulgent and performative cruelty and his private intuitions regarding nation state politics. The initially cowering Fife is his immediate subordinate and suffers most from Welsh's self-assured displays of domination. ''All right fuckface! Where's that fucking platoon roster I told you to fix up for me?' (33) runs one typical exchange. Aggressive language of this nature is an aspect of the novel that is arguably more successful than in *The Naked and the Dead.* Mailer's attempts to recreate the language of the platoon are contrived and stand out rather jarringly; particularly the censor-aware use of 'fug' instead of 'fuck'. Jones, however, captures the crude bluntness of military discourse in his dialogue. Jane Hendler (2003) describes Jones' 'sexual frankness' (12) as evidence of his ability to create 'startling realism' (12). Jones' characters use a discourse of taboo language that includes frequent sexual swearing and misogyny.

The attempt to display masculinity through such language is well documented by linguists such as Jennifer Coates (1993), Deborah Cameron (1998) and Scott Keisling (2009). The latter, for example, states that the masculine subject uses such discourse, 'mechanically' (187) as a result of 'social pressure on them as men' (187). John Archer (1994) argues that behaviour of this type is connected with issues regarding 'face-saving' (135), 'self-esteem' (135) and 'the role of the audience' (135). The performance of 'aggressiveness' (136)

'toughness' (136) and 'viewing women as sex objects' (136) are central to 'macho' (136) culture in western societies and are the earliest steps in 'escalating' (137) cultures of violence. This is an example of what linguists such as Peter Stockwell (2002) refer to as covert prestige. Stockwell argues for significant 'gender differences in hypercorrection' (16) which indicate that men opt for 'stigmatised pronunciation' (12) when they are 'aware of their own speech' (12). Jones' novel, then, confirms the importance of understanding masculinity as socially constructed and thus performable. In the context of the aforementioned empirical attempts to define an essential masculinity in early twentieth century American psychology, the performances of characters such as Welsh demonstrate that such ideals are rather hollow or, as Tim Edwards (2006) writes, 'hopelessly unrealistic' (105). The imperative to perform is clear in the recruitment and training regimes of the Second World War as successful masculinity is so narrowly defined.

Jones' characterisation of Welsh, therefore, uses violent and aggressive language to identify him as a dominant and potentially dangerous masculine subject. His mastery of foul and insulting language are considered a part of who he is. Fife's stuttering response, in turn, identifies him as subordinate and very little threat to Welsh's dominance or to the established hierarchy. Welsh's public performances of dominance, however, are undermined by passages in which his interior demonstrates there is much more to him than the bullying figure his subordinates perceive. His views on war are evidence of an intelligent and cynical distrust of the Second World War's key figures and their motives. He reduces the war to arbitrary and petty disagreements over 'one man's' (51) or 'one nation's […] property' (51). His philosophical misgivings, insightful as they are, do not make him question his own position and participation. The novel's commentary on fatalism is evident in Welsh. He sees war as inescapable and permanent. Guadalcanal is merely the current stopping off point. For Welsh, then, the army may as well be the place in which he exists and in which he can enact those behaviours that signify his dominance. As such, he is a curious mixture of self-awareness and stubborn performance. He knows that the war is an absurd battle for masculine dominance writ large, yet he accepts his own place in this battle and acts accordingly. He does not, for example, see a duty of care as part of his leadership role. Any semblance of emotional support is

perceived as feminine and is consequently unwelcome. During preparations for a night raid, he repels Fife's search for solidarity with a 'face as expressionless as unchiselled granite' (153). He insists that his subordinate 'get the fuck away […] and stay away' (153). The role of care provider is aligned with the feminine and Welsh will not 'wind up playin' nursemaid' (153) or 'mother' (153). The constructed maternal role is taboo in a masculine environment. The dominance and power of the symbolic father supersedes the nurturing reach of the symbolic mother.

Issues of paternity also trouble Captain Stein. Nicknamed Bugger due to his rather awkward posture, his prevailing and constant motive for success in the armed forces lies in his symbolic and lived relationship with his father. His leadership is not driven by a thirst for power or dominance but as an emulation of his father's heroics as an officer in the trenches of the First World War. This is a paternal legacy that Stein strives for yet he is paradoxically aware that it cannot be achieved. His military 'policy' (102) is shaped by the narratives of his 'father the Major' (102) and his 'sense of guilt' (348) regarding failure. A 'schoolboy feeling' (348) of being 'dressed down' (348) underpins all that he attempts. Buchbinder sees the 'requirement' (39) of 'patriarchal masculinity' (39) as paradoxical in regards to what the son seeks from the father. The need for 'love and support' (38) always 'run[s] counter' (39) to the stipulation that 'men be independent and emotionally invulnerable' (39). As such, Stein's own love and support for his men is taboo. In order to emulate his father Stein wants to avoid being an 'old maid' (102) or 'wet blanket' (102) through the provision of overtly emotional support to his subordinates yet his amiability and tenderness override such desires and leave him anxious and uncertain. Consequently, he is unsuited to the style of leadership displayed by his contemporaries. Stein's inclination toward the emotional well-being of his men is, in the context of the military, feminine and unsuitable. As a result, he is eventually relieved of his officer status. Clearly, the ability to recognise emotion and achieve a degree of empathy for other soldiers is mutually exclusive from leadership and the maintenance of masculine hierarchy. Immediately prior to his admonishment, Stein ironically leads a highly successful battle and has the utmost respect of his men. However, his decision to refuse a command on the grounds of protecting men from fatal exposure to gunfire is deemed 'soft' (348) and 'not

tough fibred enough' (348). Stein's humane view of his subordinates is polarised by the dehumanising reduction of the men by his superiors to strategically necessary detritus. Stein is told that he must 'calculate the loss in lives against potential gain' (348). To view his men in such terms is something he is unable to do.

He is relieved to exit the trauma of battle but still feels anxiety regarding the legacy of his heroic father. However, he ultimately considers the narrative of his father's achievements in the context of his own traumatic experiences. His faith in the veracity of his father's recounted memories is altered by the knowledge that no man could possibly revel in heroics under such challenging physical and psychological circumstances. Indeed, the very concept of masculine heroism becomes implausible.

> Stein found he no longer gave a damn what his father the World War I Major thought. Men changed their wars in the years that followed after they fought them. 'I'll-believe-your-lies-about-you-you'll-believe-my-lies-about-me,' History. And Stein knew now his father had lied – or if not lied, had augmented. And Stein hoped he would never do that. He might but he hoped not. (394)

Stein sees such fabrication as an attempt to construct a legacy of selfless duty and courage. Jones himself casts doubt on narratives of bravery stating that 'if a man were truly brave he wouldn't have to be always proving it' (Aldrich: 9). Therefore, such narratives are 'suspect, ridiculous and dangerous' (Aldrich: 9). Jones subverts constructions of courage and cowardice and insists that moral bravery is demonstrated by the ability to refrain from violence when it cannot be justified.

A contrast to Stein is provided through his immediate superior Colonel Tall. An ambitious and callous officer, he aspires to move upwards through military hierarchy and is willing to use this end to justify occasionally appalling means. Tall is frequently accompanied by the most senior of staff and is himself under pressure to perform in a decisive and ruthless manner. His ambition is barely disguised and is something of a 'regimental joke' (265). He plays his role for 'every big shot here on the island' (265). However, his presence in the novel is far from that of simple metonym. Jones, as with so many of his characters, provides a fleeting moment of insight that demonstrates Tall's self-awareness regarding the degrading nature of his sycophantic efforts to climb the hierarchy.

He considers the 'untold buckets of shit' (326) he has 'eaten' (326) and the manner in which he has 'slaved' (326) in order to achieve professional and publically recognised success. Privately the outcome of the war is of less importance than his status.

Jones' contrast between carefully controlled public appearance and private subjective motivation is a recurrent theme in this novel. Virtually every character given third person focalisation indulges in a private world far removed from that which he portrays to those around him. This gap is a common feature of twentieth century American literature from Arthur Miller's Willie Loman (1998 (1949)) to Brett Easton Ellis' Patrick Bateman (1991). A society heavily influenced by psychotherapy and an image-obsessed media creates huge pressure to conform to socially prescribed norms of appearance and behaviour. If anything, the necessity of conformity is magnified in the military as each soldier's requirement to perform a normative masculinity is instilled throughout recruitment, training and in active service. Donald Mrozek (1987) describes the 'unitary culture' (226) of the Victorian and early twentieth century American military as one in which normative codes of behaviour are inscribed through 'rhetoric, ritual and symbol' (222). For the soldier to succeed and survive he is required to adhere to a 'vocabulary of behaviour' (223) that 'differ[s] from […] society as a whole' (223). In Mailer and Jones' novels, huge disparity exists in the socioeconomic and geographical backgrounds of enlisted men and their officers. Fragmentation of purpose and disunity are inevitable without stifling behavioural codes. Barry McCarthy (1994) discusses the significance of constructed and socially enforced male solidarity in what he terms 'warrior values' (116). He argues that the masculine group in war is subject to 'group selection, eliminating the weakest and least fit […] while increasing the organisation and cultural development of the victorious' (115). To avoid being viewed as weak (and by association feminine) the masculine subject is expected to conform to and exceed the 'warrior values of courage, endurance and honourable combat' (116). Thus, to return to Connell's hegemonic model, the dominating masculinity in this fixed historical moment is that established by exactly such warrior codes. Connell (2005) reflects on her own work by establishing that the problem for the masculine subject is that, despite the hegemonic ideal being 'normative' (832) and 'the currently most honoured way

of being a man' (832) it is not 'normal in the statistical sense' (832).
Consequently, it is clear that 'only a minority of men might enact it' (832). For
the majority of men subject to hegemonic masculinity, performance of its codes
will always be consciously artificial. Each masculine subject has knowledge of
his own public dishonesty and, by extension, of the dishonesty of their
masculine group.

Such awareness isolates Jones' characters. Pressure to conform permeates the
novel and private fears and anxieties are repressed. This is addressed early in
the novel through Private Doll. His initial withdrawal from the accepted codes of
masculine group behaviour gradually lessens as he realises that inclusion, no
matter how artificial, will only come as a result of performing a role. His identity,
as his name suggests, is a superficial construct dependent upon the reception
and whims of those around him.

> Chiefly, what he had learned was that everybody lived by a selected fiction.
> Nobody was really what he pretended to be. It was as if everybody made up a
> fiction story about himself and then he just pretended to everybody that that was
> what he was. And everybody believed him, or at least accepted his fiction story.
> (14)

Doll recognises that the group share illusory narratives. There is an unwritten
agreement in place not to question their veracity. He believes that the
masquerade of cohesion is possible despite its basis on self-conscious
narrative. He argues that, 'if you were honest and admitted you didn't know who
you really were, or even if you were anything at all, then nobody liked you' (15).
Yet ironically 'when you made up your fiction story about yourself […]
everybody accepted it and believed you' (15). The relationship of storytelling
and masculinity is explored much further in O'Brien's postmodernist response to
Vietnam but this is a frank admission that successful masculinities are based
upon inherent and shared artifice. Additionally, Doll's fictions are an example of
conscious performance that Judith Butler (2006) claims 'compels a
reconsideration of the place and stability of the masculine and the feminine'
(139). If Doll's actions are a conscious performance then it follows that they are
simultaneously an attempt at conformity and a parody of that very culture. In
essence, Doll's self-awareness allows Jones, to refer to Butler again, to 'reveal
the performativity of gender itself' (139).

Such heightened artifice is enacted in order to avoid rejection or ostracism from the masculine group. Kilmartin confirms that this process begins in childhood as adolescent masculine subjects that 'behave in gender inconsistent ways' (267) are prone to 'social rejection' (267). The resultant isolation is avoided through 'conforming to peer-group norms' (267) with a superficially unquestioning amorality. To admit to self-doubt and anxiety is to remind others that they share this emotional state. To share the conscious delusion creates a protective self-rationalisation and unspoken understanding that personal narratives are to be taken at face value. Jones' characters, therefore, indulge in masculine signifiers such as growing beards, consuming liquor and schoolyard fist fighting. Steven Carter (1998) notes that Jones' characters 'immerse themselves in manliness' (96) as a means to outwardly 'reflect their primitive consciousness' (96). However, as this is an atmosphere of hypermasculinity, the displays of conformity do not stop with such simple and relatively harmless acts. The desire for acceptance creates a group that needs to stretch and exceed masculine codes to levels that challenge moral limits and taboos. Coupled with Jones' 'evolution of the soldier' and what Lindermann describes as 'brutalisation' (82), the Pacific combatant participates in extreme violence. He is ostensibly indifferent to death or injury of the dehumanised *other*. There is a group pressure to refrain from moral condemnation or objections regarding acts committed by other members of the group. Indeed, Pat Lauderdale et al (1984) establish that challenging the behaviour of another identifies the subject as deviant. When there is a tangible 'external threat' (1060) the 'threatened group' (1060) are unlikely to be seen as offering moral critique to responses regardless of their levels of violence.

The violence of the masculine group is also attributable to the imperative to conform to national masculinities. As with Mailer's protagonists, there is a sense that the violence enacted upon the bodies of Japanese soldiers is significantly motivated by the culture of revenge and spectacular punishment. Foucault argues in *Discipline and Punish* that punishment in the twentieth century is no longer connected only to the perceived crime but is also 'an organised ritual for the marking of victims and the expression of the power that punishes' (33). As argued earlier, the attack on Pearl Harbour constitutes an attack on America's mythic power. The dehumanising violence enacted upon the Japanese enemy

is a manner of reasserting this power. Due to the symbolic nature of power, punishment is enacted as 'ritual' (33), 'hierarchical' (33) and 'spectacular' (33). Foucault adds that acts that 'take place even after death' (33) such as 'corpses burnt, ashes thrown to the winds, bodies dragged on hurdles' (33) are evidence that 'justice pursues the body beyond all possible pain' (33). So, in the novels studied here, the social body of Japan is attacked as punishment for an attack on the social body of America. Such symbolism manifests in material acts of brutality on the Japanese soldier and his body. This confirms and reasserts masculine America's dominance over a feminised or animalised savage other.

Evidence of this lies, as I have discussed elsewhere (2013), in the group desecration of a shallow Japanese grave. As C for Charlie Company search for their own war souvenirs, they 'silently watch the symbolically muscular Private Queen attempt to heave a corpse from its grave by the leg' (Mann:167). The 'horror at such an act is juxtaposed by the juvenile mimicry of the group in emulating Queen's macabre tug-of-war' (Mann: 167). Jones captures the moral ambivalence of a peer group uncertain of dynamic moral codes.

> They seemed seized by a strange arrogance. They pushed or poked at this or that exposed member, knocked with rifle-butts this or that Japanese knee or elbow. They swaggered impudently. A curious Rabelaisian mood swept over them leaving them moderately ribald and laughing extravagantly. They boisterously desecrated the Japanese parts, laughing loudly, each trying to outbravado the other. (74-5)

Bakhtin's (1994) own engagement with Rabelais establishes the body as 'carnival grotesque' (228). It is not one that can be 'entirely finished, completed' (228) or 'strictly limited' (228). Instead, the body is transitory, organic and permeable through the mouth, the nose, the anus and the genitals. Bourke argues that war provides a 'joyous celebration' (15) of the 'inversion of what was sacred' (15). The 'immense delight […] in breaking the highest moral law' (37) is possible due to the artifice created and catharsis offered by the carnivalesque. Each combatant is able to 'invert the moral order while still remaining innocent and committed to that order' (37). Thus, the immorality and taboo nature of grave desecration is superseded by both the reluctance to challenge the moral behaviour of a masculine peer and by the suspension of morality through evoking the carnivalesque.

The Japanese bodies are certainly organic but do not retain their humanity. They are a part of the organic earth and their removal from the ground allows the masculine group to enact both control of landscape and a frenzied attack on a dehumanised enemy associated with that very landscape. As Queen continues his struggle to pull the corpse from its grave, he becomes aware that his masculine identity is challenged by the possibility of failure. The futility of his objective is of no importance, only the need to conquer the deceased. Only Bell, a character with far more military experience, stands apart from the scene watching with a detached horror. Yet even he does not attempt to intervene. Instead he imagines a dialogue with his wife in which he attempts to rationalise the scene before him by equating moral objection with the feminine.

> *Brutes! Brutes! Animal brutes!* He could hear her cry. *Why don't you do something? Brutes! Don't just stand there! Stop them! Stop them! Is there no human dignity?*...What could I have done Marty? Anyway, you're a woman. You want to make life. You don't understand men. Even in himself there were elements of pride and hope involved, he didn't want to see Queen lose. Numb and sick as he was. (76)

Bell equates the feminine with the creation of life. He sets up a binary in which masculinity is defined by its ability to do the opposite. This coping mechanism is a manner in which Bell can justify his own moral inactivity and eventually abandon his interior discomfort.

Jones' characters move from relative innocence to wizened experience in a matter of days when they witness the abrupt power of mechanised weaponry. The repetition of rhythmic machine gun fire and the ghostly descent and sudden explosion of mortar shells form a nightmarish sensory landscape. The arbitrary and seemingly random nature of death in battle is striking. The constant spray of machine gun bullets can injure anyone at any time. The operator of the weapon has no way of knowing who he has aimed at or even if he has been successful. Just as Hemingway laments the loss of ritual in conflict, Jones proposes that values such as courage and duty are now a symbolic anachronism. J. Michael Lennon (2009) describes *The Thin Red Line* as 'a stark presentation of random and impersonal death in modern technological warfare' (9). The brooding and experienced Bell's knowledge of conflict allows him moments of objective lucidity despite the chaos of battle.

> Methodically, he drilled his shots into the dun hillside…He could not believe that
> any of them might actually hit somebody. If one did, what a nowhere way to go,
> killed by accident, slain not as an individual but by sheer statistical probability, by
> the calculated chance of searching fire, even as he himself might be at any
> moment. Mathematics! Mathematics! Algebra! Geometry! (201)

Bell's mathematical assessment suggests that modern warfare is a purely industrial process. The side with the most developed machinery is likely to be the victor. The male body is at war merely to function as part of war's machinery yet its organic nature is inadequate for this process. Bell sees war as the death of 'the individual' (244) in a system that is 'too vast' (244). The subject is now replaced by 'collections of men' (245) whose identities lie in 'only numbers' (245).

In a precursor of the statistical discourse of Vietnam's body count strategy (discussed in chapter four) the combatant as subject with free will or the ability to shape outcome is revealed as fallacy. The American masculine subject's actions are little more than exercises in futility. Bell sees a dark irony in the manner in which soldiers enter the war thinking that they 'made decisions and ran their own lives and called themselves free individual human beings' (284). Instead, in a sentiment that recalls Foucault, their mortality lies in the power of 'the state' (284). The illusion of free will is the most coercive of strategies and, despite what corporeal and psychological experience suggests, they continue to fight and die 'freely, of their own choice' (284). Futility and randomness are demonstrated frequently by abrupt death. Victims range from those that are killed instantly without sufficient time to consider their fate to those that suffer slow deterioration and immense pain. Like Mailer, Jones' graphic descriptions of corporeal injury fixate on the eviscerated male body. The death of Tella, for example, combines damage to the vulnerable body with an angry realisation of mortality.

> Finally the scream stopped of itself, from lack of breath, and Tella breathed,
> causing more blood to run from the hole in his chest. When he spoke it was only a
> few decibels lower than the scream. 'Fuck you,' he piped. 'I'm dying! I'm dying
> Sarge! Look at me, I'm all apart! Get away from me! I'm dying!' Again he breathed,
> pushing fresh blood from his chest. (257)

As Tella rejects the symbolism of the impenetrable masculine whole, he is overcome with rage. Jarvis argues that mechanised war reveals that 'bodies are in process' (96). The breaking of corporeal barriers such as skin and bone is an experiential rebuttal to 'phallic masculinity' (96). As Tella becomes aware of his own vulnerability he has nothing left to cling to except anger.

Indeed, anger drives one of the novel's most notable sequences. Bead's fatal assault upon an enemy solider is, according to Robert Blaskiewicz (2008), 'a fictionalized account of something that actually happened to Jones' (277). Jones is reported to have 'stepped into the forest for a moment of privacy, [been] caught with his pants down, and beat a man to death with his own hands' (277). This anecdote forms the basis of Bead's own violent rebirthing in the war. The incident signifies his transition from innocence to experience and provides an effective example of the links between fear, anger and violence. Kilmartin states that 'men tend to convert other emotions into anger' (158) which can lead to 'destructive' (158) incidents which are 'unacknowledged and uncontrolled' (158). This is the case for Bead as fear of injury or death is coupled with intense disillusionment regarding the moribund logic of his place in the conflict. Midway through the equally Rabelaisian act of defecation, Bead is confronted and drives his 'rifle butt again and again into the Japanese man's face, until all of the face and most of the head were mingled with the muddy ground' (176). He is left with the 'faceless, almost headless corpse with its bloody cut fingers and [a] mangled hole in its chest' (177). Bead is overcome with revulsion at his own act. He cannot make sense of the transition from 'breathing living man' (177) to death. His search for meaning reveals that there is in fact no 'reasonable answer' (177). Bead acts in this manner because he is alienated from his actions. He realises that the war has no moral centre and consequently feels alone.

To combat such alienation, Jones' characters secretly search for some kind of emotional or physical connection with other men at war. Buchbinder contends that 'homosocial relationships between men are disrupted and shot through with suspicion' (36). As a result, men are 'fearful of confiding in and trusting their male fellows' (37). Indeed, palpable moments of connection and honest disclosure are rare in *The Thin Red Line*. When they do happen they are away from the battlefield in the relative sanctuary of the medical facility. Fife and

Storm, injured to differing degrees, find that they are able to admit their hatred and fear of battle to one another. Away from the rest of their masculine group, projection of masculine virtue is no longer required. Fife's internal torment is a rich source of experiential discourse within the novel. He longs to disclose that he is a coward but fears this will mark him as deviant and subject him to hostility from his peers.

> There didn't seem to be anything left to say. Fife still had not got said what he had been trying to say, nor had he come anywhere near it. How did you go about telling someone you were a coward? How you had never thought you would be a coward but it had turned out you were? (388)

Fife knows that revealing such self-knowledge is to admit that he, like his colleagues, has been living a selected fiction. However, when Fife splutters out his admission, he finds that Storm is willing to see it as rational and objective. His reply is unequivocal: any man that 'aint a fucking goddam fool' (388) is also a coward. Like Heller's Yossarian, Storm sees fear and cowardice as evidence of rationality. To actively pursue danger of this degree to body and mind can only be considered otherwise. Therefore, any soldier that denies cowardice is either losing their grip or is simply a liar. This simple admission unites Fife and Storm and allows an emotional aspect in their relationship to develop. For Fife, the brief moment of honesty and shared disclosure brings a small amount of relief. Soon he and Storm spend 'a lot of time together' (389) as a way to avoid 'lying miserable and depressed in his own little, overheated, badly pitched tent' (389).

Jones' novel is notable for a subtle discussion of homosexuality during the Pacific campaign. Unlike Mailer who employs the stereotypes of self-loathing, effeminacy and compensatory control in his characterisation of General Cummings, Jones' engagement with homosexuality is much more nuanced. The relationships between Fife and Bead and between Doll and Arbre move away from the reductive homophobia evident in *The Naked and the Dead* by rejecting stereotypes and rigid sexual binaries. Phillips argues that Jones 'daringly breaks down the polarisation of heterosexual and homosexual' (97) and 'calls into question' the 'heterosexual boundaries drawn for men' (104). Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (1990) attempts to deconstruct the 'long crisis of modern sexual definition' (1) in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century's 'word

mapping' (2). The result is a challenge to a 'binarised identity […] full of implications' (2). 'Institutionalised taxonomic discourses' (2) actively oppress the 'more unsettled and dynamic' (10) nature of sexualities. Indeed, the military screening process described earlier was predicated on the notion that homosexuality is a quantifiable personality type. Bérubé argues that the process enforced a performative 'heterosexualised' (37) environment in which homosexuality was marginalised and categorised as 'soft, unaggressive and physically weak' (35). In this environment, homosocial relationships which, based upon Edwards' reading of Sedgwick's model, 'exist on a continuum from the unemotional to the fully homosexual' (92), are enacted in the military *buddy system*. Petersen (1998) argues that encouraging these relationships is a way for the military institution to 'supress the homoerotic' (53) and promote 'bonding and solidarity' (53) as an 'essential element in forging effective fighting units' (53). Bérubé adds that focus on the overtly heterosexual nature of such homosocial relationships in the Pacific campaign led to a situation in which sex between men 'was not queer' (41). He identifies a construction of 'situational bisexuality' (191) that is rationalised by the idea that 'healthy young men needed some kind of sexual outlet' (191). He also argues that the binaries used as a demarcation between supposed sexual polarities created male-female sexual roles so that the purportedly heterosexual male could dominate and the homosexual male could 'play the passive sexual role' (41).

Rationalisation and assertion of heteronormative identity is certainly evident in the sexual relationship that develops between Fife and Bead. Their frequent sexual encounters are rationalised as merely helping one another in achieving the relief of mutual fellatio. They convince themselves that the act demonstrates heterosexuality in terms of fulfilling regular ejaculation. Their interaction just prior to the physical act is marked by its references to heterosexual libido and masculine virility.

> Well, he was a very horny type, little Bead said, and he needed lots of sex. At eighteen this may well have been true; and Bead had stated it many times before; but Fife could not help feeling that Bead bragged a little. Anyway, for Bead, the worst thing about this whole war was that, he said. And what the hell could a guy do? Nothing, that was what. Beat it or do without. Unless guys helped each other out now and then. It was either that or find yourself a queer cook or baker

someplace, or it was nothing. Guys could help each other out, Bead supposed.
(128)

The great irony of this particular relationship is that Fife and Bead use notions of heteronormative masculinity to convince one another that nothing could be more masculine (and by association, heterosexual) than engaging in sex with one another. They repeatedly offer mutual assurance that they are most certainly not 'queer'. They are merely assisting with heterosexual objectives in a difficult environment. Changes in their professional relationship appear as a result of their growing physical bond. Fife's aggression to Bead suggests denial and a rejection of their growing tenderness. Tragically, awareness of an emotional connection that matches their sexual attraction only emerges at the moment of Bead's fatal injury. Fife is reluctant to meet Bead's plaintive desire for Fife to hold his hand as he dies. He fears that their sexual intimacy may be revealed. He worries about accusations of 'homosexuality', 'faggotism' (287) and being thought of as 'fairies' (287). Yet, his 'hesitation' (287) is soon overpowered as he 'cradle[s] him' (287) and begins to mourn the loss of the 'only man in the company whom Bead could call friend' (287). Jones does not place a distinction between the sexual aspect of their relationship and the fact that they have developed a friendship. This demonstrates the complexity and subtlety with which he addresses sexuality and the boundaries and distinctions imposed upon the masculine subject in the military environment.

Also in denial is Doll who develops an increasing attraction for Private Arbre. Close physical contact during a combative skirmish arouses Doll and leads him to consider the cause. He is able to admit to himself that he desires sexual intimacy with Arbre. In order to rationalise his desire he feminises Arbre and looks to a 'physical, gentle, fondling, sexual love' (495). Doll chooses not to see the connection between sexual attraction and his own sexuality. Instead, he shapes his desire as a power game; one that he has heard rumour of amongst the officer class. His desires are shaped by the masculine-feminine dynamic of the family in which he will take the role of the husband looking after his passive spouse.

> And after all, why couldn't he? He knew lots of oldtimer regulars who had their
> punks, their boys, back in peacetime. He could do a lot for Arbre. Protect him from
> the worst missions. Get him made Corporal of the squad finally. Get him a squad

sergeantcy even, if he ever got the platoon himself. If he wanted to pogey Arbre and look after and adopt him that didn't make him homosexual, it only made Arbre homosexual, if he accepted it…It wouldn't make him queer, it would only make Arbre queer. Which was all right with Doll, he didn't mind that, he was liberal. (495-6)

It is clear that Doll equates homosexuality with the feminine and uses such a structure to formulate a relationship far more palatable to sexual distinctions and binaries. Doll's intentions, however, are checked when Arbre's sexual candidness runs in opposition to his construction of a masculine-feminine relationship. For Arbre, the act is purely sexual. This is an attitude that disappoints Doll who aligns sexual assertiveness with heterosexual masculinity. Doll walks away from the aborted encounter to join those witnessing a fist fight. In doing so he attempts to regain a decidedly heterosexual masculine self-identity despite the inherent homoeroticism of such playful activity.

What unites the novels discussed here is their determination to resist reductive simplicity. Mailer and Jones demonstrate that the American masculine subject is nuanced and full of paradox and contradiction. The men in each novel have a genuine desire to fulfil a socially prescribed role and to re-establish masculinity lost in the economic difficulties of the Great Depression. However, it becomes apparent in each text that such aspiration is to something that may never have existed in the first place. Unlike Dos Passos and Hemingway, whose characters experience existential crises regarding their gendered identity, the characters in *The Naked and the Dead* and in *The Thin Red Line* are damaged both psychologically *and* corporeally. To reiterate, Foucault argues that power is enacted when the subject perceives the potential for autonomy. The greater the pursuit of autonomy the more the subject loses agency. Masculinity as a quantifiable and singular identity is a mythic fallacy that the military proposes as a manner to enact its own power. The body is shaped, classified and sent to war as a result. What Jones and Mailer achieve is a gradual and torturous process of realisation that this process is taking place. However, unlike Frederic Henry and John Andrews, the vast weight of power means that the American masculine subject is unable to do anything except offer a fatalist shrug of his shoulders. The system will win. The subject is left without a mythic masculinity to aspire to. Endeavour is futile and absurd. This leads the discussion to the fiction of Joseph Heller and Kurt Vonnegut. The next chapter examines the

absurd and the American masculine subject's postmodern condition in the light of the European Second World War and the American 1950s and 1960s. Heller and Vonnegut undermine the fictive process by an insistence that narrative is as useless in self-determination as action. Their novels demonstrate that America's absurdity leads to self-conscious experimentation in which simple acts of compassionate decency are really all that the American masculine subject has left.

Chapter Three

'Nothing intelligent to say': Heller, Vonnegut and the European Second World War

This chapter moves on from Mailer and Jones to examine Joseph Heller's *Catch-22* and Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five*. These novels underline and make explicit the tension between material experience and narrative representation. They employ narrative innovations that signify a self-conscious and systematic revelation of artifice. Such experiments are an alternative way to examine the central tension in this thesis between myth and materiality. The act of writing must be self-conscious if it is to avoid further propagation of myth. Heller and, to a greater extent, Vonnegut demonstrate that narrative has always and will always fail. Its gaps and ambiguities are filled with ideological bias or personal aggrandisement. Only when the process is revealed as artifice can this tension be exposed and resisted. Additionally, self-conscious narrative artifice reveals much about the malaise of the American masculine subject in the years after the Second World War. Narratives of conformity dominate ideological discourse through the 1950s and 1960s. Consumerism and the pervasive language of the free market provides a salve when mythic American autonomy and self-determination are exposed as illusory. The military systems satirised in Heller's novel and the inability to look at trauma embodied in Vonnegut's Billy Pilgrim are both reflections on war experience and on postwar American life. The promises of American myth falter yet are replaced by new myths. Hegemonic American masculinity is no longer demonstrated by rugged individualism but by acquisition of commodities. The American masculine self is no longer a producer with agency. He is now passive consumer. The American Adam is no longer required to perform his conquests. Instead, he just has to show he can participate in the new consumer Eden. Of course, as each novel reveals, this is a narrative that hides deeper malevolence.

Joseph Heller and Kurt Vonnegut see the Second World War and the growth of fascism as reflective of modernity. There is a powerful tendency to refrain from questioning the undoubted and urgent necessity of resisting the rise of fascist totalitarianism and engagement with the atrocities of concentration camps. Heller himself has stated in interview (Flippo, 1993) that he 'saw it is a war of

necessity' (148). Opposition to fascism and responses to Pearl Harbour, he adds, 'united this country' (149). Theodor Adorno (2003) describes the events of the Holocaust as 'resistant to explanation' (xiii) and this problematises attempts to explore the very nature of such explanation. At the outset of this chapter, therefore, it is imperative to state that it is not the intention to belittle or ignore the war's humane justification or its necessity as barrier to the spread of fascism. Instead, the objective is to discuss texts that examine the Second World War and its American legacy from a broader perspective. These are novels that depict the lived experience of war and America's newfound international status and importance. The fight against fascist brutality is central to novels in the decades following the Second World War. However, it is fascism as an ideological problem rather than national. Joseph Waldmeir (1969) argues that American novelists of the period in question fear the potential of fascism in their own society. He identifies 'corruption, brutality, aggressiveness' (54) and 'irresponsible action for expedient reasons' (54) as qualities that 'constitute the terms for the novelists' definition of Nazi-Fascism and the reasons for their crusade against it' (54). Yet, he concludes, 'the evils are not the exclusive property of any nation or political philosophy' (54) and 'can be found in Americans as well' (54). This a condition exacerbated by the malevolence and misuse of growing technological power and the fragile subject's place amongst such enormous and incomprehensible force. Heller speaks (Amis, 1993) of 'physical survival against exterior forces or institutions that want to destroy life or moral self' (113). The role of technology in war links each novel in this thesis. It is a process that continues to an extraordinary degree in the fiction of the Vietnam War.

The first half of this chapter, then, focuses on the manner in which Heller depicts the disappearing agency of the American masculine subject. His conflict is not so much one of American man versus European man as it is American man versus American mechanisation and corporate bureaucracy. The second half explores the way that Vonnegut questions the narrative ordering of such powerlessness. The Dresden bombing is both material massacre and a metaphor for technology's malevolent power over the subject. Vonnegut concludes that destruction of such magnitude cannot be narrated and, yet, the

subject strives to do so. Narration, even when it is self-consciously futile, is a way for the American masculine subject to re-assert his humanity.

In order to contextualise each narrative, it is necessary to reflect on America's polarising relationship with the European Second World War. David Hogan (2011) argues that the 'crusading liberalism of World War I' (1039) was absent in the 'less high minded and more realistic' (1039) response to the new possibility of conflict in Europe. America's 'wartime unity' (1040), Hogan continues, was driven by a 'grim practical resolve to do everything necessary to win the war as soon as possible' (1040). In terms of the human enemy, the physical dislocation of the Pacific Islands and the remote cultural and ethnic identity of the enemy required carefully constructed binaries. Unknowns were made familiar only through the construction of a ruthless and savage other. In Europe though, the enemy was already known. Not just through memories of the Western Front's quagmire but also due to the physical closeness of an enemy separated only by linguistic differences. Europe, therefore, was a place in which the known enemy had to become a caricatured construction of itself. Paul Duke (2002a) describes the celebrity cast of the good and the bad that strongly appealed to an American public well versed in such oppositions.

> It had big heroes and big villains. Winston Churchill, Franklin Roosevelt, George Marshall, Dwight Eisenhower, Douglas MacArthur and Charles de Gaulle, among many others, have all taken their places in that special Valhalla reserved for Western civilisation's finest warriors. On the opposite side, Adolph Hitler and his Nazi courtiers will be forever assigned to the first rank of sadistic monsters. (19)

America's postwar elevation to global economic power and the desire for conformity and political homogeny made great use of such simplistic narrative. Hogan argues that the war 'in retrospect' (1040) confirmed 'an image of warfare' (1040) as a 'righteous crusade by a virtuous, destined nation on the leading edge of history' (1040).

This is evident in a popular culture willing to celebrate America's role in the war.[18] Paul Fussell (1989) argues, however, that this is an inherently dishonest

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[18] Anne Mark (2011) argues that this celebration continued in television and cinema throughout the twentieth century. She claims that 'one of the main vehicles for the development and implementation of World War II as national mythology has been representations in film and television, and thus the myths of World War II have always been dependent on Hollywood' (53). She cites titles as varied as *GI*

discourse. In the decades immediately after the war, advertising, news reporting and historical revision masked the reality of European service. Fussell contends that 'the real war was tragic' (268) but that such 'meaning' (268) was 'inaccessible' (268) in 'unbombed America' (268). As such, the American masculine subject's 'suffering was wasted' (268). Those who returned from Europe had witnessed and experienced destruction of landscape and corporeal terror equal to that of 1917. They were faced, however, with a public who had little inclination to hear this version of events. Michael Gambone (2005) states that the war 'produced the largest number of American wounded casualties of any conflict in US history' (38). Vast numbers of men had suffered physical injury or profound psychological wounds. They found an America eager to show compassion yet simultaneously discovered that 'few citizens wanted the celebrations that started that late summer to end' (41). Gambone describes the great strides made in American public life to aid and assist those with visible injury but claims that veterans displaying psychological trauma were more difficult to accommodate. Christina Jarvis (2011), frames the issue in terms of gender. She explains that 'the psychiatric casualty explicitly exposes the emotional side of men and challenged a warrior ideal predicated upon bravery, self-mastery, control and courage under fire' (99). For the psychologically wounded, awkward silence was a common response. America's national mood was resistant to narratives which suggested war experience was anything other than confirmation of American myth and singular masculine virtue.

Catch-22 and *Slaughterhouse-Five* are as much documents of America's postwar transition as they are of the war itself. Each narrative offers commentary on the paradoxical malaise for the American masculine subject in an era of unprecedented American economic growth. Such change was predicated upon cultural and ideological shifts that would further unhinge the masculine subject from his mythic roots in symbolic autonomy. Victory in the war, Malcolm Bradbury (1998) argues, 'powerfully revived the American economy' (243) and established an 'energetic new era of consumption' (243). Additionally, the moral dualism of the early Cold War meant that to be American was to publically perform 'the American way of capitalism, [and] mass

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Joe and *Bataan* in the 1940s through to Spielberg's *Band of Brothers* in the 1990s as examples of the 'romantic image of the war abroad' (53).

consumerism' (244). The Cold War's new myths aligned the American masculine subject with an equally new hegemonic ideal. Demonstrating success was possible through the simple act of consumption. Martin Halliwell (2007) contends that this was a performance encouraged by 'the expansion of culture' (11) through 'commercial television, a popular music industry and the dramatic increase of consumables' (11). Immersion in such mass cultures 'complicated any idea of raw or unmediated experience' (11). Therefore, the American masculine subject was coerced into finding the answer to difficult experiential problems in simplistic representations of aspiration and acquisition. Such simplicity was preferable to questions that complicated America's new global dominance. Maldwyn Jones (1995) explains that, after all, America 'emerged from World War II with unchallenged economic and military supremacy' (517). For its masculine subjects, Bradbury adds, the late 1940s and 1950s were 'a time of optimism, consensus, great national pride' (245). Internationally, 'American ascendency grew and its influence spread American styles, commodities, trade, mass culture, artistic, scientific and technological achievements and democratic values widely through the world' (245). Yet, amongst this consensus of American exceptionalism lay profound existential anxieties. The new economy and the growing middle classes were notable for their vast size. The remains of autonomy yielded to large-scale economic systems dwarfing anything that resembled mythic American masculine identity.

Such a significant change in America's economic structure is evident in the perceptions and consequent representations of the American masculine subject. The promise of economic freedom was at the expense of intellectual and philosophical autonomy. The American masculine subject was expected to adhere to a rigidly defined set of principles that sat in opposition to those of America's Communist enemies. For the masculine subject, Michael Kimmel (1996) argues, this was a culture in which he was 'frightened into conformity' (154) and in which his 'ideas of normalcy were enforced with a desperate passion' (155). Of course, nowhere was this culture more apparent than in the witch hunting activities of Senator Joseph McCarthy and the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC). The frenzied national alarm regarding the potential threat of the American left was, Susan-Mary Grant (2012) claims, a significant 'cultural and political force in postwar America' (333). The 'fear of

widespread subversion' (333) and 'impulse for consensus' (330) were as pervasive as they were hysterical. Anti-communism as national narrative abandoned empirical investigation and logic in favour of what Jones describes as 'brazen publicity seeking […] partisan attempts to capitalise on the growing anti-Communist hysteria […] bigotry […] bullying […] and contradictory tittle-tattle' (529) Such was the power of McCarthy and the HUAC that the subject no longer felt secure in their intellectual certainty. Anyone could be labelled as subversive and, Bradbury concludes, Americans were 'threatened from without and within' (245).

Therefore, the performance of conformity was paramount for the American masculine subject. The growth of consumerism and corporate, middle-class, suburban enclaves provided a material and symbolic space in which to hide anonymously. Kimmel concludes that the American masculine subject aspired to little more than becoming 'a faceless, self-less nonentity [in an] empty grey flannel suit' (155). A shift from mythic autonomy to passive and subjugated emptiness was palpable. The American masculine subject no longer looked to the mythic frontier and its symbolic potential as a site of aspiration or as a confirmation of national identity. He looked instead to the consumerist idyll of the suburbs. If autonomy were to be found anywhere it was simply in the power to make consumer choices regarding property, vehicles and television sets. D.W. Meinig (1979) reconfigures the symbolic understanding of the suburbs by examining the term itself. He argues that the 1950s saw them turn from 'mere adjuncts of older urban areas' (169) to 'the dominant pattern' (169). American space, always such an important symbolic trope, offers a new heterotopia. The masculine American subject is no longer judged by his ability to conquer space but to be assimilated within it. He no longer strives to be seen as the individual sitting atop the captured wilderness but merely as one that is not noticed.

Indeed, the notion of anonymity amongst a vast number is the focus of much of the era's socio-political theory. Popular texts such as David Reisman's *The Lonely Crowd* (2001 (1950)) and C. Wright Mills' *White Collar* (1959) develop new discourses in order to describe the growing yet nebulous malaise of the middle class American male. Reisman argues that the 'shift from an age of production to an age of consumption' (6) is matched by a shift from inner-direction to outer-direction. The former is 'capable of maintaining a delicate

balance between the demands upon him of his goal in life and the buffeting of his eternal environment' (14). The latter, meanwhile, finds himself 'in a centralised and bureaucratised society' (18) in which life is governed by messages from 'the mass media: movies, radio, comics and popular culture media generally' (21). Ultimately, this is an issue of control and self-governance. The symbolic stability of American masculine identity is sent into crisis by the relatively sudden entropy of mass corporatisation and hysterical national conformity. Reisman reflects the new omnipotence of mechanised technology in his choice of metaphor. The inner-directed subject guides his morality and activity with a 'gyroscope' (18) while the outer-directed is dependent upon 'radar' (25). The American masculine subject is, therefore, assimilated into a mechanistic discourse.

Mills, meanwhile, explores the new dynamics of labour. He argues that the 'immense productivity of mass-production technique and the increased application of technologic rationality are the first open secrets of modern occupational change' (66). The new middle classes are denied productive work and as a result, 'fewer individuals manipulate *things*, more handle *people* and *symbols'* (65) [author's italics]. Work is no longer organised along meritocratic lines but through an 'amorphous' (110) system of power in which 'manipulation replaces authority' and 'the victim does not recognise his status' (110). In such a structure the 'the individual is confronted with seemingly remote organisations; he feels dwarfed and helpless' (111).

Bradbury argues that the philosophical and intellectual anxieties of the era can be explained by recognising the influence of European existentialism. Jean-Paul Sartre and the work of the Frankfurt School 'found a second home' (242) in America. 'Affluence and social bureaucratisation brought […] alienation' (246) and 'a new world of moral emptiness' (246) and 'individualised insecurity' (246). Such anxieties are evident in Erich Fromm's *Escape From Freedom* (1965). This spiralling text's central conceit is that the modern subject feels guilt at their own free will. Freedom is not emancipatory but felt as an unbearable burden. The subject, therefore, enters a paradoxical state in which they experience 'an innate desire for freedom' (21) alongside 'an instinctive wish for submission' (21). Symbolic and mythic autonomy are no longer signifiers of success. In fact, the very concept of the subject as 'distinct from nature and other people' (20)

leads to profound existential anxiety. The subject 'feels his insignificance and smallness in comparison with the universe' (36).

It is such vastness that most adeptly captures the new mood of the American masculine subject. In the new corporate age – an age when the atomic bomb renders individual human life as utterly vulnerable – the American masculine subject is no longer able to explain his purpose or existence. He is overcome with feelings of 'powerlessness and anxiety' (45). In place of self-determination, the subject looks to alternative narratives such as those provided by capitalist consumerism and the mass media. Fromm argues that early American capitalism gave the subject the opportunity to 'rely on himself, to give up soothing and terrifying superstitions [and] to see himself objectively' (127). However, these values are illusory and capitalism ultimately 'made him a servant to very machine he made' (132). The subject consequently subjugates himself to vast systems beyond his control or comprehension.

In literary culture, this is a phenomenon captured in Allen Ginsberg's *Howl*. The second section of the poem employs the Canaanite fire deity *Moloch*[19] as a conceit. Frank Casale (2006) explains that 'Moloch represents all that is evil, mechanical, militaristic and materialistic in American society' (np). Ginsberg (1957) writes that Moloch is a 'sphinx of cement and aluminum' (np) who acts as analogue for a litany of 'blind capitals' (np). He is 'the vast stone of war' (np) and 'pure machinery' (np). The only 'sane response' (np) to his unyielding power, Casale concludes, 'is insanity' (np). The literary parallels with Heller's Yossarian, therefore, are clear.

Fromm argues that, with self-determination abandoned and alienation from work complete, the subject is left pondering the absurdities of life as 'a cog in the vast machine' (130). He concludes that 'salvation lies mostly in his ability to run away' (154) from the very freedom that has promised so much. To flee from a system that one no longer understands or has purchase on is a leap of faith in an absurd world. Flight will manifest itself in a submission to authoritarianism, a compulsion to destroy the 'world outside' (177), by adopting 'automaton conformity' (208) or by becoming 'automatons who live under the illusion of

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[19] Moloch's 'worshippers' (89) according to Jeffrey Meyers (2012), 'had to sacrifice their own children' (89). The deity's inclusion in *Howl*, he argues, is his 'equivalent' (89) to Dante's Lucifer.

being self-willed individuals' (219). It is, of course, the notion of running away that unites the crises of Heller's Yossarian and Vonnegut's Billy Pilgrim. Both find themselves adrift in systems which 'overshadow their lives' (152). They face an existential anxiety that propels them spatially and temporally away from and toward narratives that offer illusory happiness and contentment.

Catch-22 is set in the latter half of the Second World War on the fictional Mediterranean island of Pianosa. John Yossarian is stationed there as a member of an American Air Force squadron. His experiences are confusing, alienating and resistant to rational explanation. He staggers through the novel, punch drunk and furious at the activities of his peers and the greed and selfishness of his officers. His response to the increasing hostility of his own military is to engage in an escalating rebellion. The novel is by turns funny, terrifying and emotionally scarring. Heller describes (Thorne, 1993) it as 'a retreat from realism or an advance beyond realism' (132). Howard Stark (1974) reads the novel as one that witnesses the terror of 'of a disordered universe in which fantasy and the grotesque are indistinguishable' (139). The simplistic oppositions that define America's postwar identity are 'inverted' (139) and the American masculine subject is alone in a world in which 'the insidious' (140) and 'the violent' (140) are privileged. To refer again to Fromm, experience of mechanised war is the epitome of the American existential crisis. He contends that in war the 'possibilities of destruction have increased so tremendously [and] the range of people to be affected by war has grown to such an extent […] that the threat of war has become a nightmare' (152).

War operates simultaneously as metaphorical analogue and as material evidence of the American masculine subject's existential terror. The temptation to view *Catch-22* merely as a response to postwar American society is hard to resist when faced with the nefarious activities of arch free-marketeer Milo Minderbinder or the McCarthyist persecutions evident in Captain Black's 'glorious loyalty oath crusade' (124). Indeed, there are passages in the novel in which it is easy to forget that you are reading about combat. Yet this would ignore the importance of material combat experience. Charles Harris (1971) suggests that sequences in which Heller describes aerial missions are central to the novel. He argues that they 'are often presented in a calm, precise and logical prose style' (28). Robert Merrill (1987) claims that such passages 'stand

out precisely because they are surrounded by so much that is anachronistic or unrelated to war as such' (22). The death of Clevinger, for example, is described in deceptively simple prose.

> Clevinger was dead [...] Eigteen planes had let down through a beaming white cloud off the coast of Elba one afternoon on the way back from the weekly milk run to Parma; seventeen came out. No trace was ever found of the other, not in the air or on the smooth surface of the jade waters below. There was no debris. (136)

The influence of Hemingway manifests itself in such passages. The description is ostensibly technical in its approach while being heavy with subtext. The surface of the water and that of the text are acting in unison. The death is unexplained and, therefore, unexplainable. Heller's unusual restraint here demonstrates his narrative flexibility. He recognises such deaths can be narrated with absurd humour or, as in this case, understated reportage.

Structurally, the novel is an experiment in fragmented chronology. The confusion of multiple time points and the text's gargantuan cast list has created significant critical debate. Clinton Burhans (2001) attempts to unravel the events and place them in temporal order while Marguerite Alexander (1990), Daniel Green (1995) and Thomas Nelson (2001) agree that, to quote Alexander, 'the form is designed to mimic the confusion experienced by the participants of the war; the labyrinthine form being in itself a reflection of military bureaucracy' (151). David Seed (1989) considers the 'possibility that all events fit together is something which the reader only suspects' (44) and is 'thus in a position similar to that of one of the characters in being haunted by a sense of connectedness which can never be adequately substantialised' (44-45). Merrill argues that chronological fragmentation creates circles of repetition that gradually accumulate into powerful motifs. The soldier in white, the hold of catch-22 itself and, of course, Snowden's secret are features that initially hint at the novel's humane message before ultimately transforming into powerful statements regarding combat experience and the manifestation of power. The sense of alienation and dislocation experienced by the American masculine subject is evident in this structural choice. In addition to being lost in space, the subject no longer has a temporal foothold. This is, of course, an issue addressed more explicitly by Vonnegut in *Slaughterhouse Five*.

This dislocated American masculine subject faces the mechanised power of technological warfare and its manifestation in bureaucracy. Military and corporate technology dehumanises and terrifies and it is this process that binds together this long and fragmented novel. Machines – whether mimeograph, IBM product or B-25 bombers – have ultimate power. The organic human subjects of the novel twist and scrap in efforts to conform to the absolutes demanded by technology's pre-eminence. The machine acts as metaphor for an age in which the American masculine subject has lost autonomy. He has been subsumed into a newly technological society. Alongside the mechanised systems dominating the American workplace is the increasing mechanisation of the human subject. Kimmel describes the postwar American masculine subject as a 'depersonalised cog' (158) in a wholly 'bureaucratic state' (157). For Mills, postwar America is defined by the image of 'the salaried bureaucrat, with brief case and slide rule, ris[ing] into political view' (x). Reisman argues that it is bureaucracy, above all else, that stifles intellectual dissent and enforces conformity. He states that 'between the intellectual and his potential public stand technical, economic and social structures which are owned and operated by others' (149). In *Catch-22,* bureaucracy signifies an elusive and omnipotent power. J. Patch and R. Lehan (1967) view the Kafkaesque labyrinth of official documentation as one in which the American masculine subject 'does not exist if [he] does not have an ID card' (37). Heller fills *Catch-22* with references to official memorandum. Policies are built upon policies which then contradict existing policies.

The parody of bureaucratic language demonstrates the manner in which innocuous incidents spiral out of control. Yossarian's playful use of 'Washington Irving' and 'Irving Washington' as disobedient *nom de plumes* and the panic caused by ex-PFC Wintergreen's barked 'TS Eliot' (37) to a 'perplexed' (38) Colonel Cargill create narrative ripples. In fact, the power held by ex-PFC Wintergreen simply as a result of regular access to military records and the telephone switchboard is indicative of the control that due process has over rational behaviour. The circular logic employed in the treatment of Mudd and Doc Daneeka's 'deaths' indicates that human life is readily dismissed as a procedural headache. Mudd's death takes place 'in combat before he had officially reported for duty' (140) and in a material sense he never appears in the

novel. Yet he remains the 'dead man in Yossarian's tent' (140). His presence lingers only in untouched belongings 'contaminated with death' (141). Doc Daneeka's death is officially recorded due to the forged manifest of a doomed flight despite the fact that he remains very much alive. His fate acts as a narrative mirror to Mudd's. Mudd is 'a dead man in Yossarian's tent who wasn't even there' (431) whilst Doc Daneeka is 'the new dead man in the squadron, who most certainly was' (431). The bureaucratic system ensures that mechanisms of official documentation begin 'pullulating like insect eggs and verifying each other beyond all contention' (435).

The human cost is evident in the distress and confusion experienced by Mrs Daneeka. Military correspondence tells her in absolute terms that impassioned letters she has received from her husband are unfortunate products of 'some sadistic and psychotic forger' (434). The issue of Doc Daneeka's death is settled beyond doubt by the form letter purportedly sent from the hand of Colonel Cathcart.

> Dear Mrs., Mr., Miss, or Mr. and Mrs. Daneeka: Words cannot express the deep personal grief I experienced when your husband, son, father or brother was killed, wounded or reported missing in action. (436)

The interchangeable terms in the letter demonstrate that the autonomy and individualism that underpin American masculine myth are swept away by the bureaucratic document's authority. As a result, James McDonald (2001) describes a situation in which, 'the dying [and] the dead have no real identity' (26).

In the early stages of the novel a hospital-bound Yossarian is asked to 'censor letters written by all the enlisted-men patients' (14). An activity borne of boredom soon signifies the dehumanising manner in which the materiality of the subject is secondary to their bureaucratic status.

> When he had exhausted all possibilities in the letters, he began attacking the names and addresses on the envelopes, obliterating whole homes and streets, annihilating entire metropolises with careless flicks of his wrist as though he were God. (15)

Alen Nadel (1995) describes this redacted correspondence as an exercise in the 'power of signs divorced from their referents' (172). The relegation of

language in this manner suggests that *Catch-22* speaks to postmodern concerns regarding the alienation of the subject from the discourse that defines them. Frederick Jameson (1991) argues that '[…] if we are unable to unify the past, present and future of the sentence, then we are similarly unable to unify the past, present and future of our own psychological or psychic life' (27). Yossarian's game is an experiment with broken language. It highlights the dislocation of the American masculine subject. The section also operates as metatextual comment on the paradoxical role of the author. Heller suggests an omnipotence regarding language and the minutiae of grammar but this does not equate to power and meaning. In fact, the ease with which language can be created and eradicated suggests that text and narration are powerless in terms of ordered and coherent meaning. The nature of writing is consequently problematised as a means of representing experience and identity. Thus, there is a tension between the official powers of textual bureaucracy and the creeping sense that it is meaningless. This difficult relationship is something that is explored more explicitly in Vonnegut's own metafictional experiments.

Of course, as a war novel, *Catch-22* also addresses the violence and threat to life contained in combat. Unlike novels representing the Pacific and Vietnam conflicts in which individuals are faced with an equally vulnerable human enemy, Heller's airborne combatants face rapid and unceasing bombardment from anonymous flak. Walter Miller (2001) acclaims Heller for his 'destructive power, metaphoric intensity and poetic cadences' (138). The passages depicting the five bombing campaigns [20] are central to the novel's thematic concerns as they provide a core of material combat experience. The insistent malevolence of flak elicits a fragmented and overwhelming sensory response.

> […] the goddam foul black tiers of flak were bursting and booming and billowing all around and above and below him in a climbing, cracking, staggered, banging, phantasmagorical, cosmological wickedness that jarred and tossed and shivered, clattered and pierced and threatened to annihilate them all in one splinter of a second in one vast flash of fire. (67)

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[20] David Craig (1997) lists the key bombing missions, in chronological order, as: Ferrara, Bologna, Avignon, Parma/Leghorn and La Spezia.

Heller signals the failure of prosaic language in capturing experience. He chooses instead to poetically explore the cacophonous barrage of flak in onomatopoeic strings of semi-alliterative, plosive phonics.

Descriptions of airborne combat are central in understanding Yossarian's growing alienation from his military labour. In a key incident in the novel, his last vestiges of courage force a return to a missed target over Ferrara. In the process, he condemns Kraft's plane and its human contents to 'a mute and secluded agony' (178). His superiors, Colonel Cathcart and Colonel Korn, reward him with a medal and promotion in an attempt 'to act boastfully about something we ought to be ashamed of' (180). Consequently, Yossarian is left with the 'vile, excruciating dilemma of duty and damnation' (178). He is pulled between the cinematic[21] masculine glamour of participation in the war and the actualities contained in his proximity to violence. Therefore, as with Dos Passos' John Andrews, Mailer and Jones' combat groups and Vonnegut's authorial persona, Yossarian's epiphany occurs as a result of seeing the American masculine subject's symbolic autonomy snuffed out by vast and uncaring technological warfare.

Yossarian's subsequent rebellion marks him out as an alienated anti-hero. It is necessary to return to Joseph Campbell's (Campbell et al., 1988) paradigmatic hero model in order to frame this notion. As stated in the introduction, Campbell views the hero narrative as a universal monomyth. It provides the immature human subject with a pathway to self-determination. As a child, Campbell argues, 'you are in no way a self-responsible free agent but an obedient dependent expecting and receiving punishments and rewards' (16). Thus, to break with the controlling father figure, the masculine subject must enact the hero myth. He can then 'evolve out of this position of psychological immaturity to the courage of self-responsibility and assurance' (160). The national American child broke from the European father to demonstrate his independence and the American masculine subject must do the same. In this

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[21] Heller's biography is of significance again at this point of the argument. Judith Ruderman (1991) explains that; 'Heller had been anxious for combat. Propagandist war movies and a firm belief in the righteousness of the cause made warfare appear dramatic and heroic to this young soldier.' (17) While Seed adds; 'Enlisting did not simply mean doing one's bit for a national purpose [...] Heller [...] saw himself as a movie character acting out adventurous roles.' (11). Finally, Heller himself explains to Merrill that, 'wars are still initiated by a certain type of professional soldier whose ambition is to act out fantasy scenes from war movies[...]' (151).

regard, heroic actions are symbolic. However, the material danger of such activity is, as Campbell warns, to fall into a 'predictable pattern of wires responding to stimuli' (160). What seems like self-determined choice is in fact a pre-determined conformity to mythic gender construction. This is not heroic freedom, but an inevitable journey towards 'one of our inhuman wars' (161). BertholdSchoene-Harwood (2000) argues that 'the heroic idealism of patriarchal masculinity' (7) is traditionally 'exempt from moral questioning' (8). The hero figure and his myths are 'taken for granted as a sublime principle' (8). The 'urgent imperative' (7) in performing mythic masculinities will result in material behaviour that Schoene Harwood describes as 'acts of reckless, over compensatory heroism' (15).

David Simmons (2008) argues that the most 'significant shift' (10) in the literature 'following the postwar period' (10) has been the gradual realisation that 'the forms that once supported the heroic can now only be judged as archaic or obsolete' (10). So, as mythic narratives that define the American masculine subject as heroic begin to falter, so too do the representations of such narratives in the nation's literary output. Simmons concludes that, as a result of this shift, 'the anti-heroic comes to fruition as an appropriate model for representation of twentieth century themes such as dissidence and individualistic alienation' (10). Similarly, David Galloway's (1981) absurd hero is a protagonist fuelled by realisation that meaningful understanding of the American masculine subject's mythic root is terminally threatened. The traditional structures that tutor the subject and galvanise his modes of behaviour have fragmented and shattered. Galloway explains that the absurd hero is disillusioned with extrinsic values and turns inwards to search for meaning. The subject adopts 'a new and extreme articulation of the necessity of man's appealing to himself as a source of values' (15). In Reisman's terms, the anti-hero is inner-directed in a world in which the pressure to be guided by external forces is immense. Reisman identifies such figures as 'anomic' (242), defining the term as 'ruthless, ungoverned […] synonymous with maladjusted' (242). The anomic masculine anti-hero strives for inner direction. He contrives to explicitly perform a rejection of new value systems. Reisman argues that his 'inability to cope with the social demands of a modern urban culture' (244) results in a desire to 'sabotage either himself or his society' (242). The anti-hero then is a

'misfit in society' (243) who manifests as 'overt outlaw' (245) or simply 'catatonic' (245). Frequently, his actions are futile individual struggles in an overpowering system. Yet their value lies in intellectual bravery. The masculine anti-hero will fail but it is a failure suffered on self-determined terms.

Consequently, it is possible to read Yossarian's journey in *Catch-22* is another example of the subverted *bildungsroman*. As with Mailer and Jones' Pacific novels, there is a sense that the innocent American subject's intellectual growth is only toward uncertainty and alienation. Yossarian's initial bravery and commitment to the war's palpable ideological necessity are replaced by prolonged bitterness. Yossarian's disobedience is evident in his abandonment of uniform, his tampering with the Bologna bomb line to delay another mission and the repeated use of aforementioned epistolary alter-egos. Vance Ramsey (1966) argues that his behaviour is a 'direct challenge to the values and ideals which the world claims to hold' (103). There is a distinction, however, between acts designed primarily to irritate and offer symbolic resistance and the altruism that leads him to Rome and his eventual arrest. Constance Denniston's (1974) study of Yossarian's rebellion describes a parodic 'hero's quest' (70). She argues that Yossarian's early actions are little more than 'deceit, cleverness or outward defiance' (71-72). They are certainly satisfying, yet lack philosophical resolve. However, his decision to search the violent streets of Rome in an effort to secure the safety of the eleven year old sister of Nately's whore is an 'attempt to save the innocent from being victimised' (72). Despite his failure in this quest, the fact that Yossarian takes the side of innocence is hugely significant. This is Yossarian's moribund stance against enormous power. Of course, it is inevitable that he will fail. The attempt though is an intellectually courageous and anti-heroic stance.

Yossarian's alienation from his military labour is mapped by Heller's circular and oblique references to Snowden's corporeal secrets. Of the many deaths in the novel, it is Snowden's which is most revelatory. Heller's fragmented chronology hints at its significance from the very early stages of the text and with each mention there is a palpable darkening of tone. Ultimately, it signals the American masculine subject's profound vulnerability in the face of the huge, unmanageable powers symbolised by endless sky and unknown depths of the ocean. The landscape is no longer there to define the American masculine

subject's ability to conquer it. Instead it swallows those who perish. Yossarian is overwhelmed by the corporeal subject's organic insignificance. He is powerless both in nature and when faced with malevolent technology. When reflecting on mortality Yossarian questions 'mournfully […] about all the people who had died under water' (427). The powerlessness of the organic male body is clear as he asks 'Where were they? What insects had eaten their flesh?' (427).The symbolically whole male body is exposed as matter that disintegrates and fragments. Accumulative repetition of Snowden's death foregrounds the male body's organic frailty. Alexander, Alberto Cacicedo (2005), Craig and Ruderman agree that its circular narration reflects the process of traumatic memory. While Gary Davis (2001) and Seed see it as a manner in which to deconstruct the military's bureaucratic construction of the body as exploitable resource.

What is rarely addressed, however, is the actual representation of Snowden's death scene as it is finally revealed towards the end of the novel. Certainly, there is a symbolism to his torn flesh and Yossarian's horror but its significance as material experience must not be underestimated. Yossarian assumes the role of parent in his desperate attempts to administer first aid as Snowden lays dying and uttering, incantation like, 'I'm cold (552)'. Yossarian overcomes his initial revulsion and administers competent and comforting support with his repeated yet meaningless refrain 'there, there' (552). His physical interaction with Snowden's thigh injury – incorrectly identified as the source of his agony – grows from fear to morbid curiosity. He finds 'excuses to caress the wound with his fingers again and again to convince himself of his own courage' (553). That such courage is merely performative is brought into focus as Snowden's opened flak suit reveals the extent of his chest injury.

> Here was God's plenty all right, he thought bitterly as he stared – liver, lungs, kidneys, ribs, stomach and bits of the stewed tomatoes Snowden had eaten that day for lunch […] It was easy to read the message in his entrails. Man was matter, that was Snowden's secret. Drop him out of a window and he'll fall. Set fire to him and he'll burn. Bury him and he'll rot, like other kinds of garbage. The spirit gone, man is garbage. That was Snowden's secret. Ripeness was all. (554)

Yossarian's consequent intellectual clarity is one that many combat protagonists search for but few obtain. He sees through rhetoric and ideological argument to the simple truth that war tears apart the flesh of young men; nothing more,

nothing less. Stark describes the passage as an epiphany. He argues that, 'without belief and conviction, without essence and soul and without faith and hope, man is nothing and life is meaningless' (133). The passage suggests that humanity is corporeal. Of course, this idea is not a new literary trope. After all, Shylock asks 'if you prick us, do we not bleed?' (Shakespeare, 1997 (1596-8)). Rather, the dogmas and ideologies that permeate war and masculine participation in war are rendered meaningless by the centrality of the organic male body.

This is a pivotal point of lucid understanding that twentieth century American combat fiction has been building towards and will revisit in Vietnam fiction. It positions *Catch-22* in a contemporary theoretical framework that problematises modern atrocities in terms of Enlightenment ideals of rationality and scientific progress. Theodor Adorno (1997) aligns the rise of fascism with the triumph of brutality. He sees the potential utopia of scientific and technological dominance as a grotesque falsehood. He insists that 'what men want to learn from nature is how to use it in order wholly to dominate it and other men' (4). The result is catastrophic for the subject in terms of transcending corporeal limits. Instead man 'remains the corpse […] substance and matter' (234). What scientific progress has facilitated is in fact the freedom for 'murderers' (234) to ensure 'the division of life into spirit and its object' (234). For Yossarian, this is what Snowden reveals. Technology's omnipotence abolishes the need to do anything other than strive for mere survival. The myths that have defined the American masculine subject are subverted by this corporeal epiphany. The corporeal and the material take precedence over the mythic.

This is demonstrated in the events surrounding the deaths of Kid Sampson and McWatt. The youthful masculine zeal in McWatt's devilish insistence on airborne bravado and the scenes of playful naked happiness on Pianosa's beach signify sexual energy, physical confidence and exhibitionism. This is an atmosphere representative of war as glamorous manly adventure. Heller disrupts the jovial atmosphere when Kid Sampson leaps 'clownishly to touch' (428) McWatt's bomber which arrives 'suddenly into sight out of the distant stillness' (428). Kid Sampson's youthful confidence demonstrates an innocent misunderstanding of the body's relationship with mechanised power and he is cut in half. His 'two pale skinny legs' (428) are grotesquely 'joined by strings

somehow at the bloody truncated hips' (428). They stand 'stock-still' (428) before falling 'backward into the water with a faint echoing splash' (428). The American masculine subject's *whole body* at war fragments. The organic nature of the male body violently clashes with the impenetrable muscularity of the mythic American hero. McWatt's own response to the tragedy is a distant and lonely suicide. Crashing his plane into a mountain will never, as Doc Daneeka repeatedly states, 'make sense' (430). Only Yossarian attempts to understand. His exposure to Snowden's revelation provides appalling clarity regarding mortality. He simply observes that 'the number of dead people just seemed to increase [...] death was irreversible' (438).

The boorish stupidity of the dead men's replacements reveals the emptiness of consumerist constructions of American masculinity. This is the same masculinity that has literally been sliced apart by McWatt's B-25. The new recruits are 'noisy, overconfident, emptyheaded kids of twenty-one' (439). They have 'gone to college and were engaged to pretty, clean girls whose pictures were already standing on the rough cement mantelpiece' (439). They 'had ridden in speedboats and played tennis' (439). Ultimately, they are 'glad that the war had lasted long enough for them to find out what combat was really like' (439). War then is another youthful endeavour. It is sold to young men as an activity that will define their virility. This is a cartoonish masculinity redolent of Technicolor advertising. It is a consumerist construction of the American masculine subject; a new myth. The irony is that the material confirmation of American masculinity that they are searching for does not exist.

The combination of this masculine fallacy and Yossarian's newfound clarity speak to the holistic thematic concerns of this thesis. To reiterate; each novel demonstrates an initial understanding of masculine combat experience as driven by mythic narrative. Participation is driven by conceptualised and romanticised heroic duty. Characters are driven by hatred of constructed enemies, urgent imperatives to symbolically adhere to mythic masculine identities, the temptation to embark on masculine adventure or a complex combination of all these factors. This motivation is disrupted by painful corporeal epiphany in which mythic narratives and their symbolic enactment are suddenly redundant. They are subsequently replaced by alienation, corporeal vulnerability and the omnipotent determinism of mortality.

Death looms as a constant threat. Ironically, this is most evident in the supposed sanctuary of the military hospital. Nelson notes that the hospital 'furnishes Yossarian with the illusion of safety where, at least, death is more predictable and less messy than on the outside' (37). For Yossarian, the hospital cannot 'dominate Death' (213) but can go some way toward making 'her behave' (213). The hospital is a metaphor for limited self-determination during war. More broadly, it is an iconic feature of postwar American popular culture in satirical works such as *M.A.S.H.* (1970)[22]. Its impersonal and dehumanising *modus operandi* in Hemingway, Mailer and Jones' novels is counterbalanced by recognition of the exceptional urgency required in combat facilities and by isolated instances of professional excellence and compassionate care. However, such caveats are absent in *Catch-22*. The 'soldier-in-white', for example, represents a dehumanised corporeal subject taken to narrative extreme. He is human form only in shape; 'encased from head to toe in plaster and gauze' (416). He is as much an emblem of the corporeal subject's frailty as Snowden. He is as much a symbol of the disappearing material American masculine subject as Mudd. The dehumanising nature of the hospital is underlined many times in the novel through a constantly revolving cast of inefficient and uncaring professionals. Patients are indistinguishable; literally so when Yossarian is used as a replacement to appease a visiting family who arrive too late to comfort their dying son. Yossarian's presence solves a logistical riddle and suggests that in warfare 'all dying boys are equal' (234).

If the duty of care displayed in the hospital is questionable then that of the military hierarchy is positively hostile. When reflecting on his own work some thirteen years later (Kupferberg and Lawless, 1993), Heller explains that '*Catch-22* is about a person being destroyed by war, about people in danger not from enemy forces but from their own superiors from within organisations of which they are a part' (120). Again, this aspect of *Catch-22* is a critique of America at war and postwar. The army in this sense is analogous with the rapidly growing power of America's vast corporations. For the middle-class masculine subject in

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[22] *M.A.S.H.*, based on Richard Hooker's 1968 novel *MASH: A Story of Three Doctors*, achieved enormous success as both a cinematic release (written as *MASH*) in 1970 and as a televised serial (using *M.A.S.H.*) between 1972 and 1983. Set in the Korean War it shared with *Catch-22* a desire to 'blast the army, often making Generals look like buffoons' (Schochet, 2010).

postwar America, employment was no longer productive or satisfactory. As the Great Depression had deprived so many of the opportunity to define themselves through meaningful and productive labour, the postwar boom left those employed experiencing what Bradbury describes as 'blandness and artificial coherence' (263). To return briefly to Mills, he contends that 'white collar man has never been independent […] he is always seen as somebody's man: the corporation's, the government's, the army's' (xii). The mythic autonomy of the American masculine subject is abandoned. Instead he is faced with subjugation to 'forces beyond his own control' (xii) and 'movements he does not understand' (xii). He is to be forever 'acted upon' (xii). 'The problem of authority,' Mills concludes, 'is to find out who obeys whom and for what reasons' (109). Petty jealousies and suspicions replace meaningful and productive endeavour. An air of pervasive paranoia is the inevitable result. Military labour in this sense operates as analogue for postwar labour.

As such, Heller satirises the folly and stupidity of military hierarchy and its dehumanising impact on the American masculine subject. Each man is an obstacle in a careerist system of remote symbolic power. Heller's hierarchical chain is crass, corrupt and utterly self-serving. As with Mailer's representation of masculine hierarchy examined in chapter two, it is prescient to consider the manner in which such group behaviour is analysed in gender scholarship. Connell argues that 'workplace control' (174) is based around a tension between 'masculine authority and technical rationality' (174). 'Superior knowledge' (173), Connell explains, is 'supposed to be concentrated at the top' (173). This notion is held in place by 'formal authority and tight social control' (173). Workplace problems lie, however, in 'broader irrationalist trends in the world of advanced capitalism' (177). The workplace is not always an arena in which logic and cooperation are privileged.

In the case of *Catch-22*, the army as workplace is driven by mechanised and bureaucratic alienation. This results in paranoia and fantasies of self-importance. It is a workplace that, as Connell describes, 'has squeezed out the sense of agency' (177). It is 'controlled by chance or esoteric forces' (177). Frederick Karl (2001) and Merrill recognise that such a system is evidence of unwitting adherence to symbolic power. The officer class of *Catch-22* are blind to their own self-defeating and dehumanising systems. Their pursuit of power

diminishes them to paranoid stasis. They are intensely distrustful of enlisted men and certain of the constant machinations against them. Military protocol is frequently exploited by officers as a signifier of their authority. This is evident early in the novel in a set piece in the commanding officer's quarters in the Santa Ana cadet school in California. A caricatured Colonel who is 'bloated with a big fat moustache' (99) berates a simpering major. He in turn transfers the abuse down the chain of power to a terrified young recruit 'vibrating in terror' (100).

'Don't interrupt.'

'Yes, sir.'

'And say "sir" when you do,' ordered major Metcalf.

'Yes, sir.'

'Weren't you just ordered not to interrupt?' Major Metcalf inquired coldly.

'But I didn't interrupt, sir,' Clevinger protested.

'No. And you didn't say "sir" either. Add to that the charges against him.' Major Metcalf directed the corporal who could take shorthand. Failure to say "sir" to superior officers when not interrupting them.'

'Metcalf,' said the Colonel, 'you're a goddam fool. Do you know that?'

Major Metcalf swallowed with difficulty, 'Yes, sir.'

'The keep your goddam mouth shut. You don't make sense.' (99-100)

This exchange offers another example of the manner in which bureaucracy has provoked a breakdown of language. Harris identifies 'tautological dialogues, circular conversations filled with much sound but little sense' (44) littering the pages of the novel. The dialogue demonstrates that circularity is a key motif in terms of understanding the subject's place in a vertical hierarchy. Power shifts as the Colonel scolds the Major and the Major bullies the recruit. The education and preparation of young recruits is a vehicle for pursuit of status. Yet, this very pursuit is both futile and self-defeating. The young American Adam cannot form in such conditions. Yet again, the *bildungsroman* is subverted.

Such relationships demonstrate that the men of the airbase are operating in a moral and ideological vacuum. Patriotism and the authority of the officer class

are reduced to insularity and self-aggrandisement. As a result, enlisted men seek an explanation for their labour. The justified attempt to resist fascism is lost among the machinations of hierarchy. Consequently, combatants are left reeling in a search for meaning. To cope with such uncertainty, they turn to an intellectual process Heller names 'protective rationalisation' (459). This allows the subject to achieve satisfactory yet paradoxical explanation regarding participation in events that defy reasoned analysis. Heller's Chaplain is 'exhilarated' (459) by the 'handy technique' (459). He can 'turn vice into virtue and slander into truth, impotence into abstinence, arrogance into humility, plunder into philanthropy, thievery into honour, blasphemy into wisdom, brutality into patriotism and sadism into justice' (459). These binary oppositions shed more light on the emptiness of language. The Chaplain's previously firm moral certainties become susceptible to intellectual manipulation. Ferdinand de Saussure (2010 (1916)) argues that a word's 'value is […] not fixed so long as one simply states that it can be exchanged for a given concept' (858). Signification depends on comparisons 'with similar values, with other words that stand in opposition to it' (859). Heller's protective rationalisation makes use of this relationship. Each pairing in the chaplain's chain of thought has what de Saussure describes as 'value only through their opposition' (859). The Chaplain is able to adapt to a new moral environment through a delusional process of negative capability. He transfers values between each word in order to create a new morality and impose intellectual consistency upon a world that would otherwise disrupt his moral code. Protective rationalisation, then, is essentially a process of linguistic switching. As de Saussure claims, the 'sign is arbitrary' (854). It is not linked by any 'inner relationship' (854) with the signified. Protective rationalisation takes advantage of this. It simply recalibrates meaning to confirm pre-existing moral codes.

Abuse of this moral flexibility is evident in Aarfy's deplorable violence in Rome. The product of middle class success and university education, his routine degradation of women is rationalised through the infantile social codes of his college fraternity. Jess Ritter (1974) describes Aarfy as, 'fat, soft and indifferent to all human feeling […] he represents blunt gratuitous evil' (49-50). Aarfy's 'rubicund warmth of nostalgic recollection' (306) is a register at odds with the violent assaults of his reminiscences.

> I remember one day we tricked these two dumb high-school girls from town into the
> fraternity house and made them put out for all the fellows there who wanted them
> by threatening to call up their parents and say they were putting out for us. We kept
> them trapped in bed there for more than ten hours. We even smacked their faces a
> little when they started to complain. Then we took away their nickels and dimes
> and chewing gum and threw them out. Boy, we used to have fun in that fraternity
> house. (306)

The anecdote suggests that holding power is in itself justification to wield it over others. The violent sexual bind described here is a reminder that 'catch-22' is not merely a piece of twisted military bureaucracy. It operates as metaphor for the moral relativism evident in abuses of power everywhere. Like language, power of this nature is regulated by a system of opposition. In Alan Bass' (2007) reading of *Margins of Philosophy*, Jacques Derrida 'identifies opposition in which one term is placed above the other' (107). This results in the inculcation of a sequence of 'value judgements' (107). Additionally, in Barbara Johnson's (2007) translation of 'The Pharmakon', she argues that 'the value judgement of all oppositions rests on: what comes from inside me; and confirms my identity with myself as superior to what comes from inside me; and confirms my identity with myself as superior to what comes from outside me' (57). Derrida himself (2010 (1972)) suggests that in such a system 'it is truly morality that is at stake, both in the sense of opposition between good and evil, or good and bad, and in the sense of mores, public morals and social conventions' (1705). Oppositions of this nature are socially encoded through repetition until they 'cancel out the resources of ambiguity' (1714) and sustain 'blockage of the passage among opposing values' (1715). In Aarfy's anecdote, he justifies his moral behaviour by sustaining a masculine-feminine opposition. Masculinity is privileged as a signifier of power, wealth and moral liberty. Femininity, on the other hand, signifies powerlessness, passivity and sexual subjugation.

This rigid opposition allows Aarfy to unquestioningly enact and propagate abuse. More broadly, the propagation of oppositional thinking underpins the mythic American masculine subject. He is defined always in opposition to a feminised other. The other manifests itself in untamed wilderness, the savage enemy, the conquered European and, of course, the American feminine subject. The international conflicts discussed in this thesis have their moral basis in opposition. The Japanese and Vietnamese enemy are a racial other abhorrent

in their opposition to the American combatant. Europe is defined as effete and reactionary when compared to rugged American progress. In Aarfy's anecdote, the American masculine subject defines himself with the language of conquest. His youthful masculinity is only material if it asserts itself over a designated and feminised other. Thus the linguistic mechanics of protective rationalisation are effective. Aarfy's morality is borne of an institutionalised and unchallenged patriarchal code. It is sustained by his inability to understand its inherent violence. This results in the rape and murder of Michaela, the Roman brothel's young and illiterate maid. Aarfy's sense is that Michaela's lowly position on the social spectrum invalidates moral arguments regarding his crime. Yossarian exclaims that, 'You *killed* a girl. They're going to put you in Jail!' (527). Aarfy's response is that, 'They aren't going to put good old Aarfy in jail. Not for killing *her.*' (527). Heller's italicised emphasis in each statement reveals the moral chasm between each man. Aarfy explains in his defence, 'I hardly think they're going to make a fuss over one poor Italian servant girl' (528). Yossarian, barely able to speak, can only argue that Aarfy is 'stupid' (528). Aarfy understands his actions in a rigidly oppositional sense. Michaela, both a woman and a servant, is there to be abused, especially so if she has no way to resist.

This ideology slowly reveals itself throughout the novel. Yossarian's epiphany is of corporeal fragility overrun by vast powers who will continue to do so unchecked and with ever increasing savagery. The ideology is what gives the novel its name and it reveals itself slowly and repetitively. 'Catch-22' shifts from clever bureaucratic trap into an overarching philosophy of violent force and self-perpetuating authority. Its essence is astutely summarised by the elderly matron of the Roman brothel as she surveys the damage inflicted by MPs. She describes 'catch-22' as a mandate 'to do anything we can't stop them from doing' (314). It is in Rome on the night of Michaela's murder that Yossarian searches for the young sibling of Nately's whore. The sequence suggests that vast and unchecked power is a harbinger of apocalypse. Yossarian walks through scenes of repeated and systemic abuse. The innocent are beaten, barracked and murdered by figures acting with moral impudence. AWOL from the airbase, he witnesses a litany of violence in sequences that Minna Doskow

(2001) parallels with Dante.[23] Certainly, the cacophonous sensory plurality of the writing suggests an earth bound hell. Karl contends that Rome 'is now a dilapidated shell as though modern Goths and Vandals had destroyed everything in their path, or as if a modern God had visited his wrath upon it' (138). Moral dissolution is symbolised by 'monuments' (138) that are 'shattered' (138) and 'streets' (138) containing 'surrealistic nightmares' (138). As with Vonnegut's Dresden, the ancient city has become itself a narrative of destructive power.

The significance of Rome and Dresden is underlined by Samuel Hynes' (1992) commentary on the physical location of atrocity in the Second World War. He argues that the trenches of the Great War as signifiers of the colossal destructiveness of total war are replaced by pan-global locations.

> The centre of horror in the Second World War was on no front at all. Instead it hovered over a number of places: Auschwitz and Buchenwald, Dresden, Tokyo, Hiroshima, Nagasaki. These are the scenes of the most pitiful aspect of modern war, the war fought against helpless civilians. (63)

Thus, the modern city is a potent symbol of atrocity. Both novels here witness the destruction of civilian life, myriad histories and the architecture that symbolises organic and humane growth of place. The First World War's distinctions between feminine domestic space and landscape reserved for masculine conflict vanish. This, of course, is a process taken to absurd extremes by the burning villages of the Vietnam War. Subject and place intertwine in Heller's unforgiving Rome and Vonnegut's faux-innocent eyes bearing witness in Dresden.

Yossarian walks through ritualised violence. A dog is beaten, an old woman is physically assaulted and a child is repeatedly struck in front of a passive and indifferent crowd. The violence of the passage is incessant. The child is struck with 'resounding open-palm blows to the head' (524). These are followed by the instigator 'jerking him up to his feet to knock him down again' (524). For Yossarian, the world has fallen into the hands of 'mobs with clubs' (525). They rule with aggression and a morality twisted to alleviate responsibility. The mobs are there in Rome, they are there at the Pianosa airbase, and they are there in

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[23] Comparisons can also be drawn with William Blake's *London* and, as John Hunt (1974) does, James Joyce's 'Night Town' chapter in *Ulysses.*

American society. The mobs tell lies to protect and elevate themselves. Their pursuit of power renders them blind to the reality of material suffering. Their stupidity and greed renders them incapable when it comes to carrying out idealistic involvement in conflict in the first place and to help those who cannot help themselves. The war's core humane values are undermined. The brutality and bullying nature of fascism is evident everywhere. War does not provide resistance to such behaviour. It is endlessly propagated in ripples of violence and domination.

Upon his return from Rome, Yossarian's repeated offences and the subsequent embarrassment caused to Colonel Cathcart and Colonel Korn lead to the offer of a moral compromise. He is asked to return to America and act as advocate for the war. He is promised 'parades in your honour' (539) and asked to 'make speeches to raise money for war bonds' (539). Korn claims that the compromise is easy to argue away. It is 'a rich, rewarding, luxurious, privileged existence' (540). Yossarian would 'have to be a fool to throw that all away just for a moral principle' (540). Fromm argues that the postwar American masculine subject is 'allowed and expected to succeed in personal economic gains as far as his diligence, intelligence, courage, thrift or luck would lead him' (126). This is the message communicated by consumer culture and the message that drives the newly outer directed. It is an imperative to climb and achieve illusory self-determination. 'Everyone teaches us to aspire to higher things' (537), Korn argues. 'A general is higher than a colonel, and a colonel is higher than a lieutenant colonel. So we're both aspiring' (537). Such simplicity initially attracts Yossarian but his newfound understanding of power and innocence mean that he decides instead on permanent desertion. He cannot return to the Adamic innocence of the start of his military career. He now understands the motivations of those who seek power. Yossarian sees nothing but 'people cashing in on every decent human impulse and every human tragedy' (560). This is the futile yet intellectually courageous response of the anti-hero.

This is the point at which the economic autonomy and freedom promised to the American masculine subject in exchange for unquestioning conformity become a moral burden. Fromm argues that such freedom is 'too frightening' (154). Therefore, Yossarian will flee. He will run from the powerful in a bid to protect the decency he is sure still exists in him. His tent-mate Orr, presumed dead, has

been found alive and well in Sweden. This news inspires Yossarian to make his final defiant act. Orr is a somewhat oblique individual given to cryptic teasing of Yossarian. He is perhaps the novel's most positive masculine archetype. Stark describes him as, 'pragmatic […] active and practical; always testing, always probing, always finding out how things work, trying to avoid absurdity through non-involvement' (133). These qualities suggest that the most positive manner in which to survive the inverted logic of Pianosa is to exist in parallel to it. Orr's quiet technical skill and understated confidence suggest a subtle masculine decency. Paradoxically, the fact that Yossarian's plan to join Orr seems unlikely to succeed adds to its sense of emancipation. Yossarian has discovered that a search for ideological certainty is futile. Dominant forces will continue to dehumanise the individual through incarceration or violent destruction. As a moment of anti-heroic rebellion, Yossarian's desertion is an abandonment of rationality. His decision is a defiant act that foreshadows the political inclination to 'drop out' in American counter culture later in the decade. Hunt and Ritter both identify 'refusal' as central to Yossarian's action. Initially, the term appears counter-intuitive; surely Yossarian's flight is desperate and impulsive. It does not suggest the stubbornness that 'refusal' indicates. Yet, Hunt concludes, it is refusal 'of a world that is immoral' (127). It is the only active choice left for Yossarian. He is, 'running to his responsibilities' (511).

At this point it is necessary to signal key areas of commonality between *Catch-22* and *Slaughterhouse-Five*. Superficially, the clearest indication of their intertextual relationship lies in choices regarding chronology. Heller, as already discussed, fractures his narrative in an attempt to instil existential dislocation. Vonnegut is determined to foreground this idea in his novel. Disrupting linear narrative is a central plot device. Billy Pilgrim's temporal and spatial dislocation is a result of trauma. It is a way for Vonnegut to represent the life events of his protagonist in a deceptively arbitrary fashion while the hell of Dresden remains static at the centre of the novel. In this sense, Dresden and Snowden operate as narrative pivots around which *Slaughterhouse-Five* and *Catch-22* revolve. The traumatic event, then, operates as novum in each text. The term here is borrowed from Darko Suvin's (1979) work on shaping the science fiction genre. He defines the novum as 'a totalising phenomenon or relationship deviating from the author's and implied reader's norm of reality' (64). It is 'hegemonic […]

so central and significant that it determines the whole narrative logic' (79). In *Catch-22* and *Slaughterhouse Five*, such hegemony is provided by the death of Snowden and by the Dresden firestorm. They are the singular and unmoving events that dominate narrative structure and narrative mode. I argue here that trauma fiction shares this structural requirement. Snowden's death and Dresden are traumatic events that hold the remainder of the novel in place. They are new and unprecedented both within the novel and in the world the novel purports to represent. Similarly, in Vietnam fiction, the war itself and its nebulous terrors are unknown and unprecedented. Its nature shapes the mode and structure of the text. Trauma fiction's central paradox is that the trauma creates a need to narrate yet its magnitude prevents this from being possible. Thus, trauma as novum shapes the metafictional approaches so evident in trauma fiction. The approaches used by Heller and Vonnegut influence Vietnam writing and are still there in the post 9/11 novel. Temporal and spatial fragmentation, the artifice of the authorial voice and the metafictional exposure of narrative falsity are crucial in achieving this. Understanding this idea opens up *Catch-22* and *Slaughterhouse-Five* and allows the type of analyses present here.

Also important in each novel is the interaction with America's postwar mainstream and its willingness to shelter under consumerism. Consumerism's hegemony is a narrative that veils existential dread. In other words, the very tonic that America uses to heal itself is profoundly damaging to the American masculine subject's self-determination. Keith Booker (2001) views fiction of the 1950s and 1960s in terms of Jameson's growing hostility to the 'cultural logic of late capitalism' (5). Such fiction converges on the dehumanising power of consumerism. It addresses America's decision to answer social problems with the promises evident in advertising and the contentment offered by conformity to the consumer narrative. In Heller's case, the presence of capitalism's rise to central prominence is embodied by Milo Minderbinder and his relentless application of the laws of the free market. For Vonnegut, however, consumerism operates as cosseting illusion for a public willingly blind to spiritual and physical decline in Vietnam and much closer to home.

Slaughterhouse-Five satirises the obvious contradictions and inherent myopia of its period. Billy Pilgrim is less an anti-hero than a vapid illustration of traumatised apathy. He allows himself to be defined only by material successes.

His presence in the novel is an allegorical representation of the manner in which the American masculine subject has abandoned mythic autonomy in favour of a submission to capitalism. Critical readings provided by Kevin Brown (2006), Kathryn Hume (1998) and Christina Jarvis (2010) focus on Vonnegut's commentary on America's national condition in the late 1960s; specifically the juxtaposition between consumerist contentment and the unfolding debacle in Vietnam. *Slaughterhouse-Five* is as much active protest on America's involvement in Vietnam as it is a novel about Vonnegut's witnessing of the Dresden firebombing. Dresden remains at the novel's core and is a platform for Vonnegut's attack on unchecked technological growth and passive acceptance of vast and incomprehensible power. Booker argues though that seceding personal responsibility results not in blissful release from anxiety but a new terror of '[…] the sense that their lives were in the grip of large impersonal forces' (18) or, as Vonnegut would put it, existing as 'the listless playthings of enormous forces' (119). *Slaughterhouse-Five,* therefore, is an example of Jameson's postmodern sublime. He adds to the sociological philosophy of the existential 1950s by arguing that the subject is now utterly powerless in the face of '[…] a network of power and control even more difficult for our minds and imaginations to grasp' (38). Thus, the process of abandoning mythic narratives of masculine autonomy is complete. The American masculine subject offers his identity to vast and nebulous power.

The opening chapter of *Slaughterhouse-Five* is an exercise in overt metafictional artifice. It frames the work as the culmination of a long and frustrating textual process. While it would be an error, as Maurice O'Sullivan (2010) argues, to read the autobiographical and confessional register of Vonnegut's presence as anything other than an alternative fiction, it does serve to position the novel as one borne of material experience. Vonnegut does not suggest didactic conclusion or cogent explanation for why a massacre such as Dresden takes place. Instead he addresses the futility of such a narrative process. Consequently, he rejects the attractiveness of finding experiential salve through narrative illusion. Historiography, biography and the discourses of American popular culture are exposed as meaningless. For Vonnegut, there is dishonesty in any text that insists upon its own veracity. T. J. Matheson (2010) reads the first chapter as 'a means of tracing the author's evolving attitude to

both the horrors of war and to the composition of his book as well' (229). The chapter is a guide 'as to how we should respond intellectually and morally to war in particular and evil generally' (229). Though broadly accurate, this statement misses the chapter's central argument. Vonnegut's own narratives are equally as doomed to failure as those he explicitly rejects.

Leigh Gilmore's (2001) work on the relationship between autobiography and trauma is relevant to the novel's opening chapter. The writer is faced with a narrative dilemma when 'language fails in the face of trauma and trauma mocks language and confronts it with insufficiency' (6). Gilmore argues that utilising the conventions of the autobiographical form subverts narrative authority. Paradoxically, however, this very lack of authority suggests authenticity in subjective representation of historical events. Gilmore concludes that the 'long tradition in autobiography of representing the self as utterly unique' (19) creates narrative opportunity to 'learn more about history and, perhaps, yourself and what you are capable of' (19). For Vonnegut then, his own personal representations of trauma are as flawed as all of the other illusions within the text. However, these flaws are ironically evidence of authenticity. This is Vonnegut's authorial sleight of hand. His disarming honesty regarding the limitations of his own account is free of the didactic bombast of grand narrative. The admission of failure is in fact the novel's great success. It philosophically frees the American masculine subject from his futile search for narrative that explains his trauma and defines who he is.

Vonnegut scholars such as William Allen (1991), Donald Greiner (2010), James Lundquist (2010), Todd Davis (2006) and Jerome Klinkowitz (2010) define Vonnegut's representation of Dresden as a narrative difficulty. They view the novel's thematic and formal plurality as spiralling out from this singular concept. Textual conflict exists in the idea that his experiences should conform to accepted modes of thinking regarding America's military success in the European theatre. Their refusal to do so, as Davis argues, speaks to Jean-François Lyotard's postmodern concerns regarding 'disillusionment with the grand narratives of American culture, especially the narrative of American progress' (76). Lyotard (1984) defines the postmodern subject's epistemological state as one of 'incredulity towards metanarratives' (xxiv). Consequently he

argues that 'narrative function is losing its functors, its great hero, its great dangers, its great voyages, its great goal' (xxiv).

This 'crisis of narratives' (xxiii) is evident throughout *Slaughterhouse-Five*. The American masculine subject's trauma at war and in postwar America undermines the power of mythic masculine narratives. The autonomous masculine subject and the promises of capitalism are unsettled and fractured by experiences such as Dresden. As such, the narrative of American progress manifest in the promises of consumerism and political conformity no longer operates successfully. America's mythic history is a history of masculine ideals embedded in its narrative culture. As such, the American masculine subject as entity is perhaps metanarrative. The historically fixed masculine ideals that drive Connell's (1995) hegemonic model are themselves a narrative construction. The pursuit of such ideals by the American masculine subject means that narrative's stranglehold sustains patriarchy and the marginalisation of the vulnerable and uncertain self. Historic narratives of westward expansion are symbolically conflated with American progress. Lyotard (2010 (1986)) describes the 'idea of progress as possible, probable or necessary'(1467) and as 'rooted in the certainty that the development of the arts, technology, knowledge and liberty would be profitable to mankind as a whole' (1467). Vonnegut's Dresden novel disputes all of this. *Slaughterhouse-Five* presents a series of characters, including the author himself, who desperately look to narrative as a means of understanding their own subjectivity. Narrative coping strategies range from biblical interpretations, through the promises of consumer capitalism to the tropes and formulas of comic books and science fiction.

Vonnegut ironically describes himself as 'a trafficker in climaxes and thrills and characterisation and wonderful dialogue and suspense and confrontations' (4). Upon his initial return from Germany, Vonnegut assumes that creating a coherent textual representation of his experiences is a matter of linking memory and page.

> When I got home from the Second World War twenty three years ago, I thought it
> would be easy to write about the destruction of Dresden, since all I would have to
> do would be to report what I had seen. And I thought, too, that it would be a
> masterpiece or at least make me a lot of money, since the subject was so big. (2)

However, it is this very magnitude that proves so resistant to textual capture. Narrating trauma is as circular and obtuse as the unending song of 'Yon Yonson' (2). As the opening chapter develops, it becomes clear that this is a novel largely about the relationship of experience and narrative. It is a metafictional exploration of trauma's resistance to structured chronicle. As such, Marcel Cornis-Pope (2001) claims that, in *Slaughterhouse Five*, 'narrative innovation is a form of resistance against official constructions of reality' (1). Indeed, Vonnegut employs textual constructions that claim to definitively explain experience while continually exposing them as guilty of denying their own artificiality. He condemns some more than others. Official histories and the rhetoric of romantic masculine duty come in for particularly harsh treatment. Meanwhile, survivors of trauma search, to the point of self-willed delusion, for any story that will offer lucid explanation. Vonnegut implies that the traumatised subject is capable of the kind of protective rationalisation so evident in *Catch-22*. The subject is aware of the artifice in narrative but, such is their desire for cogent closure, acts out a feat of doublethink in accepting these very narratives as absolute truth.

Patricia Waugh (1984) identifies such awareness of artifice as pivotal to the postmodern agenda of metafictional writers. She argues that metafiction introduces 'the notion of alternative worlds by accepting and flaunting the creation/description paradox […] the construction of contexts is also the construction of different universes of discourse' (90). Such constructed alternatives are certainly evident in *Slaughterhouse-Five*. Vonnegut demonstrates narrative artifice through using, in Max Schulz's (1973) terms, 'multiple modes' (15). It is a technique that appears superficially playful but is in fact an act of authorial enquiry into the relationship between subject and text. Indeed, Peter Freese (2000) argues that the novel's experimental scope underlines Vonnegut's insistence that all accounts of experience are read and interpreted in the same manner as his own declaration of fictive authorial control. He contends that 'the novel's overall message is that each answer which man discovers in his painful search for meaning only leads to another question' (86). Thus, the subject searching for truth is persistently brought back to the beginning of their enquiry. The attractiveness of narrative that breaks

such circular insecurity is clear. The American masculine subject requires a singular narrative that insists upon its authority.

Thus, *Slaughterhouse-Five* is very much at the centre of postmodern argument regarding the role of historiographic discourse. Linda Hutcheon (1988) defines metafiction through a reading of the relationship between subject and historical experience. Knowledge, she argues, is 'entirely conditioned by textuality' (16). This claim opens debate on the veracity of historiographic text. The historical incident is read as plural and fluid rather than singular and fixed. Self-conscious artifice, then, is crucial to the postmodern novel's intertextual relationship with historiography. Hutcheon suggests that all text, to some degree, is dependent on the context of its authorship and, therefore, 'history cannot be written without ideological and constitutional analysis of the act of writing itself' (91). All narratives are subject to their own inherent constraints; a paradox Pope describes as 'ambivalent, both limiting and liberating' (7).

In *Slaughterhouse-Five*, Freese argues, 'every version of the past is conditioned by the needs and values of the person who holds it' (83). An example of this is evident in Harvard history professor Bertrand Copeland Rumfoord's research into 'bombings and sky battles' (134). His source material is loaded with politicised bias such as Harry S. Truman celebrating America 'harnessing […] the basic power of the universe' (135) or the views of senior military officials regarding Dresden as 'military necessity.' (137). As if to prove the point, Vonnegut himself fell foul of his own warnings regarding historiography. His unfortunate reliance on the work of holocaust denier David Irving is itself evidence of the dangers of trusting historiography.[24] What becomes clear in each official history is the inclination to use moral equivalency as a means of defending a political or moral position. As stated earlier, to discuss the Second World War as a universal human tragedy rather than a polarisation of good and evil is not to underplay the evils of fascism. Instead, it emphasises that human horror and corporeal terror lose meaning when used in a game of moral mathematics. For the American masculine subject trying to maintain his postwar

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[24] Vonnegut's use of Irving is still a polarising issue. *Slaughterhouse Five* was published ten years prior to Irving's controversial stance becoming public and Vonnegut has spoken of his deep disgust for the activities within the concentration camps (Hayman et al., 1977). Despite this, articles published after his death in the *Times Literary Supplement* (Stothard, 2007) and the *Daily Telegraph* (Leslie, 2008) maintain that his association with Irving is something of a stain on his reputation.

status as participant in a heroic crusade, such textual challenges pose potentially unanswerable questions.

Vonnegut further illustrates textual unreliability and the contradictions of constructing narrative through a series of passages that detail the various strategies that organise his 'famous Dresden book' (2). This technique places yet more emphasis on the novel as an example of postmodern fiction, particularly in terms of text as collage. Robert Tally Jr. (2008) connects collage with the postmodern project of utilising intertextual pastiche as a means of questioning narrative validity. He contends that 'Vonnegut's collage is […] indicative of the characteristically postmodern pastiche in which the various style of older arts forms reappear in surprising places' (164). Therefore, it is not just historiography that is called into question but a broad range of familiar narratives. In a manner that engages with Schulz's aforementioned identification of 'modern modes', Tally continues his reading of Vonnegut's 'project' (164) by commenting on his movement between generic boundaries. He lists 'marginal' (164) literatures such as 'science fiction […] dime store magazine-writing, slapstick comedy and […] soft-core pornography' (164-5). This range of generic modes is further evidence of Vonnegut's great difficulty in securing a valid discourse to explore trauma securely. Tally's argument builds on Jameson's more radical claim that 'disappearance of the individual subject' (16) renders authentic narrative impossible. Jameson argues that this leads to 'the well-nigh universal practice today of what may be called pastiche' (16). When Jameson defines pastiche he is careful to distinguish it from parody, claiming that parody's comedic intent, its 'ulterior motive' (17), loads it with satirical meaning that contradicts the nature of the activity.

Vonnegut's faux-innocent tone is well-suited to such 'blank parody' (17). He incorporates historiography, science fiction and memoir into the pages of the novel yet avoids parodic mockery. Instead he presents them as narrative modes equal in artifice. To emphasise the difficulty of identifying narrative authenticity, he communicates his various experiences as a creator of narrative. These include a graphic representation of *Slaughterhouse-Five's* plot using his 'daughter's crayons' (4) and the 'back of a roll of wallpaper' (4). The faux simplicity of this approach underlines the difficulty in organising an event so overwhelming in human cost. Writing itself is portrayed as manipulative and

ignorant of corporeal suffering. In accounts of Vonnegut's missives as a 'police reporter' (6) for the 'Chicago City News Bureau' (6), stories of violence and mortality are 'mimeographed and stuffed into brass and velvet cartridges' (6). They travel from agency to agency 'by means of pneumatic tube' (6). Meaning is reduced to a mechanical currency suggestive of the subject's insignificance in a technological world.

Such textual processes indicate the emptiness and silence which veterans of Vonnegut's generation faced upon their return from the Second World War's European arena. American combatants returned to a nation of friends and family keen to hear tales of valour, masculine connectedness and triumphant heroism. This is problematised by traumatic experience resistant to simplistic explanation. Traditional narratives of success that frame experience are, therefore, wholly inadequate. Vonnegut's persona is initially drawn to such narratives but swiftly realises that glamour, excitement and intrigue are as empty as the Chicago stories enjoyed by breakfasting Americans. Vonnegut's visit to his wartime companion Bernard O'Hare is approached with romantic expectation. The author expects to indulge in happy nostalgia ensconced 'in two leather chairs near a fire in a panelled room where two old soldiers could drink and talk' (9). The sharing of personal narrative is driven by the imperative to create linear and comforting versions of events. What transpires though is that both Vonnegut and his comrade struggle to achieve such narrative closure. Instead their memories are fractured and fragmented. The brutality of the firebombing itself is entirely absent.

Constructions of masculine identity are raised by Bernard's wife Mary. Initially a marginal domestic figure, she provides lucid criticism of Vonnegut's authorial endeavour. She cuts through the unspoken conformity of masculine subjects unable or unwilling to deconstruct familiar pop-cultural narrative.

> 'You'll pretend you were men instead of babies, and you'll be played in the movies
> by Frank Sinatra and John Wayne or some of those other glamorous, war-loving,
> dirty old men. And war will look just wonderful, so we'll have a lot more of them.'
> (11)

Her attack on the narratives and discourses of Hollywood cinema are examples of what Harris calls 'illusions' (54). In Vonnegut's writing, he argues, the

American masculine subject is forced to define himself by 'artificial distinctions' (54) such as material success, nationalist superiority and racial prejudice. For Harris, Vonnegut's struggle to expose this process is, in itself, a form of 'social protest' (54). As demonstrated in previous chapters, mythic constructions of American masculinity limit self-determination while ironically propagating this very value. Over-reliance on familiar narrative hinders attempts at meaningful expressions of masculine experience. Vonnegut plays with constructed masculine archetypes throughout the novel and reveals each one as a narrative cocoon in which to shelter from trauma. As such, the novel will fail. It cannot help but be 'short and jumbled' (14) as 'there is nothing intelligent to say about a massacre' (14). Language and its artificial constructs are of little use when 'everybody is supposed to be dead, to never say anything or want anything ever again' (14).

The process of creating narrative coherence from an event such as Dresden is inherently futile. However, to return to Simmons and Galloway, such a Sisyphean task is a signifier of intellectual anti-heroism. Determination to engage and understand with the absurd is what distinguishes Vonnegut's persona from Billy Pilgrim and his moral complacency. Two more texts are referenced towards the end of the opening chapter. Seemingly disparate, Erika Ostrovsky's *Celine and his Vision* and the standard hotel edition of the *Gideon Bible* are linked through their 'tales of great destruction' (16). Celine insists the author must fix their gaze upon trauma as 'no art is possible without a dance with death' (15). This is paralleled by Lot's wife and her refusal to turn away from the devastation of Sodom and Gomorrah. Her determination to look back is, Vonnegut argues, 'so human' (16). It is here that Vonnegut differs from Heller's Yossarian and Hemingway's Frederic Henry. They choose desertion as their heroism. They remove themselves entirely from the field of conflict and end intellectual engagement. Vonnegut's persona, however, feels that his duty as a writer is to textually engage with trauma despite the inherent futility and resultant artifice of such a task. Instead it is Billy Pilgrim who runs. His escape is temporal becoming as he does, 'unstuck in time' (17). His time travel operates as allegory for his submission to grand narrative. As well as the fatalist philosophies espoused by the Tralfamadorians, Billy's life is defined by consumerism. His is a life of material success and middle class respectability.

He has little use for agency and, thus, his temporal escape is analogous with the moral escape described by Fromm. Symbolic autonomy, for so long the goal of the American masculine subject is now, Fromm argues, 'separation from a world, which in comparison with one's own individual existence is overwhelmingly strong and powerful' (45) and is, therefore, 'threatening and dangerous' (45). For Billy, moral complacency becomes his outer direction.

Vonnegut's fractured chronology is integral to the structure of *Slaughterhouse-Five.* It is both technical innovation and central plot device. Billy has taken on the role of chief earthly proselytiser for the inhabitants of Tralfamadore and their rejection of temporal linearity. In another example of text attempting to shape the subject's experiential existence, Billy outlines his radical approach in a letter to the *New York Times.*

> When a Tralfamadorian sees a corpse, all he thinks is that the dead person is in bad condition in that particular moment, but that same person is just fine in plenty of other moments. Now, when I myself hear that somebody is dead, I simply shrug and say what Tralfamadorians say about dead people, which is "So it goes." (20)

This aspect of the novel is divisive in terms of critical responses. There are readings that see Billy's fatalism as the novel's moral manifesto. Barry Chabot (1981), for example, pins his interpretation on the concept that Vonnegut is somehow striving to preserve collective serenity by shifting away from trauma and basking in simple acceptance. He argues that Vonnegut 'will try to forget the pain he has lived through' (49). He will avoid 'the sting from disappointment and suffering' (49) and become 'effectively immunized against death in any form' (49). This, however, misreads Vonnegut's intentions. Having lavished praise on the nobility of Lot's wife it would be entirely contradictory to revere the opposite in Billy. As a riposte to Chabot's approach, both Davis and Stacey Peebles (2005) draw clear lines of demarcation between Vonnegut (as writer and as persona) and Billy with the former making clear that 'it remains a common mistake to conflate the two' (78-79).

Billy's time travel can be read as a nod to the science fiction genre, knowing fable or, as suggested by Susanne Vees-Gulani, (2010) as a manifestation of post-traumatic stress disorder. To return to postmodernism, it is even possible, as Tally Jr. does, to consider Jameson's emphasis on subject 'spatiality' (166).

Jameson argues that the when the postmodern subject is faced with terrifying and anonymous power systems they become psychologically and spiritually lost. As a narrative concern, this is best expressed through characters that are dimensionally dislocated in a literal sense. As such, Vonnegut's exploitation of the science fiction genre narrates trauma and powerlessness as a struggle with, to use Jameson's expression, 'cognitive mapping' (21). Billy conforms to such a rendering of the traumatised postmodern subject. Cut adrift post-trauma, he understands his life through Tralfamadorian philosophy. Science fiction and postmodernity can certainly be conflated with regard to their engagement with temporal and spatial experimentation. Science fiction writer Samuel Delany (1988) identifies in postmodern science fiction and its myriad generic varieties the notion of 'paraspace' (31). He defines this as 'an alternate space, sometimes largely mental, but always materially manifested, that sits beside the real world, and in which language is raised to an extraordinarily lyric level' (31). In *Slaughterhouse-Five*, paraspace combines the spatial and the temporal. It resists linear chronology or rational dimensional organisation. It reflects a postmodernity in which, as Elana Gomel (2010) describes, 'time and space have been sundered and set against each other' (2). Gomel adds that 'the crisis of temporality is accompanied by the crisis of historicity' (2). Billy Pilgrim's traumas require a narrative that looks to an alternative cognitive approach to time and space and the manner in which they are embedded in language. Postmodernity must look to science fiction, Gomel concludes, and its 'halo of virtualities' (11).

America's postwar decades are described by Keith Booker (2005) as 'dystopian' (174). The nation was fixated on arms and a desire to witness the ultimate destruction of the Soviet enemy. Science fiction, therefore, offers an allegorical opportunity to explore the way that potentially apocalyptic matters such as these defy realist representation. Critics of the genre such as the aforementioned Booker, T.A. Shippey (1979) and Veronica Hollinger (2005) consider science fiction's relationship with the Cold War as a key intertextual link to the early experiments of postmodernism. J.A. Sutherland (1979) argues that the era is a point at which both 'science fiction and the experimental modern novel clearly interpenetrate' (162). This is a dynamic narrative relationship that mirrors Vonnegut's own authorial direction.

As a novelist in America's 1950s, Vonnegut's early career publications such as *Player Piano* (1999a (1952)), *The Sirens of Titan* (1999b (1959)) and *Cat's Cradle* (1998 (1963)) very much fit within the generic boundaries of science fiction. Vonnegut's playful mockery of science fiction is embodied by the repetitious use of Kilgore Trout[25]. He wanders the pages of Vonnegut's novels as a fabulously unsuccessful science fiction writer whose work is destined to remain as unread features in pornographic publications. Trout operates as the ultimate artistic outsider marginalised by his own low self-esteem (something that Sutherland attributes to science fiction's self-image) and questionable prose. His work is only read by accident. Yet his stories, regularly paraphrased by Vonnegut, are parables on postmodern malaise. Like all narrative attempts to explain, Trout's are of course failures but Vonnegut at least appreciates their open textual dishonesty. Influenced by the 'light, leftist touch' (Booker.181) of Philip K Dick, Vonnegut's fiction of the late 1960s is a paradoxical mixture of writing that rejects science fiction while simultaneously utilising its formal properties. This is another example of Vonnegut's elaborate tangle of pastiche. Yet, the difference with this particular genre is that it never claims anything other than such artifice, hence the clear link to postmodern fiction.

Postmodern fiction and science fiction are, as Brian McHale (2003) argues, in an increasingly symbiotic relationship. McHale explains that science fiction and postmodern fiction have a mutual 'indebtedness' (68) that reflects a shared interest in, for example, 'motifs of temporal displacement' (66). McHale also notes the 'increased openness to developments in postmodernist writing' (69) occurring in the 1960s and argues that this is something of a 'breakthrough' (69) for a genre previously considered 'noncanonical' (69) and 'subliterary' (69). Scott Sanders (1979) reads the science fiction genre in the light of the dehumanised and destabilised American subject.

> The reigning institutions of modern society – technological production,
> bureaucracy, cities, mass media – so regiment and fragment the social world that
> the individual is thrown back upon his island of subjectivity in search of meaning
> and coherence. (136)

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[25] Roger Luckhurst (2005) claims that Trout is a caricature of science fiction writer Theodore Sturgeon. His inclusion in Vonnegut's work led to him being ostracised from the science fiction community. Eventually, he was 'openly resented by the science fiction community' (116).

Thus, we are returned to Jameson's 'cognitive mapping'. The subject is bewildered and without fixed identity. What Sanders adds to the argument is recognition of science fiction's ability to use its artifice as a paradoxical aid to the subject's potential recalibration. The genre is notable for its 'subverted' (133) characterisation of 'self as puppet, robot or automaton' (136).

Billy is dehumanised by his apocalyptic experiences in Dresden and by the external gender constructions inherited from his father and found in postwar America. He is animated only by his Tralfamadorian experience, itself a plot device heavily indebted to science fiction. Billy's relationship with his mother furthers the dissolution of him as American masculine subject. After his return from Dresden, Billy spends time incarcerated in a 'ward for nonviolent mental patients in a veterans' hospital' (71). Billy's mother cannot understand why her son, returning home from a triumphant war and bathed in material excess, can have, as Sanders claims, 'disappeared' (134) in this manner. Vonnegut's timely introduction of Kilgore Trout helps to shed light on the disparity between Billy's fraught mental state and his mother's uncomprehending impatience. Billy reads 'Maniacs in the Fourth Dimension' (75), a novel 'about people whose mental diseases couldn't be treated because the causes of the diseases were in the fourth dimension and three dimensional earthling doctors couldn't see those causes at all, or even imagine them' (75). Indeed, those around Billy cannot understand his trauma. Mrs Pilgrim's world constitutes organised religion and money. This limits her ability to comprehend Billy's condition.

Billy's passive disintegration begins three years after his war experience has ended. His mental breakdown during his studies in optometry is endured in silence. His condition is fashionably attributed by mental health professionals to his Freudian relationship with his father rather than the much more recent trauma of Dresden. His companion in the institution is Eliot Rosewater, an intertextual reference to Vonnegut's own fiction (and so another reminder of textual artifice). Rosewater and Billy are 'dealing with similar crises' (73). They both find 'life meaningless' (73) and struggle to make linear sense of 'what they had seen in the war' (73). Rosewater 'had shot a fourteen-year-old fireman, mistaking him for a German soldier' (73) and, of course, 'Billy had seen the greatest massacre in European history' (73). Their efforts to 're-invent themselves and their universe' (73) are greatly helped by the textual

experiments of science fiction. The books of Kilgore Trout were 'a big help' (73). Their doctors, meanwhile, rely on the textbooks of psychoanalysis. America's growing reliance on therapy as a means of understanding the subject's place in society and the dynamics of the mental institution are redolent of the cultural context of *Slaughterhouse-Five's* publication. The subversive success of Ken Kesey's *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* (2006) in 1962 was followed by Erving Goffman's (1968) sociological study of 'total institutions' (23) and their inhabitants, *Asylum*. Even those Americans not institutionalised turned *en masse* to psychotherapy to the extent that Ellen Herman (1995) claims Americans 'have been convinced that who we are and how we feel are more tangible […] than whether our society lives up to […] democracy and equality' (1). Therefore, it is no accident that Vonnegut includes psychotherapy and the experience of institutionalisation in his novel. His negative portrayal of Billy's experience as a patient echoes the prevailing literary[26] and sociological mood and is described by Harris as 'simply another delusive attempt to explain and systemise the inexplicable and chaotic.' (74).

Billy's trauma can only be rationalised with help from Tralfamadorian philosophy. He learns from them the paradoxical skill of active passivity. In other words, he chooses not to see. On questioning his Tralfamadorian guide about the remarkable peace on their planet, he receives an explanation that ultimately forms the core of his ethos.

> 'But you do have a peaceful planet here.'
>
> 'Today we do. On other days we have wars as terrible as any you've ever seen or read about. There isn't anything we can do about them, so we simply don't look at them. We ignore them. We spend eternity looking at pleasant moments […]' (85)

This curious mixture of passive complacency and fatalist determinism is, for Billy, the grandest of narratives. For the remainder of his life he is an acolyte for simple acquiescence. He attempts to force the public gaze away from the complexity of trauma. Billy Pilgrim's conscious inability to look *at* the events of his terrible war is underlined by his presence at the Lions Club to hear a 'major in the Marines' (43) explain the justification for increased bombing in North

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[26] JD Sallinger's *The Catcher in The Rye* (1994) and Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar* (2005) also explore the failures in therapy as a means to capture and heal the traumatised American subject.

Vietnam. It is a contradictory narrative explanation that Vonnegut presents with mocking satire.

> He said that the Americans had no choice but to keep fighting in Vietnam until they
> achieved victory or until the Communists realized that they could not force their
> way of life on weak countries […] He was in favour of increased bombings, of
> bombing North Vietnam back into the Stone Ages, if it refused to see reason. (43)

Billy, despite 'the hideous things he himself had seen bombing do' (44), feels no obligation to speak out against the military operations in Vietnam. He prefers passivity. It is a moral choice that he makes repeatedly.

Faced with poverty and urban degradation as he drives through 'Ilium's black ghetto' (43), for example, he is unmoved by poverty. As a resident of the area approaches his hermetically sealed Cadillac, Billy's course of action is consistent with his approach throughout the novel; 'Billy did the simplest thing. He drove on.' (43).The automobile is presented as an icon of American material success yet is also revealed as a symbol of economic division. Billy's smooth progress through urban deprivation is mirrored in the opening pages of Thomas Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow* (1988) as Prentice 'sits in velveteen darkness […] speeding through the city' (1) protected from 'drunks, old veterans […] hustlers in city clothes, derelicts, exhausted women with more children than it seems could belong to anyone' (1). In Don Delillo's *Cosmopolis* (2004) also, Ian Davidson (2012) contends that the car symbolises 'promises of freedom and liberation' (469) and 'discourses of power, wealth and the ecological' (469). Billy's Cadillac operates as signifier of a mythic American masculinity that is palpably denied by his physical and psychological shortcomings. The American car, Deborah Clarke (2004) explains, is associated in 'popular myth' (101) with masculinity. It is aligned with a symbolic 'female body' (102) and, as such, offers American men 'control over […] women' (102). Here then is another example of the manner in which *Slaughterhouse-Five* presents popular narrative while simultaneously pointing out its flaws and inconsistencies. Billy's utter powerlessness is contrasted by the performative gesture of driving an expensive car. Yet the car also operates as a way to emphasise the complacency and passive existence that Billy's traumas have led to. Billy blindly accepts consumer power as an ordering narrative and it is this very story that isolates him from any purposeful search for meaning.

Vonnegut aligns such passivity with the narratives of organised western religion. Billy adheres to Reinhold Niebuhr's *Serenity Prayer*, itself an incantation opposed to protests against the greater purposes of national interest. Billy uses the content of the prayer, framed upon his office wall, as a guide to his post-Dresden life. He accepts that 'among the things [he] could not change were the past, the present, and the future' (44). The agency of the American masculine subject has all but disappeared. Billy is representative of his era in that the pursuit of autonomous free will has been replaced by an acceptance of powerlessness and conformity. As Fromm argues, 'the person who gives up his individual self and becomes an automaton, identical with millions of other automatons around him, need not feel alone and anxious any more' (209). However, this is a Faustian pact and 'the price he pays […] is high, it is the loss of his self' (209). Billy's choice is made easier by the comforts offered by late capitalism that validate his meek complacency. The modern masculine imperative to build visible and economic public success and pass such values to offspring serves as rationalising construction. Billy's aspirational progress is revealed repeatedly through symbols of American success. 'Billy's own Cadillac El Dorado Coupe de Ville' (41) is resplendent with 'stickers on the bumper' (41) that demonstrate allegiance to political philosophies[27] imposed by his father-in-law which, of course, Billy willingly accepts. Billy's successful life as an optometrist is enveloped in safety, comfort and sterility. His loveless yet compliant wife and he reside in 'a lovely Georgian home in Ilium' (44) full of modern comforts such as his vibrating 'Magic Fingers' (45) mattress. Material consumerism serves as a narrative that aids understanding of life's contradictory elements. This is evident in his mother's quest 'to construct a life that made sense from things she found in gift shops' (28). The novel demonstrates that consumerist narratives of success are anti-progressive. Material accumulation is stasis. It is, like Tralfamadorian philosophy, a way to accept complacency when faced with psychological and corporeal trauma. Billy's mother chooses not to see what is wrong with Billy, and Billy chooses not to see what is wrong with the Dresden massacre.

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[27] These include the call to 'Impeach Earl Warren'; an opposition to the Federal Judge who ended school segregation (Nichols, 2008) and membership of the John Birch Society, an example of America's powerful 'extreme right'(Eatwell et al., 2004).

While the critics already noted in this discussion broadly agree that Billy and Vonnegut have endured trauma, what remains overlooked is the material detail of that experience. Like *Catch-22,* beneath humour and narrative innovation, *Slaughterhouse-Five* is also a novel about combat experience and its impact upon the American masculine subject. The masculine archetypes attacked by Mary O'Hare are present throughout Vonnegut's remembered Second World War. Vonnegut depicts Billy's dislocated terror as a 'dazed wanderer' (23) during the Battle of the Bulge, as a prisoner of war (POW) (in another of Goffman's 'total institutions') and, of course, during Dresden's cataclysmic razing. Billy, a distinctly unglamorous 'chaplain's assistant' (22), has a physical appearance polarised with the images of muscular stoicism so readily perpetuated after America's Second World War.

> Billy was preposterous – six feet and three inches tall, with a chest and shoulders like a box of kitchen matches. He had no helmet, no overcoat, no weapon, and no boots. On his feet were cheap, low-cut civilian shoes which he bought for his father's funeral. Billy had lost a heel, which made him bob up-and-down, up-and-down. The involuntary dancing, up and down, up and down, made his hip joints sore […] He didn't look like a soldier at all. He looked like a filthy flamingo. (24)

His dishevelled physical self is reduced to that of malfunctioning toy soldier. His body is no more than a dissonant set of mechanised parts. Coupled with his sartorial mismatch, the description suggests isolated vagrancy rather than membership of an inclusive masculine group. As such, his marginalisation is clear. The contrast is particularly sharp when considered next to the 'clever, graceful, quiet' (23) scouts he has accidentally fallen in with. Fully armed and as battle hardened as figures from Hollywood war movies, they too suggest textual artifice. Billy's return to infancy when under fire refutes masculine ideals of decisive bravery.

His fate is intertwined with Roland Weary; a painfully deluded figure who is as marginalised as Billy. 'Stupid, fat and mean' (25), Weary adopts a bullying demeanour borne out of rejection by those he aspires to join. Consequently, he seeks to violently transfer that rejection. The process echoes the hierarchical imperatives discussed in the previous chapter. His behaviour is, therefore, legitimised by identifying and subordinating a victim.

> When Weary was ditched, he would find somebody who was even more unpopular
> than himself, and he would horse around with that person for a while, pretending to
> be friendly. And then he would find some pretext for beating the shit out of him.
> (25)

Weary's masculine relationships unfold in this manner and are a constant source of pain for him. His military background is as flimsy as Billy's but, rather than exist in a dreamlike stupor as Billy does, he retreats into a fantasy every bit as comforting. If anything, Roland's manner of constructing alternative narrative reveals even more about the harm of populist masculine imagery than Billy's. He interprets his hopeless reality miles behind enemy lines through a schoolyard obsession with disembowelling weaponry and fanciful notions of masculine solidarity. He is ignorant of the corporeal materiality of combat life. He considers such a gap in experiential knowledge shameful and covers it with a thin veil of bravado.

Aware that the Scouts show him no interest, he harangues Billy with a grisly body of information passed down from his father. He is laden with specialist military equipment and delights in informing Billy of the purposes of its efficient and murderous design. David Simmons (2010) contends that his version of heroic war adventure is taken from the pages of adolescent fiction. The slow and inevitably unsuccessful movement of the five stranded combatants is lived by Roland as comic book fantasy. This provides another opportunity for Vonnegut to employ textual pastiche. Weary's 'true war story' (30) reduces the complexities of combat to childish simplifications. The 'big German attack' (30) is resisted by Weary as his 'antitank buddies' (30) who 'fought like hell' (30). The men 'become close friends' (30) and determine to 'fight their way back to their own lines' (30). Their agreement is sealed by a hand shake and a decision to name themselves 'The Three Musketeers' (30). Despite such fantasies, Roland and Billy are soon abandoned. They are captured as Roland vengefully beats Billy. The German soldiers proceed to confiscate Roland's many layers of uniform thus removing protection from traumatic experience. His *Musketeer* fantasy intensifies and acts as opiate during his eventual death from gangrene. His presence demonstrates that clinging to a narrative construction in which the subject maintains the courageous zeal of fictional heroes is as powerful a narrative artifice as any depicted in the novel.

Billy's transfer to a large POW camp provides a setting in which Vonnegut can explore the Second World War's atrocities. His inclusion of marginal characters also further underlines narrative coping strategies. Despite the misgivings of Phillip Watts (1994) who incorrectly levels charges of anti-Semitism, Vonnegut implicitly refers to the barbarity of the holocaust when he describes 'candles and soap […] made from the fat of rendered Jews and Gypsies and fairies and communists and other enemies of the State' (69). In addition to this, horrifyingly familiar images draw parallels between dehumanising boxcar journeys across Eastern Europe and Holocaust survivor narratives. The sensory depiction of corporeal decay, so prominent in the last days of Roland Weary, strikes an incongruous chord of realism and thus echoes Heller's airborne terrors in *Catch-22*. Jarvis argues that this section of the novel contains 'the most striking examples of militaristic, wartime views of bodies' (90) as 'bodies blur into one another, becoming part of a larger, Nazi death-making machine' (90). The narrative moves back and forth from the exterior position of the German guards to the claustrophobia inside the car itself. This switch in perspective pivots on dehumanisation. For the guards the corporeal subjects are indistinguishable from each other as 'each car became a single organism which ate, drank and excreted through its ventilators' (51). Humanity is reduced to its most basic biological components and its circular organic nature. The guards observe the feeding in of 'water and loaves of blackbread and sausage and cheese' (51) and, subsequently the flowing of 'shit and piss and language' (51). Inside the cars, however, Vonnegut demonstrates that compassion is still possible even in such unpleasant physical circumstances. He writes that 'when food came in, the human beings were quiet and trusting and beautiful' (51).

This raises an issue central to Vonnegut's philosophy and can be traced through his oeuvre (especially in *God Bless You Mr Rosewater* (1992b (1965)), *Jailbird* (1992c (1979)) and *Breakfast of Champions* (1992a (1973)). In a world in which the individual feels essentially powerless and questions their own sense of constructed identity, Vonnegut views small acts of altruism as a manner in which to retain self-determination. The ability to offer kindness, generosity and selflessness in a limited sphere of influence is a rare example of compassionate decency and evidence of Vonnegut's faith in communal socialism. The efforts of the POWs to maintain human interaction through the

symbolic sharing of food juxtaposes debilitating disease and corporeal breakdown.

The British soldiers who await the Americans in the POW camp demonstrate a pastiche of cartoonish masculine resolve. 'Clean, enthusiastic and decent and strong' (68), the English are 'adored by the Germans, who thought they were exactly what Englishmen ought to be' (68). Jarvis argues that the Englishmen 'reinforce the importance of undermining traditional war narratives' (84). They 'embody pre-world War I ideals' (84) and, as such, 'reveal the power of self-generating war fiction' (84). They 'perform gallant war roles from the past whilst simultaneously creating new ones for future wars' (84). The British POWs are archetypes of masculine endeavour. They are muscular, resourceful, stoic and endlessly optimistic. Their belief in masculine camaraderie, embodied through their lusty choral singing, will see them through imprisonment.

Inside the camp, the failure of the male body juxtaposes such fictions. This is evident in the brief appearance of a colonel grappling for life. He suffers from 'double pneumonia […] a high fever and vertigo' (48). He has 'lungs [that] rattled like greasy paper bags' (48). Like Weary, he escapes to a well-worn narrative. In this instance, it is that of a well-loved paternal figure overseeing jovial camaraderie. As he approaches death he imagines that 'he was addressing his beloved troops for the last time and he told them that they had nothing to be ashamed of' (48). He looks to a future nostalgia in which he holds a 'regimental reunion in his home town which was Cody Wyoming' (49) where he will 'barbecue whole steers' (49). Another POW, Paul Lazzaro is racked with 'plagues of boils' (60). He chooses a brash veneer of aggression and revenge as his own coping narrative. He rejects corporeal failure through imaginative assertion of his own aggressive power. Threats are proffered to anyone that he perceives as having had the temerity to 'fuck' (101) with him. He regales a vengeful anecdote in which a dog that has bitten him is fed steak filled with sharpened metal shards. The story reveals a desire to dominate a weaker subject. As with Heller's descent into Roman hell, the binary of powerful and weak is sustained and the unspeaking and vulnerable subject is victimised. The animal, as will be discussed in analysis of Vietnam fiction, operates as a symbol of silent oppression and wordless suffering.

'Blood started coming out of his mouth. He started crying and he rolled on the ground, as though the knives were on the outside of him instead of on the inside of him. The he tried to bite his own insides. I laughed and I said to him, "You got the right idea now. Tear your own guts out, boy. That's me in there with all those knives."' (101)

Lazzaro's evident pleasure in inflicting such torture, regardless of the veracity of his account, shelters him from his own corporeal decay. His isolation and fear are tempered by an illusory network of equally violent associates. In a different take on the fantasy of male solidarity, they are apparently ready to operate under his influence and command. Allen sees Lazarro as 'an emblem of the fact that a soldier can never really escape his war experiences' (90). This is proved when Lazarro eventually murders Billy 22 years after the war.

Such violent fantasy is in stark contrast with Edgar Derby, Vonnegut's totem of compassionate decency. His textual significance is signalled in the very early stages of the novel during conversation between Vonnegut's persona and Bernard O'Hare. Vonnegut foregrounds the artifice of his creation by stating the 'the climax of the book will be the execution of poor old Edgar Derby' (4). Derby represents an 'irony' (4) in that a 'whole city gets burned down, and thousands and thousands of people are killed […] then this one American foot soldier is arrested in the ruins for taking a teapot' (4) and is 'shot by a firing squad' (4). Derby is a high-school teacher never without his copy of Stephen Crane's *The Red Badge of Courage* (1983 (1895)). He lives his military life by modest principle and acts with a rare humanity. He takes care of the frightened and wounded and stands by his conviction in the moral necessity of the war. This is particularly evident when faced with another reference to Vonnegut's own fiction in the guise of supposed Nazi sympathiser Howard W. Campbell[28]. Derby's undoubted bravery – he has survived a five day mechanised onslaught – is coupled with his touching devotion to his role as father and husband. Such belief in the importance of compassionate decency is a small positive in the vastness of combat, disease and destruction.

Of course, such plural narrative constructions can only be interpreted when accompanied by analysis of the firebombing of Dresden. The central traumatic event of the novel is preceded by various depictions of the city's architectural

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[28] The protagonist of Vonnegut's 1961 novel *Mother Night* (1992d).

and cultural beauty prior to its destruction. As with Heller's Rome, this illustrates the shift in sites of atrocity from the battlefield to civilised and established centres of human culture. Vonnegut's textual sources include a 1908 cultural biography of the city whose florid prose foreshadows the city's destruction. The 'genius of a few men' (13) has created 'permanent landmarks in art' (13) which leave visitors with 'lasting impressions'. (13) The initial impression made on Billy's American peers echoes this description. The city is seen as 'intricate and voluptuous and enchanted (108). Hollywood provides a familiar narrative frame for understanding such beauty through the single word 'Oz' (108). The Americans' life housed in 'schlacthof-funf' (114) is communal and oddly fortifying. Their relative safety, the innocence of their youthful guards and the beauty of the city outside set up a significant juxtaposition. The overwhelming mood of Vonnegut's Dresden is of vitality and human achievement. It is a city using the advancements of the early century to make life better for its inhabitants. That the city is destroyed by those same advancements is evidence that human progress may be the grandest narrative of all. In a novel in which chronology has lost its temporal bind, the raid on Dresden itself is the only section of the narrative that is experienced by Billy as memory. The treatment of mortality intensifies and death takes on incomprehensible magnitude. The German guards are 'killed with their families' (129), the girls sharing the slaughterhouse who had promised dynamic sexual possibility are 'all being killed' (129) and Dresden itself, previously such an earthly delight, is now nothing but an alienating graveyard. The city is 'like the moon now' (129); it is 'nothing but minerals' (129). The city was once teeming with life, now 'everybody […] was dead' (129).

This apocalyptic devastation is further evidence that technology's utilisation as massed weaponry is at the heart of twentieth century malaise. Veronica Hollinger (2005) recalls Adorno and Lyotard when she claims that 'science is the ultimate tool of the sovereign humanist subject in its accumulation of knowledge about and mastery over the natural world' (239). Indeed, Lyotard, 'following Theodor Adorno' (1477) looks to 'Auschwitz' (1477) in order to challenge 'the modern claim to help mankind emancipate itself' (1477). Lyotard argues that 'the development of techno-sciences' (1477) is 'a means of increasing disease, not fighting it' (1477). Appropriately he looks to another

narrative as a metaphor for postmodern engagement with the rapid growth of science and technology. He writes that 'we are in this techno-scientific world like Gulliver: sometimes too big, sometimes too small, never at the right scale' (1478). Kevin Boon (1997) contends that Vonnegut's generation of writers reject technology as progress. Atomic power is evidence that unchecked technological growth irreversibly alters the subject's relationship with scientific endeavour. Luckhurst argues that the atomic age is unique in that 'there was no outside of technological modernity anymore' (127). Technology's 'reach' (127), he continues, is 'global [...] its anti-human tendency starkly manifested' (127). Therefore, he concludes, 'the inherent progressive nature of science or technical rationality' (127) is 'difficult to sustain' (127). Boon adds that fear of technology culminates in a sense of powerlessness. Given technology's promises in postwar consumerist products of domestic and medical convenience, it is ironic that the subject is alienated from science. For Vonnegut, the moral choice is simple. In the face of well-resourced malignant power it is imperative to have no part of it. This is a value he is determined to pass down his paternal line. He tells his sons that 'they are not under any circumstances to take part in massacres, and that the news of massacres of enemies is not to fill them with satisfaction or glee' (14). This fatherly advice ties in with the aforementioned imperative to enact compassionate decency in a limited social sphere. Billy Pilgrim and Roland Weary have received questionable moral guidance from their fathers. In Billy's case material gain and ultra-conservative political leanings are accepted with typical passivity. For Roland Weary it lies in his morbid fascination with weaponry and its potential for corporeal damage. As a counterpoint to this, Vonnegut's protests against mechanised warfare only make a difference if passed to his sons. As he expresses in the novel's opening chapter, writing an anti-war novel is as much use as one that is 'anti-glacier' (3). Yet he can create change in his immediate social environment.

Such reasoning is central to Vonnegut's intellectual anti-heroism. The act of writing may be futile but, like Yossarian, he refuses to be a part of an inherently immoral system. The author's idealism is best exemplified by the passage in which Billy views a standard-issue moment of Hollywood military glorification

backwards. The reversal of hostile technological processes suggests the human potential for good.

> When the bombers got back to the base, the steel cylinders were taken from the racks and shipped back to the United States of America, where factories were operating night and day, dismantling the cylinders, separating the dangerous contents into minerals […] The minerals were then shipped to specialists in remote areas. It was their business to put them into the ground, to hide them cleverly, so they would never hurt anybody ever again. (54)

Such a chain of collective action for the benefit and safety of humanity and their homes is of course idealistic and evidence of the brand of 'Old Left' political debate that Brian McCammack (2008) attributes to Vonnegut. However the simpler message in Vonnegut's writing is that, among the depression and isolation felt in a world of anonymous and vast power, kindness offers a glimpse of self-determination for the American masculine subject.

The surviving POWs are set to work in Dresden 'corpse mines' (157). This is labour that reduces the corporeal human subject to mineral constituents. It is a task so physically unsettling that eventually bodies are simply 'cremated' (157) by flame-thrower. Despite these apocalyptic images, Vonnegut finds space for a simple moment of compassionate decency in the guise of the biblically resonant 'blind inn-keeper and his sighted wife' (130). They offer sustenance and shelter in a city where such simple pleasures are beyond contemplation. Vonnegut's intellectual anti-heroism suggests that small instances of altruism are the only humane response to society's crushing super systems. There is an important link here between Vonnegut and Heller's view of masculine endeavour as rebellion. Yossarian's symbolic disobedience operates as an asymmetric moral equivalent to Vonnegut's determination to engage with his traumas and take whatever shreds of dignity he can from them. It is evidence of kindness that eludes Yossarian in Rome. He sees only dehumanising brutality and the unstoppable defeat of innocence. Vonnegut insists that kindness provides the American masculine subject with an authentic moral response to dislocating trauma and the existential terrors of postwar America.

To position both *Catch-22* and *Slaughterhouse-Five* into the evolution of American war narrative and masculine combat experience, one has to be alert to works of fiction either side of their publication. They are not so much distinct

from the protests of the 1920s or the naturalism of the Pacific campaign as an innovative development. Intertextual homage exists both in overt pastiche and in a more subtle thematic sense. Yet it is undeniable that their work moves the war novel into a new phase. Contextually, the novels were adopted by the radicalised student movements of the late 1960s and early 1970s and are significant to the innovative narrative exploration of the postmodern period. Their questioning of values and dislocation of the American masculine subject is crucial aspect in understanding the artistic response to postwar American society. Heller and Vonnegut's open ambivalence regarding dominant narratives and ideologies is a significant influence on the writing that was produced in the aftermath of Vietnam War. The writing of Tim O'Brien and Larry Heinemann shares a literary debt to both figures. Their texts are intensely personal and the American masculine subject is now vulnerable and nebulous in a spatially and temporally unknowable war. The focus on physical sensation, mortality and the enormous array of technological power in Vietnam literature has Vonnegut's Dresden and Heller's airborne terror at its heart. This is also true of the psychological barrier between those informed by official policy and those whose daily life was to become one of nihilism and amoral survival.

Chapter Four

'This is true': Heinemann, O'Brien and the Vietnam War

This final chapter explores responses to the Vietnam War. Larry Heinemann's novels *Close Quarters* and *Paco's Story* are visceral and challenging representations of the violence and squalor associated with Vietnam. His work depicts the full cycle of participation in the conflict from basic training to the traumatised veteran's return to the United States. His narrative combines Mailer and Jones' graphic reportage and Vonnegut and Heller's narrative innovations. Such narrative plurality mirrors the chaotic and unknowable nature of the war itself. His soldiers are broken figures whose bodies tell narratives of violence, sex and the rapidly diminishing distinctions between the two. They demonstrate disillusionment and fear as a default setting on active duty and isolation and trauma once returned from conflict. The novels' treatment of American masculinity exposes the narrative of misogyny and fear that underpins traditional and mythic models as well as offering a critique on pervasive popular culture. Tim O'Brien also engages with the models of American masculinity represented by popular culture and the American media in his novels *Going After Cacciato* and *The Things They Carried*. However, unlike Heinemann, he engages in a more systematic and self-conscious debate regarding narrative and experiential truths. His metafictional strategies stress the artifice in representation and demonstrate the vitality of the human imagination in responding to trauma. The dual notions of fear and courage act as a platform for his own examination of masculinity and the Vietnam War. Narrative complexity is revealed as a valid way to engage with a war that resists simplistic or reductive cultural representation. Unlike previous chapters, there are two novels from each writer under examination here. This is because the texts work as pairs. This is not to say that the latter texts are sequels, more that the narrative strategies and thematic concerns work in a continuum across the texts. To only examine one novel from each writer would be to only tell half the story.

There are a wide range of secondary texts that have been of great use in preparing this chapter. Historiographic studies of the war by John Hellmann

(1986), Cincinnatus (1981)[29] and Loren Baritz (1998) cover the conflict in terms of military strategy, the relationship with Vietnamese people and their landscape and America's cultural response to the war. Key surveys of Vietnam fiction by Philip Biedler (2007), Tobey Herzog (1992) and several others offer responses to narrative form and to the relationship between text and historical moment. Susan Jeffords (1989) reads the conflict and its cultural aftermath from a feminist perspective. She contends that the war and its failure are the beginning of a period of symbolic remasculinisation and self-conscious performativity. Finally, the ground breaking work of Robert Lifton is central to understanding the complexities of the traumatised veteran. Lifton's therapeutic work with Vietnam veterans is detailed in his book *Home From the War Vietnam Veterans: Neither Victims nor Executioners* (1973). Roger Luckhurst (2008) describes him as 'one of the key figures in the transvaluation of trauma' (62) and a figure who attempted to 'morally elevate the survivor' (64). The complexity of the traumatised soldier is vital to the analyses that follow. It is yet further evidence for marking the tension between the singular American masculinity of myth and the nuanced plurality of material experience.

Frederick Jameson (1992) argues that the Vietnam War was the 'first terrible postmodern war' (176). It was 'a virtually unimaginable quantum leap in technological alienation' (176) unknowable as material experience. Jameson states that the epistemological security desired by the postmodern subject can only be found in artifice and representation. The past is only knowable when the subject 'imitate[s] dead styles' (71) or finds meaning from 'pop images' (71). Thus, for Vietnam combatants, tangible meaning was in representation of previous wars. Such representation evokes American myths of rugged masculinity. These were wars in which soldiers returned home to adulation and ceremony. They were wars that were perceived as successful. Jean Baudrillard's (1992) observations regarding the 'panic stricken production of the real and the referential' (153) are pertinent to this situation. The subject clings to artifice for meaning. In the process, distinctions between 'the sign and the real' (152) are diminished. Consequently, attempts at finding authenticity or

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[29] Cincinnatus was the pseudonym of Dr Cecil B. Currey, a professor of American military history at the University of South Florida in Tampa. Writing for *The New York Times*, Herbert Mitgang (1981) explains that he 'never served in Vietnam' (np) and decided to use a pseudonym because […] lack of experience in Vietnam might harm the book's credibility' (np).

autonomy only lead to simulations of other simulations, echoes of echoes. Baudrillard (1994) also states that postmodern 'representation' (2), has removed the 'distinction between the real and the imaginary' (3). Reality is based on seemingly infinite layers of imitation. Any traces or possibilities of original authenticity are lost.

Richard Dyer (1993) frames all modes of human experience, behaviour and interaction with what is learnt from cultural construction. He argues that the way 'we are seen determines in part how we are treated; how we treat others is based on how we see them; such seeing comes from representation' (1). Like Jameson, he contends that what is seen or perceived are the 'available cultural forms of presentation' (2). These are often reductive simplicities that fail to capture a 'reality that is always more extensive and complicated than any system of representation can possibly comprehend' (3). The liminal spaces between material complexities and simplistic forms of representation are vital in reading literary responses to Vietnam. Christian Metz (1977) contends that complexity and difficulty drive the susceptible subject toward popular culture. He compares the subject's response to that elicited by dreams. Despite operating as immersive and 'hallucinatory wish fulfilment' (112), dreams are 'neutralised […] by the bromide that this was only a dream' (112). Thus, despite such subconscious activity potentially unlocking desires, Metz continues, the subject actually places more faith in popular culture's visual representations. There is a 'tendency to perceive as real the represented and not the representer' (115). Metz provides as example 'the impression of seeing a galloping horse' (116) but not 'the moving spots of light' (116) which technically constitute such an image. So it is for constructions of masculinity abundant in the period between the Second World War and the early 1960s. For the American masculine subject, it is easier to admire the heroic and victorious combatant (the galloping horse) than to see clearly the machinations of patriarchal capitalism (the moving spots of light).

For Vietnam and its literary representation to be read in the light of such postmodern thinking it is important to establish the conditions that make the war an unknowable event and to examine its consequent representation in popular culture. In the second half of the 1960s, the American masculine subject's economic position in society radically altered. Consequently, hegemonic ideals

regarding labour were called into question. The Vietnam War occurred simultaneously with a movement away from valorised physical blue-collar work towards the white collar existence discussed in the previous chapter. This was an era in which legal gains in employment rights fought for by feminism threatened traditional masculine dominance of the public sphere. George Yudice (1995) argues that the result of such social change was 'the loss of protection that men were offered under patriarchy in accordance with their own social roles' (272). Barbara Ehrenreich (1995) adds that the American masculine subject's self-image was further destabilised by new discourses in advertising which softened masculinity's hardened edges. She attributes a perceived 'decline in patriarchy' (287) to 'the embrace of males by […] American consumer culture' (287). For John MacInnes (1998), movement away from a clearly demarcated 'sexual division of labour' (7) led to the 'gradual decline of the male breadwinner ideology' (53) and ultimately the 'masculine crisis' (11). He contends that historically such crises cause the American masculine subject to fall back on long established masculine myth as a 'guarantee or anchor of what we truly are, for what we can imagine to be our authentic nature' (13). Therefore, it is no surprise that the qualities associated with military service symbolically align with those of the American Adam. Indeed, Milton Bates (1990) claims that the masculine endeavour of combat promised by the Vietnam War was an alternative to 'the safe, well-regulated, rather tedious nature of civilian life – a life traditionally regarded as feminine' (34). Enlisting in the military was a way for the American masculine subject to 'prove his manhood and desire for adventure' (34). This was a chance to imitate culturally embedded representation.

For the Vietnam combatant, cinematic representation of America's simplistic binarised innocence was a source of performative masculinity. Critics discussing the cultural environment of the Vietnam War frequently cite John Wayne as a crucial figure in confirming hegemonic myths. Herzog explores the relationship between Wayne's films, his ideological stance and a generation of adolescent males who were initiated into American life by him. His 'status as a cultural icon representing traditional American values of patriotism, courage, confidence, leadership and manliness' (18) cemented and propagated 'widely accepted stereotypes of masculinity' (18). Wayne's 1968 anti-communist film

The Green Berets[30] is, according to John Hellman (1986), an attempt, to capture the romanticism of Kennedy's counterinsurgency groups upon whom the film was ostensibly based. Ironically, Kennedy himself was also responding to representations of American myth. Hellman describes Kennedy's use of the rhetorical clarion call New Frontier and the Green Berets as 'a contemporary reincarnation of the western hero' (45). He adds that 'the Green Beret personified the combined virtues of civilisation and savagery without any of their respective limitations' (45). As such, Michael Bellamy (1990) claims that Kennedy's celebration of the Green Berets and Wayne's subsequent film, 'implied a lucid, playful version of war' (11).

Thus, to return briefly to Metz, such implications carry inherent dangers for the spectator. Metz argues that what is ostensibly represented in visual culture as 'authentic' (109) is in fact much closer to 'delusion' (110) or 'hallucination' (109). The passive spectator is highly receptive to visual culture as it is ingested in a near sleep like state, a 'kind of daze' (117). However, it is in fact an experience in which the subject is conscious and sentient. Delusions emanate from 'true images and sounds' (107) and are not dismissed as interior (thus, unreal) reflections of wish fulfilment.

Aside from cinema, young American males found mythic ideals alive and well in the popular comic books published between the end of the Second World War and the late 1950s. Alexander Clarkson (2008) explains that the celebration of American success and masculine endeavour that greeted victory in 1945 'created a mass audience for war comics' (176). They carried an 'ethos which idealised military discipline and self-sacrifice as the fundament of masculine identity' (176). He describes titles such as *Sgt. Fury and His Howling Commandos* and *Sgt. Rock* as 'an exclusively male reserve' (177). They 'celebrate the successful defence of democratic values' (178). Indeed, Robert Kodosky (2011) contends that the idealised comic book veteran of the Second World War was a pervasive cultural figure for young men entering the Vietnam War. He provided 'a new readership' (1049) with 'insight into the previous generation's combat experience' (1049).

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[30] The film, Gordon Taylor (1995) claims, was proposed by Wayne to Lindon B Johnson in 1965 and resulted three years later in 'the most blatantly propagandist contemporaneous feature film made about the Vietnam War' (21).

It is clear then that layers of myth and imitation demonstrate the difficulty faced by combatants in reconciling popular images of masculinity with material experience. The Vietnam soldier depicted in the novels examined here experiences disillusionment, fear and inadequacy. Such qualities do not square with popular representations and are culturally taboo. The American masculine subject finds security and safe conformity in the sustained performance of popular representation in which he is both performer and audience. Consequently, alienation from psychological authenticity is inevitable. Herzog (1988) contends that the 'happy-warrior mentality left over from the John Wayne films' (21) clashed with 'disenchantment with the brutality of war, questions about the meaning of war, self-doubts and feelings of helplessness' (21).

Jeffords argues that performativity is paramount. She positions combatants at the centre of a performative triangle. They are at once spectators of popular culture, mimetic performers and spectators of that very performance. They are 'soldiers watching themselves fighting a war' (19). She suggests, for instance, that violence toward the Vietnamese (both as ally and as enemy) is based upon affirmation of the performative imperative. As such, it is vital that simplistic binaries are maintained. Jeffords explains that the 'feminine exists only in relation to and as a function of the masculine' (36). In Vietnam 'the masculine is dependent […] on the feminine' (36). That feminine is equated with passivity, weakness and submissiveness. It exists in contrast to the well-established violent dominion of the American masculine.

However, as is demonstrated by the fiction of Larry Heinemann and Tim O'Brien, such binary representation is dissonant with the experiential materiality of Vietnam. The role literature has to play is, as Hellman describes, one of 'remythologising Vietnam' (102). Rather than provide absolutes, it depicts, 'flesh and blood ghosts of abandoned dreams' (100). It is a space for those dislocated and silenced by Vietnam to, 'display […] their scars and mutilations, most especially their psychological ones' (100-1). Hellman's description echoes Jacques Derrida's (1993) term 'hauntology' (10). Derrida suggests that the subject 'learns to live' (xvi) not through the certainties and binaries of mortality but from the liminal spaces 'between life and death' (xvii); moments that 'no longer belong to time' (10). Absolutes are abandoned when reality exists only as representation and simulation. If Vietnam is unknowable as experience then

attempts to know it are futile. This is not to say, of course, that Vietnam fiction does not deal with the materiality of Vietnam. Moreover, it is a reminder that such corporeal lessons are deceptively hazy and stubbornly resistant to absolutes.

Larry Heinemann's *Close Quarters* and *Paco's Story* make use of such an ambiguous narrative space. Heinemann describes his visceral approach to narrative as a 'downward path to wisdom' (Nguyen, 2012) and this is certainly evident in critical appraisal of his work. Biedler, for example, argues that the highly detailed corporeal descriptions are themselves emblematic of Vietnam as moral experience. He describes a 'movement through consciousness toward confrontation with some vision of horror so arresting in its sense of awful completeness and finality'(162) that it ends at 'the soul's ground zero' (162). A physical and psychological descent of this nature requires narrative that, like those of his forbearers Mailer and Jones[31], does not flinch from verisimilitude. Heinemann adds that, 'there is an undeniable ugliness that can only be described as appalling; it is those moments in a soldier's life that are most remembered and lingered over – and, sadly, internalised' (Nguyen. 2012). Alongside his great affection for Jones, it is clear that Heller and Vonnegut are also major influences. As such, Heinemann's writing combines forensic detail with innovative experimentation. The narratives in *Close Quarters* and *Paco's Story* are as elusive and phantasmagorical as their subject matter.

Close Quarters tells the story of Philip Dosier's tour of duty from his innocent arrival in Vietnam through to its traumatic completion. The novel disrupts western traditions of adventure and conquest and, therefore, can be read as a subversive engagement with the Gothic. Stephen Tabachnick (2013) identifies 'adventures' (191) in 'distant and colourful places' (191) as a key trope of nineteenth century European Gothic. The protagonists of such narratives face constant 'challenges' (191) from 'strange beings' (191) that, at the narrative's close 'are overcome by technologically advanced and brave Europeans' (191). Heinemann subverts this narrative tradition in two ways. First, despite the

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[31] Heinemann is particularly influenced by James Jones. In an interview he claims, 'I just loved his writing. And I've heard he was a real character. He wrote about war from the point of view an ordinary soldier using ordinary language. If memory serves, he was the first American writer to use the word "fuck." *From Here to Eternity* and *Thin Red Line*, his World War II books, are his strongest. He really did call a spade a spade. He came back with an attitude not dissimilar to the soldiers coming back from Vietnam.' (Jacobsen. 2003)

enormous technological muscle available to Dosier and his fellow combatants, conflicts with an unknown other are rarely victorious. In fact, the very notion of victory implies an experiential clarity entirely absent from Dosier's reconstruction of his tour. Second, Dosier, though able to 'tell his tale', is far from the returning hero who is ready to confirm the sanctity of America's moral war. Instead, his fractured and ghostly reminiscences are evidence that narrative itself is doomed to fail at capturing experience. Dosier's first person narration hovers between blank remembrance of traumatic experience and self-aware reflection on moral decline.

Herzog's study of thematic commonality across Vietnam fiction (1992) identifies loss of innocence as crucial to the subject's construction post-combat. As with the war fiction discussed in earlier chapters, the Vietnam novel is a subverted *bildungsroman.* Herzog claims that 'underlying […] chronological, emotional and psychological progression is the central character's movement from innocence through experience to consideration and understanding' (59). Dosier's actions as a soldier are brutal, often cruel, and leave him numb or ashamed. The novel's portrayal of daily GI existence is unflinching and its detailed depictions of violence and its aftermath suggest that this is masculinity shorn of moral direction. The novel depicts the manner in which the masculine group and the American masculine subject seek to cope with and impose violent order on traumatic chaos. The analysis that follows will focus on the relationship between traumatic material experience and mimetic performance of representative masculinity. Inherent in *Close Quarters* is the performativity that Jeffords proposes and evidence that distinctions between sexual desire and combat violence are impossible to maintain. Alongside this are the struggles, also witnessed in Pacific War fiction, to cope emotionally in a restrictive masculine group. Domestic and combat spaces are juxtaposed and the masculine body becomes a site that narrates its own fatigue, pain and sexual arousal. The body is in the text yet remains textual.

The mythic wholeness of the American masculine body is best represented through Heinemann's narration of labour. Heinemann speaks of 'war as work' (Nguyen, 2012: np) and crucially, of the 'literal physical satisfaction that comes over you when a job's well done'(Nguyen, 2012: np). As Dosier encounters increasingly debilitating fear, work provides a rare opportunity for control and

corporeal self-determination. Physical labour is ideologically encoded in America's mythic and hegemonic masculine ideals. Chris Haywood and Mairtin Ghaill (2003) claim the 'hard, physically demanding labour of manual work' (29) is 'understood […] by working-class men as being heroic and requiring physical and mental bravery' (29). John Beynon (2002) argues that social challenges to meaningful, physical employment and the growth of the white collar middle classes are a contributing factor to the so-called masculine crisis cited in contemporary gender debates. He argues that the 'advent of postmodernity' (77) has negated a central aspect of the hegemonic ideal resulting in 'breadwinner ideology' (84) becoming 'no longer credible' (84). Anthony Clare (2000) argues, therefore, that the manner in which men of Dosier's generation 'defined their lives' (7) is centred on physical and public employment that provides 'the very essence of their masculinity' (7).

Certainly, this view is supported by the evident pleasure in Dosier's detailed account of his duties.

> […] the work at my back done, and done proper: the gas tank and leaking radiator topped off; those several hundreds of thousands of bolts and nuts as snug and tight as I could manage; the tread tensions perfect; the machine guns, cleaned and oiled and mounted, covered with stiff, wrinkled ponchos; and the jump cable hooked up between the Cow Catcher and the seven-six […] (104)

The forensic delight and specific technical discourse that Dosier employs in detailing his tasks is evidence that this aspect of combat experience is one in which he feels relative safety and control. In Vietnam, violent triumph – that other great marker of public masculine achievement – is thrown into infantilised doubt. The symbolic nature of physical work allows the vulnerable American masculine subject to fall back upon mythic masculine endeavour. The precision in this language of labour marks a clear contrast with impressionistic and chaotic descriptions of combat. In the novel's first combat sequence, for example, Dosier is physically dislocated and overloaded by sensory cacophony. His narrative is disjointed and indicative of fraught panic. The sanctity offered by the technical logic of labour is juxtaposed by 'shots and grenades and more shots' (43) and by 'rounds […] going by my ears, near enough to touch, buzzing, whining like quick hard thorns' (43). Dosier can see himself 'lying on the ground screaming bloody murder' (43). His physical terror is enhanced by a

lack of control. The landscape disorientates him and he is surrounded by malevolence. Enemies are invisible, out of reach and uncontrollable; a far cry from the images of popular culture that suggest mastery of landscape and domination of an inferior enemy.

Michael Herr's work of participatory journalism *Dispatches* (1977) opens with a description of a tattered map of Vietnam and speaks of the futility in imposing order onto the conflict's spaces. Again, the heterotopian tension between material place and imagined space is clear. The temporal and spatial difficulty faced by Vonnegut's Billy Pilgrim is evident here also.

> It was late '67 now, even the most detailed maps didn't reveal much any more; reading them was like trying to read the faces of the Vietnamese, and that was like trying to read the wind. We knew that the uses of most information were flexible, different pieces of ground told different stories to different people. We also knew that for years now there had been no country here but the war. (3)

As Herr suggests, physical landscape is a metaphor for the war as experience and as cultural representation. Cincinnatus' excoriating analysis of America's military strategy in the war identifies Vietnamese geography as a cause of psychological alienation and, consequently, the traumatic failure of the war on an individual and national level. He argues that combatants, despite being 'equipped with the latest weapons that western technology could provide' (31), were unable to navigate 'brush and jungle' (31). They were left 'never knowing the kind of war they were fighting' (31). The 'heavily foliated and frequently mountainous (56)' landscape masked the threat of North Vietnamese soldiers skilled in guerrilla warfare that Americans remained 'oblivious' (40) to. American soldiers' paranoid and perpetual fear was exacerbated by myth in which control of landscape is of symbolic significance. As has been discussed throughout this thesis, masculinised American identity and history relies heavily upon conquest of landscape and a will to make unknown terrain submissive. Clare contends that the need for such control stems from masculine preoccupation with 'the penetrating penis' (125). He argues that the female body, a site of 'broader and more diffuse bodily eroticism' (125) is unknowable and therefore 'detested' (200). It is an 'immense challenge to the male sense of control' (201). Clare goes on to project such conflict outwards to the masculine subject's relationship with the material world. He argues that the '[…] this preoccupation with

remaining in control coupled with the urgings of an insistent sexuality […] lies at the core of male aggression […] turned outwards in sexual and other forms of violence' (202).

In Vietnam, the feminised Vietnamese people and their landscape are conflated. The difficulty in understanding their complexity is addressed through a simplistic masculine-feminine binary. The nuances of language and cultural difference are equated with Vietnam's landscape. As such, both are subject to American phallocentricism. Thus, when the American combatant is faced with unknowable terrain, sexual performativity and mechanised destruction of land become indistinguishable. The Vietnamese jungle is a tangled and fecund mass. Its 'darkness and tall grass and brush' (90) are unpredictable constantly shifting. The jungle is aquatic and uterine. Dosier sits rain soaked' (76) in the 'soggy cool night air' (76) he feels 'down into the grass between his legs, feeling for a single root' (76). This is a search for singularity in a landscape that is terrifyingly plural. This contrasts with the hard metallic edges of the American phallus. It is a binary that Edward Said (1995) describes in terms of the 'ragingly masculine' (147) west and the 'passive, seminal, feminine, even silent and supine east' (138). Dosier's armoured personnel carrier traverses the otherwise impassable Vietnamese jungle. He uses the language of sexual conquest as masculine technology rides over feminised landscape. They move with 'jerks and lunges, rising up the sides of trees, crashing down on top of them with a sudden sharp bounce.' (59) If the landscape cannot be known then it will simply be conquered. Dosier expresses a violent fury at 'every snatch of sand, every hill and ARVN fort, all the banana groves and rice paddies and hamlets and fucked-up mud hooches, right down to the last squint-eye on this whole fucken farm' (19). His sexualised language is an attempt to feminise the landscape and create an opportunity to perform symbolic masculine dominion. Jeffords claims that the Vietnamese landscape fulfils a submissive sexualised role for the American military and that, 'technology does not 'stand in' for the male body but is that body' (14).

Indeed, Vietnam sees a sustained focus on American technological muscle. Baritz argues that symbolic constructions of masculinity are bolstered by American hardware and that, consequently 'many young American males […] think of machinery and sex as the same thing' (52). Eroded masculinity is

equated with sexual inadequacy and lack of performance in combat is equated with the failure of the penis to perform. Therefore, using weapons to kill is not the taking of human life but a successful sexual victory achieved with the symbolic phallus. Freud (1967 (1911)) describes the phallic symbol in terms of 'unconscious phantasies of neurosis' (346). The phallus appears in dreams in the form of 'long sharp weapons' (354), 'complicated machinery and apparatus' (356) and 'weapons and tools' (356). Freud concludes that 'sexual symbolism can find its best hiding-place behind what is commonplace and conspicuous' (346). Certainly such objects are the everyday of Vietnam experience. Mastery of Vietnam's material tasks and equipment is a way for the American masculine subject to assert his prowess. Arthur Brittan (1989) suggests that phallic representation confirms for the male subject 'difference and domination' (56). It 'legitimises their view of themselves as having authority over women' (56). Jacqueline Lawson (1989) argues that, 'firing a weapon that has become a surrogate penis is an act of sexual aggression: spontaneous, instinctive and overpowering' (27). Jacques Lacan (1989 (1966)) argues for a dissonant relationship between the phallus as signifier and the male penis as signified. The sense that 'impotence' (321) is 'difficult to bear' (321) means that the symbolic phallus 'is the signifier intended to designate as a whole the effects of the signified in that the signifier conditions them by its presence as a signifier' (316). Differentiating the penis, described by Brittan as a 'flabby piece of unaesthetic flesh' (56) from the phallus is a manner in which to perform symbolic power and sexual prowess. Dyer also makes this vital distinction, making clear that the phallus as symbol requires wilful ignorance of the mimetic absurdity involved in such a transformation. 'Male genitals' (90), Dyer argues, 'are fragile, squashy, delicate things; even when erect, the penis is spongy, seldom straight, and rounded at the tip' (90). Yet, a 'discrepancy'(90) exists; 'it is not flowers that most commonly symbolise male genitals but swords, knives, fists, guns' (91).

This symbolic gap is mirrored by the American masculine subject's inability to equate material experience with representation. The subject's failure to move beyond performativity to authenticity is failure that is matched by the penis' dissonance with its symbolic signifier. In a broader sense, this is an issue that has resonance across each chapter here. Mythic representation of American

masculinity and the American masculine subject's relationship with his body, his culture and his landscape fails to match its material equivalent. Such are the restrictive behavioural codes of hegemonic masculine culture that this dissonant mismatch is endured in silence. The American masculine subject is left with a situation in which he cannot not perform cultural representation.

The gap between experience and prevailing cultural attitudes is underlined in *Close Quarters* by the presence of the American media. In the aftermath of a fire fight the thirst for sensationalism and images of idealised heroism are suggestive of another aspect of performativity and representation. Before the Tet Offensive of 1968 (the point at which Dosier's tour ends), news coverage of the Vietnam War sought to emulate John Wayne's rugged masculine version of combat experience. Dosier and his colleagues, now experienced and cynical, are aware of the hollowness of such representation and satirically play up to such an ideal. They grab 'clean shirts and our bush hats and some ammo belts and bandoliers and pineapple frags, machine guns and rifles and forty-fives' (248) and stand in a 'loose semi-circle and John Wayne it for the guy' (248). This is both self-conscious performative behaviour and evidence of conforming to a masculine cultural construction. John Wayne is ostensibly what Judith Butler (2006) defines as a 'universal basis' (6) for performed masculinity. Wayne becomes a 'cultural intersection' (5) where gender representation is 'invariably produced and maintained' (5). Butler argues that the anticipation of the cultural agent precipitates performativity. Therefore, that 'culture becomes destiny' (11). In addition to the visible culture of cinema and John Wayne, the subconsciously anticipated audience (itself a cultural agent) for this performative mimesis is 'the folks back home' (250) and 'ma' (247). This is an idealised cultural audience requiring an idealised performance regardless of whether it exists at all. There is a representative cycle at work here. Domestic America has anticipated expectations that are confirmed by the media and performance of the soldiers. In turn, the soldiers are afraid to deviate from the masculine ideal and so confirm and propagate the ideal forwards for further representation.

Controlled performance of cultural representation is a manner of delaying the trauma associated with temporal and moral dislocation. Kali Tal (1989) claims that Vietnam trauma is the result of 'the failure of the social myths upon which

soldiers' personal myths are based' (239) and the inability to 'acknowledge the enormous gap between their society's expectations and the wartime realities they experienced as soldiers' (240). Ironically, performance of accepted codes of cultural representation is a way to delay trauma but also a precursor for some of the brutality that is so traumatic in the first place. First, the immediacy of violent material experience cannot be adequately relayed in narrative. Trauma resides in the liminal spaces between representation and material experience and resists the linearity of conventional narrative. Tal argues that the 'urge to bear witness' (230) is 'one of the strongest themes in the literature of trauma' (230). Yet, to 'carry the tales of horror back to the halls of normalcy' (231) is 'impossible' (231). Second, the individual subject seeks to veil his active engagement in brutality with more acceptable narrative of courage and moral patriotism It is not so much that the Vietnam combatant seeks to be dishonest, more that the nature and magnitude of Vietnam's violence and brutality are resistant to linear and cogent memory. Thus, the subject falls back upon familiar narratives of masculine endeavour and moral certainty. However, reliance upon such narratives is simultaneous with masking repressed experiences. The soldier who has acted with brutality and dehumanising malice finds solace by looking to constructions of heroism that are propagated and remythologised in popular culture.

The process of brutality is explored in detail in *Close Quarters* and begins with the weaponisation of racist language. Just as Vietnam's landscape is overcome with powerful mechanised hardware; its people are controlled with the blunt instrument of dehumanising language. Weapons and language serve the same symbolic purpose in maintaining binarised distinctions between mythic American masculinity and the feminised other. Robert Lifton explains that the 'beleaguered American soldier-survivor' (199) dehumanised the Vietnamese with racist discourse; a process he refers to as 'gook syndrome' (199). He explains that, 'some such dehumanising term is always necessary to the numbing of widespread killing' (201). Indeed, to refer to Said again, such discourse enables the reduction of the Vietnamese other to be 'recognisable and authoritative' (231) and aids in 'obliterating the distinctions between […] type' (230). Thus, the violent and racist language so frequently employed by American combatants is a discourse that ensures that the confused combatant

can bury doubt and act without the 'distractions of accident, circumstance or experience' (230). *Close Quarters* is littered with terms such as 'gook', 'dink', 'slope' and 'slant-eye'. The American combatant does not distinguish between his North Vietnamese enemy and his South Vietnamese ally. Such nuance is abandoned. Violent language holds a symbolic potential equal to the material power of mechanised weaponry and to physical acts of brutality.

Close Quarters' representations of violence reveal that Dosier and his colleagues believe their survival is dependent on barbarity. The narration of Dosier's hand-to-hand combat with a lone enemy, for example, demonstrates a maliciousness that goes beyond the military role of the soldier. Faced with the choice of a simple kill with his bayonet or the more arduous process of strangulation, Dosier opts for the latter; an indication of his need to perform physical dominion.

> I squeeze his Adam's apple with both thumbs. I lift his head and push it back into the turf with a muted splash. My fingernails work into the back of his neck. The little man grabs both my wrists. He gurgles and works his jaw. His mouth stretches open and he wags his tongue. Lift. Push. Squeeze. (73)

The switch to present tense and the listing of active verbs ensure that the focus is on forceful violence. The final three words used to represent the struggle have a dramatic typographical and syntactic impact. Their blunt monosyllabic appearance and sound suggest physical completion. However, their isolation as individual clauses suggests that violence of this nature no longer requires (or is adequately captured by) grammatical completion. Just as the track overpowers the landscape, Dosier overpowers the 'gook'. There is no immediate reflection on Dosier's part, for such information is subtextual. The fact that Dosier only narrates the event in this stilted fashion suggests analytical reflection is too painful, too traumatic.

Dosier offers a more lucid form of reflection after he shoots an injured Vietnamese boy. The distinction between civilian and enemy combatant is entirely absent in this instance. Both are 'gooks' and a target for angry and confused American fear. Dosier stands guard over the captured youth as a village is searched. He wants to 'crush his fucking face' and (217) 'disembowel his little asshole' (217). This type of attitude, Lifton claims, was endemic among

American soldiers who had lost all sense of moral direction. They 'underwent a gradual but profound process of numbing, reflected in their increasing callousness and brutality toward the Vietnamese' (45). Dosier's intense momentary hatred underlines the need the American masculine subject has for autonomy and power. In a war in which he is powerless in a material and experiential sense, the child symbolises a legitimate victim on which to perform a violent affirmation of self-determination. Children and animals operate as tropes for brutalised and powerless innocence in texts throughout this discussion. Heller's Yossarian witnesses ritual beatings of children and dogs in Rome, Vonnegut's Paul Lazzaro finds pleasure in feeding a dog razor blades and, as will be discussed later, O'Brien's terrified Rat Kiley fires endless rounds of ammunition at a baby water buffalo. Dosier, unseen by his fellow soldiers and unable to control his anger 'blew the top of his head off' (219). He reflects that 'I hated him when he was alive and I hated his corpse' (220). Dosier now narrates in the past tense and with a marked objectivity. He reflects that his act of brutality happened on 'the day after Christmas' (220). The charity and humanity ostensibly associated with Christianity are disrupted by the image of a 'weak wounded kid and [...] his grave and my grave' (220). Symbols of western morality, therefore, are no longer absolute.

The process of brutalisation – Heinemann's 'downward spiral' – is partly attributed by Baritz, Cincinnatus and Lifton to the controversial military strategy of body count. This policy was to be the measure of progress in a war in which control of land was no longer relevant. The literal counting of enemy dead was, according to Baritz's sporting metaphor, a 'score card' (289). Lifton argues that it reduced 'the essence of American numbing, brutalisation and illusion into a grotesque technicalisation' (65). In such a system killing and death are a systematic and fascistic abstraction. Cornelius Cronin (1983), analysing the policy's influence on *Close Quarters*, states that Dosier 'see[s] himself as primarily a killer' (126). As the novel progresses he begins to 'focus his attention even more firmly on the presence of death in his world and on his role in causing death' (126). The Vietnam combatant became a self-conscious killer and his ability to carry out this role was, Lifton claims, a measure of 'one's sense of skill, worth and manhood' (69). Jeffords concludes in her analysis of body count that performativity was again crucial 'in a system' (8) in which

'bodies became only numbers that could be fed back to the military's computerised analyses' (8). 'Killing' (8), Jeffords adds, 'became a question, not of the enemy of even of survival, but of the demands of the audience for performance' (8). Killing, therefore, is a measure of performance masquerading as an official indication of military progress. In *Close Quarters* enemy bodies are reduced to a quasi-empirical source of military justification. They are evidence that Mailer's (1998) General Cummings' views regarding the 'physical power' (327) of the 'reactionary's century' (93) are in fact highly prophetic. Yet for Dosier, it is difficult to reconcile the sight of mutilated human forms with such statistical discourse. For him, in another moment of reflection, they had 'lain there and struggled and died, crying and calling for water in dry-throated whispers' (238). This sentiment underlines the validity of this narrative space. Dosier cannot express such reticence publicly as to do so would be deviant. He must conform to policy and to the performance expected in this hyper-masculine environment.

As with each example of war fiction in this study, corporeal imagery is a reminder that the American masculine subject's relationship with his own body and the bodies of others is central. Dosier's friend and colleague Granger is injured almost beyond human recognition. His 'scalp and face and […] neck' (89) are virtually severed from his body 'in bloody tatters' (89) Dosier's recollection of the injuries is a traumatic remembrance that forces him to look to his own body as site of narrative. Alongside the ever present threat of death are reflections on decay and squalor. Dosier describes 'pain deep in my back' (99) and 'a lump of phlegm, a slab of lard, a gob of yellow clay' (99). The dirt of war has infiltrated Dosier's body. The 'greasy grit' (104) and 'dust I could never wash out' (104) are material experience and metaphor for Vietnam's trauma.

Superficial indifference regarding such corporeal decay and devastation are reflected in a satirical attack on military hierarchy. During one of the novel's significant departures into experimental narration, graphic reportage gives way to hallucination. Under the influence of strong Vietnamese marijuana, Dosier experiences a Bosch-like vision of military grandeur and corporeal devastation. In 'some mansion foyer' (160) he stands looking at the 'thirty two polished

points of the compass rose'(160) [32] with his 'head craned at the oval spirals of mahogany railing rungs' (160). An isolated figure amongst so much opulence, Dosier caricatures figures from America's social and military elite. They jovially 'call over their shoulders for more martinis and rotgut bar scotch and another platterful of those tasty liver pate and beef tartare hors d'oeuvres' (160) while casually commenting on the war's 'damn fine killers' (161). The establishment figures, oblivious to the material experience of war, begin 'tumbling […] bodies out and over' (160) their protective balcony. Dosier is submerged in 'chips of knees and knuckles and whitish compound fractures and the bubbling, hissing gush of sucking chest wounds and sticky black pools of blood' (161). The sequence is completed by a metaphorical indication of the combatant's unrelenting exposure to corporeal horror.

> Higher and higher the dead pile until I begin to climb up and out among the corpses, using the leg bones and arm bones, gaping mouths and mushy bellies, and heads of straight black hair for handholds and footholds, like a person would climb the inside of a pile of neatly stacked tires. (161)

The passage's hallucinatory tone and apocalyptic imagery suggest degradation of human life and the individual combatant's isolation. The proliferating bodies again reflect Heinemann's narrative debt to the Gothic. In this instance it is a nod to the contemporary rather than a reworking of the nineteenth century. Mark Jancovich (1992) charts a move towards *body horror* in the North American cinema of the 1970s. He states that, 'within these films, bodies erupt and mutate before the eyes of the audience, and it is these processes which are the central preoccupation of their narrative and visual styles' (112). Thus, Dosier's revulsion at the reduction of human form to mere matter finds a visual language with which to express itself. Jancovich argues that this mode of narrative serves to 'alienate and objectify the body' (113) and that 'the body itself is penetrated and tied into a whole series of processes' (113) which 'blur the distinctions necessary for a stable sense of self' (113). Thus, in the dehumanised environment of Vietnam, systematic body count and muscular technology achieve primacy over the vulnerable and dismembered corporeal subject. As with Mailer, Jones and Heller, the male body is revealed as frail organic matter. Its symbolic wholeness is revealed as a grotesque dishonesty.

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[32] This is quite possibly a reference to the Zero Milestone in Washington DC.

A reassertion of the mythic and hegemonic masculine body is found in sexual encounters during rest and recuperation (R&R) in Tokyo. Transactional processes with Japanese prostitutes are an affirmation that the male body is a potential site of what Connell refers to as 'exemplary masculinity' (86) through 'heterosexual performance' (86). Dosier's first night with a Japanese prostitute features a bathing scene that acts as a reminder of the feminised symbolic potential of water. He is 'scrubbed and scrubbed' (190) by 'Susie' (190); a cleansing of traumatic experience. However, underlying Dosier's sensual and sexual recollections is the sense that 'Susie' is playing the role of compliant and submissive female. He describes that she 'drank what I drank, ate what I ordered and fucked eagerly, any way I wanted to fuck' (197). Clare argues that masculine relationships with prostitutes operate upon 'the monetary nature of the transaction [that] forces the man away from any need to consider the woman's pleasure' (203). He also contends that to be 'constantly available, forever lubricated, ever ready' (203) makes her little more than a heterosexual 'object' (203). Susie's commoditised femininity (even her name conforms to western ideals) separates her in Dosier's mind from prostitutes in Vietnam. Nameless other than derogatory labels such as Claymore Face and Five Fingered Mary, the Vietnamese prostitutes are entirely dehumanised. As Dosier recalls in repetitive language redolent of onomatopoeic gunfire, they would 'fuck regular, ass-fuck, titty-fuck, lick your asshole, suck, fuck with the crook of your elbow if that's what got you off – any fucking thing' (191). Consequently the dehumanised sexual act is a technical and disposable process. The metallic power of the phallic gun and the perceived potency of the penis are indistinguishable.

The levels of dehumanisation attached to Vietnamese prostitutes are illuminated by contrasting memories of Dosier's American girlfriend Jenny. Romanticised depictions of their first sexual experience are markedly different in narrative tone. The focus is on surrounding detail rather than genitalia and penetration. The act takes place in 'spring' (186) among such American icons as the 'John Deer' (186) and 'the lowering afternoon sun' (186). Intercourse is consensual and enjoyable and Jenny's idealised wholesomeness is suggested through repeated references to her 'hair' (187). Thus, a binary is created between the idealised American sexual experience and the degradation of

Vietnamese women. Lawson argues that such attitudes ensure that sexual assault and atrocity are inevitable. Consequently, it should be no surprise that 'acts of rape, gang rape, assaults on women, torture, mutilation and murder crowd the pages of these texts' (19). Claymore Face, for example is victim of a group sexual assault in which she is forced at gunpoint to repeatedly perform oral sex on seven GIs. The penis and phallus are, therefore, united in a performance of violent dominance.

The only voice of protest during this atrocity is a 'fucking new guy' (261). He seeks the disapproval of the Sergeant but is dismissed as a 'fucking Boy Scout' (261). The treatment of new recruits and their subsequent moral decline demonstrates the masculine hierarchy's desire to identify legitimised victims. Jeffords' suggestion that Vietnam is essentially performative is evident in codes of aggressive language and bullying behaviour. In Vietnam, enlisted men were inserted into combat platoons one by one for a 365 day tour; usually to replace a casualty. Thus an inexperienced combatant entered an experienced group as a replacement for a fatality. Nancy Anisfield (1988) argues that the 'gradual development of male camaraderie frequently found in combat novels' (57) is 'inappropriate' (57) in Vietnam fiction as 'frequent transfers and no continuity of military operations or personnel eliminate male bonding as an acceptable focus' (57). Such a simple distinction rather underplays the complexities of earlier novels but the point remains valid in terms of isolation. The protagonists in Dos Passos' novel and those of Mailer and Jones, for example, train together and, despite their restrictive environments, are aware that others are sharing their anxiety. Protagonists in Vietnam fiction such as Dosier enter male groups who have already established shared performative discourse and behavioural codes. There is no way to integrate other than mimetic performativity.

Dosier's initial interactions with his new masculine group are passive. He wordlessly absorbs a barrage of violent boasting and weapon fetishism. He is shown, for example, the intricacies of preparing a hand grenade and instructed to 'pull the pin all but half a cunt hair' (38) and to 'pull the son of a bitch with your fucken eye tooth' (38). The violent, sexual language demonstrates that mastery of such a skill is equated with heterosexual prowess. Owen Gilman (1988) claims that such codified language, a distinct narrative feature of *Close Quarters,* is essentially a 'coping mechanism' (69) and 'means of sustaining the

human spirit in the face of abysmal nothingness' (69). In Erving Goffman's (1971) analysis of social interaction and the presentation of the public self, he argues that when 'the individual plays a part he implicitly requests his observers to take seriously the impression that is fostered before them' (17). As a performance, profanity and learned linguistic codes suggest casual affinity with violence and death. The language, however, masks anxiety. As the novel progresses and Dosier's moral decline accelerates his level of mimesis keeps pace. This process shifts from a conscious performative act to a delusional belief in the performance itself. Goffman categorises the poles of this continuum as 'cynical' (18) and 'sincere' (18) performance. Movement from one position to another reflects paradoxical belief in the authenticity and value of the performance.

To return to Dyer briefly, his suggestions regarding representation illustrate Goffman's analysis. Representation is evident in the boorish and aggressive performance that Dosier and other initiates imitate. Subsequently, further initiates repeat the process. Just as American soldiers are willing to believe in stereotypes regarding the Vietnamese people, they are subject, then, to self-stereotyping. Dyer argues that stereotypes as representation 'express particular definitions of reality' (14). Therefore, stereotypes work to confirm and shape behaviour toward the other *and* for the performative self. The self performs to confirm its own representative existence. Goffman concludes that the slide into delusional performance (what he refers to as 'sincere') results from a willingness to 'exemplify the officially accredited values of the society' (35). Such values are simultaneously 'idealised' (35) yet, as Dyer and Baudrillard would agree, are 'pasted together, one false item on another' (70). The tension between material experience and mythic identity intensifies as a result.

However, Heinemann demonstrates that genuine male friendship can exist and even flourish in Vietnam. As with Jones' Pacific novel, Heinemann demonstrates the complexity of homosocial relationships. However, unlike Jones, Heinemann's friendships retain a performative element throughout the narrative. There are very few moments, even when alone, when the performance falters. Authentic moments of human connection and love remain suggestive. Dosier's relationship with Quinn, for example, has an unspoken closeness that only reveals itself upon Dosier's return to America and his

consequent visit to Quinn's bereaved family. Heinemann's representation of their relationship has intertextual precedent in American narrative. Nick Caraway and Jay Gatsby in Scott F. Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* (2000 (1925)), Sal Paradise and Dean Moriarty in Jack Kerouac's *On The Road* (2000 (1957)) and the unnamed narrator of Chuck Palahniuk's *Fight Club* (1997) and his alter ego Tyler Durden are evidence for the protagonist's double. This is a character that can engage in behaviour that crosses taboos. They permit the vicarious thrill of shedding social limitations. Maria Bonn (1989) claims that Quinn faces 'the same dehumanisation and same increasing brutality' (6) yet 'pushes that brutality into an even greater violence' (6). Quinn's disobedience and violent demeanour are essentially performative. His tales of being AWOL are told over a cold beer and met by repeated 'laughs' (95). Yet, such performance hides his anger at Vietnam and the powerlessness and futility that he associates with it. It is during moments of intoxication that Quinn's performative veneer slips to reveal psychological vulnerability. Indeed, much of the novel is spent consuming beer and marijuana, creating what Baritz terms a 'form of resistance' (315). Intoxication allows the restrictive emotional codes of the masculine group to be partially abandoned. As is so often the case with war fiction, it is a memento from home that triggers Quinn's emotional revelation. A photograph of a recent casualty in a newspaper matches a colour copy that Quinn keeps carefully in his wallet. It is a photograph of himself with a childhood friend. His death causes wistful remembrance of an idealised masculine adolescence engaged in wrestling, chasing girls and working in a 'welder's shop' (143).

The juxtaposition between idealised home and traumatic Vietnam is expressed clearly in sections of the novel in which letters are received. Heinemann develops the war novel's use of the epistolary form – already subverted by Mailer and Heller – by presenting them as symbolic textual objects. The letters provide connection with idealised feminine domesticity in a hyper-masculinised combat space. The experience of receiving a letter is 'sweet and bitter' (132). The letters evoke 'lonesomeness and a twitching groin and dreamy head' (132) and are read a 'second or third or fourth time' (132). Masculine iconography is sharply countered by the letters' material nature. The 'dust crusted floorboards' (132), 'canvas cots' (132) that smelled of mildew and sweat' (132) and the

'smell of gun oil' (132) contrast with 'lined loose-leaf or onionskin bond or five-by-seven Hallmark, printed with fancy flowers' (132). Each letter is something of a tomb or textual time capsule containing traces of domestic safety. D.C. Gill (2010) states that letters from home give the combatant 'purchase on a world with which they no longer have a sensory connection' (13) so that each soldier can 'see, taste and even hear a reality to which they are no longer privy' (13). Soldiers in *Close Quarters* are 'drawn down into themselves, sighing and smiling' (135). Upon hearing about the death of colleague 'Willie O'Neal' (135), for example, Dosier feels 'a tingling numbness in the legs' (135) and silently revisits memories of when they 'shot good pool, shared women and rooms' (135). Verbally, however, all Dosier can muster is, 'There's this dude…' [author's ellipsis] (136). In terms of communicating Vietnam, Dosier sees the letter-as-object as more effective than self-conscious artistic forms. During his R&R, Dosier explores an air conditioned art gallery in Tokyo and considers the possibility of the letter as *objet d'art.* Letters that are 'blood splattered and filthy' (206) and 'tattered as though a cat had chewed them' (206) could be 'mounted […] on a slab of cheap whitewashed plywood' (207). The letter is potentially an innovative narrative mode. This passage, therefore, suggests that narrative experimentation is necessary in communicating trauma. Certainly, *Close Quarters'* instances of lyrical experimentation are evidence of such writing but it is the content of *Paco's Story* that marks a more significant shift towards sustained narrative idiosyncrasy.

Paco's Story opens with a metafictional paradox. This is a war novel that sets out to dispute the effectiveness of its own form. 'War stories are out' (3) claims the narrator. They are rejected with a 'one, two, three, and a heave-ho' (3) and dismissed as 'alewife scuz' (3) and 'foamy harbour scum' (3). The rejection is, ironically, a 'clean fact' (3). This playful contradiction indicates that cogent and linear narrative text is unfit for purpose. The unnamed narrative voice goes on to tell the implied listener 'James'[33] that war stories are tied up with the whims of the market. Traumatic experience is reduced to a commodity that drifts in and out of literary fashion for 'book learned witch-craft amateurs and half-savvy street punks and patriots-for-cash' (4). As the idiosyncratic hipster register continues, it is apparent that this is the ambiguous and plural voice of the

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[33] Given Heinemann's fondness for James Jones, this is very possibly a direct address to the author.

Vietnam dead. The novel's narrators are plausible due to their colloquial and idiomatic register yet are also explicitly supernatural. Tzvetan Todorov (2000), in establishing a 'definition of the fantastic' (15) argues that such a paradox creates a 'hesitation experienced by a person who knows only the laws of nature […] confronting an apparently supernatural event' (15). Considered alongside Derrida's call to abandon simple binaries of physical life and death, the narrator and his ghostly protagonist are markedly uncanny. They exist simultaneously in the 'natural' (15) and the 'supernatural world' (15). The Vietnam veteran carries such profound and conflicting cultural meaning that he cannot be considered in any sense tangible. Yet here he is: evident in the margins of American landscape. As Todorov states, 'either the devil is an illusion, an imaginary being; or else he really exists, precisely like other living beings' (15).

Never revealed as a singular voice or that of a chorus, Gregory Morris (1994) argues that Heinemann's narrative, 'assumes a weird, ghostly omniscience, always moving between subjective and objective points of view' (61). This is a metafictional strategy that further demonstrates the unknowable nature of Vietnam experience as well as language's inability to convey it. The deliberate artifice of the voice is a constant reminder of its own limitations. The opening chapter, for example, details the violent destruction of Paco's Alpha Company in a 'ball-busting cataclysm' (14). The terror of such an event is conveyed in a frenetic narrative barrage. The material of war becomes indistinguishable from human flesh as 'everything […] transformed into Crispy Critters' (15). The relative linearity of *Close Quarters* explodes across the opening pages of this much more chaotic and challenging novel. The minutia of Vietnam life – 'dog tags, slivers of meat, letters from home, scraps of sandbags and rucksacks and MPC scrip, jungle shit and human shit' (16) – are ultimately reduced to 'ash and marrow and spontaneous combustion' (15). The expressive, colloquial register is an intertextual reminder of the experiments of the Beats and Mailer's evocation of hip in 'The White Negro'[34] and *Why Are We in Vietnam?*. The language of hip is a linguistic and stylistic counter narrative to the formalities of Standard English. Mailer contends in 'The White Negro' that 'hip […] gave

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[34] Mailer's 1958 essay for *Dissent* magazine is described by J. Michael Lennon (Lennon, 2013) as an 'intellectual manifesto' (239) for 'American nihilism' (240).

expression to abstract states of feeling which all could share' (np). New trauma, then, requires new narrative codes. The playful inventiveness of hip is a knowing nod to the emptiness of language in conveying trauma.

The titular Paco is the only survivor of the attack and the novel recounts his attempts to physically and mentally heal and recover. By placing the attack in the opening pages of the novel, Heinemann subverts conventional expectation of war narrative. Anisfield (1990) explains that such subversion is emblematic of Heinemann's determination to innovate.

> It isn't necessary to jolt the reader with cataclysmic devastation. It is necessary though, to find a new narrative structure that rejects apocalyptic closure and encourages careful examination of not only the Vietnam War, but also the aftermath of that war and the texts that will hold the war in America's collective memory. (281)

Anisfield's comments reveal the emasculating impact of traumatic Vietnam experience. Rather than work towards a phallocentric climax to the narrative, Heinemann demonstrates that the equation of such violence with masculine sexuality is disingenuous. It is unhelpful to the process of exploring masculine trauma.

The novel details Paco's emasculation through his new physical limitations. He has difficulty, for example, in sustaining meaningful work or engaging in sexual activity. The fluid narration of the novel takes place in a present in which Paco strives to sustain himself in the fictional and ironically named Texan town of Boone. However, it is a present that is disrupted by a past in which traumatic aspects of his Vietnam experience are relived, often at the behest of the transient narrator. In this sense, Paco utilises what David Galloway (1981) describes as the 'absurd man as Picaro' (82). Galloway argues that the conditions of the second half of the American twentieth century lead to a frequent 'metaphysical outsider, dangling between commitments and value systems' (83). It is a trope that exists in the drifters of the Southern Gothic, Jack Kerouac's intoxicated road trips and in Charles Bukowski's alienated urban workplace. Paco's liminal existence physically and psychologically between military and civilian life means that he lacks a moral centre. However, Paco differs from so many picaresque characters in that, to refer to Galloway again, they ultimately retain humanity through accepting 'tenderness and kindness'

(106). Such a denouement is denied Paco. His veteran status signifies permanent marginalisation.

The Vietnam veteran's return to America was an extension of his trauma. Lifton and Baritz comment that the physical and emotional alienation experienced in service continued upon return to America. For Lifton such alienation led to a life without roots. The veteran's search for meaning became a search of unceasing movement as 'men […] keep physically and psychologically on the move as though nothing were sufficiently authentic to hold them' (178). Baritz adds that the America left behind by the combatant remained 'frozen in time' (316). Veterans had symbolically 'grown up' (316) while those that had not fought were 'still late adolescents whose lives revolved around six-packs, cars and chasing girls' (317). The returning veteran was 'stunned by the nation's refusal to welcome them home as returning warriors' (317) and traumatised by 'the continuing pain of flesh and memory' (317). Certainly, Paco's search for meaning is enacted alone. He is a broken human being who is 'not dead but sure as shit should be' (18). Thus, he returns to an America in which he is rejected as a masculine subject in terms of employment and as a sexual being.

His damaged body operates as a site of narrative. He reads himself and is read by others. As he regains consciousness after surviving the apocalyptic attack, for example, he 'imagines looking down at his body, seeing – vividly – every gaping shrapnel nick, every pucker burn scar, every splintery compound fracture' (18). The organic and liminal nature of his body is clear as he begins to decompose while still living. He is 'covered in bugs drawn by the stench' (19) and lies motionless 'raw and infected' (19). Paco is faced with abjection more profound than that of Mailer's Pacific combatants or Heller's Yossarian faced with Snowden's secret. Paco sees what Kristeva (1982) describes as 'body fluids' and 'defilement'(3); the substances that 'life withstands, hardly and with difficulty, on the part of death' (3). Whereas in other fiction there is an opportunity to 'permanently thrust aside' (1) the corporeal damage enacted upon a literal other, this is happening to Paco. He is both subject and object. He cannot see his damaged body as something 'ejected beyond the scope of the possible, the tolerable, the thinkable' (1) unless he accepts alienation from his own corporeal self.

Paco's return is to an America whose view of the war in Vietnam is shaken by the Tet Offensive in 1968. Narratives of American righteousness were replaced by counter narratives of incompetence and barbarity. Hellmann claims that media images of the Tet Offensive had a 'devastating psychological impact on American opinion' (89). The events of the war contributed to the American decade of protest. Bates argues that, Post Tet, the conflict 'succeeded poverty and racial discrimination as a national issue' (40). Protests and social unrest had successfully raised the profile of the Civil Rights movement and the burgeoning momentum of Second Wave Feminism. Now, Bates continues, protests against the war viewed the 'American soldier' (40) as a symbol of 'the forces of patriarchy, racism and capitalist exploitation' (40). Counter-culture, Bates adds, suggested 'alternative models of masculinity' (38) that some veterans adopted successfully. Others, however, faced the difficult process of a marginalised return in which they 'had to reconstruct their sexual identity' (38). Returning soldiers were viewed by many as vicious killers and by others as military failures. Tet shook American belief in what Hellman terms 'mythic heritage' (90). Consequently, the public were 'left without a convincing story of the conflict in Vietnam' (90).

Paco's own return is to an America signified by familiar iconography such as the 'silver and grey cross country bus' (34) and the 'Texaco station' (34). The bus driver 'peg[s] him for a GI' immediately; 'underweight, funny eyes, dippy Army haircut […] three-quarters stoned on some new-fangled junk' (36). The narratives of previous American wars influence the driver's interpretation of Paco. Despite his obvious injuries and physical discomfort, the driver concludes that 'he ain't got it so bad' (39) compared to 'Korea' (39) and '1945' (39) in which he would have been 'pushing up daisies' (39). Paco's survival signifies weakness. In continuing to live, he cares more about personal survival than the greater national good. The atmosphere of suspicion continues during Paco's search for work. He encounters hostile ignorance in each establishment. The embittered drunks of 'Rita's Tap' (81) and the gossiping 'loafers' (84) of the town barber shop suggest the idealised domestic space that Paco has purportedly been defending is an anachronistic dishonesty. He is seen as a masculine failure convinced of his own sense of entitlement. As 'Hennig the

barber' (84) so dismissively states, 'Them Vietnam boys sure do think you owe them something, don't they?' (85).

The novel's most developed passage of interpretation occupies its final pages. Paco's neighbour – college freshman Cathy – engages in flirtatious behaviour with him as they glimpse each other through their respective windows. These sexualised rituals intensify Paco's awareness of his own corporeal disfigurement. Irrational and uncertain, he breaks into her apartment to read her diary. The metafictional strategies in the novel are again significant in this switch. The hyper-masculine narrative voice of the Vietnam dead gives way to a form that Lorna Martens (1985) describes as 'the readiest possibility for a […] women's voice' (182). The diary, Rebecca Hogan (1991) argues, is 'private, secret, locked […] a sort of silent text […] standing in for the historically determined social construction of feminine behaviour' (99). Heinemann shifts his narrative tone from a confrontational register to this traditionally feminised form. This strategy is evidence of a systematic challenge to narrative's veracity and of the novel's problematic engagement with femininity. Given the brutalisation of the feminised Vietnamese people and of women themselves detailed elsewhere in the text, Cathy's voice revels in stereotypes regarding female sexuality that suggest the novel is misogynist. For Cathy, Paco's scarred body is initially a site of sexual curiosity. He is a figure of romanticised heroism and teenage desire. He has been 'wounded in the war' (202) and will be 'something to tell my grandchildren about' (202). However, such fantasy is replaced by horrified fascination as Cathy voyeuristically watches Paco's sleeping discomfort. She scrutinises scars that 'look like purple and brown and white swirls, deep, and pitched together here and there like the heavy stitches of a quilt' (204-5). She is also aware of his psychological scars as she hears, 'screams, as if each scar is a scream' (208). Her shifting attitude toward Paco echoes that of post-Tet America. He morphs from idealised hero to a 'dingy, dreary, smelly, shabby little man' (205). Despite such overcooked protestations, there remains in Cathy a repressed sexual fascination with Paco. In her dreams she engages in intercourse with him. However, in imagery again suggestive of the body horror genre, a post-coital Paco begins to 'peel […] scars down his arm' (208) and 'lay strings of those scars on my face' (208). The boundary between sexual horror and sexual fascination is blurred. Cathy describes the

way that Paco 'lays them across my breasts and belly […] lays them in my hair' (208). She faces a confrontation with Vietnam's corporeal reality as she 'feels the suffocating heat, hears the scream' (209). Again, Vietnam's violence and its sexual undertones are difficult to differentiate. The body's narrative is simultaneously one of horror and sex. Cathy's inability to make a clear distinction is an analogue for America's national inability.

Dreams of this nature are a valuable narrative tool in this text. The ghostly omniscience of the ambiguous narrator controls Paco's subconscious. His interior world represents traumatic memory and the Vietnam veteran's inability to escape it. His dreams are a temporal distortion in which he physically and psychologically exists in a damaged present and a damaging past. Gilles Deleuze (1990) considers such fragmented chronology as the tension between two competing frameworks: *Chronos* and *Aion*. Chronos is time that is 'limited' (189) and is 'inseparable from its […] accidents' (189). Aion, however, is 'always already passed and eternally yet to come' (189). Aion is free of linear constraint and in perpetual flux.

This is how Paco's traumatic memory operates. Arthur Frank (1995) defines 'postmodern memoir' (70) as a narrative process in which corporeal trauma is remembered as 'unassimilated fragments that refuse to become past, haunting the present' (60). Thus, Paco's waking hours are a determined process in repressing fragmented and conflicting Vietnam memories. As Richard McNally's (2005) study of trauma confirms though, such acts of repression do little to weaken the impact of traumatic memory.

> […] people remember horrific experiences all too well. Victims are seldom incapable of remembering their trauma […] people sometimes do not think about disturbing events for long periods of time, only to be reminded of them later. However, events that are experienced as overwhelmingly traumatic at the time of their occurrence rarely slip from awareness. (2)

The novel's innovative narrative voice personifies traumatic memory as a malevolent and insistent force. As such, the text itself operates as an open literary tomb that simultaneously exposes and represses trauma. As Paco 'flops headlong across the bed' (138), the pluralised narrative voice is that of those killed during the cataclysmic firefight. Vietnam's 'ghosts […] begin to massage the top of his head' (138) until 'Paco is […] beguiled, most rested and trusting'

(138). They 'whisper in his ear' (138) and 'give him something to think about – a dream or a reverie' (138). Subconscious images of 'escape' (138), 'waiting rooms' (140) and 'execution' (141) vie for attention. The executioners wear 'flat, benign expressions' (143) that create associative imagery of 'the city dog pound' (142) and its 'leftover dogs' (142).

Despite Paco's waking determination, his traumatic memories are so powerful that they interrupt his conscious self. Freud (1939) argues that the subject's 'traumatic neurosis' (84) appears as 'a series of grave physical and motor symptoms' (84) which 'can be ascribed only to his shock or whatever else happened at the time of the accident' (84). These manifestations take time to appear remaining 'latent' (84) for the 'incubation period […] elapsed between the accident and the first appearance of the symptoms' (84). Cathy Caruth (1991) adds that the traumatised subject experiences 'delayed and controlled repetitive occurrence of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomena' (192). In *Paco's Story*, sensory triggers with only a tenuous link to Vietnam set in place immersive recollections in which linear chronology is secondary to temporal disorientation. His conscious recollections are underpinned by sex and violence and the ever weakening distinctions between them. A session of dishwashing takes him back to the Vietnam mess hall. His friend Gallagher – fulfilling a role similar to that of Quinn in *Close Quarters* – returns from R&R replete with a tattoo and sexual boasts about 'Thai pussy' (132). The smell of whisky also recalls Gallagher and his attempts to ward off terror by becoming 'absorbed in […] drinking and smoking' (119).

A more detailed recollection of Gallagher draws focus to his father's daily blue collar routine as a bus driver in Chicago. Like Mailer, Vonnegut and O'Brien, Heinemann challenges the idealised and symbolic father figure in the subject's own sphere and as pervasive and lingering national myth. Gallagher's father is employed in a workplace in which violence, threats and bullying are normative. Such modes of behaviour soon cross into his domestic life. Haywood and Ghaill attribute domestic violence to 'a subordinated work masculinity' (43) that produces a 'patriarchal, authoritarian masculinity within the home' (43). Indeed, Gallagher's father figure, worn down by financial struggle and alcohol, dominates his family with a violence depicted through a series of colloquial verbs.

> I remember many a night curled up as tight as a fist under my covers, listening to
> one or another of my brothers getting a whipping – them hopping around
> downstairs on all fours like a damn crab – my old man stompin' after them, shoving
> furniture aside and thrashin' at them with that fuckin' belt – bellowing, *screaming*
> angry. (123)

The episode suggests a breakdown in the assumed juxtaposition of the idealised domestic world and the violence of Vietnam. Rather than such a distinctive opposition, it appears that the innate culture of violence and abuse in America is at the heart of violence in Vietnam. This is further evidence that the American war novel is as much a novel about mythic national identity as it is about the material experiences of war. Gallagher enacts the same process of violent transference as his father. In Vietnam and his home, Gallagher is a feminised and powerless subject fearful of the aggressive nature of the powerful. However, in the novel's more harrowing traumatic remembrances, Gallagher and his colleagues perform power and in so doing construct a feminised and powerless subject. The construction of a binary such as this operates as moral justification for brutality. They act as if the power relationship is an essentialist given. Performance relinquishes culpability for atrocity.

For Americans in the 1970s, the Vietnam War was closely linked with atrocity. Hellmann claims that, in 1970, the slow revelation of the *My Lai* massacre two years earlier 'seemed to confirm the darkest accusations' (95) of the American public. Lifton links the 'atrocity producing situation' (41) specifically to constructed hyper-masculinity.

> The masculine initiation rite of basic training and the manly status acquired in it
> become inseparable from what is best called the machismo of slaughter […] The
> imagery is that of the hunt. The 'animals' one shoots serve merely to provide
> trophies, evidence of one's prowess […] The men underwent a gradual but
> profound process of numbing, reflected in their increasing callousness and brutality
> toward the Vietnamese. (45)

The atrocity then can be attributed to a masculinity whose construction is based upon warrior motifs that include prowess in violence, ruthlessness in battle and calculated brutality. Lifton concludes that boundaries between legitimate warfare and savagery blur until 'the illusion' (50) of the warrior provides justification for 'gunning down old men, women and babies' (50).

In *Paco's Story*, atrocity is narrated in unflinching detail as Paco's sexual attraction to Cathy triggers memories of the gang-rape of a 'VC girl' (174). It is an event that he 'cannot choose but remember' (174). Here, the feminised geographical and cultural landscape of Vietnam is indistinguishable from the literal female body. The conquest of territory with the mechanised phallus leads inevitably to the rape of bodily territory with the penis now a simulation of its own symbolic representation. Susan Brownmiller's (1975) analysis of rape committed by American soldiers during the Vietnam War suggests a highly performative act. Rape illustrates the lengths that combatants go to in order to demonstrate conformity to warrior representations of masculinity. 'His forcible entry into her body' (14), Brownmiller argues, is 'the vehicle of his victorious conquest over her being' (14). It is the 'ultimate test of his superior strength, the triumph of his manhood' (14). The casual indifference that Paco's company display during the act itself is juxtaposed with the awful suffering of the girl. As the men are 'standing in line' (180) waiting to 'fuck her ragged' (180) and 'dudes […] call out coaching' (181) the girl is 'ground into the rubble' (180). Paco's recollection is corporeal in nature and scatological in its depiction. He feels 'her whole body pucker down' (181) and 'her bowels squeezing as tight as if you were ringing out a rag' (181). The rape continues until there is 'spit and snot, blood and drool and cum all over her' (182). Such confrontational detail suggests that Paco is aware of the evil that he is generating. But he feels the obligation to perform for the masculine group.

To refer to Jeffords again, gang-rape is 'confirmation of masculine bonds' (69) and 'combines collectivity and display as the masculine band performs as a group with itself as audience' (69). Performativity is heightened as the group's spectatorship and complicity in the act confirm its supposed normalcy. Jeffords adds that such group performance is restrictive. To 'challenge the rape' (69) or 'question the display' (69) risks being 'rejected by the collective' (69) as a deviant. Jeffords argues that this passage of Heinemann's novel is a 'collective metaphor of American involvement in the Vietnam War' (69). Certainly this is a valid claim but the harrowing retelling cannot be read only in metaphorical terms. The atrocity is still literally an atrocity; the rape is still a rape. Its narration rejects the urge to 'recreat[e] the soldier in the image of a hapless victim' (Cronin, 1989). Paco's complicity in the act forms the core of his reflective

trauma. Heinemann's narration of the incident is graphic, unrelenting and lengthy. The passage's positioning toward the end of the novel problematises the reader's relationship with Paco. He shifts from victim of war to perpetrator of atrocity. Despite his traumatisation, it is impossible to privilege his experience above that of the VC girl. Indeed, Grant Scott (1994) argues that 'if we have the courage to read these episodes, we may be outraged enough to prevent them from happening again' (70). Thus, trauma in reading the rape fosters a moral imperative to avoid treating atrocity with complacency.

The events of this passage embody much of what has been discussed thus far in this thesis. The damage to the human condition enacted by adherence to hegemonic ideals and constructions of mythic masculinity is exemplified in the intolerable dehumanisation of a young Vietnamese girl. The physical act of rape brings the crisis in masculinity observable in these twentieth century war narratives into horrifying focus. The myriad constructions of male power, duty, patriotism and courage are exposed as absurd through the brutality performed at this moment. The debasement of the female and feminised body exposes rigidly constructed gender as an inherently dangerous grand narrative. Enlightenment ideals regarding progress come to a shuddering halt. The power of gendered representation reveals the American combatant as a confused and morally unhinged perpetrator of the very violence and terror that they are ostensibly fighting against.

Paco's post-Vietnam experience is an attempt to numb him against traumatic memory. The repression of trauma can be partially achieved by immersion in labour. As is the case in *Close Quarters*, the value of work is tied to Paco's attempts at psychological stability. Movement and uncertainty are evident during his initial period in Boone and his repeated rejections from local businesses. Stability and fixedness arrive as he is offered work in a diner by Pacific veteran Ernest. Paco's work as a dishwasher at the 'Texas Lunch' is more than a little redolent of Orwell's life as a 'plongeur' in *Down and out in Paris and London* (1989). Like Orwell, Heinemann valorises physical labour and daily routine. Scott argues that labour 'reinstate[s] a degree of order and coherence' (72) for Paco. It allows him to define himself as something other than participant in atrocity. In effect, 'it cleanses and heals him' (73). Nearly seven pages of the novel are devoted to the mechanics of dishwashing and

Paco's ability to develop an efficient routine for completing his tasks. A traditionally domestic activity such as dishwashing carries with it feminine associations. Yet, as MacInnes argues, the 'material progress of modernity' (46) problematises any sense of a 'coherent public ideology' (46) of masculine endeavour in physical labour. Therefore, Paco applies masculine traditions of physical blue collar labour to display codified public masculinity.

His time at the Texas Lunch is stable and relatively free of traumatic remembrance. This is aided by the fact that his employer is a veteran of Guadalcanal and Iwo Jima who, unlike others in Boone, recognises Paco's silent struggle to reconcile his war experiences with his veteran status. For Ernest, a veteran of a war whose veneration lies in stark contrast to Vietnam, his anger lies in the manner in which glorification ignores the visceral reality of the Pacific campaign. He vows that 'I'll be fucked if you'll ever see me fly the flag' (126). Ernest's 'droning talk' (130) appears rehearsed as if lived many times. Whereas Paco copes with trauma through repetitive work, Ernest copes through shaping his experiences into performative narrative. Neither man, however, achieves a complete escape from their respective traumas.

Paco's other significant encounter with a combat veteran comes in the form of drifter Jesse. His ceaseless movement around 'this fucking country' (155) is signified by well-established tropes such as his 'rolled up bindle' (149). His movement is a physical reminder of the veteran's search for stability and meaning; the need to locate a 'place to cool out' (155). A veteran of the earlier phase of the Vietnam War, Jessie mirrors Ernest's strategy of ordering trauma with performed narrative. He uses colloquial profanity to rage at the war's 'newspaper clowns' (154), 'cornball chickenshits' (154) and 'shitbrained, candy-assed Hollywood fags' (153). His anger is most notably directed toward the notion of Vietnam memorialisation. *Paco's Story* was published four years after Maya Lin's controversial monument[35] was unveiled in Washington although the novel is set, as the narrator helpfully confirms 'years before anybody ever thought of one' (156). Representation of Vietnam as 'John Wayne crapola' (157)

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[35] Lin's monument was initially, according to Karen Feldman (2003), 'criticised for its supposed femininity, Asianness and blackness' (297). It was 'called a statement of dishonour and a statement of nihilism' (297). However, Daniel Abramson (1996) comments that the monument has come to be seen as 'a provocatively unconventional work of art and its image has become a part of American popular culture' (684).

suggests a tacit approval of Lin's primary design. Indeed, Jesse's alternative includes references to Lin's design in its inclusion of 'the names of all the Vietnam War Dead' (158) arranged in 'first come, first served' (158) order. Jesse adds, however, a visceral, scatological element that emphasises the debasement of the war's participants.

> Then gather every sort of 'egregious' excretion that can be transported across state lines from far and wide – chickenshit, bullshit, bloody fecal goop, radioactive dioxin, sludge, kepone paste, tubercular spit, abortions murdered at every stage of fetal development […] Shovel all that shit into that granite bowl […] Stir it all together – build a goddamn scaffolding and use galley oars if that suits you. (159)

The transgressive and disquieting listing of organic matter speaks back to the sanitised discourse of heroic memorial. As with Mailer and Jones' representation of death and decay in chapter two, it is helpful to consider this narrative as the language of the grotesque. This is a discourse in which Mikhail Bakhtin (1994) argues, 'the confines between bodies and between the body and the world are overcome' (226). The clear divisions between life and death maintained by heroic memorialisation (even when, like Lin, these are in the abstract) are disrupted. Bakhtin argues that 'acts […] performed on the confines of the body' (226) are 'events' (226) in which 'the beginning and end of life are closely linked and interwoven' (226). Jesse's anger, therefore, is directed at those who reduce the war to knowable and clean binaries. His relentless movement and profane fury is indicative of a futile search for meaning in the concrete domestic world. He demonstrates that the veteran finds no such simple understanding of Vietnam.

Vietnam's resistance to narrative and reductive simplicity is the point at which this discussion moves to Tim O'Brien's systematic metafiction. O'Brien followed the publication of his Vietnam memoir *If I Die in a Combat Zone* (1973) with two novels that demonstrate the centrality of consciously fictional storytelling in depicting the Vietnam War. *Going After Cacciato* and *The Things They Carried* privilege the inherent artifice of the narrative process. His work shares with Heinemann an interest in examining the representation of constructed and challenged masculinities in Vietnam. His texts explore the crisis felt by young American men equally terrified by participation in combat as by the social ostracism that dodging the draft potentially entailed. The depiction of corporeal

damage is approached with more subtlety than the corresponding material in Heinemann's texts. O'Brien is aware that language, no matter its visceral content, is inadequate in terms of rendering such experience. O'Brien also slips fluidly into the voice of an authorial persona thus privileging the artifice of his work. The gap that this strategy creates between experience and narration is filled by O'Brien's engagement with imaginative space.

Going After Cacciato, winner of the 1979 *National Book Award*, is a rumination on protagonist Paul Berlin's attempts to reconcile mythic and hegemonic constructions of courage with the experiential fear of material participation in the Vietnam War. O'Brien's structural strategy divides the novel into three distinct narrative modes: fractured reportage of experiential memory, reflexive psychological exploration and fantasy escapism. Biedler claims that these seemingly parallel structural modes are 'not so much a synthesis of memory and imagination, life and art, as a testament to their fluid interchanegability' (172). Therefore, the innocent and frightened Berlin's traumas are processed through imaginative engagement with narrative. Berlin's unreliable memory is narrated with a realism tempered by blurred sensory edges. Combat, landscape and the masculine group are chronologically fragmented and uneven. This paradoxically highlights the dislocation, alienation and fear that drive Berlin's desire for linear narrative ordering. Linearity is rendered problematic by the manner in which the physical geography of Vietnam and the chaos of battle are indistinguishable. Death, decay and malevolent landscape merge on the novel's opening pages. The deaths of Pederson, Rudy Chassler, Buff and Ready Mix are listed alongside 'rain fed fungus' (9) socks that have 'rotted' (9) and 'feet turned white and soft' (9). Fetidness and mortality are indistinguishable in landscape. Therefore, Berlin's war is ephemeral and dislocating.

Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's (1988) rhizomatic model offers a theoretical platform for analysis of this tangled sensory relationship. They argue that 'there are no points or positions in a rhizome, such as those found in a structure, tree, or root' (9). Indeed, the Vietnam War has no edges. It has no tangible routes from its centre to its perimeter. It only has 'multiplicities' (10) that 'fill or occupy all of their dimensions' (9). Deleuze and Guattari contend that western understanding of landscape is dichotomous with the east which 'offer[s] something like a rhizomatic model opposed in every respect to the western

model of the tree' (18).Thus, as a subject well versed in western thinking, Berlin is physically and experientially adrift. He fears a landscape that he cannot order. Bonn (1994) argues that Berlin's temporal and spatial confusion is 'symptomatic of the American soldiers' lack of any sort of historic, or moral bearing while fighting the Vietnam War' (9). She argues that 'O'Brien's soldiers […] have no geographical context within which to locate themselves and no textual guides to lead them to greater moral understanding' (10). Without guidance, Berlin and his colleagues are unable to prepare for the material physicality of combat or the intense and immediate nature of terror.

Landscape retains a dark mystery that Berlin can never hope to decode. The chapter entitled 'How the Land Was' opens with the ironic claims that 'what Paul Berlin knew best was the land' (238). Certainly, he has a physical familiarity with the paddies in which he has slept, urinated and drank from. Yet, their uterine fluidity and 'depth' (238) are something that 'he'd never known before' (238). It is clear then that knowing in this context does not necessarily equate to understanding. Berlin tries to read Vietnam's 'hedgerows' (239) but sees only opaque layers acting as 'a kind of clothing for the villages' (239). Berlin's desire to find absolutes in the landscape is thus thwarted by its dense physical structure. The hedgerows are 'curtains' (240) or 'walls' (240). They 'expressed the land's secret qualities' (240). The landscape is 'cut up, twisting, covert, chopped and mangled' (240). It is a 'maze' (240) of 'blind corners leading to dead ends, short horizons always changing' (240). Vietnam landscape is an ambiguous and amorphous 'feeling' (240). It is a 'sense of entrapment mixed with mystery' (240). The Pacific landscape featured in Mailer and Jones' novels in chapter two operates as a useful intertextual reference here. Novels of both conflicts ascribe fluid and uterine qualities to the jungle. This process is described in Barbara Creed's (1993) analysis of American cinema in terms of labyrinthine imagery. She observes the trope of 'intra-uterine settings' (53) that 'consist of dark, narrow, winding passages' (53) in which 'dreadful acts' (53) take place. As with Herr's comments earlier in this chapter, Berlin's Vietnamese landscape is unknowable and ungovernable. This is anathema to American soldiers. Berlin, looks to the cultivation of America 'where the land was smooth with corn in August' (239) as means of comparison. The simplicity of American youth embodied in the consumerism and entertainment in the 1950s and early

1960s privileges a literal and figurative landscape made knowable by clear binaries and demarcation. The feminised labyrinths of Vietnam resist such organisation. They leave the American masculine subject dislocated and alienated from the physical and cultural world that Vietnam represents. As with the heterotopian dissonances discussed in chapter one, Vietnam is far removed from the rational individualism embodied in the American land. J.B. Jackson (1979) defines American organisation of land as the essential 'pride of the homesteader' (162). Without ownership or knowledge of the landscape, Berlin and his colleagues perceive it as actively malevolent.

Here, there is a clear link with Heinemann. The unknowable landscape is constructed as feminine. It is made subject to masculine traditions of destructive domination. The death, for example, of Pederson – reduced to 'a mess' (79) in the chapter 'Fire in the Hole' – is responded to with mechanised power. The death is intertwined with 'paddy stink' (79) and the men try to cleanse themselves by removing 'bits of algae' (79) and 'slime' (79) from their bodies. The simple instruction 'kill it' (80) is issued to anonymous airborne support and the village of 'Hoi An' (80) is destroyed. Berlin's recollections describe the manner in which the 'village went white' (80) and then 'glowed' (80). There is a blurring of senses as the 'scalding sound of oxygen being used' (80) clashes and overlaps with the 'melting […] heat' (80) of 'fluid boiled'. (80). When faced with traumatic experience, technological power provides an answer. The uterine complexity of the fluid, semi-aquatic Vietnamese land is simplified through its destruction by the technological phallus. Baritz argues that 'It was unthinkable that America's military could ever fail to establish its supremacy on the battlefield' (45) or that the 'industrial, scientific and technological strength of the nation would ever be insufficient for the purposes of war' (45). 'Americans' (45), he concludes, '*were* technology' (45). Yet, muscular American power and the destruction of unknowable landscape do not lead to vengeful completion. For Berlin and his combat group, there is none of the validation that exists for Philip Dosier and his fellow combatants. Instead they remain 'blank' (81). Even after they follow the air strike by firing hand weapons at the village 'until they were exhausted' (81) and the 'village was a hole' (81).

Beyond landscape, O'Brien extends Vietnam's unknowable nature in the chapter entitled 'The Things They Didn't Know'. In this section of the novel he

juxtaposes the reductive absolutes of military hierarchy and the intricate complexities of Vietnam as material experience. In a sequence more than a little redolent of Clevinger's interview in *Catch-22*, Berlin is interviewed for a potential promotion by three 'squires behind a tin-topped table' (251). The officers assess Berlin's understanding of the war and make it clear that intellectual complexities are unwelcome. When asked why America is engaged in 'this fuckin'-ass war' (254), Berlin simply repeats 'to win it' (254). Any further analysis is not required. This statement is 'a fact' (254). In terms of leadership, all that the officers seek is a 'swingin' fuckin' dick' (253) and a man with 'guts' (253). The brash simplicity of these statements contrasts with Berlin's myriad uncertainties. His squad are unable to communicate with the South Vietnamese people. Despite being ostensibly allied to them, the nuances of language provide an insurmountable verbal barrier. As a result, they 'throw away the dictionary' (247) and 'rattle off a whole round of ammunition' (247). This demonstrates that brute power is the solution to cultural and linguistic miscommunication. Cincinnatus claims that, for the duration of the Vietnam War, 'no-one knew the first thing about the Vietnamese language, the country's nationalism, its politics, its culture' (40). Accordingly, for Berlin, the Vietnamese are a 'ridiculous, impossible puzzle' (248). He is unable to tell 'friends from enemies' (247). The war's morality is unknowable too. The singular absolute that the officers propagate ignores Berlin's concerns that 'he just didn't know if the war was right or wrong or somewhere in the murky middle' (250). The war as combat experience lacks the coherence of representations of previous wars such as 'a sense of victory, or satisfaction, or necessary sacrifice' (255). Vietnam has 'no front, no rear, no trenches laid out in neat parallels' (255). It 'did not have a cause' (255) to organise its morality. They do not have the clearly defined righteousness afforded to their military fathers. The explanations provided to them are either banal or call on their unquestioning desire to conform to masculine ideals. To question, after all, is to deviate.

Among such confusion, it is not surprising that Berlin's group use sport as a controllable and knowable representation of combat. Michael Messner (1987) argues that twentieth century challenges to 'traditional bases of male identity' (198) are often met by sport as 'an increasingly important cultural expression of traditional male values' (198). Clare explores the martial 'language of struggle,

victory and defeat' (64) and the manner in which it operates as a psychologically acceptable surrogate for war in popular culture. He identifies, 'passion, the shared camaraderie, the opportunities for personal heroism and shared exaltation, the tribalism, the common cause, the will to win and the catastrophe of defeat' (64). These qualities, he continues, 'have largely departed the theatre of war [but] are still pursued and cherished on the sports field' (65). This process is evident in the chapter 'Pickup Games' in which a period of relative safety – a 'lull' (103) – is filled with eagerly contested basketball matches. The fixtures provide a knowable alternative to chaotic masculine vulnerability. Berlin 'found himself looking forward' (103) to each competition as 'he liked the clarity' (103) and 'knowing who won and by how much' (103). Basketball provides a masculine endeavour far closer to popular representations of combat. Careful planning is evident as the group 'began diagramming a play in the mound of dirt' (102) and 'figuring strategy, diagnosing weaknesses and devising new ways to correct them' (103). Traditionally constructed masculine virtues such as teamwork, physical endeavour and loyalty are rewarded by victory; just as popular culture has stated they would be in combat. Berlin, eager to live up to perceived paternal standards, dreams that 'his father was out there in the bleachers' (103). His participation is a 'rooted-for dream, boosted by an old man who built houses' (103). Here is an opportunity to understand experience that complies with masculine tradition. Organised sport is an alternative to the relentless disorientation and cyclical 'routine' (103) of searching for an invisible enemy and destroying villages. Basketball becomes 'artificiality, a sense of imposed peace' (103). However, it offers only a limited salve. Underneath its structure, the war remains terrifyingly out of reach. Sport, then, is a linear narrative whose regulated order thinly disguises subtextual angst.

To make the war knowable requires self-consciousness and reflexive temporal and imaginative space. O'Brien addresses this in the second of his narrative modes in the chapters entitled 'Observation Post'. Berlin is on night watch upon a 'rickety and fragile and tottering' (68) tower. His physical stillness offers a rare contemplative space. These sections employ a fractured chronology in which Berlin explores his personal past and imagined futures. Unlike the traumatic content of the novel's attempts at realism, the chronological fractures in this

instance are driven by Berlin. Thus, temporal chaos becomes temporal opportunity. The stillness of the observation tower juxtaposes the continuous movement of Berlin's mind just as the constant physical movement of active combat in turn juxtaposes the deadening effect of confusion. Jack Slay (1999) argues that the chaotic experiential environment of Vietnam ensures that 'Berlin's narrative […] is hardly chronological, barely cohesive; it is […] hazily remembered, occasionally disorientating and confusing' (79). Paradoxically, however, 'these memories compose the novel's most truthful and tangible reality' (80). Reflexive memory, no matter how jumbled, brings Berlin closer to his version of truth. Yet, as Michael Raymond (1983) states, such truth remains 'only a rumour, a war story, a vision of what might have happened as opposed to what did happen' (100). Raymond concludes that the 'rational consideration of such issues as courage and responsibility and such goals as understanding the war and of achieving the smooth, orderly arc from war to peace […] are imaginary fulfilments' (100). Myers adds that the 'narrative in the tower is the most complete study of the inability to connect immediate violent reality with larger historical and ideological components' (176). As such, the chapters are an ambiguous bricolage in which, Myers explains, 'experience and imagination face each other but […] also compose a continuum' (173). For Berlin, this reflexive ambiguity allows him to attempt a reconciliation of material experience with mythic constructions and representations of masculinity. Everything he has been told about warfare jars with his material experience. The stability and solipsism of the tower provides space in which to attempt a reconstruction of masculinity built from childhood memories, philosophical reflection and recognition of the importance of narrative imagination.

Significant to this process is his remembered relationship with his father. He is a man who 'built houses' (175) with 'good materials and good craftsmanship' (54). He embodies quiet, blue collar stoicism and mastery of landscape. Hellman argues that, 'Berlin looks back from Vietnam at a single father who embraces at once the mythic concept of a good society and a good war [and] associates his father with the landscapes of American myth' (162). The reconstruction of his childhood is signified as artifice by claims that 'he had a history' (175) bookending the idealised description of an agrarian American upbringing. His idealised adolescence is one in which he 'played baseball' (175), went

'canoeing with his father' (175) and 'spent a summer building houses' (175). The familiarity of such imagery further underlines the confusion and dislocation felt in Vietnam. Berlin's adolescence conforms to American ideals in its heteronormativity and in qualities he has supposedly inherited from his father.

These ideas can be projected to national level as the valorised benevolence of the founding fathers is replaced by John F. Kennedy's death and Nixon's corruption. Masculine endeavour shifts palpably from building progress and decency to destruction and violence. The American Adam is no longer creating a nation. He is participating in the destruction of one. Therefore, the values propagated by Berlin's father and his generation are impossible to reconcile with Vietnam combat. As well as a reconstruction of a familiar past, Berlin constructs a postwar future. It relies upon the familiar masculinity of the celebratory return of his father's generation from the Second World War. Berlin visualises his own return home from Vietnam replete with understated approval from his father and, by extension, the gratitude of the American nation. As his train arrives home he 'would brush off his uniform and be certain all the medals were in place' (54). His simple statements to his father that he 'did okay' and 'won some medals' (54) are met with a simple yet significant 'nod' (54).

What occupies Berlin most on the observation tower is the nature of fear. It is omnipresent and tangible. It is a 'kind of background sound' (35). It has the power to distort temporal awareness. Berlin senses the 'incredible slowness with which time passed' (52) and attributes it to 'the tricks his fear did with time' (52). The nature of courage remains frustratingly out of reach in both physical and intellectual terms. Like so much else in Vietnam, the 'power of will to defeat fear' (83) is in 'tangles'(83). He longs to comprehend the 'circuitry for all that was possible' (83) and to access 'the full range of what a man might be' (83). The 'order of facts' (304) and which 'came first and which came last' (304) give Berlin 'trouble' (304). There is no way of 'understanding them' (304) or 'keeping them straight' (304). He has no sense of ordering the minutiae of his daily life or the grand narratives of heroism and America's mythic righteousness. It is at this intellectual juncture that imaginative space and its relationship with such absolutes becomes a crucial method of survival for Paul Berlin.

Biedler states that *Going After Cacciato's* chief thematic objective is to demonstrate a 'synthesis of memory and imagination, life and art, as a testament to their fluid interchangeability' (172). Indeed, this drives Berlin's imaginative possibilities and provides a manner in which to shape constructions of the war. O'Brien has repeatedly stated his belief in the importance of a tangible imagination. 'It's a real thing,' he argues 'and […] influences in a major way the kind of real-life decisions we make […] we imagine our futures and then try to step into our own imagination' (Lomperis, 1987). Through Berlin, O'Brien pursues a metafictional strategy which exposes the inherent artifice of the written word and the manner in which such artifice is used to shape the external world and its cultural representations. Berlin tries, for example, to free himself from the limitation of 'stupid war stories' (270). For him, masculine combat representation is full of 'commonplace' (270) and 'trite truths' (270) like 'it hurts to be shot' (270) or that 'dead men are heavy' (270). These statements are ineffective when it comes to processing trauma. Thus, Berlin explores 'what might have been' (271). His imagination operates as psychological escape. Just as Yossarian flees for an idealised Sweden and Billy Pilgrim takes refuge on Tralfamadore, Berlin creates an imaginative space in which Vietnam conforms to war as explicitly artificial cultural representation. It is not the character of Berlin – or all of those he embodies – that O'Brien problematises in this process. Instead, it is America's representation of war and what it means for the psychological survival of inexperienced young men.

The third narrative mode used in *Going After Cacciato,* then*,* explores the titular Cacciato's desertion and subsequent attempts at his capture. Cacciato, 'open faced and naïve and plump' (15), has 'left the war' (10) and embarked on a mythical quest 'to Paris' (11). As a character largely absent from the narrative, much of what is learnt about him comes from the opinions of his fellow combatants. They agree on his 'strange, boyish simplicity' (15) or, as Stink Harris bluntly puts it, the fact he is a 'Dumb-dumb […] dumb as a dink' (15). Yet, for Berlin, it is his supposed lack of masculine virtue that renders him enigmatically heroic. Berlin admires the simple innocence of Cacciato's decision to walk away from the war. The success of Cacciato's journey offers an imaginative contrast to the drudgery, violence and fear that make up Berlin's material experience. What he has been searching for during his stints on the

tower is a way to knowingly confirm the representation of masculine war as myth. Berlin's departure provides such an opportunity. The imaginative construction of Cacciato's escape and the pursuit across continents to Paris forms the self-consciously fictional portion of the narrative. This is no delusion for Berlin is fully aware that he is 'pretending' (32). The imaginative possibility that there is an alternative to his material trauma provides the chance for a 'happy ending' (31).

O'Brien underlines the textual nature of Berlin's imaginative escape by referring to it as 'a fine war story' (123). It counters 'stories that began and ended without transition […] developing drama or direction' (270). The helplessness that accompanies much of Berlin's Vietnam life is resisted by his determination to assert narrative order. Becoming the storyteller provides agency and self-determination. Berlin's omniscience provides 'control' (68) and a way to know Vietnam though 'figuring out the details' (80). The fragmented chronology of the reportage sections and the reflections of the observation tower contrast with this imagined alternative. By doing this, O'Brien adds another level of artifice to his novel. The significance of such overt fictionality can be read in two interrelated ways. First, O'Brien is commenting on the dishonesty of cultural war representations and the malcontent they create for soldiers who cannot equate what they have learnt prior to the war with what they have experienced within the war. Second, *Going After Cacciato's* experiments suggest a text that is very much in tune with postmodern rejection of narrative absolutes. Raymond sees the jarring contrast between O'Brien's narrative modes as 'a metaphor for the overwhelming dislocations associated with Vietnam' (103). He argues that the novel's metafictional innovations expose 'fraudulent ideals, orderly conventions and absolutist thinking' (103) as 'inappropriate' (103). Their inclusion in Berlin's narrative construction, he concludes, 'articulates the unspeakable horrors, insanities and disillusionments that were the Vietnam War' (103).

O'Brien's complex metafictional approach addresses his concern regarding popular and mass-media representations of masculine combat experience. The novel is both intertextual – in that Berlin's imagined chase is referential to Hollywood, popular fiction and television – and intratextual as Berlin constructs himself and his experiences as explicitly fictional. He uses cultural representation to shape the war to a palatable and familiar discourse. In turn,

O'Brien constructs Berlin to critique the impact of dishonest representation on the American masculine subject at war. Linda Hutcheon (1989) claims that awareness of the subject's 'intense self-reflexivity and overtly parodic intertextuality' (3) are defining characteristics of 'postmodernism in literature' (3). Hutcheon pays particular attention to the 'common discursive property in the embedding of both literary and historical texts in fiction' (4) and the manner in which it is 'made problematic by overtly metafictional assertions of both history and literature as human constructs' (4).

Such constructs are both necessary and illusory and this paradox is central to O'Brien's own systematic metafictional strategy. His construction of Vietnam is a narration of a historical event that rejects claims for textual authority. The character Berlin exists in a historical moment yet reflects through imaginative constructs cultural history's representation of that very moment. The constructs that are necessary for his psychological stability are laid open to critique. As such, O'Brien's nods to popular culture are both playful and complex. For example, Berlin's imagined construction of nationality and regional difference is driven by knowing stereotype and heterotopian thinking. Tehran is 'a land of infidels' (176) and the 'German heartland' (262) contains 'streetlights in the towns and steeples over the churches and neon lighted ads for Coke' (262). This is a world constructed by Disney and the power of American advertising. Berlin's imaginative construction of the world is dependent upon American television as a discourse machine. O'Brien parodies popular forms such as romance, adventure, comedy and magic realism. Such variety is a metafictional strategy in itself. Jean Baudrillard (1994) would see it as a manner of 'proving the real through the imaginary' (19).

Mailer, writing about the Vietnam protest movement in *Armies of the Night* (1968) identifies the irony in fighting for a freedom that is symbolically represented by the family gathered in front of a television. He explains that 'the America he saw in family television dramas did not exist' (167). Yet, its representation had the 'power' (167) to 'direct the styles and manners and therefore the ideas of America […] ideas like conformity, cleanliness, America-is-always-right' (167). Indeed, John Carlos Rowe (1989) argues that, for the postmodern artist, the presence of television is key to perception of immediate social environment and the broader world existent in imagined space.

'Television' (217), he contends, holds a 'special kind of realism […] in which the authority of the immaterial, the figurative and the metamorphic is increasingly accepted by the viewer as part of his or her own reality principle' (217).

War in Vietnam was very much a pluralised media spectacle in which the conflicting components of representation made a coherent narrative whole impossible. Myers claims that the 'Vietnam War flashed across American television screens as tight concentrations of violent images' (3). This was a media schism that highlighted the contrast between the domestic safety of the American couch and the developing trauma in Vietnam. Indeed, he goes on to explore the plurality of contradictory reports of events in Vietnam and the manner in which 'the official summaries and the corrective journalistic ones became more opposed, more contradictory and couched in an ever expanding cloud of mutual mistrust' (23). Ultimately, 'the war simply could not support the weight of competing readings placed on it and the cracks and fissures in the immediate tension-ridden narrative spoke to a great number of writers' (24). This is reflected in Berlin's imagined journey as he enters Delhi. The elegant and idealised 'Hamijolli Chand' (145) reflects on her 'two years in Baltimore' (145). They are 'the loveliest period of my entire life' (145). She confirms the unifying essence of television as 'one of those unique products of the American genius' (145). Television's messages are a 'means of keeping a complex country intact' (145). When complexity and contradiction 'begins to explode every which way' (145) America copes by organising itself around television's cultural tropes such as the 'Super Bowl' (145), 'Matt Dillon' (145) and 'baseball' (145). O'Brien states in interview with Twister Marquiss (2004) that 'all of my writing about Vietnam has been a kind of delayed response to the simplistic images and icons that were presented to me as a young man' (11).

Such simplicity is evident in Berlin's portrayal of American masculinity. His American masculine subject is binarised with idealised representations of Asian femininity in the characterisation of Hamijolli Chand and ethereal Vietnamese peasant Sarkin Aung Wan. Issues of gender stereotype merge with race in these constructions. Building on Said's *Orientalism* (1995), Renee Tajima (1989) refers to western constructions of Asian women as 'lotus blossom imagery' (np). This is a notion paraphrased by Karen Pyke and Denise Johnson (2003) as 'passive, weak, quiet, excessively submissive, slavishly dutiful,

sexually exotic, and available for white men' (36). Yen Le Espiritu (1997) argues that this construction is prevalent in twentieth century American cinema. She identifies an imperative to 'embrace the socially constructed passive Asian beauty as the feminine ideal' (97). Hamijolli Chand ('Americans always called her Jolly' (145)) confirms this construction and validates America's modern cultural myths. Her perfectly managed beauty manages to combine both Asian stereotype and Hollywood glamour. As a fantasy figure she reveals an idealised femininity that conforms to western standards while remaining exotic. Berlin and his colleagues watch as 'she lit a long cigarette and smiled' (145) with 'eyebrows [that] had been freshly drawn into great mobile vaults [and] fingernails and lips [that] glowed soft pink in the dusk' (145). Her willingness to conform to western ideals of feminine beauty is matched by her repeated incantation that America is a 'land of genius and invention' (145).

Sarkin Aung Wan also confirms the lotus blossom stereotype. She is the romantic lead in Berlin's imagined narrative. She provides feminine grace as a counterpoint to masculine brutality. Berlin's opening descriptions of her establish a physical attractiveness that conforms to the stereotype outlined above. She is 'pretty' (62), 'fragile' (65), 'delicate like a bird' (65) and 'without lines or wrinkles' (65). Her willingness to join the men in their pursuit of Cacciato is based upon an innocent desire to 'see Paris' (64) and to 'stroll through the gardens, visit all the famous monuments' (64) and, most importantly, to 'fall in love there' (64). She embodies Berlin's narrative attempts to repair the damage to his American masculine identity. As a solider he is powerless; unable to influence the events that surround him. Yet, Sarkin is convinced that he 'will find a way' (77) to trace Cacciato. Her submissiveness allows Berlin to demonstrate autonomous courage and decisive agency. Such signifiers of successful American masculinity are frequent in this part of the narrative. Berlin incorporates cinematic tropes such as prison escapes, car chases in 'a '64 Impala' (231) and tense Parisian stake-outs. The opportunity for masculine heroism as enacted by John Wayne or Steve McQueen becomes a possibility. This version of war and masculine endeavour is, for Berlin, a 'splendid idea' (33). The novel then demonstrates the importance of the fictional process in confronting Vietnam's essentially unknowable nature and the manner in which this jars with the singular narratives of popular representation.

O'Brien's challenge to singular cultural representation continues in *The Things They Carried*. The novel comprises of a set of interconnected short stories and vignettes. They cover a range of experiential reflections through a self-conscious fictional process that continuously undermines the textual authority of the work. The narrator of each story is a fictionalised version of the writer Tim O'Brien. He is 'forty three years old' (179) and a veteran who 'walked through Quang Ngai Province as a foot soldier' (179). The biographical similarities to the real Tim O'Brien are striking and this is essential to the fictional process. The distinction between O'Brien as creator of the text and the textual version of O'Brien are made transparent. He states that 'I invent myself' (179) and indeed 'almost everything else is invented' (179). Thus, the stories are marked by ambiguity and self-conscious limits. Robin Silbergleid (2009) argues that the autobiographical nature of the text is a response to and development of postmodernism. It is 'vitally connected to and fundamentally distinct from both autobiographical fiction and metafiction' (137). It cannot 'be separated from the life of the writer' (137) yet remains 'insistent on its fictionality' (137). As with Vonnegut's metafictional authorial presence, Leigh Gilmore's (2001) study of autobiography is useful here. She argues that the autobiographical mode, rather than suggesting a 'dominant construction of the individual' (13), has come to represent 'an assembly of theories about the self and self-representation' (7). Thus, the autobiographical mode is highly appropriate for postmodern debates regarding the textual self. However, this is only the case if the artifice of such representation is repeatedly signalled. For O'Brien, the textual self – an identity made up of language and social narratives - is itself deeply autobiographical. Paul Eakin (1985) addresses the binary approach to reading 'autobiographical discourse' (182) as either 'self-validating testimony' or 'fatally derivative' (181). He claims that, in postmodern terms, 'the fictional nature of selfhood is held to be an autobiographical fact' (182). This is the liminal space that O'Brien's autobiographical discourse occupies. It is self-consciously artificial yet stresses that such artifice is, paradoxically, an experiential truth.

To further this autobiographical strategy, the novel revels in deliberate contradiction and ambiguity. The events and reflections explored in each of the twenty-two chapters jar with one another. Lorrie Smith (1990) argues that such experimentation is a rebuttal of reductive simplicity in relation to Vietnam. The

novel engages in 'word play, shifting voices, multiple perspectives, illogical transitions, metaphoric elaborations, temporal disjunctions and other experimental techniques' (97). It 'resists hierarchy, linear history and binary oppositions' (97). O'Brien interrogates those same narratives that mean Paul Berlin only understands war within the framework of popular culture. Michael Kaufmann (2005) argues that 'for O'Brien, the quest for the absolute truth beneath any experience is not only impossible, it is undesirable – and ultimately false' (339).

However, O'Brien does not offer a competing or alternative narrative. He presents instead a war that cannot be understood or made knowable. Vietnam is an experience whose truths are elusive, shifting and personal. Truths that are unknown even to those that hold them. Marilyn Wesley (2002) claims that O'Brien's approach demonstrates the paradoxical and relativist nature of his moral stance regarding war representation. She explains that, 'it is only through the unflinching willingness to evade the consoling simplicity built in to the formulaic war narrative process that genuine responsibility can be attempted' (13). Steven Kaplan (1993) states that such responsibility lies in recognition that meaningful and pluralised representations of war will 'not be in the fictions created by politicians but in the stories told by writers of fiction' (44). Indeed, O'Brien has stated in interview (Smith, 2010) that the rejection of singular narrative and an acceptance of pluralised and paradoxical truths are central in the act of writing.

> I wanted to capture that feeling in *The Things They Carried*. I wanted to explore multiple planes of "reality" and multiple planes of "truth." Yes, there is a real war going, with real casualties and real horror, but at the same time those realities are being processed in a mix of memory and imagination. Which is how we shape experience. (6)

In terms of masculinity, *The Things They Carried* refuses to define or confirm social or cultural constructions. Mythic and hegemonic qualities such as unquestioning courage, unthinking duty and unshakeable loyalty are questioned. Alternatives remain ambiguous. O'Brien does not provide absolute or idealised versions of masculinity or an American masculine subject that has somehow been educated by Vietnam. Instead, his stories offer multiple and

conflicting responses to dominant cultural forms. They create a space to analyse American men in the Vietnam War.

In the chapter entitled 'On the Rainy River', for example, O'Brien remembers his response to receiving his draft order in 1968. The story is presented as long hidden and a source of potential shame. It portrays a young man at odds with the masculine imperative to serve his country in conflict.

> This is one story I've never told before. Not to anyone. Not to my parents, not to my brother or sister, not even to my wife. To go into it, I've always thought, would only cause embarrassment for all of us, a sudden need to be elsewhere, which is the natural response to a confession. Even now, I'll admit, the story makes me squirm. (39)

Despite the passing of time and opportunity for reflection and rationalisation, the narrator still feels that admitting how close he came to escaping the draft by crossing the border into Canada is 'a hard story to tell' (39). O'Brien uses textual space to explore his response to the draft and to detail shifting definitions of morality and courage. He outlines the power of popular culture in shaping his adolescent self-image. His younger self believes that 'in a moral emergency we will behave like the heroes of our youth, bravely and forthrightly, without thought of personal loss or discredit' (39). The courage of the 'Lone Ranger' (39) is a 'comforting theory' (39). Thus, popular culture shapes youthful masculinity. As a young adult and recent graduate, the politics of the war are confusing, particularly when compared with the moral necessity and subsequent celebrations of the Second World War. Vietnam 'seemed to be wrong' (40) and the 'very facts were shrouded in uncertainty' (40). O'Brien concludes that 'the only certainty that summer was moral confusion' (40). The draftee's 'moral split' (43) boils down to multiple readings of the essence of courage. Intellectually, O'Brien skirts around the edges of the war's morality. He admits that there are times when 'a nation was justified in using military force to achieve its ends' (42) but that 'the problem […] was that a draft board did not let you choose your war' (42). Yet, underneath such rumination the 'raw fact of terror' (41) provides more visceral opposition to the war. All else is conjecture when faced with the simple reasoning that 'I did not want to die' (42).

However, concurrent with material fear is a fear of 'ridicule and censure' (43). O'Brien's family and his 'conservative' (44) town are highly susceptible to

national myth and popular representation. O'Brien visualises his terrified anger at a community sated by popular images and arguments.

> I'd be screaming at them, telling them how much I detested their blind, thoughtless, automatic acquiescence to it all, their simple-minded patriotism, their prideful ignorance, their love-it-or-leave-it platitudes, how they were sending me off to fight a war that they didn't understand and didn't want to understand. (43)

For the citizens of his town, O'Brien is simply going to do his duty or become a 'treasonous pussy' (44). Thus, he must decide what he fears most: violent death or the irretrievable loss of masculine reputation.

The literary representation of this dilemma is enabled by spatial metaphor. O'Brien decides that he will flee north to Canada. Intertextually, the story evokes Frederic Henry and Yossarian. These are men that want to find a separate peace, men whose courage is moral and intellectual. Yet, these narratives too turn out to be empty. All that faces O'Brien is further confusion. He arrives at the border – portentously named 'Rainy River' – and is 'scared sick' (45) and frozen into inactivity. The owner of the 'Tip Top Lodge' (45), Elroy Berdahl, provides a silent space away from the babble of competing narrative. Elroy's emotional intelligence and compassion are unspoken. In his 'ferocious silence' (47) lies a recognition that for a problem this complex, 'words were insufficient' (48). The tensions between the metaphoric qualities of the silent space and the materiality of the draft are clear when O'Brien is taken out fishing and views Canadian land 'as tangible and real' (52). However, the magnitude of his decision causes 'paralysis' (52) and 'moral freeze' (52). In fact, it appears that inaction is a major part of his reflective shame. He painfully confesses that 'I couldn't decide, I couldn't act, I couldn't comport myself with even a pretence of modest human dignity' (52). This is not moral courage; it is infantilised fear. For O'Brien it is clear that the competing narratives of family, community and popular culture are morally dislocating. The narrative asserts itself as explicitly textual when the autobiographical register gives way to a hallucinatory montage of American icons such as 'LBJ and Huck Finn and Abbie Hoffman' (53). They are joined by 'Joint Chiefs of Staff' (53), the 'last surviving veteran of the American Civil War' (53), 'Jane Fonda dressed up as Barbarella' (53), 'my grandfather' (53) and 'Gary Cooper' (53). American masculinity is constructed of such competing and incomplete narrative figures from public and private life.

Ultimately, O'Brien returns to his home town so that he can prepare to leave for Vietnam. Yet, this is not a decision that has grown out of newfound courage or zeal for war. O'Brien finds no use in any of the competing narratives or cultural figures and chooses the course of action of which he is least afraid. His confession is not that he was tempted to flee but that he 'submitted' (54) to 'the war' (54) because 'he was embarrassed not to' (54).

O'Brien's rejection of absolutes is most clearly articulated in the chapter entitled 'How to Tell a True War Story'. This mock-didactic narrative depicts the grief and dislocated anger experienced by grieving young soldier Rat Kiley. He tries to process the death of his friend Curt Lemon who detonates a booby trap when 'goofing' (69) and is blown 'into a tree' (78). Curt Lemon represents youthful and masculine playfulness and its mythic invulnerability. Yet like those fates so despised by Hemingway, Curt's death is abrupt and absurd. The difficulty Rat faces in finding meaning in his friend's death provides O'Brien with an opportunity to critique narrative absolutes.

The chief strategy in this critique is metafictional nesting of narrative. O'Brien (the writer) narrates O'Brien (the character) who narrates the attempts made by Rat Kiley to create narrative order for his grief. The text opens with the declarative 'This is true' (67) and the superficial simplicity of this claim is a textual sleight-of-hand. In the context of this novel, nothing is true; all is narrative. O'Brien, reflecting on his choice of opening, recollects that, 'When I wrote that, I knew nothing at all about what would become the content of the story, or plot or character or theme, not a glimmer of a story line. I simply found myself tantalized by language itself, that flat declaration' (Smith, 2010: 7). O'Brien continues by commenting on the paradoxical nature of making this statement 'in the context of what I believed to be a work of fiction' (Smith, 2010: 7). The concept of truths is slippery and multi-dimensional. O'Brien asks if they can 'evolve or reverse themselves over time' (Smith, 2010: 7) or if 'two truths' (Smith, 2010: 7) can be 'utterly contradictory and yet remain true' (Smith, 2010: 7). The opening line is undermined and complicated by assertions that the story is one that he has 'told before […] many times, many versions' (75).

Such admissions reiterate that truth is a nebulous and relative concept. Narratives that posture as absolute are futile and damaging. Therefore, limited

experiential narratives are never presented as authoritative counter narratives. Rather they are other versions of Vietnam truth that merely sit elsewhere on the narrative continuum. John Timmerman (2000) argues that 'O'Brien aims for nothing less than resolving this dialectic into an integrated whole' (101). Indeed, O'Brien rejects privileging one truth over another. Each layer of narrative is systematically revealed as fiction. However, this is not a devaluation of storytelling. In fact, O'Brien states that consciously fictional narration provides an answer to the difficulties faced when attempting 'to separate external "reality" from the internal processing of that reality' (Smith, 2010: 6). Vietnam's unknowable contradictions mean that stories possess 'natural seemingness, which only makes the story seem untrue, but which in fact represents the hard and exact truth as it seemed' (70). Vital to the success of such stories is the notion that 'a true war story is never moral […] it does not instruct, nor encourage virtue, nor suggest models of proper human behaviour, not restrain men from doing the things men have always done' (68). If O'Brien were to make a claim for moral authority then he would be guilty of the very accusation he levels at other modes of war representation. Representation that claims narrative authority gives men exposed to traumatic experience no imaginative space in which to begin healing or reconciliation. If constructions of the American masculine subject are fixed and unchallenged then O'Brien's metafictional paradoxes offer the chance to examine trauma from a multitude of perspectives.

Rat's understanding of his place in war is structured and limited by such singular constructions of positive masculine endeavour. He writes to Curt Lemon's sister in an attempt to reconcile the relative banality of Curt's death. The letter acts as narrative confirmation to an imagined female of Curt's value as an American masculine subject at war. He is described as a 'real soldier's soldier' (67) who would 'volunteer for stuff nobody else would volunteer for in a million years' (67). As well as bravery, he is commended for his contribution to the masculine group dynamic. He 'made the war seem almost fun' (67) with his 'great sense of humour' (67). Curt Lemon is Rat Kiley's 'best friend in the world' (68); their homosocial bond so strong that they, like Dosier and Quinn, 'were like soul mates' (68) or 'twins or something' (68). The letter is a textual construction of war and, like so many others in war novels, offers the chance to

shape masculine experience and provide order. In this instance, however, the narrative is essentially without reader as Curt's sister does not respond. Rat dismisses her as a 'dumb cooze' (68) thus reductively placing her in binary opposition to the masculine ideals in his letter.

The ordered masculine narrative Rat uses to make Vietnam knowable is problematised by both the absurd death of his friend and by the indifferent silence of his friend's sister. His desire to establish masculine structure to his war experience leads to a prolonged attack on a 'baby VC water buffalo' (75). The buffalo symbolises the femininity perceived in the Vietnamese people and their landscape as well as the perceived ignorance of domestic America. Thus, to return to Jeffords' arguments, it provides a symbolic opportunity for Rat to violently assert the moral and sexual authority inherent in America's representations of war. Such representations, of course, are invalidated by the silence of Curt Lemon's sister who fails to fulfil her role in valorising his participation in the war. The buffalo is shot repeatedly and Rat ensures that each shot 'was to hurt' (75). Parallel to the group rape sequence in *Paco's Story*, the silently observing masculine group signal acquiescence and unwillingness to deviate: 'Nobody said much. The whole platoon stood there watching, feeling all kinds of things, but there wasn't a great deal of pity for the baby water buffalo' (75).

In the same manner as Heinemann's own moment of moral breakdown, distilled into this single occurrence is the culmination of all that twentieth century American war fiction has been building towards. Abandoned are notions of intellectual and moral progress, replaced by visceral and abject hatred. The buffalo symbolically represents all that challenges the epistemological safety of American masculinity and its mythic traditions. Trauma and harrowing absurdity create in the American masculine subject a desire to restore order, sense and self-willed autonomy. When all else fails, this can only be achieved through destruction. The grand narratives of American masculinity are exposed as empty and absurd myths. The buffalo – like the Japanese or Vietnamese enemy, the coward, the dissenter or the ignorant sister – represents a feminised other. To legitimise the mythic American masculine subject, the feminised other must be spectacularly overcome. As with the conquest of wilderness and the destruction of Native American customs and cultures, as with the crusades of

Creel and Wilson, as with the aggressive pursuit of political non-conformists, Vietnam fiction demonstrates that mythic American masculinity is a damaging narrative folly.

This is evident in the triumvirate of stories which deal with the experience of killing an enemy combatant: 'The Man I Killed', 'Ambush' and 'Good Form'. Each story underlines its textual artifice by offering an alternative and contradictory version of its central violent event. 'The Man I Killed' takes the form of traumatic memory and is narrated as autobiography. 'Ambush' steps back and imagines another version of the event as a potential narrative for a fictional version of O'Brien's daughter. Finally, 'Good Form' is, as the title suggests, a literary reflection on the manner in which the Vietnam veteran as writer 'invents himself' (179). It is an appeal to the perceived reader to 'feel what I felt […] to know why story-truth is truer sometimes than happening-truth' (179). Wesley argues that these 'contradictory depictions of violence produce the thematic assertion of the moral confusion imposed by the war' (12). Wesley adds that the three narratives are a 'representational divergence' (12) that 'demand the possibly impossible ethical interrogation of the violence of Vietnam' (12). Such contradiction is evident as the first version of events, ostensibly a first person account from memory, employs an act of imaginative reconstruction to explore the dehumanising ramifications of violence. O'Brien, like Mailer's Red Valsen, imagines a life for the Vietnamese soldier who 'lay face-up in the centre of the trail, a slim, dead, almost dainty young man' (121). His feminine appearance jars with the muscularity of western war representation and O'Brien extends this juxtaposition by detailing the soldier's inner-life. There are frequent parallels to O'Brien's own narrated adolescence in 'On the Rainy River' in that the young soldier's view of war has been shaped by 'the force of tradition' (121). The masculine imperative is to 'defend the land' (122), a task that is 'man's highest duty and highest privilege' (122). The looming war secretly terrifies him and he simply unable to live up to 'the brave things his father had done, or his uncles, or the heroes of the stories' (122). His terror extends to the material aspects of combat in which he is convinced he will 'perform badly' (123). Essentially, O'Brien's imaginative construction is built around the gap between public performance and private anxiety. Just as his own constructed self enters the war despite his thinly veiled fear, the dead soldier is 'afraid of disgracing

himself' (123). He performs in front of the paternal figures in his life by 'pretending to look forward to battle' (123). It is only in the comforting feminine company of his mother that he is able to pray 'that the war might end soon' (123). The act of narration in this story serves as an alternative to the racist dehumanisation of Vietnamese soldiers so prevalent in Heinemann's *Close Quarters*. The responses of O'Brien's platoon members, however, reduce the death to a performative act. They comment on how successfully he 'fuckin' trashed the fucker' (122) and 'scrambled his sorry self' (122). He is awarded a metaphorical 'A plus' (122) for the manner in which he 'laid him out like Shredded fuckin' Wheat' (122).

The masculine combat space that O'Brien inhabits means that he must conform to such amorality and his anxieties must remain hidden. Again, like Mailer's Red Valsen, imaginative construction allows O'Brien to explore the moral consequences of violence. In this instance, he has killed somebody's child and, subsequently, in 'Ambush' the event is now constructed for the author's daughter. As a parent, O'Brien is compelled to demonstrate what the war meant for him.

> When she was nine, my daughter Kathleen asked if I had ever killed anyone. She knew about the war; she knew I'd been a soldier. 'You keep writing these war stories,' she said, 'so I guess you must've killed somebody.' It was a difficult moment, but I did what seemed right, which was to say, 'Of course not,' and then to take her onto my lap and hold her there for a while. Someday, I hope, she'll ask again. But here I want to pretend that she's a grown-up. I want to tell her exactly what happened, or what I remember happening, and then I want to say to her that as a little girl she was absolutely right. This is why I keep writing war stories. (129)

As a father, O'Brien can only offer inexact memories of trauma. In his view this is a more intellectually noble act than regurgitating dishonest representations of war. Again, there are several narrative layers at play in this story. Memory is shaped into a future narrative for an imagined adult.

Luckhurst argues that the Vietnam's combatant's 'death encounter' (63) is signified by a failure to 'formulate the experience' (63) and a 'collapse of narrative possibility' (63). The desire to order experience through narration and psychologically move past Vietnam's chaotic terror and moral entropy is thus thwarted. This, Luckhurst explains, leaves 'death stalled in the psyche' (63) as a

'permanent rupture' (63). Luckhurst links the traumatised subject, narrative and postmodernity. As 'trauma is anti-narrative' (79) the postmodern text seeks to 'ostentatiously' (80) experiment and innovate. Trauma texts have, he contends, 'played around with narrative time, disrupting linearity, suspending logical causation, running out of temporal sequence' (80). To attempt 'narrative temporalisation' (81) is, Luckhurst concludes, 'an unethical act' (81). The temporal interplay in this narrative emphasises the blurred ambiguities of storytelling and the validity of multiple truths. This version of the killing has a focus upon O'Brien's attempts to make sense of violence and death. Again, his actions are reduced to elemental fear. Ideology and duty are rejected in a series of negative statements. O'Brien 'did not hate the young man' (130) nor did he 'see him as the enemy' (130). He 'did not ponder issues of morality or politics or military duty' (130); he was simply 'terrified' (130).

Despite the passing of real and imagined time, the sense making process is on-going and incomplete. For O'Brien, narrative is a paradoxical phenomenon. As with Vonnegut, the search for reasoned absolutes is futile yet the engagement of imagination is intellectually and emotionally necessary. Conclusions appear and then vanish and the shape of truth constantly shifts. At the time of the soldier's death 'words seemed far too complicated' (131) and in the imagined present O'Brien hasn't 'finished sorting it out' (131). Such incompleteness and ambiguity is central in O'Brien's writing. In the third version of the story, 'Good Form', O'Brien takes another step back from the events. He addresses the reader as writer echoing his line 'this is true' by stating that 'It's time to be blunt' (179). Of course, the statement is misleading. Each revelation regarding the writing process is a reminder that 'almost everything […] is invented' (179).The experimentation and overt artifice are, he claims, 'not a game' (179). This is not experimentation for its own sake. Through story-telling O'Brien is able to examine the war as ambiguous experience. In doing so, he rejects the reductive narratives of popular culture. If courage is essential to the American masculine subject then it can become available through imaginative and ambiguous construction. O'Brien writes that 'I can look at things I never looked at. I can attach faces to grief and love and pity and God. I can be brave' (180). The American masculine subject as constructed by popular representation prevents this process. Self-analysis and questioning are denied and, consequently,

trauma is unendurable. Masculine experience that does not fit with cultural representations leaves the subject isolated. O'Brien encourages the American masculine subject to welcome uncertain fluidity and multiple, contradictory truths.

A crisis of representation runs through the four Vietnam novels analysed here. Heinemann and O'Brien demonstrate an awareness of the American masculine subject's vulnerability when constructing himself against the masculinities of previous wars and pervasive popular culture. Abigail Solomon-Godeau (1995) argues that the postmodern era no longer requires an 'unproblematic […] natural, crisis-free variant' (71) of masculine identity. Heinemann and O'Brien acknowledge this shift. Their protagonists do not fail at combat; they are never in a position to do so. To fail would be to suggest that there is a tangible reality to aspire to rather than hegemony based on popular culture and myth. In addition, the innovation and textual experimentation evident in all four novels demonstrates that Heinemann and O'Brien have reached a point in which fiction is equally unable to provide absolutes. Paradoxically, fiction provides the most appropriate arena to declare its own fictionality. The motif of dislocation, so prevalent in the texts, is useful in a multitude of ways. The material aspect of Vietnam combat is developed by depictions of troubled self-analysis and, at a metatextual level, by recognition that fiction is just another attempt at philosophical navigation of masculine subjectivity. Intertextually speaking, the fiction discussed in previous chapters, provides a framework for Heinemann and O'Brien's engagement with Vietnam as masculine experience. Yet even here, there is an understanding that this can only be a limited process. Ultimately, Vietnam fiction demonstrates that combatants responded not just experientially – profound as such experiences were – but also to the difficulty in reconciling singular and mythic ideals of masculinity with the fragmented and uncertain masculinities evident as participant in the Vietnam War.

Conclusion

This thesis concludes by revisiting and reiterating its core thematic and analytical threads. What follows demonstrates this work's original contributions to the field. This is a study driven by examination of tensions. In Foucault's terms (1986), there are competing constructions and materialities in the American masculine subject's understanding of self that are simply 'not superimposable' (23). The liminality between the real and the imagined, between symbolism and actuality, between myth and corporeality and between experience and representation provide space for this work to operate. This final section will draw together such anxieties and the manner in which my literary commentary adds new perspectives to a busy disciplinary field.

Included is a remodelling of the American Adam with a specific focus on his eschatological drive and the way that this is manifest in the literature here and, consequently, in broader American culture and ideology. Questions regarding the manner in which completion is offered to the American masculine subject and the veracity of such conditions are addressed with reference to the fluctuating pervasiveness of the myth itself. Landscape and heterotopia are central to this. The wars and conflicts examined here expose dominant desires to enact conquests of other landscapes and other subjects. These desires are thwarted by the resistant materiality of new geographical locations and the evident emptiness that lies beneath the very process of construction. This dissonance is reflective of the central concern of this thesis; namely, the conflict between myth and experience. Each chapter explores the manner in which literary prose fiction attempts to reconcile this difference and, crucially, the epiphanic moments in which the narrative project is revealed as a self-conscious failure.

The thesis begins by exploring the disillusionments and formal experiments engaged in by John Dos Passos and Ernest Hemingway. It then looks to Norman Mailer and James Jones and their evocation of reportage, verisimilitude and the American naturalist tradition. This is followed by analyses of Joseph Heller and Kurt Vonnegut and the crucial recognition that text rooted in traumatic experience responds with experimentation and reflexive awareness of artifice. Finally, it examines the Vietnam writing of Larry Heinemann and Tim

O'Brien. Their work is a response to the unknowable nature of the Vietnam conflict. It demonstrates the dangers of such conditions to a group of men driven by Adamic singularity.

Central to all of this analysis is the figure of the American Adam. His mythic status and all that this means for the material life of the American masculine subject creates tensions that make this research valid, original and necessary. The liminal space between the corporeal materiality of the combatant and the constructed nature of a singular hegemonic masculinity creates conditions for challenging and plural narrative forms. Art thrives in such uncertainty and offers a way to open debate on individual and national identities. Additionally, the study of masculinities in this manner provides opportunity to examine and destabilise societal super structures such as capitalism, consumerism and patriarchy. These are structures that depend upon rigid fixedness in gender. Challenging systems of domination, submission and marginalisation is ethical and necessary. It is also a manner in which to demonstrate the political nature of the novels examined in this work.

The American Adam dominates American myth and masculine identity. His newness and his eschatological drive are a template for understanding American mythogenesis. His identity is avowedly hyper-masculine and, as demonstrated in this work, his constructed singularity hangs heavy on the American male subject at war. Participation in the conflicts examined is framed by the opportunity to enact and perform Adamic masculinity. George Creel and Woodrow Wilson's recruitment policies, for example, were based upon a return to the European father. This was an opportunity to show that the American masculine subject had achieved adulthood and autonomy. The immaturity of the nation could be transformed into a self-determining manhood. America was positioned as rugged and unencumbered by history. It could identify itself on one side of a newly constructed binary with an effete and potentially feminine Europe. The Pacific conflict provided a different eschatological model. This time, the American masculine subject looked to revenge against a Japanese enemy constructed as other through dehumanising discourses. As with the First World War, the landscape of conflict is a heterotopia. It is simultaneously a new movement west into the Pacific and evidence that such mythic movement only leads to uncertainty and corporeal trauma. In the European Second World and

in America's post-war economic growth, the eschatological drive shifts again. This time war is a demonstration of and evidence for American exceptionalism. Completion now lies in the corporate model, in consumerism and in suburban assimilation. Ironically, it is such domestic safety that is arguably a precursor for engagement in the Vietnam conflict. The feminised domestic sphere propels a new generation of combatants towards war and hypermasculinity. They are motivated by the pervasiveness of the Adamic myth in popular culture. Comic books and the weighty influence of John Wayne provide a performative template. In Vietnam the material dangers of enacting Adamic masculinities are clearest. Unable to conquer land or enemy in the manner prescribed by mythic narrative, the Vietnamese combatant is pushed towards atrocity. He participates in acts that are representative of North-American muscle and aggression. The acts say much regarding symbolism but more about the corporeal activities of war. Atrocities certainly bear mythic weight but, ethically, they cannot be removed from their material nature and legacies.

Despite the variety outlined here, it is clear that each conflict is united by Adamic myth. The opportunity to perform newness and to move toward maturity and completion is evident. This notion raises another of the key issues under discussion in this thesis. I have made extensive use of Connell's hegemonic model as a platform for my analysis of American masculinity and the manner in which my chosen texts address it. It is necessary to reiterate here that Connell's model is 'historically mobile' (1995: 77). The dominant paradigm for masculinity shifts in temporal and cultural terms and is constantly engaged in a battle for dominance with other competing masculinities. However, the pervasive nature of Adamic myth means that there are certain characteristics and qualities that attain fixedness in such a fluid system. Autonomy, agency, self-determination, newness and adulthood (or maturity) appear repeatedly and are a template for each newly revised hegemonic form. This is particularly the case at times of national crisis or trauma.

After the failure of the Vietnam War and the widespread castigation of Vietnam veterans, for example, the American 1980s saw what Susan Jeffords (2012), building on her analysis of the Vietnam conflict, describes as 'a rearticulation of both the individual and the nation in terms of masculine identities' (13). Jeffords argues that the era is marked by 'popular discourses of militarism, patriotism,

individualism, family values and religious belief' (13). Ronald Reagan's popularity as president was, Jeffords claims, 'firmly anchored in his Hollywood past' (4). His theatrical career, she adds, 'provided him with a secure frame of reference in the insecure world he now found himself in' (4). His political rhetoric reignited and cemented the binary nature of the Cold War and, once again, singular American masculinity was constructed as a rugged combination of moral certainty and patriotic duty. Popular culture reflected such a mood and television and cinema were dominated by figures such as Sylvester Stallone's John Rambo and Rocky Balboa. Blue collar simplicity was positioned against the feminine intellectualism of Europe.

Similarly, after the attacks on the World Trade Centre on September 11th 2001, George W. Bush performed the popular myths of the Old West in an attempt to embody the avenging and heroic cowboy. Erik Baard (2004), writing for *The Village Voice* in 2004 claimed that 'media accounts'(np) characterised the president as 'buckaroo to the bones'(np). Bush publicly declared (Macaskill, 2011) in 2001 that the American military was going to 'smoke out'(np) its terrorist enemies. 'I want justice' (np) he stated, 'There's an old poster out West that said, 'Wanted, dead or alive' (np). There is an undeniable link here to the strategies used in previous conflicts. George Creel's propaganda machine made ubiquitous Woodrow Wilson's call to 'make the world safe for democracy' in 1917. In doing so, American moral superiority aligned with Adamic heroism. After the attacks on Pearl Harbour in 1942, the Japanese enemy were caricatured and dehumanised. The attack on American soil produced a thirst for revenge that galvanised and justified the brutality evident in the Pacific theatre. In Vietnam, the pervasive and popular imagery associated with John Wayne became a barometer for the performance of American masculinity.

Bonnie Mann (2014), discussing the atrocities of September 11th 2001, argues that 'the destruction of the towers came to stand in for the violent destruction of the American phallus' (4) and that their subsequent collapse was 'an embarrassing detumescence' (4). The attacks were a wounding of the American Adam and his potency. Mann explains that the nation felt 'like a woman' (4) as they witnessed 'two erect towers […] penetrated over and over again' (4). Sally Haslanger (2003), therefore, argues that the attacks were followed by a 'masculine response' (459) which cemented the hegemonic form as a

'passionate patriot' (460). Therefore, the attacks offer a paradox. As a traumatic event, 9/11 is unprecedented yet the gendered response has historic and mythic echoes. Kevin Coe et al. (2007) argue that President George W. Bush used 'a discourse rich in highly masculinised language' (32) in an effort to 'accrue political capital' (34) and to make his War on Terror message 'unequivocal and unchallengeable' (34). Bush, Coe continues, used 'strength masculinity' (35) and 'dominance masculinity' (35) to communicate 'physical power and supremacy' (35) as well as to achieve the symbolic 'emasculation of others' (35). The enemy, Coe concludes, was stripped of 'traditional heterosexual masculinised qualities' (35). These processes echo elements of each conflict examined in this thesis. American masculinity is locked into a repetitive pattern in which trauma is followed by a renewed focus on Adamic singularity. Consequently, a singular narrative emerges as conflict unfolds. Literature's role at this point is not to offer a counter narrative but to demonstrate that plurality and uncertainty are closer to the material life of the American masculine subject.

It is here, then, that this concluding section comes back to text. Alongside the originality evident in the broad theoretical mode of this analysis, this work contains detailed and innovative commentary on the manner in which narrative addresses American masculinities and their inherent tensions. It bears repeating that this is a literary study and that my intention has always been to privilege textual modes of representation in my analysis. In a world of competing narratives, it is important, however, to state that the narratives themselves cannot (and, in my opinion, do not) lay any claim to textual authority. This thesis recognises a plurality of narrative modes, narrative voices and narrative approaches. What these novels share, therefore, is a resistance to singularity. They recognise the tensions and liminal spaces between myth and materiality and explore them.

What unites these texts and their often disparate narrative approaches are crises in representation. Combat experience and its aftermaths pose a paradoxical narrative difficulty. The traumatic event in all of its corporeal, psychological and intellectual manifestations creates the urge to bear witness. The writers chosen for this study have their own first hand experiences of combat and their writing arguably grows out of such experience. The difficulty is

that the nature and magnitude of twentieth century war sustains a resistance to linear narrative capture. This thesis explores the formal properties of modernism, a revised naturalism and three decades of postmodern writing. The texts are, therefore, varied in their treatment of combat and its impact upon American masculine identities and subjectivities.

Dos Passos and Hemingway look to an aesthetic of empty symbolism and lost ritual. Their novels are a lament for the efficacy of American performance. Their protagonists take action yet it inevitably fails. Mailer and Jones, by contrast, look to realism and verisimilitude as a means to communicate the corporeal trauma generated by mechanised war. Their novels are detailed, intricate and sprawling. They are a panoramic view of war with the political aim of providing a panorama of America's vast social systems. These are perhaps the least self-conscious of the texts considered within. Their attempts at reportage are a tacit rejection of modernism and at odds with the subsequent narrative innovations of postmodernism. This suggests is that their fiction shuts down debate. Its realism and focus on detail leaves little room for self-consciousness or commentary on the nature of narrative and trauma.

This is why Heller and Vonnegut are, this thesis argues, a crucial step in American war fiction's narrative development. The ambiguity in language and in masculine agency helps to foreground the shift from heroic to anti-heroic. Their temporal and spatial experiments render each text as metafiction and, thus, the notion of war as narrative difficulty becomes central. Vonnegut regards his book as a failure and that this is all that it could ever have been. Yet, such narrative pessimism is checked by the fact that, despite the futility, he will try to tell his story anyway. This decision is intellectually courageous. Vonnegut's weariness and bleak outlook on his own trauma is tempered by the humane act of narration. In a system in which the American masculine subject lives without the illusory autonomy promised by Adamic myth Vonnegut's narrative provides imaginative agency. Even if narrative fails it is still an act of creativity.

This is the notion that drives the Vietnam fiction examined in the final chapter of this thesis. Vietnam's unknowable nature is both a material terror and a metonym for the unravelling subjectivities of the postmodern masculine subject. Heinemann's texts combine the brutality and corporeal realism of Mailer and

Jones with a reflexive and self-aware approach to narrative. He simultaneously narrates the conditions that create trauma and, in his more experimental passages, the ramifications that such conditions have for narration. O'Brien's slippery engagement with narrative agency and self-determination valorises imaginative space. Unlike the other writers discussed in this thesis, he sees the imagined and the fictional as potentially Adamic. Imaginative space is artifice but, when all around is also clearly so, it is self-determined and self-shaped artifice. It has the potential for altruism and for psychological reflection. O'Brien's fiction, then, demonstrates the potential for eschatological satisfaction. It is not completeness in terms of victory or material success. It is a completeness of imaginative possibility. This thesis, therefore, demonstrates that dominant narratives of American identity and of American war are reductive. They quash and shut down debate and nuance. The American masculine-self can only achieve agency through his relationship with the very narratives that define him. It is here that Adamic possibility exists.

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