Imagining War And Peace: American Women's Short World War Ii Fiction.

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IMAGINING WAR AND PEACE
American Women's Short World War II Fiction

by

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ABSTRACT

Until recently, little to no academic attention or critical study was given to women's war literature. Since women did not serve in combat, they were presumed absent from war thus lacking any stories to tell. Women scholars, recognizing these presumptions to be inaccurate, increased attention to women's war literature. To date, studies have concentrated on examining women's war stories for their historical and sociological content more than their literary qualities. Current literary analyses concentrate on W.W.I and Vietnam literature.

The war short fiction about W.W.II written by American women commands further study for several reasons. First, it provides significant insights into the literary developments during the watershed 1940's. Second, it explores the development of post-W.W.II American thought. Most importantly, it tells the truth about a war that has been "romanticized almost beyond recognition"(Fussell ix), thus correcting dangerous misconceptions about war and peace. Employing a variety of critical analyses, feminism, structuralism, autobiography, this dissertation examines World War II short fiction written by American women between 1935 and 1953.

Chapter one provides an overview of the literary climate of the 1940's. The war combined with vacillations in literary

tastes and styles to create a difficult environment for all writers. Chapter two features in-depth literary analyses of stories that examine the causes of war; chapter three features stories that examine war's effects. Writers such as Katherine Anne Porter, Bessie Breuer, Ann Petry, Shirley Jackson, and Dorothy Parker determine W.W.II causes to be complex, its effects especially dangerous for their destruction of human relationships. These chapters focus on the connections among war, human relationships, and language. Chapter four concentrates on Kay Boyle's war short fiction since Boyle is one of America's most prescient and prolific writers. Chapter five looks at Martha Gellhorn's and Jean Stafford's examination of peacetime in a world where peace seems unimaginable.

My study concludes that this comprehensive, diverse, and to-date undervalued body of writing represents key progressions in the American literary tradition as well as valuable insights into the developing patterns of American thought resulting from World War II.

INTRODUCTION

The focus of this study provokes many questions: Why examine W.W. II stories? Why concentrate on women writers? Why chose short fiction?

This year marked the fiftieth anniversary of the end of World War II. Books appeared from historical retrospectives to fiction, attempting to describe, explain, recapture the war experience in a way previous books had not. As a result, we were continually reminded of both the glory and the horror that surrounded a time when the entire world was at war. We were also reminded that World War II remains the most popular war in our national imagination. Paul Fussell, in his Wartime (1990), characterizes W.W.II as being "sanitized and romanticized almost beyond recognition"(ix). Probably the romanticizing began during the war, in part with good intentions; nevertheless, the myth of W.W.II as "the last, good war" continues today. By looking at some of the war stories that came out of W.W.II, particularly stories by women authors, we can see the germination of an anti-war attitude that was not fully recognized in American fiction until Heller's and Vonnegut's novels in the 1960's.

Until recently, little to no academic attention or critical study was given to women's war literature. The province of war stories was thought to belong to men only. Since women did not serve in combat, they were presumed absent from war, and "presumed to have no story to tell"(Hanley 7).

As scholars began recognizing that women have never been "absent" from the war experience, studies began appearing that focused on women's war literature, fictional as well as non-fictional. Some of these studies concentrated on justifying attention to war stories written by women. Others analyzed the stories to gain historical and sociological insights into the treatment of women during war, perhaps more accurately the victimization of women by war. Still others examined women's war stories to learn about the various roles women fulfill in war.

These studies found that while some women's war literature offers two stereotypical images of women's place in war--a heroine bravely maintaining the homefront or a victim, usually of the enemy but sometimes of the entire system of war as practiced by her nation--much of it is more complex. A truer portrait of women's place in war has been established by current commentators such as Margaret Higonnet in Behind the Lines (1987), Helen M. Cooper, Adrienne Munich, and Susan Squier in Arms and the Woman (1989), and Miriam Cooke and Angela Woollacott in Gendering War Talk (1993). Higonnet notes that especially in the twentieth century women became more involved in war experiences that traditionally only men had "[moving] from auxiliary and support roles ... to sabotage and combat..."(1). Cooper, Munich, and Squier contend that "the themes of women's complicity in and resistance to war [need to be] fully integrated into conventional conceptions of

the war narrative" (xv). Cooke and Woollacott say something similar, but develop the idea further. They observe that an exclusive pattern of thinking about war (assigning the female experience solely to the homefront, the male experience to the battle front) leaves out a good number of both male and female experiences. They propose that the rigid distinctions between genders in war have become "negotiable binarisms," binarisms that are reflected in the language writers use to represent war and women's place in it.

Cooke and Woollacott's thesis points to two essential characteristics about women's W.W. II literature. First, stories written by women about W.W.II reveal a variety of experiences. Women writers present their female characters in any number of roles from brave widow to helpless victim, but also to French resistance fighters, war correspondents, WACS, pilots. Some women imagine what the male experience of war must be like. While some do focus on women's war experience in relation to men, many stories examine the experience of women in relation to other people, regardless of gender, and especially in relation to themselves.

Second, the importance of language in analyzing their writing cannot be overstated. As Cooke and Woollacott say, language is important because it "transforms experience into consciousness" (xii). In his essay, "The Threshold of Thrill: Life Stories in the Skies over Southeast Asia," Stanley Rosenberg suggests that male pilots told war stories in an

"attempt to construct a narrative identity: a workable conception of self"(Gendering War Talk 43). By extension, we could say that women writers possessed a similar motivation. This connection, between experience, language, and linguistic constructs of experience; that is, war stories, is especially significant when considered along with Lynne Hanley's thesis in Writing War: Fiction, Gender and Memory(1991).

Hanley examines the connection between our capacity to imagine war and our propensity to make war and how fiction functions to enable that connection. She says, "narratives of war are ...potent in shaping our imagination and how we imagine war has a great deal to do with our propensity to make war"(4).

By combining the perspective that women play a number of roles in war and that their experiences are not rigidly fixed with the fact that fiction serves as a conduit allowing readers to share their experiences, we arrive at one conclusion: One of the most important roles women play in war is that of storyteller.

W.W.II short fiction by women adds significantly to the American literature canon, then, for several reasons. First, since it was easier for writers to produce and publish short fiction during the war (novels take more time and more retrospection), short fiction provides insights into the war as the participants were experiencing it. Second, since war experience cannot/should not be segregated by gender, we can

learn a lot by listening to the voices of women storytellers. Finally, since fiction has influenced how we continue to think about war, we need to examine all war stories to gain a truer picture of the W.W.II experience.

In the introduction to the O.Henry Memorial Award Prize Stories of 1941, Herschel Brickell praises Kay Boyle's first-place story, "Defeat": "One of the story's most notable virtues is that it shows how fiction, given all the appearance of fact, may actually be much more effective than the best reporting"(xiii). Brickell recognizes what Tim O'Brien later asserted in The Things They Carried, his autobiographical novel about his Vietnam War experience: to be able to tell a "true" war story, writers need fictional devices. William Abrahams, editor of the O.Henry 1981 series, concurs that fiction "releases writers from the 'tyranny of fact' to trust in imagination to evoke emotional response"(Carter 56).

In her Writing War, Lynne Hanley assigns a greater significance to the power of fiction. Hanley writes "...our fictions have power, they shape our memories of the past and they create memories of pasts we have never had..."(3). As Hanley reminds us, we must consider what aspects in war stories contribute to our "cultural memory of war," and lead us to "make war again and again..."(4).

Recent studies have focused on the role war stories play in American literature. According to David Vanderwerken, in his dissertation, Battle Hymns: The Rhetorical Strategies of

Twentieth Century American War Novels, war stories are not just a part of twentieth-century American literature, they represent "in microcosm the twentieth-century American novel genre as a whole."[1] Elizabeth Matthews, in her dissertation, Women Writing and War, contends that "the history of America is incomplete without the history of war and protest... [and that] women's voices are a part of both"(DAI abstracts). In his "The American Literature of War," David Lundberg asks "What would our literary heritage be without [war stories]?" (373). Still, war literature holds a paradoxical place in the American literary canon. In one sense, war stories such as The Red Badge of Courage, A Farewell to Arms, Catch-22, and In Country are viewed as classics of American literature in general and valued for qualities that transcend their subject matter. In another sense, some qualities that are indigenous to American literature require the structure inherent to war stories--the exploration of the individual vs. the group or as Fiedler says in Love and Death in the American Novel the propensity towards violence found in American literature.

As Susan Schweik says in her introduction to A Gulf So Deeply Cut, it is important to recognize not only the role of women in war, but also the role of the female writer in war literature. Since World War II, American women writers have

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[1]Vanderwerken examines Dos Passos' Three Soldiers, Hemingway's The Sun Also Rises, Mailer's The Naked and The Dead, Wilson's The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit, Michener's The Bridges at Toko-Ri, Ehrlich's Court Martial, O'Brien's Going After Cacciato, and Mason's In Country.

gained increased recognition in general, but women's war stories remain to a large extent undervalued and/or invisible.[2] For example, in The Second World War in Fiction, Eric Homberger discusses only male authors in his analysis of United States' war stories. Paul Fussell's recent books Wartime and The Norton Book of Modern War include little recognition of W.W.II women writers.

In general, more critical studies have concentrated on W.W.I and Vietnam War literature. The only literary studies that focus on W.W.II literature are these: Susan Schweik's analysis of W.W.II poetry, A Gulf So Deeply Cut: American Women Poets and the Second World War (1991); Marilyn Elkins dissertation, Kay Boyle's Narrative Innovations (1991), Maureen Honey's book, Creating Rosie the Riveter (1984), Linda Ann Schuller's dissertation, American Women during W.W.II as Portrayed in Film and Fiction(1988); and Dorothy Sauber's thesis, "Historical Context/Literary Content: Women Write About War and Women"(1988). A greater number of studies exist on Holocaust literature. Schweik's book remains an important contribution to American literary criticism. Elkins dissertation provides a comprehensive analysis of Boyle's novels. Honey's book looks only at popular fiction published in pulp periodicals, and her analysis is purely sociological;

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[2] During the 1940's, women were more accepted in the male domain. After the war, they were supposed to return home. This attitude could explain what happened to women's W.W.II literature--it was recognized during the 1940's, but forgotten afterwards.

she does not focus on the literary quality of the stories. Schuller's dissertation is also extremely limited in scope and examines the two genres, film and fiction, without establishing any evident criteria. Sauber's thesis is more comprehensive and more critically insightful, but it too is limited by Sauber's definition of women's literature--it must be about women only, written by a woman in a woman's voice. Part of the reason that W.W.II women's fiction has not received more attention may be that scholars have had difficulty locating it. Before Susanne Carter's, War and Peace Through Women's Eyes: A Selective Bibliography of Twentieth-Century American Women's Fiction (1992), virtually no bibliography existed that provided information on what existed.[3] Carter's contribution provides necessary information so that we can expand our study of war literature.

As we need to broaden the American literary canon to include more women's war stories, we need to expand our definition of the war story. Lundberg says that after W.W.II and the advent of the Cold War, the line between war and peace became indistinct and that "in a sense all literature written

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[3]Alice Budge and Pam Didur's "Women and War: A Selected Bibliography" in Mosaic 1990, lists non-fiction works. In prefatory remarks, Budge and Didur include only a few works of fiction, such as Bobbie Anne Mason's In Country, contending that "the parameters of this bibliography preclude the listing of creative works"(151). While Carter's bibliography has proved invaluable to any study of women's war literature, some important short stories, such as Bessie Breuer's "Pigeons en Casserole," Hazel Hawthorne's "More Like a Coffin," and Jean Stafford's "The Maiden" are not listed.

in the shadow of the nuclear age is war literature"(388). In her Women and War (1987), Jean Bethke Elshtain writes, "neither women nor war is a self-evident category...war is an object of discourse central to historic understandings of politics in the West. Without war stories there would be many fewer stories to tell"(x).

A misconception exists among many commentators that a war story depicts the experience of combat and by extension can be told only by men since they are the ones who participate in combat. This idea contains two fallacies: First, as Lundberg reminds us, many war stories have been written by men who did not experience combat at first-hand. Stephen Crane was not born until after the Civil War in 1871 and relied on interviews with combatants to help produce The Red Badge of Courage (374). Still, he translated second-hand war experience into one of the classics of American literature. Second, war experience involves more than combat. It involves waiting for a loved one to return from war, grieving when that loved one never returns, and experiencing the suffering and frustration of attempting to heal the psychological and physical scars of the ones who do survive. True war stories, then, are more than just "battle stories"; they consider a broader, more comprehensive examination of the war experience.

One of the reasons women's war literature has not received the attention it deserves stems in part from the problems of gender bias, but it also originates from the

binary way of thinking in the post-modern, nuclear age. Is there a discernable male or female narrative structure? Are women writers constructing typical female narratives or trying to imitate a male pattern? Or, are they inventing (Cooke and Woollacott may say negotiating) a new one that transcends polarities--one that provides readers with an understanding that traditional binary thinking which assigns gender to war experience is wrong and dangerous? We need to follow Cooke and Woollacott's directive to "negotiate" these binarisms so that we can fully benefit from stories that provide us with a better understanding of the causes of war and the effects of war on the individual psyche, on relationships, and on American culture. We also need to understand better the dynamics of the war experience. W.W.II short fiction written by women provides a good place to start.[4]

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[4]Women have continued to write about W.W.II even though the war ended over fifty years ago. Between 1950 and 1991 over sixty short stories by American women authors about W.W.II have been published in collections; in fact, the number of stories about W.W.II increased in the 1980's and 1990's. Some of these were recovered from the 1940's and 50's, but most were new. A good number are Holocaust stories, some written by Holocaust survivors. So many have been written about "The Bomb," that Carter devotes an entire chapter to nuclear war fiction (War and Peace 187-221). As the short war fiction written during the 1940's and 50's reflects both the changes in American literature and American thought, so does the short fiction written about W.W.II after Vietnam reflect the most recent literary trends and our changing world view since 1975. More study needs to be done of this literature.

CHAPTER ONE

Striking A Balance: American Women Writers Face the Changes of the Forties

One of the best ways to dispel the myth that women writers have no war stories to tell is to look at the collections of notable fiction from 1939-1950: The O.Henry Memorial Award series, The Best American Short Stories series, It's A Woman's World: A Collection of Stories from Harper's Bazaar, 55 Short Stories from The New Yorker, Cross Section 1947, and Wave Me Goodbye.[1] Except for the latter, all collections were compiled during the same decade. They contain over thirty war stories (some of which appear in more than one collection) written by over twenty different women writers. (See Figure 1) Each editor of these anthologies includes prefatory comments stating that the stories were chosen for their literary quality, not for their subject matter. Two of the collections, It's a Woman's World and Wave Me Goodbye, feature literature by women writers exclusively. The rest strive for objective selection of any fiction that

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[1]William Peden in his The American Short Story: Continuity and Change asserts that, despite some inconsistencies (different editors favored different types of stories), "It is impossible to overestimate the role played by these collections in stimulating the development of the American short story"(17). Paul Fussell in Wartime believes "Wartime was notably the age of anthologies" because "The war forced everyone...to consider which things were valuable enough to be preserved..."(244-245).

fits a certain quality standard.[2] Philip Wylie, in the Foreword to It's A Woman's World, calls the collection "some of the best contemporary men's reading in print"(i). To some extent, then, despite the gender biases that existed in the 1940's, women writers were not only visible but also valued.[3]

The women who wrote and published short fiction during World War II faced obstacles stemming as much from the circumstances of their time as from their gender. Trends in American literature were shifting; commercialized fiction was growing; and the government, through OWI and the Magazine Bureau, was demanding that writers conform to an agenda of propaganda. These elements combined with the war itself to create a climate in which creative thought and freedom of expression proved difficult to achieve.

During the 1940's, disagreement increased among writers and critics about the state of fiction in America--where it was, where it was going and where it should go. Archibald

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[2]The O.Henry series and the Best American series in particular repeat in each year's volume the criteria for selecting certain short stories for distinction. While Herschel Brickell felt the need to mention that the top three award-winning writers in 1941 were women, he seems more concerned with denouncing any regional bias than gender bias. In 1943 he reminds readers that the first O.Henry award, in 1919, went to a woman, Margaret Prescott Montague, for "England to America," a war story. 55 Stories from The New Yorker features only eleven war stories, five of which are written by women.

[3]Editors chose to honor a number of short stories by women, many of which were not war stories. In 1942 and 1943, for example, Eudora Welty won back-to-back first place O.Henry Memorial awards for her stories "The Wide Net" and "Livvie is Back."

MacLeish and Van Wyck Brooks condemned writers such as Faulkner, Dos Passos, Farrell, and Hemingway as The Irresponsibles and called for literature to "make a total commitment to society."[4] Edmund Wilson argued for artistic freedom and "sharp critical intelligence."[5] Still others thought that the major American writers of the 20's and 30's, while contributing greatly, had reached their peak.[6] Regardless of the disagreement over the condition of American literature, virtually all commentators from that time until today agree that American fiction in the 1940's was in a state of transition.

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[4]Chester E. Eisinger, Fiction of the Forties 8-9.

[5] Paul Fussell, Wartime 172. The MacLeish-Wilson debate is noted by most scholars commenting on the literary critical climate during this decade. Edwin Seaver, lampoons MacLeish's position in his Foreword to Cross Section 1947, stating that "the war was fought to a victorious conclusion despite 'the irresponsibles'"(x). Eisinger, whose book appeared in 1963, credits MacLeish with more influence, noting that even those who wished to dispute MacLeish's position, such as Bernard De Voto in his 1944 The Literary Fallacy, inadvertently lent "support to MacLeish's position"--one that "tied together literature and society in an indissoluble knot"(9). Fussell places the argument in a larger context. First, the debate did not begin and end in the 1940's. Wilson and MacLeish's argument escalated as early as 1928 and continued until at least 1952, when James Jones "paraphrased his editor Maxwell Perkins and said: 'The only thing wrong with literature in our time is that it lacks...malice, envy, and hate.... This fear of rascality in our writers is unwittingly turning them into moralists"(172-180). Moreover, Fussell believes it is wrong to single out MacLeish (he adds Carl Sandburg and Edna St. Vincent Millay) as the only writer guilty of placing high-mindedness over quality writing during the war (175).

[6]This position has been advanced from 1941 in Edith Mirrielees' Atlantic Monthly article, "What is Wrong with the American Short Story" to 1992 in Tony Hilfer's American Fiction Since 1940.

literature, virtually all commentators from that time until today agree that American fiction in the 1940's was in a state of transition.

The editors of Best American Stories and The O.Henry Memorial Award series note a shift from the two basic concerns of the American short story--seamless good form and "social usefulness"-- to a more subjective and introspective mode. Edward J. O' Brien, editor of the Best American Short Stories series until 1941, praises the "best" stories for their "organic" form and "the artist's power of compelling imaginative persuasion [to] transform [stories] into a living proof" (BA 1940 xv). Harry Hansen, editor of the O.Henry series until 1941, valued stories that went beyond holding the reader's interest and "open[ed] his eyes to the problems they describe"(1939 x).

By the end of the decade, Martha Foley (O'Brien's successor) does not praise the stories' qualities as much as observes their characteristics (good and bad) and provides an overview of the shifting trends in American literature from "the 'internal man,'" in 1947, to "tension" in 1948, and finally, to "the most important happening in American literature this year...the appearance of an entire new generation of writers" in 1949. Today, critics concur that writers' approaches changed from a concern with social issues to a movement inward away from failed social and political systems (Hilfer 11). "With all forces thus conspiring to

destroy the self, fiction set about recording the survival of the self"(Eisinger 20). 1940 began with a call for new, quality fiction. As a result, many previously unknown writers emerged with a variety of approaches that changed American fiction. By 1949, commentators looked to this new generation of writers to give American literature direction and infuse it with vitality. Writers of this post-war generation included a greater variety of writers, with previously "marginal" groups--women, African American, Southern, and Jewish writers--comprising a more significant position in the American literature canon.

The call from the literary community to produce new, quality literature was joined to the call from the publishing industry to produce fiction that would sell. During the 1940's, periodical reading soared and opportunity increased for writers to have their works (particularly short fiction) published. But this increased commercialization of fiction had its drawbacks. The distinction was quickly made between popular periodicals and quality periodicals, popular and quality fiction. The 1940 issue of Best American Short Stories lists twelve quality periodicals. While the editor deems all the magazines worthy, he still feels the need to distinguish the stories further by ranking them with one, two, or three asterisks denoting relative degrees of distinction.(See Figure 2). And, while some believed it was possible to produce quality literature that would sell, many associated popular

fiction with poor fiction.

Herschel Brickell, in his "Foreword" to the 1943 O.Henry Memorial Award Prize Stories, asserts that stories could have a market and be "artistic"(xxi). R.P. Blackmur, in The Sewanee Review, assigns an inverse relationship to commercial writing: the value of the literature decreases as the money paid a writer increases. Martha Foley, in her "Forewords" to Best American Short Stories of 1944 and 1945, chastises the writer who sells out to the commercial magazines: "Perhaps he becomes happy because he is rich. Perhaps. There was F. Scott Fitzgerald who never forgave himself"(Best American 1944 vi). Later, in 1949, she notes with a touch of irony that "An odd and amusing development in the short story this year has been its appearance at the top of the best-seller list, a place where collections of short stories are not usually found"(ix). But the stigma of popular fiction persisted. In his The American Short Story William Peden contends that commercialization virtually ruined American short fiction. He believes the American short story reached its "highest achievement" only when it disappeared "from the mass-circulation market"(1-3, 9,10).

Because of commercial competition, many smaller periodicals, such as Southern Review, did not survive the forties. As early as 1939, Harry Hansen noted the effects of commercialization--the death of two quality magazines, Scribner's and Frontier and Midland. With the high number

between artistic and popular literature, the problem for all writers became not so much getting published as getting read. The irony developed that if one wrote quality fiction, her story might not be read by a significant number of people.

Of course, during the war, these problems were exacerbated by the government's pressure on both publishers and writers to produce works that contributed to the war effort. The Office of War Information (OWI) was established in the summer of 1942 ostensibly to "disseminate information about government programs in a neutral way"(Honey, Creating Rosie, 30). At the same time (June 1942), the Magazine Bureau was established and in July 1942 began publishing The Magazine War Guide. It was distributed to "four hundred to six hundred magazines with a combined readership of over 140 million people" and to over nine hundred magazine staffers and one thousand freelance writers (Honey, Rosie 37-38). This bi-monthly publication, which continued until August 1945, suggested appropriate subject matter and story lines that would be helpful to the war effort.[7] As Honey explains,

> Fiction writers could [help win the war] even though they were far removed from combat, by fashioning home-front heroes who willingly gave of themselves to help their country and set an example of subordinating personal wishes for the good of the whole. (52)

While many writers and publishers complied with the

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[7]Honey contends that one of its major goals was to help move women into the workforce when they were needed during the war, then move them out again when the war ended and men needing jobs returned.

government's guidelines (after all, as Honey points out, they wanted to stay on the right side of the government so that they could stay in business), others resisted. For example, although Bessie Breuer worked for OWI, her award-winning short fiction does not follow the story formula advanced by the Magazine War Bureau, a subsidiary of OWI.[8] In the 1943 issue of Best American Short Stories, Martha Foley adamantly rejects the effort to force "any form of creative expression into a propaganda mould"(BA 1943 ix). At best, editors and writers were torn between an understandable need for writing that would not compromise the nation's security and the fear of having such controls on free thought and speech. Whichever position writers took, the pressure to renounce individual concerns and conform for the common good remained, adding to the overall oppressiveness of the war climate itself.

In his The American Short Story, William Peden states that the best war stories are "concerned more with the effects of war upon the individual participants than on acts of war in

[8]This formula changed with government need. For example, when the government needed women in the workforce, they suggested fictional themes that would "subtly generate desirable attitudes," i.e. getting women to want to work and getting the public to accept working women. War work was deemed a woman's civic and moral responsibility. (Honey, "New Roles" 39 and Rosie 6). When the war ended and the government wanted women to relinquish their jobs, the formula changed, stressing a more domestic female image. Honey wonders how the government expected the "strong figure of "Rosie the Riveter" to be transformed "into the naive, dependent, childlike, self-abnegating model of femininity in the late forties and fifties"(Rosie 1-2). In her book, she illustrates that the propagandistic goals of OWI and The Magazine Bureau sometimes failed (212).

the overall oppressiveness of the war climate itself.

In his The American Short Story, William Peden states that the best war stories are "concerned more with the effects of war upon the individual participants than on acts of war in themselves"(155-156). Of course, some of the most serious effects of war are felt not only by participants but also by writers. War denies individuality, dehumanizes people, and causes temporary, if not permanent, psychological damage, disillusionment, and despair. Many writers could not write about World War II; others found it difficult to write at all. In the 1941 edition of Best American Short Stories, Edward O'Brien looked to the American writer to "keep his head" and "maintain the truth" since "The pressure of war in Europe completely inhibits creative writing at present"(xv-xxi). Martha Foley continued the theme in 1942, including the American short story as one of the freedoms and cultural institutions America was fighting to preserve. Arguably, these attitudes could have added to the pressure authors were feeling blocking their ability and/or desire to write.

In addition to the general oppressiveness with which war suffocates creativity, war inhibits language and the ability to use imagination to create freely. Fussell stresses the intellectual damage the war caused, particularly to think freely and objectively in a productive way, untainted by propaganda. Because language is restricted by censorship, corrupted by vulgarity (the violence and crudity of war is

reflected in an increased use of cursing and obscenities), and reduced to euphemisms and clichés, "disappointment threatens anyone searching in published wartime writing for a use of language that could be called literary..." (Fussell 251).

Writers who did manage to overcome the war's debilitating effects and to avoid the pressures of commercialization and of propaganda campaigns still had to face the difficulty of trying to find words adequate to express the horrors that surrounded them. Fussell attributes loquacity to World War I literature but finds "something close to silence" in the writing of the Second World War. He quotes Robin Maugham, Olivia Manning's fictional character in Nomad: "'Everything I could think of to say seemed pitifully inadequate'"(Fussell 132-133). War-storytellers' major problem, then, was to find a way to use language to express war's damaging effects on it. Women writers solved the dilemma by developing characters who struggle and often fail to find words adequate enough to cope with war's traumas and to connect to one another as war's victims. As the war continued, women writers relied more on understatement and refrained from commenting (and especially preaching) about their characters' actions. Their stories speak for themselves. Any moral, if there is one, is the story itself. In the late thirties, a number of American war stories began to appear in periodicals, but few were deemed worthy of inclusion in award-winning collections. In the 1939 edition of O.Henry Memorial Award Stories, Harry Hansen

few years of the war, Boyle's stories dominate periodicals and collections, often being the only war stories included.[9] But a number of other female authors produced notable war stories, and though some (especially Bessie Breuer) have undeservedly been forgotten by current commentators, women writers whose war stories are still anthologized today include such well-known authors as Dorothy Parker, Dorothy Canfield (Fisher), Shirley Jackson, and Kay Boyle. Many of these stories involve women at the homefront, but only one, Edna Ferber's "Grandma Isn't Playing," is the "Rosie the Riveter" type that appeared in many of the pulp periodicals.[10] Few award-winning stories appeared in what are now considered the pulp periodicals; they typically appeared in The New Yorker, Harper's, Harper's Bazaar, and The Atlantic Monthly.

Though most of the collections' editors did not express attitudes as extreme as Fussell's about literature in general, they were ambiguous about the war story itself. In 1940, The O.Henry award went to Steven Vincent Benet for "Freedom's a Hard-Bought Thing" because the editors thought a slave story

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[9]Boyle's short fiction during this time is so prolific and significant that it warrants its own in-depth analysis. See Chapter Four, "Stories That Must Somehow Be Told."

[10]This story appears in Anne Boston's collection Wave Me Goodbye. Boston admits that while she chose the stories for this collection for their literary quality first, she was also guided by a story's "historical interest"(x). In the case of Ferber's story, Boston includes it as an example of writing produced to conform to the "propaganda commission...to boost women's part in the war effort..."(xvi).

attitudes as extreme as Fussell's about literature in general, they were ambiguous about the war story itself. In 1940, The O.Henry award went to Steven Vincent Benet for "Freedom's a Hard-Bought Thing" because the editors thought a slave story more readily awakened the reader's imagination than a story about the present situation in Europe (ix-x). At times when war stories were singled out for distinction, such as 1944 when Irwin Shaw won the first place O.Henry award for his "Walking Wounded," Brickell lavished praise on their literary qualities, but Dorothy Canfield Fisher suggested that their dual themes of sex and war are "'a sort of unconscious Gallup poll about what is in the forefront of human minds and hearts'"(xvi-xvii). In 1948, Brickell expressed great pleasure that "this year's collection...contains no war stories at all" (xvii). And in 55 Stories from the New Yorker(1949), only ten are war stories.

The war fiction that Best American, O.Henry, It's A Woman's World, Cross Section 1947, 55 Stories from the New Yorker, and Wave Me Goodbye recognized for their literary qualities does not conform easily to type. When writing about the war, women authors focused on a variety of themes, in some of which gender is an issue, some not. There are a number of stories showing wives in relation to their lovers or husbands--women saying goodbye (e.g., Boyle's "The Canals of Mars"); women following their soldier husbands from one domestic army base to another (Johnson's "The Rented Room,"

cases, the writers examine the ways in which war adversely affects the ability of men and women to find and sustain relationships.

But not all stories deal with romance and marriage. The male/female dynamic in Ruth Portugal's "Call A Solemn Assembly" is that of sister and brother. Nancy Hale's "They Were as Brothers" involves a male Jewish exile and his female neighbor who, because of her own experience with cruelty, is able to understand his agony better than anyone else. Conversely, Bessie Breuer's "Bury Your Own Dead" depicts a young WAC whose individual tragedy (the death of her fiancé) renders her unable to relate to another, a soldier who lost his brother. While Breuer does not deny her characters their sexuality, the emphasis is not on their gender but on their relationship as one grieving human being to another.[11]

In fact, during the war, editors noted an increase in the number of stories that dealt with human relationships in general. In the "Foreword" to The Best American Short Stories of 1943, Martha Foley credits the war with creating an attitude within writers that compelled them to tell stories not for propaganda purposes or out of pity but for "the human

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[11]Other stories worthy of recognition do not fit into any of the above categories. Dorothy Canfield's "The Knot Hole," and Allison Stuart's "Sunday Liberty" imagine war from a male perspective. Edita Morris's "Heart of Marzipan" depicts war's greatest crime, "'putting out the laughter of children'"(Carter 124). Emily Hahn's "The Baby Amah" describes a wife's separation from her husband, a Japanese prisoner of war. Jo Sinclair, "The Brothers" illustrates the damage violence does to the male psyche.

number of stories that dealt with human relationships in general. In the "Foreword" to The Best American Short Stories of 1943, Martha Foley credits the war with creating an attitude within writers that compelled them to tell stories not for propaganda purposes or out of pity but for "the human values in them"(x). Still, even though writers did not conform to propaganda, they have an agenda in their stories. Often storytellers act as moral observer, identifying the nature of hatred, aggression, fear, and rage whose ultimate manifestation is war. In these stories gender is sometimes but not always an issue. The tragedy in Breuer's "Pigeons en Casserole" results from the abuses of patriarchy, but the tragedy in Petry's "In Darkness and Confusion" results from the abuses of racism. In many other stories, female characters act within the context of humanity, and this humanity as a whole is more important than any divisions between men and women. Though women's war stories of the 1940's may not be linked by a common theme, they do show a common concern with using fiction to illustrate the causes and effects of war. Writers determine the causes to be complex; their stories suggest a number of contributing factors, some particular to World War II, some to war in general. Katherine Anne Porter's "The Leaning Tower" and Bessie Breuer's "Pigeons en Casserole" offer multiple causes for World War II that fit in with most historians' theories. Ann Petry's "In Darkness and Confusion" illustrates not only the growing awareness of

America's hypocrisy during the forties (we were fighting racism and oppression of the Jews in Europe while practicing it against African Americans here at home) but also how continued oppression and fear can escalate into rage and violence and ultimately even to war. Hazel Hawthorne's "More Like a Coffin" is a good example of what many writers identified as a major contributor to the atrocities of W.W.II--not just racism and oppression but others' blindness and apathy towards them. Shirley Jackson's "The Lottery" shows how sheep morality--blindly following tradition and the crowd--and scapegoat mentality contributed to the Holocaust. More importantly, both Petry's and Jackson's stories caution that the utter destruction and unthinkable atrocities of World War II could happen here in America at any time, and (a minor but significant distinction) could happen AGAIN AND AGAIN because we haven't rid our society of racism and oppression. These stories will be discussed in-depth in Chapter Two.

Women storytellers of W.W.II were most concerned with one major effect of war--the destruction of human relationships. Dorothy Parker's "The Lovely Leave" depicts the disintegration of a marriage. Bessie Breuer's "Home is a Place" exposes the tragedy of a war widow. But war destroys more than romantic relationships and families--war destroys humans' ability (always tenuous even in the best circumstances) to communicate and connect to one another as human beings. Hale's "Those Are As Brothers" (1941) still hopes that successful human

connections are possible. But by 1945, Breuer's "Bury Your Own Dead" asserts that the war has destroyed the possibility. (Chapter Three.)

Kay Boyle's short war fiction provides the most comprehensive study of the causes of war, its effects, its connection to language, gender relationships, and human relationships. Because she was so prolific and her literary skill so superior Boyle's short fiction has survived to a greater extent than any other American woman author. Still, she has only recently begun receiving some of the attention she deserves. (Chapter Four).

Finally, most writers, both male and female, had difficulty imagining peace after W.W.II. While writers have continued to produce short fiction about W.W.II, these stories represent a continued effort to reinvision the war so as to understand its causes and effects better. The few stories set in peacetime depict characters struggling to find a sense of peace in a world forever changed by W.W.II. (Chapter Five).

A review of women's war short fiction from 1935-1953 reveals both the shifting trends of American literature and the development of a bleaker and blacker world view as a result of unrelenting and ever-increasing atrocities. If 1945 brought the end of the war, it also brought the full awareness of the Holocaust and the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. So, while stories of the early forties are more hopeful and optimistic, later ones have become darker, more

cynical, less hopeful. Stories from the mid-to-late forties seem to despair of the possibility of finding solutions and suggest a world without hope. As noted previously, fiction of the forties changed not only in tone but also in style. Katherine Anne Porter's "The Leaning Tower" (written in 1940) is more overtly didactic like the literature of the late thirties. Shirley Jackson's "The Lottery" is so symbolic that few recognize it as a war story, although it illustrates chillingly the Holocaust and humans' capacity for cruelty which periodically manifests itself in war.

In his American Fictions 1940-1980, Frederic Karl identifies a variety of challenges that faced writers during the forties, from the shifts in style to the war itself. In addition to all of the above-mentioned difficulties, Karl perceives one of the most significant as the disequilibrium between the individual ego and the individual within a group, particularly in marriage and in families (26). In his American Fiction Since 1940, Tony Hilfer discusses the problems 1940's writers faced finding a way to express themselves during a time when freedom of expression was severely inhibited. He describes the difficulty Robert Penn Warren faced during the 1940's of finding "a credible language for moral responsibility, a language neither too ideal to fit the dread realities of his time nor too complicitous with those realities in a self-defeating cynicism"(21). In their analyses of writers' problems during World War II, Karl and

Hilfer identify what all wartime writers struggled to achieve--a sense of balance.

It is a sense of balance that signifies the most important and effectively written war stories by women of the 1940's. At a time when the vicissitudes of the writing community and the competitiveness of the publishing industry paled by comparison to the chaos that controlled the world, these writers were able to summon the courage to write, to find the words to express the truth, and to maintain the fine distinction between "bathos [and] poignancy...sugar [and] sentiment" (Foley, "Foreword," Best American 1945 vii).

CHAPTER TWO

Reading the Signs: Determining the Causes of War

A desire to understand the causes of World War II underlies many of the stories written during and immediately after the war. Writers of the 1940's, attempting to read the "signs" of their times, created fiction that now serves as signs for us, showing readers a way to understand W.W.II as well as American short fiction. In structuralist theory, reading signs involves "the relation of signifiers to signifieds [as] matters of convention or agreement among the users of the sign system" (Vesterman 138). The problem for 1940's writers was that little agreement existed about the conventions of both literature and war. As discussed in the preceding chapter, writers worked within a literary climate of profound vacillations with no system of agreed-upon structures or formulae for fiction. (The only apparent agreed-upon convention for women's war fiction involved the propagandistic, clichéd formula found in the pulp periodicals.) As a result, quality war fiction did not conform easily to recognizable patterns. Similarly, World War II destroyed previously conceived ideas about war, such as the belief that the war could be fought cleanly and morally. People living during the war, then, could not rely on previous conceptions of war to understand what was happening and, more importantly, why it happened.

Roland Barthes insists that literature is "definitely no more than a language, a system of signs: its being lies not in the message but in the system....[and that the critic's/reader's task involves] not decipher[ing] the meaning of a sentence but determin[ing] the formal structure which permits the transmission of meaning"(Lodge 650-651). Actually, both responses to literature, determining its structure/determining its meaning are inseparable. Readers attempting to decipher the signs found in and represented by 1940's short war fiction discover that how we read the story, how we interpret its signs is affected by two conditions--the story's historical context and our contemporary response to the story's meaning which we cannot perceive without a consideration of the story's structure. For example, Katherine Anne Porter's "The Leaning Tower"(1940/1944) offers specific, generally accepted causes for World War II in a didactic, overt style. In both political science and literary convention, Porter's story illustrates the late-1930's/early-1940's view about what constitutes war and literature. Our contemporary response, which includes considering the separate elements of the story, its signs, and considering the story as a whole, a sign in and of itself, reveals more. Though its literary style may not be aesthetically pleasing, it is emotionally reassuring for it provides some sense of certainty. Its explanation of specific causes for the war agrees with conventional wisdom and conveys the idea that

these events were particular to one place and time. Its structure ensures that we do not miss its meaning. Readers could read Porter's story as a sign that the causes of W.W.II are comprehensible and, once so, functional as a means of preventing war's reoccurrence. Current historical commentators would disagree, as would other women writers.[1]

Bessie Breuer's "Pigeons en Casserole" (1943) and Hazel Hawthorne's "More Like a Coffin" (1943) blend "realist conventions [with] subtextual webs of symbolism" (Hilfer 11) to suggest that patriarchy and prejudice lead to war. These stories represent an understanding both that the causes of W.W.II were more complex and more universal than Porter's story suggests and that in both psychology and literature, America was turning inward, away from Europe and away from ideologies, returning to a focus on the individual. Ann Petry's "In Darkness and Confusion" (1946) follows this shift comparing the war to the social situation in America.[2] At the time Petry published her story, literary trends were changing so suddenly that her naturalism was outdated almost

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[1] A number of recent books debate the causes of W.W.II. Donald Kagan's On the Origins of War and the Preservation of Peace (1995) contends that the Allies "had the means for preserving the peace [but lacked] only the understanding and the will"(417). Michael C.C. Adams in The Best War Ever (1994) maintains that W.W.II was not preventable, nor was the scope of its destruction reducible as easily as some theorists would like to believe.

[2] Editors of the award anthologies note an increase during the war of the number of stories about human relationships in general, race relations in particular.

before she realized it (Hilfer 15,48). By the time Jackson wrote "The Lottery" (1949), Americans wanted to forget the war and return to a normal life. They did not want to be reminded of the war's atrocities or America's complicity in them. Readers responded to "The Lottery" with a mixture of confusion and anger, and Jackson's story remains deeply disturbing. Its abstract symbolism offers no specific causes to apply to W.W.II. Its ambiguous time and setting point to the idea that the town's evil could happen **again**, anytime and anywhere. "The Lottery" is a post-W.W.II and postmodern story whose structure signifies any number of meanings. Readers' responses to the story signify the post-war American psyche. As Miriam Cooke explains in Gendering War Talk, "postmodern war discourse introduces ambiguity into a narrative that has needed clarity and certainty to survive"(200). More than ever, in 1949, readers wanted clarity and certainty. By then, the style and structure of Porter's "The Leaning Tower" had long since faded from literary convention.

Katherine Anne Porter received a good deal of critical attention in the 1960's, winning a National Book Award and Pulitzer Prize for The Collected Stories of Katherine Anne Porter and publishing her best-known war novel, Ship of Fools (1962). But she is regarded as a pre-W.W.II writer, or a transitional writer, and today is generally

ignored.[3] "The Leaning Tower" belongs in both philosophy and style to the transitional period just before the onset of the war. Porter began writing "The Leaning Tower" on a 1931 trip to Europe, finished the story in 1940, and published it in 1944 as the title piece in a collection of her writing.[4]

The story, set in Berlin in 1931, examines the experiences of Charles Upton, an aspiring American artist, as he interacts with a number of diverse personalities, each supposed to represent various facets of European society that contributed to the rise and spread of Nazism.[5] Diana Hinze, in her "Texas and Berlin: Images of Germany in Katherine Anne Porter's Prose," believes the value of this story lies in its illustration of Porter's development as a writer. Hinze regards the story as an example of Porter's typical style which reflected her "basic skepticism of the redeeming value of human interaction," and of her ultimate concern with her

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[3] In his The American Short Story (1975), William Peden maintains that Porter belongs "essentially to the period prior [1940-1975] to that discussed in this book"(158). Tony Hilfer, in American Fiction Since 1940, briefly discusses Porter (less than one page) with other Southern fiction writers and notes her exclusion by feminist critics for her "sometimes illiberal politics"(191).

[4]Porter's story does not appear in any award-winning collection. Diana Hinze offers possible reasons for this exclusion: Porter's story is overtly didactic and by the time it appeared was dated both in subject matter and in literary style.

[5]As in Ship of Fools, Porter based the story on her voyage through Europe in the early 30's. Years later, she fictionalized the eight months she spent in Berlin and used her "knowledge of subsequent developments...to emphasize and reinterpret events"(Hinze 83).

"private domain" more than with her environment (87). In her evaluation of Porter's story, Hinze acknowledges that one of the problems with the story is that Porter's characterization of the Germans exhibits the prejudice she attributes to them.[6]

Hilfer concurs with Hinze that Porter was "obtuse about people of a different race and class," but maintains that Porter's fiction remains valuable for its "precise, ... clear and authoritative" moral stance (65). He calls Porter's "Magic" a "tour de force" for its ironic depiction of storyteller who fails to understand the true meaning of her story. In "The Leaning Tower," Porter uses Charles Upton, an artist who, ironically, fails to see the true nature of his environment, to illustrate the psychological problems and spiritual malaise that led to World War II.

In her story, Porter identifies three basic causes for W.W.II that conform to conventional theory: W.W.I; the German tendency toward romanticism and aggression; and the West's reaction to Germany--first denial, then resignation.

Several times characters comment on the crippling legacy of the First World War: Charles' barber has a permanent cough from the gas; his landlady Rosa, had servants to perform the housekeeping chores she must do now and blames her plight on an America she feels "deserted and betrayed us in the war"(477). But Charles refuses to acknowledge their comments.

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[6] In Joan Givner's Katherine Anne Porter: A Life, Porter herself admits "I cannot pretend objectivity" about the Germans (351).

When his barber tells him his cough is from war gas, Charles, after "a dismal pause," changes the subject (452). When Rosa reminisces about her life "before the war," Charles feels "cornered ... and rushed away"(468). His fellow border, Polish music student Tadeusz Mey, tries to explain (although he's careful not to excuse) Germany's behavior by reminding Charles that "'They lost that war ...[and] that damages a nation's personality no end'"(474).

But their defeat in World War I and the harsh conditions that followed cannot account totally for Germany's problems. The aftermath of World War I is represented by the scar on boarder Hans von Ghering's face. Hans sustained his wound fighting a duel--an allusion to what Porter sees as the German's inclination towards romanticism and violent aggression. While contemplating his scar, Hans' facial expression becomes a mixture of "amazing arrogance, pleasure, inexpressible vanity and self-satisfaction"(464). At the end of the story, Charles begins to sense the threat that hangs over everything. His response is to retreat to his bed, assume a fetal position, and have "a crying jag," even though "no crying jag or any other kind of jag would ever, in this world, do anything at all for him"(495).

The meaning of the story is best conveyed not by the characters' contrived speeches (see especially the New Year's Eve celebration) and Charles' pedantic thoughts, but by the contrast Porter exposes between what people believe or want to

believe and reality. Charles wants to believe he is a great artist; Rosa wants to believe in what her figurine of the Leaning Tower of Pisa (which Charles accidentally breaks) represents, "something she had, or thought she had once [that] even all patched up...was worthless to begin with" (494); Hans wants to believe that although Germany lost the first world war, they "'shall win in the next'"(486). Almost every German Charles meets exhibits a contrast between proud posturing and the raw fear that his/her haughty front barely covers--a fear any observant person, especially an artist like Charles Upton, should be able to perceive.

Charles aspires to be a great artist, but he needs to learn to see better. Although he perceives the misery around him, he seems incapable of conceiving what it all means. Worse still, this atmosphere of hate, fear, desperation, and oppression (readers can see the roots of a fascist police state in his landlady's controlling behavior) stifles him as an artist. So, while Charles needs to understand the nature of his environment, that very environment inhibits his ability to understand and express himself.

Other writers identify the combination of unhealed wounds, fear, desperation, nationalistic pride, oppression and misperception as the principal cause of W.W.II. But according to many novelists and poets, one of the major causes of World

War II was the patriarchal social and political systems.[7] Some contemporary political theorists agree. In her paraphrase of Betty Reardon's theory in Sexism and the War System, Dorothy Sauber proposes that war is a manifestation of core values in Western civilization--authority, power, force, competition, violence, and inequality. Sauber explains that

> not only does war affect every aspect of society, but also ... the roots of war lie in assumptions of patriarchal values of competition, hierarchy among humans of unequal value, and authoritarian constructs of the power of an elite few over the many. (198-200)

In her "Pigeons en Casserole," Bessie Breuer portrays a father, mother, and son whose relationship to one another in microcosm represents a patriarchal system that strips people of love, compassion, and the possibility of peace.

"Pigeons en Casserole" appeared in The New Yorker in 1942 and is collected in The O.Henry Memorial Award Prize Stories of 1943 and 55 Stories from The New Yorker. Breuer relates the story from the father's point of view, using the ironic revelation of limited third-person narration to show

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[7] Susan Gubar, in "'This is My Rifle, This is My Gun': World War II and the Blitz on Women," reminds readers that in Everybody's Autobiography, 1937, Gertrude Stein worries about "too much fathering." Three years later, Virginia Woolf spoke of the nineteenth-century feminists' fight against "'the tyranny of the patriarchal state'" as being closely similar to the fight against the Fascists in the twentieth century. Gubar's essay analyzes a number of literary works by Muriel Rukeyser, Dorothy Parker, Elizabeth Bowen, Carson McCullers, Kay Boyle, Edith Sitwell, Gwendolyn Brooks, H.D., Harriette Arnow, Muriel Spark, Elizabeth Bishop, and Sylvia Plath to show that World War II was "concerned less with military maneuvers and more with sexual antagonism"(Behind the Lines 227-259).

the essential nature of the situation and using the father to represent the worst and most dangerous qualities of patriarchal system. Only the reader and the mother see the father for what he truly is and the mother kills herself. Since neither the father nor the son understands the implications of their relationship and since by the end of the story the mother is gone, the son is left in a vulnerable and precarious position.

The narrator, Richard, gives readers few direct glimpses into himself. Of his past he alludes to his Austrian nobility, of his present that he is an artist displaced by the war. More revealing is the tone of his narration, exhibiting misogynistic and anti-Semitic views in an unsettling, self-righteous manner. He assumes that he is superior to his wife, and flaunts his authority over her accepting her acquiescence as a way to legitimize his position and to assuage his guilt. He equates her responses, which he characterizes as "female" behaviors, with weakness while maintaining his egocentric view of the world.

The father's misogyny is evident from the beginning of the story, where he refers to his women clients as "neurotic and unstable" and says that working in "a jungle of devouring women" is "more disgusting" than being in a concentration camp (91). He describes the help a female client provided (getting his son, Kurt, into a prestigious boarding school) in derogatory terms: "(always a woman; one steps ahead on the

breasts of women so to speak)" (94).

He characterizes his wife, Eugénie in increasingly negative terms--praising her as courageous and showing a "grace of spirit" only when she remains passive and self-sacrificing, condemning her for all other behavior, which he deems wrong for being either too feminine or not feminine enough. Her maternal enthusiasm upon seeing Kurt after eight months is embarrassing. But ironically, she is terrible for her direct, assertive response to the news that Kurt will not spend the summer with her. According to Richard, her futile attempts to forbid his trip are egregious because she makes them "without preamble or softening or grace"(95).

The conflict of the story involves the father's competition with the mother for their son, Kurt. Indeed, the father sees his relationship with his wife primarily in terms of competition. While she moves to the country and lives in poverty, he continues to live luxuriously in New York, justifying his continued separation from her by maintaining that he cannot allow her to compete for his time or attention. He employs the same reasoning for Kurt's continued isolation from her. Kurt must be free to take advantage of any "valuable connection." His implicit accusation is that a close relationship with a woman, whether a wife or a mother, has limited value, preventing men from capitalizing on opportunity and succeeding in life.

Richard perceives his wife's behavior entirely in self-

centered terms. Of her sorrow over losing the opportunity to spend time with her son, he thinks "How could she do it to Kurt? Or to me, for that matter?"(97). His final thoughts on her suicide are "What is one to think or say about a thing like that? She, who was always so considerate?"(103). Of Eugénie's attempts to get Kurt to stay with her, Richard resolves "If he could not face his mother, I, his father must and could"(95). Once he firmly establishes that she will not be allowed to visit with Kurt during the summer; moreover, she will not be permitted to continue displaying her emotions, he speaks of the resolution in terms of his victory. In the struggle over who would control Kurt's life, he has won: "Whatever she had lost ... I had gained...." He relishes the fact that Kurt has joined him in siding against his wife, emphasizing Kurt's words as he goes to bed, "'Father, Father, ... Oh, Father'"(99-100). He grudgingly allows his wife to feel sorrow, for it "was really all she had," but believes she has no use in Kurt's life, just as she has had no use in his:

> From now on his life must be healthy, I thought steeling myself against this woman by my side. I, his father, am responsible to him and to my ancestors for him. About this there can be no sentimentality. (101)

In reality, the father is practicing a philosophy similar to that of the Fascists who ran him out of Austria. He sees his life and his son's as a never-ending fight, a competitive struggle to stay among the elite--both in economic and social terms. In order to achieve this success, he believes that he

must separate himself and his son from his wife, his son's mother, and everything associated with the female gender. When he first returns with Kurt and is recounting the awkwardness of the confrontation, he thinks that even the "primitives" had the right idea about raising an adolescent boy:

> Take him away from the women and when he returns from the ordeals and the rites he is a man and there's an end to all this oppressive mother love. (92)

In Gendering War Talk, Miriam Cooke and Angela Woollacott contend that "the historical constructedness of the war story...must eliminate the feminine to survive"(ix). Breuer's story says something similar--men must remove the feminine in order for war to survive. As Lynn Higgins says in her "Sexual Fantasies and War Memories: Claude Simon's Narratology," the idea that war stories are the province of men comes from the idea that war is the province of men and that in order for men to prove themselves in war, they must fly from anything feminine (Gendering War Talk 249). If Richard's elitist, patriarchal, competitive philosophy is similar to that of the Fascists, so are the results of his practicing that philosophy. In a moment of rebellion, Eugénie warns him that even though he believes he is "so clever," he will not "escape all the consequences"(103). In Breuer's story, the consequences are the same as war--death and destruction of the family.

In his Why Nations Go to War, John Stoessinger focuses on Erik Erickson's picture of the "authoritarian structure of the German family" to explain "Hitler's charismatic grip on Germany"(47 ff.). Erickson identifies the typical German father as tyrannical and remote, the principal cause of the German male adolescent's "storm and stress"(Stoessinger 48). The oppressive patriarchy perpetuates itself when the adolescent, suffering guilt from rebellious feelings towards his father, "reverts to type."

Stoessinger believes that Hitler was not the prototypical father figure to the German people but an older-brother figure, permitting the German people, especially the youth, to rebel without guilt. Hitler's propaganda became part of their psychological identity (Stoessinger adds "integrity") which became so intertwined with his that to face reality and not follow him would have meant their "complete psychological disintegration"(49).

The fact that the father in Breuer's story is Austrian is significant for Hitler was an Austrian and his brand of anti-Semitism tied to anti-feminism became an Austrian import to Germany.[8] The father in the story is the source of the boy's "storm and stress." The boy's inevitable rebellion against his father's anger without his mother's love could make him especially vulnerable to hatred and violent aggression.

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[8] As early as the 1890's, anti-Semite ideology assigned feminine qualities to Jewish people as a way to attack them.

By mid-decade, fiction writers' focus shifted from the distinctive sociological and psychological problems that caused W.W.II to a realization that W.W.II was caused not by a special, specific set of historical circumstances but by universal human weaknesses. In politics as in literature, America's focus turned inward, away from Europeans and the war to the American situation here at home, from the commonplace as in Hazel Hawthorne's "More Like a Coffin" to the racially aware Petry in "In Darkness and Confusion," and to the surreal in Jackson's "The Lottery" whose symbolism encompasses every social, political, and religious aspect of our lives.

Hazel Hawthorne's "More Like a Coffin" first appeared in The New Yorker and is included in The Best American Short Stories of 1944. The story's impact comes from the contrast between the reader's expectations and the actual events of the story. Using concise, realistic detail Hawthorne exposes the ugly hatred that lay beneath the surface of everyday life in America during the 1940's. The story focuses on Pamela Barmore, a Manhattan mother compelled to give up the Red Cross job she likes to supervise her daughter's school bus. From the beginning, readers are set up to expect some tragedy since Pamela has dreamed the night before that the bus turns into a coffin complete with the strong smell of death. As readers hear the details of Pamela's dream and learn the details of the schoolgirls' private lives, they begin to share Pamela's sense of impending doom. Their dread is heightened as

Hawthorne recounts each specific aspect of the bus trip, anticipating that her attention to detail must precede some catastrophe.

But Pamela's and the reader's concern is misplaced. Nothing happens; the bus does not have an accident; the girls are delivered home safely. Nothing happens that is, but one incident, the incident that completes the story. As the bus waits at a light, a group of girls from another school crosses the street. Pamela notices Lucy, her favorite, blond, beautiful girl murmuring to herself.

"'What did you say, honey?' she asked."

"'I said 'Dirty Jews'" said Lucy."

At once, Pamela recalls her dream, smelling the "enclosed and sweetish smell again; the bus was reeking with it, with the smell of death"(127).

The death Pamela smells on the bus, the foreboding she has for herself and the school girls, has a different source from the one she originally imagines. The danger she perceives and that the reader expects does not come from some external force such as a freak accident; nor is the tragedy of the story an act of fate. The shock a reader experiences at the end of the story comes from the violation of her expectations, which forces the recognition of insidious evil. The incident unnerves Pamela because Lucy's comment illustrates that hatred can exist anywhere and be possessed by anyone, even a beautiful little girl. It is this kind of

hatred that perpetuated the Holocaust in Europe. But Hawthorne's concern is for how this hatred manifests itself in seemingly benign ways in this country.[9] Ann Petry shares this concern in her writing.

Ann Petry's "In Darkness and Confusion" follows the theme and style of her most famous novel, The Street (1945). In this short story about William Jones and his wife, Pink's life in Harlem, Petry reconstructs the oppressive environment that led to Lutie Johnson's downfall. Petry's story is not unlike others that appeared during the forties. While the story is set during the war and involves soldiers, the real focus is on the racism that exists in America.[10] In this sense, it is not purely a war story. Still, Petry's analysis of the violence that results from repression, fear, and desperation is useful for understanding the human mentality that produces war. Most importantly, her story exposes the hypocrisy of Americans during the war--glorifying their exploits overseas while practicing crimes against their own citizens; fighting a war ostensibly to save the world from the evils of fascism

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[9]In Wartime Paul Fussell characterizes America during the war as a place of comprehensive prejudice. Of the Jews, he says "most people didn't want to be like them in any way or even reminded of them"(127).

[10] The anthologies include a number of stories with a wartime setting and soldier characters in which the war itself is merely background to a larger issue, racism in America. Robert McLaughlin's "A Short Wait Between Trains," included in 55 Stories from The New Yorker (1949), depicts a common situation in the South. German prisoners of war walk through the front door of a restaurant and are served as black soldiers, who cannot, sit and watch.

while in truth desiring only revenge against the Japanese.[11]

Like her novel, Petry's story offers the naturalistic view of blacks' predicament in American society: no matter how hard they work, they will be defeated by their environment (Christian 67). The Jones' environment is hostile; their hopes of ever escaping it are bleak. Their apartment is hot and cramped with "boxlike rooms" and "hallways so dark ... [one could] walk over a step" (101,111). Their street, "no matter how you looked at it, ... wasn't a good street to live on," and even the few trees were "a source of danger"(103). William wants to move, at first to get his son, Sam, away from the prostitutes on the street, then, since the apartment is on the top floor and the stairs are bad for Pink, to protect his wife's health. But they cannot afford to move despite the fact that both he and his wife work six days a week, often twelve hours a day or more. William loses hope that his and Pink's life will ever get better. He stops going to church since "it looked like he and Pink ought to have gotten further" with all their hard work, but "they were doing practically the same thing" as their parents before them (113).

Petry's story depicts the problems of oppression and racism continuing from generation to generation. William's

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[11]Fussell contends that "For most Americans, the war was about revenge against the Japanese..."(138).

last hope is for Sam to escape. At first Sam's prospects look good. He's graduated high school where he was a good student and basketball star, and he plans to attend college. But when Sam enters the Army, his chance is lost. Ironically, no one is the Jones family fears for Sam fighting in the war. They fear for his having to go to Georgia for boot camp. "Sam's being in the army wasn' so bad," William thinks, "It was his being in Georgia that was bad"(105).

William eventually learns that his fears for his son are justified. Sam has been shot "through his guts" by a white MP for refusing to move "to the nigger end of the bus"(109). In retaliation, Sam shot the white MP in the shoulder, is court-martialed and sentenced to twenty years hard labor. William's dream for his son dies when he realizes that Sam would never escape the prison of Harlem. The best he has been able to do is to trade one prison for another.

In Petry's story, the danger that threatens the characters is not in the European or Pacific theater; it is in America. As he sits in a Harlem bar, William witnesses a white cop shoot a black soldier with an "overseas cap." Ironically, the soldier had been able to escape the danger of war, but not the danger of racism, a danger that pervades the North as well as the South, as evidenced by the nearly duplicate scenes of violence against black soldiers occurring in both regions. When William, who has been keeping the news about Sam from his wife, finally blurts it out, he combines

Sam's story with that of the other soldier's underscoring the comprehensiveness of the problem.

Ultimately, white violence against blacks combines with the repression, fear, and hopelessness the black community feels, producing a protest that escalates into a riot. Pink reacts by smashing windows and the crowd joins her. Petry uses militaristic language to describe Pink's actions. When she breaks the glass windows, the sound is "like a gunshot"; her weapons (a soda bottle or a footstool) are "new missiles" (123). As William watches his wife break down a gate in front of a liquor store, he understands that "It was no longer a gate--it had become the world that had taken her son, and she was wreaking vengeance on it"(127).

Keeping with the story's deterministic theme, the crowd's attacks on local, white-owned stores are futile. The white owners may lose money, but the black rioters are losing their lives. Blood drips from the broken windows of the stores they break into, and eventually Pink succumbs to a heart attack brought on by the effort she exerts in the melee. William watches a group set fire to a record store and thinks that nothing, not even fire, will wipe out the reality that Sam was in prison for twenty years and that the "'good people of Harlem'" were in prison for life.

> He repeated the words 'of Harlem.' We don't belong anywhere, he thought. There ain't no room for us anywhere. There wasn't no room for Sam in a bus in Georgia. There ain't no room for us here in New York. There ain't no place but top floors. The top-floor black people. (125)

Petry illustrates William's struggles through his use of language, or more accurately through his inability to use language to express himself. While he knows his wife intimately, discerning her moves from the sounds she makes getting dressed or preparing dinner, anticipating her reaction to his drinking on Sunday, he cannot tell her about Sam. When he tells her about the white cop shooting the black soldier, "he almost said, 'I saw Sam shot this afternoon'"(122). When he finally tells her, he knows that he doesn't make it clear.

Language continues to fail William throughout the story. When he is first concerned about Sam, he sits down to write him a letter and struggles to produce one sentence,"'Is you all right'"(103). When his niece, Annie May, quits school and he talks with the white principal, he is "buried under [her] flow of words, a mountain of words," but never asks for her help because "he never got the words together"(107). When he follows the crowd to the hospital to check on the soldier, he recalls the last time he was there--when Pink lost a baby. The white nurse's contemptuous remark that "'You people have too many children anyway'" left him speechless. He finally mumbled, "'It's too bad your eyes ain't white, too.'" In retrospect he realizes, "It wasn't any kind of answer"(121). When he finally finds words, as he kneels beside Pink dead in the street, they are words of violent anger, curse words that express the vulgar obscenity of his life:

> All his life, moments of despair and frustration had left him speechless--strangled by the words that rose in his throat. This time the words poured out. He sent his voice raging into the darkness and the awful confusion of noises. "The sons of bitches," he shouted. "The sons of bitches." (128)[12]

These are the final words of Petry's story.

Petry's 1940's fiction was valued only briefly, "nodded towards and then quickly forgotten"(Hilfer 47). Of the vagaries of literary criticism Petry herself commented

> After I had written a novel of social criticism...I slowly became aware that such novels were regarded as a special and quite deplorable creation of American writers of the twentieth century. It took me quite a while to realize that there were fashions in literary criticism and that they shifted and changed much like the fashions in women's hats. ("The Novel as Social Criticism" qtd. in Hilfer 48)

Still, as Hilfer points out, "Naturalistic social protest may have gone out of fashion but the social wrongs such fiction depicted [have] not"(48). Petry's story remains, then, an integral element of a type of American fiction whose vision into the political sources of social evil will not be obsolete until, as Hilfer says, that evil itself is (49).

By the time Shirley Jackson wrote "The Lottery," the war had ended and Americans were preoccupied by a post-war recession. Editors of the award anthologies reflected the popular attitude of wanting to forget the war entirely. In Prize Stories of 1948: The O.Henry Awards, Herschel Brickell

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[12]In Wartime Fussell determines obscenity necessary for conveying "moral reality"(252).

writes, "The editor is pleased...this year's collection...contains no war stories at all, not even one about World War III..." (xvii). It seems as if the nihilistic, solipsistic brand of stories was changing the standard purposes of literature--from "to delight" and "to teach" to "to disturb." Jackson's story fits this latter criterion. Readers struggle to decipher its meaning. Its folklorish, otherworldly quality disorients us, leaving us wondering "what does 'it'--the box, the ritual, the story itself--mean?" Critics are still debating the answer. Here we have no specific causes for a specific war; in fact, few critics connect W.W.II, W.W. III or any war to the story's meaning. But "The Lottery's" ambiguity means that the box, the ritual, the story itself could apply to anything and everything--cultural, religious, and political. In addition, readers' vitriolic response to Jackson's story represents the type of denial involving W.W.II that still concerns historians.[13]

"The Lottery" appeared in The New Yorker in June 1948 and is collected in Prize Stories of 1949: The O.Henry Awards and 55 Stories From the New Yorker. The story has become widely popular as well as critically acclaimed for its depiction of a modern American town practicing a horrifyingly brutal

[13]For example, Paul Fussell's main concern in Wartime is not that Americans did not seem to understand at the beginning of the war how bad war could be, but that today we still are not willing to understand and accept how bad W.W.II was.

ritual. However, at the time it appeared, Jackson was criticized by outraged readers for her "extremely cynical view of human nature devoid of any shred of goodness or even decency"(Coulthard 227).[14] Jackson herself denied such intention, claiming she produced the story almost effortlessly from an idea she got while "'pushing my daughter up the hill in her stroller'" and playing down the piece's importance--"...it was 'just a story'"("Biography of a Story" reprinted in Shirley Jackson: A Study of the Short Fiction 125-129). In her Shirley Jackson: A Study of the Short Fiction Joan Wylie Hall contradicts Jackson's claim of effortlessness, citing archival evidence of extensive revisions (50).

Despite Jackson's protestations to the contrary, contemporary commentators have imbued the story with major significance. Some argue that it offers a cautionary example of the results of following laws and rituals without question. Others insist it is not "a transparent attack on blind obedience to tradition" but "a grim, even nihilistic, parable of the evil inherent in human nature"(Coulthard 226). One critic suggests that Mrs. Hutchinson is more than a scapegoat figure; "She is a parodic Christ-figure, slain to appease a demonic entity...."(Cervo 184). Peter Kosenko reads the story

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[14]Negative reaction against the story continued. According to Jack Stark in Censored Books Critical Viewpoints, the story, featured regularly in anthologies during the 50's and 60's, began to "draw fire in the early 1970s...[and] by the mid 1980s [had] disappeared from all anthologies"(362). But Stark's observation is not correct today. "The Lottery" is still frequently anthologized.

from a Marxist viewpoint, claiming it is a criticism of the capitalistic class system. Expanding on the patriarchy issue first identified by Helen E. Nebeker as key to the story's significance, Fritz Oehschlaeger focuses on the "conflict between male authority and female resistance subtly evident throughout 'The Lottery'"(A Study 175-177). Hall reminds readers that the short story is part of a cycle of the same name and that an understanding of the cycle informs the meaning of the story. Nebeker offers a most useful comment for analyzing the story's theme:

> Until enough men are touched strongly enough by the horror of their ritualistic, irrational actions to reject the long-perverted ritual, to destroy the box completely--or to make, if necessary, a new one reflective of their own conditions and needs of life--man will never free himself from his primitive nature and is ultimately doomed. (A Study 174)

Nebeker's viewpoint provides the possible connection to war--the "long-perverted ritual"-- while leaving the story's most valuable quality, i.e., its ambiguity, intact. "Long-perverted ritual" and "irrational actions" can be found in any or all human customs from religion, to government, to class systems or gender systems. Jackson, herself, continually refused to comment on the story's meaning.[15] But a close reading of the letters and Jackson's arrangement of them in "A Biography of a Story," suggests that she valued the multiple

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[15] In her "Biography of a Story," Jackson recounts two common, yet contradictory responses to her story. Most readers, including Harold Ross, editor of The New Yorker, expressed extreme dislike for the tale at the same time they professed bewilderment over its meaning.

possibility of meanings the story's ambiguity coupled with her enigmatic stance provided. For example, Jackson juxtaposes a letter from an Indiana reader that offers a broad, philosophical interpretation with one from Connecticut that offers a more specific reading:

> (Indiana) I feel...the only reason it bothered so many people is that it shows the power of society over the individual....
> (Connecticut) I thought that it might be...a representation...of the selective-service system at the start of the last war. (Come Along 220)

Jonathan Stark and Jay A. Yarmove offer a more specific inspiration and meaning for Jackson's story. Stark reminds readers of the story's date and suggests its connection to Nazism, urging readers to compare it to George Mosse's historical analysis of Nazi ideology (362). Yarmove suggests that "a microcosmal holocaust occurs in this story and, by extension may happen anyplace in contemporary America"(242). Stark's and Yarmove's perspectives prove illuminating in reading Jackson's piece as a war story, or more specifically a Holocaust story. When readers examine the details of the story, they discover both meanings are possible.

"The Lottery's" otherworldliness fits well with America's attitude toward the Holocaust. Before and after Allied soldiers liberated concentration camps and published graphic photographic evidence of the Holocaust, the story of the Nazis' genocide was just that to many Americans--a story, unreal in the same sense as Jackson's story and believed to be just as fictional.

In her account of a town's practice of human sacrifice, Jackson illustrates the processes involved in the creation, development, execution, and denial of the Holocaust.

The origin of the town ritual has been forgotten. Old Man Warner's statement, "Used to be a saying, 'Lottery in June, corn be heavy soon'" (177), appears to allude to some vague notion that human sacrifice would ensure the common good of the majority of the people. The idea of the scapegoat parallels the practice of blaming the Jews for Germany's troubles; the method the town uses to choose the sacrificial victim mirrors the arbitrariness involved in the selection of who was allowed to live to work and who was chosen for immediate execution in the camps.

Most significantly, the lottery is defined as analogous not only to social rituals--"the square dances, the teen-age club, the Halloween program"--but also to "civic activities" (173). In other words, like the Holocaust, it was a government-run and sanctioned, ostensibly systematically structured, legal process.

Much has been made of the various aspects of the ritual whose meaning people have either forgotten or never knew. One especially intriguing symbol is the black box. In keeping with a reading of "The Lottery" as a war story, several meanings for this symbol are possible. We could regard the box as a "Pandora's" box-- its opening as one or all of the atrocities committed in W.W.II (the Holocaust, the London

Blitz, the fire-bombing of Dresden, the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki) and the recurrent suffering these atrocities produced.

But Jackson's description of the box calls for a broader meaning. The box "had been put into use ...before Old Man Warner...was born." It was said to have been made "with some pieces of the box that had preceded it." Despite the fact that "the black box grew shabbier each year," the townspeople were reluctant to replace it. In keeping with structuralist theory, the box as sign or "signifier" corresponds not to a "a thing out in the world...[but] to the 'signified' which is a concept" (Vesterman 138). The box, then, represents not just any and/or all wars but the idea of war itself. Like the box in the story, war has been around since before our oldest citizens were born. Like the box, war is periodically "opened" or initiated in a show of ritual designed to obscure its real purpose--to kill.

Like other writers who searched for the meaning of W.W.II, Jackson pointed up a contrast between appearance and reality. Mr. Summers "seemed very proper and important" (175). The lottery appeared to have reason and order with its lists, "proper swearing in," and "ritual salute" (174). But like the box whose shabby front poorly masked the lottery's real intention, war in the twentieth century has become little more than legalized mass murder, its usefulness as dubious as

the town's ritual.[16]

The cause for the perpetuation of this ritual is one other writers identify as a cause for most human tragedy--the lack of communication. All forms of language within the story, both spoken and unspoken, have no common understanding for any of the characters. The saying "'Lottery in June corn be heavy soon'" (177) contains no significance for anyone except Old Man Warner, who repeats it not for the meaning of the phrase itself but as a nostalgic reflection of the past attitude toward the lottery. Exchanges between the villagers constitute little more than "small talk." The actions of ritual are performed in relative silence, with a single pattern of sounds reverberating throughout the town--the call of a family's name and the family's sigh of relief when they are not chosen. This sign conveys the true meaning of the lottery for the townspeople--something to be endured, something to be glad to escape. Finally, the sacrificial family is identified not by written language but by a red dot.

The villagers of Jackson's story are confused about the "why" of the lottery just as today we remain confused about the "why" of war. In their short fiction, Porter, Breuer, Hawthorne, Petry, and Jackson all attempt to imagine various scenarios that provide us with an answer for "why?" But the answers are neither simple nor clear, and our tendency to

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[16]The term for "total war" has been replaced by the term "political realism" indicating that modern technology has rendered war a process incapable of moral limits.

rationalize and to mythologize the need for war remains. Despite our avowed hatred of war, we are like Jackson's villagers, unable to imagine replacing the box of atrocities, the ritual of killing, with any other possibility--such as peace.

In manuscripts from the Shirley Jackson Papers at the Library of Congress, both Jackson and her husband, Stanley Edgar Hyman, connect the world situation to literary style. Hyman tells readers that while Jackson admired 18th-century novelist Samuel Richardson for his "peace, principle, and kindness," she despaired of being able to write like him. "She likes to believe this is the world's fault, not her own," Hyman says (A Study 104). Still, as Jackson herself says in her "Notes on an Unfashionable Novelist," "peace, principle, and kindness are the qualities that may even survive our own distempered time"(A Study 111). In American Fiction Since 1940, Tony Hilfer connects the 1940's shift in literary style to the war:

> Thus, literary developments responded to major historical changes, and more directly, to the philosophical, psychological and sociological discourses used to moralize or rationalize such changes. (1)

In other words in attempting to re-envision, and thus comprehend, the war, writers developed stories whose forms followed not only the changing pattern of the war, but also the changing patterns of thought about the war.

What did these writers see and understand as the causes

of W.W.II? For Porter it was the psychology of conciliation and denial, for Breuer, Hawthorn, and Petry the sociology of patriarchy and racism, for Jackson the philosophy of human nature. What warnings, what danger signals were they able to articulate? A wide disparity existed between actuality and desire, between the world view of those in power and that of the oppressed. By exploring the distance between spoken and unspoken language, the difference between common meaning and true understanding, women writers of the 1940's identified the misperceptions, psychological factors, and universal human frailties involved in W.W.II. Their stories represent their best attempts to signify war experience, to reconfigure language, to communicate real experience in the form of literary experience so that readers today can read the signs.

CHAPTER THREE

"THE BEST WAR STORIES"

In his The American Short Story, William Peden writes

> The best...war stories are concerned more with the effects of war upon the individual participants than on acts of war in themselves;...they are characterized by a depth of emotion and a need to communicate, as if to reassert the importance of the individual at a time when individuals were being engulfed or destroyed in the sweep of great events. (155-156).[1]

The best short W.W.II fiction written by women does concern itself more with the effects of war than with the "acts of war in themselves"; however, it goes beyond a concern "with the effects of war upon the individual" to demonstrate a concern with the effects of war upon relationships between individuals. These writers recognized that war destroys the ability to communicate and to connect producing casualties as significant as those resulting from any weapon.

One of the most significant ways in which war destroys relationships is by destroying language. In The Body in Pain (1985), Elaine Scarry demonstrates how pain destroys language

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[1]Ironically, while Peden's analysis of an effective war story's characteristics describes exactly the qualities of the notable war stories written by women, he cites among his list of the best war stories only Kay Boyle's "Defeat" and Martha Gellhorn's "Till Death Do Us Part." In Men At War, subtitled "The Best War Stories of all Time," Hemingway says the best war stories should tell the truth and "instruct and inform rather than influence...opinion"(xxvi). Despite establishing a valid paradigm for the war story, Hemingway is now regarded as notorious for the sexist attitudes toward women writers he advances in the book.

and how war is politically but inextricably linked to pain. As Scarry explains, the manipulation of language through euphemisms and idiomatic expressions masks pain and the true intention of war--to inflict pain: "The main purpose and outcome of war is injuring"(63). This obfuscation of meaning enables the perpetuation of war.

Like Scarry, Paul Fussell in Wartime (1989) examines war's destructiveness, broadening his examination of war's effects to include the intellectual casualties of war. According to Fussell, W.W.II destroyed writers' ability to think freely, objectively, and creatively. He laments that too many works were deemed successful because they presented a world people wanted to see and told people what they wanted to hear.

According to Fussell, war stifled the thinking necessary to produce truthful, quality fiction. Moreover, it denigrated literary language to the level of platitudes, euphemisms, and clichés. Ultimately, W.W.II resulted in a world view devoid of all meaning, or the ability to find meaning. As a result, writers grew to distrust language. As Fussell says, W.W.I writers relied on language "to convey and retain profound, permanent meaning, while the later world ... is one so doubtful of language that the responsible feel that only the fewest words ... should be hazarded"(135). Paradoxically, in order to write, authors must take into account that their only tool, language, is unreliable. As Susan Sontag says in "The

Aesthetics of Silence," "'As the prestige of language falls, that of silence rises'"(qtd. in Fussell 136).

1940's women writers used literature to depict war's effect on language and on human relationships, creating characters who struggle to communicate with language damaged by war. As a result, their ability to find meaning and connect with one another is destroyed. Characters in Bessie Breuer's "Home is a Place," (1944) and Dorothy Parker's "The Lovely Leave" (1944) contend with language in ways Scarry identifies as the principal "paths" to war's destruction of language: omission, which causes "injuring [to disappear] from view"; redescription, which renames the injury; and abstraction, which relocates injury (65-70). According to Scarry, omission and redescription are "manifestations of one another," but abstraction is in a dangerous class by itself (69). Omission and redescription remove the body in pain from the text, but abstraction allows it to reenter, in brief descriptions that deny its vulnerability and elevate it to a mythical level. Scarry explains that with abstraction "'injury' is [not] wholly omitted, or ... redescribed, but rather...it is relocated to a place (the imaginary body of the colossus) where it is no longer recognizable or interpretable"(71).[2] Since abstraction is a "widely shared convention," this device

[2]Scarry cites the example of referring to individual soldiers as one group, the army, and then referring to that group with an abstract term, in this case a weapon--"a'spearhead' or a 'hammer'"(70).

need not be used excessively to produce the desired effect--transforming real wounds and real bodies into imaginary ones.

"Home is a Place" and "The Lovely Leave" show how war destroys the basic family unit, husband/wife, by separating men and women, emotionally, physically, too often permanently. Nancy Hale's "Those Are as Brothers" (1941) and Breuer's "Bury Your Own Dead," (1945) broaden the focus beyond gender relationships to demonstrate that war destroys relationships on a universal level. These stories provide a view of both the depth and comprehensiveness of W.W.II's devastation. Hale's story ends with the optimistic idea that understanding between people (in this case two vastly dissimilar people an American woman, a German-Jewish man) is still possible; Breuer's story insists emphatically that it is not.

Both Breuer's "Home is a Place" and Parker's "The Lovely Leave" depict wives who lose their husbands to war. Georgie, in "Home," is a war widow. Mimi, in "Lovely Leave" loses Steve to the military system that requires a soldier's primary loyalty be to his comrades. Both women struggle with language, fighting throughout the stories to establish some sort of successful communication. For Georgie, words present problems, for they both remind her of the reality of her husband's death and provide no real comfort or true meaning. In "Home" no degree of language manipulation can mask reality and assuage Georgie's pain. For Mimi, the lack of communication has seriously damaged her marriage because the

military system requires men and women practice "omission," "redefinition," and "abstraction" thus nullifying the unnatural separation of husband and wife.

Bessie Breuer's "Home is a Place," second-place winner in The O.Henry Memorial Award Prize Stories 1944 and one of only three war stories to be included in It's a Woman's World, was inspired by the real-life tragedy of a young artist turned Navy commando who disappeared at sea during W.W.II. Breuer wondered what could have motivated a talented family man to go to war. Knowing that she could not write his wife, but moved to respond, Breuer wrote her story, hoping it would "'have meaning for any woman whose life is a time of death'"(qtd. in It's a Woman's World 105).[3]

The O.Henry judges noted the story's understated, "telegraphic quality," praising it for "not [trying] to do too much--little more than [show] the desperate loneliness of bereavement...the subtler shadings of subjective relationships"(xii, xviii). This style is evident in the story's first paragraph, where Breuer depicts the widow Georgie trying to sleep by carefully arranging her nightdress and bedding. Here she uses tightly controlled, direct sentences. Later, when memories of her husband come flooding back, Breuer represents Georgie's inability to control her emotions in disjointed, fragmentary sentences. Throughout the

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[3]Kay Boyle is said to have encouraged Breuer to write this story. NYTIMES 9/28/75--Breuer's obit.

story, Breuer's analysis of Georgie's response to her husband's death, her various stages of grief, involves an examination of her response to words--words that are inadequate, words that serve only to exacerbate her misery, words that she will never speak to her husband again.

Breuer depicts Georgie's first response as a self-preserving instinct to flee, to leave home in order to escape the "oversoft, oversweet, oversolemn," words that will only make her feel worse because there are "...no words, never words" adequate to relieve her pain (19-21). She characterizes Georgie's coping mechanism as an effort to deny her pain through omission and redescription. Georgie omits both the word "dead" and the thought of death from her mind. Never does she use the word "dead" in referring to her husband. Never does she specifically describe the horror she feels as she contemplates his drowning. Her closest admission of his death occurs in her thoughts as "must be presumed to be...must be presumed to be..."(20).

By attempting to omit all words that pertain to death, grief, and consolation, Georgie hopes to make her injury disappear from view. But while Georgie redefines her husband's death as "must be presumed to be...," she cannot escape the reality of it. Breuer constructs a particularly poignant scene in which Georgie retreats to Harry's study, is drawn to look at Virgil's Aeneid, and focuses on one phrase: "'What God, O Palinure, did snatch thee so away from us, thy

friends, and drown thee dead amidst the watery way?'"(21). At first, she angrily throws the book to the floor, but later when she regrets her behavior and returns to the book, she cannot escape the words. "And after that had happened and the terrible stillness remained I stayed mostly in his study and I took down the book often, but the words were always the same"(21). Presented without comment, Breuer's concluding description provides a powerful illustration of the connection between the potentiality of language and the reality of pain.

At this point, Georgie concludes that since words cause pain, and no words exist which sufficiently ease pain, she must escape language altogether. In her attempt to escape words from the outside world, Georgie retreats to a hotel she frequented with Harry, but can't escape the desk clerk's unwittingly cruel question, "'Are you expecting the commander in tonight?,'" Nor can she bring herself to take a bath because it reminds her not only of her husband's drowning but also of the words Harry said once after bathing, "'It's like being born again'"(22). Still, Georgie persists in observing the world around her in outward silence. She omits all words, all language, all communication during her stay. The dining room is full of "long, long silence,"(24). An entertainer speaks, sings, dances, but Georgie relates the experience as if she were watching a movie without sound.

Ultimately, however, Georgie cannot escape the words in her head, the memories of conversations she has had with Harry

and the fantasies of conversations she will never have again. Eventually Georgie's efforts to escape words from the world and the words of her memories fail. Georgie then addresses Harry directly:

> They are laughing too loud Harry, and they are keeping me from listening to you. Way down deep inside my head will be bent over forever listening to you, inside.... (26)

Here, Breuer portrays one of the severest pains of a war widow--the despair when she realizes that the ability to communicate with her husband is destroyed and thus the possibility for connecting to him is gone forever.

Part of Georgie's despair includes her difficulty in recognizing her own identity once her husband is gone. She feels "I was nothing. I felt nothing. I was nothing. I had no substance"(21). After she leaves home to stay at the hotel, she signs in "Mrs. Georgiana Cushing," wondering "Had I ever been a person?"(22).[4] What words exist to describe her? None are adequate.

The words Georgie finally latches onto, which finally seem to give her some comfort, are in a remembered phrase that Harry had said the last time he was home. "'Home is a place.'" These words do not appear to be very profound, yet they give Georgie the courage to accept Harry's death and to

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[4]Susanne Carter in War and Peace Through Women's Eyes, cites Georgiana's identity crisis as the principal point of the story. While Georgiana must find comfort independently, she does not look at her husband's death, as Carter maintains, as an "opportunity" for independence (101).

return home. Readers will miss the significance of the story's title if they concentrate on the words' meaning in and of themselves. The phrase may refer to a passage from Robert Frost's poem, "The Death of the Hired Man."

> Home is the place where, when you have to go there,
> They have to take you in. (lines 143-145)

However, the situation of Frost's poem does not match the situation of Breuer's story; Harry invokes the sentiment as a way of thanking Georgie for keeping his birthplace, "'so beautifully'"(28). Additionally, it would seem that the irony of Harry's never being able to go home again and of Georgie's never being in a position to "have to take him in," would provoke more pain. But for some reason, the words mean something positive to Georgie. In this way, Breuer recognizes the nature of language--that it can contain amorphous meaning. And, although these words give Georgie the motivation to return home, Breuer does not relocate Georgie's resolution in coping with Harry's death by abstraction; rather she leaves it in this one, specific, albeit enigmatic phrase. Georgie's pain as a war widow cannot be fully articulated, nor will it be mitigated through linguistic manipulation. Breuer sustains the story's tragedy by showing that the phrase that enables Georgie to face the reality of Harry's death provides no further comfort. Readers' last image of Georgie is of her clutching a table, crying "in a terrible voice...'Oh, Harry, Harry, I'll never leave you'"(28).

Dorothy Parker's "The Lovely Leave," The New Yorker 1943, demonstrates another kind of war casualty--the disintegration of a marriage.[5] Mimi and Steve are physically torn apart by war, but more importantly, they have become emotionally estranged from one another. War compels them to live separate lives and to keep their individual fears and desires from each other. Parker shows how Mimi and Steve remove the injuries to their marriage by not talking about them, redescribing their pain as duty and relocating the concern for the damage to their marriage to a concern for the success of the United States Armed Forces. As Mimi and Steve struggle to renegotiate their marriage, readers see that war has destroyed not only their original relationship, but also their ability to form any kind of new relationship.

Parker's story illustrates that, in war, the husband/wife relationship cannot be allowed to exist in its natural state. The husband must deny his duty to his wife, and as Mimi points out to Steve, say "'no'" to her and "'yes...to voices...who shared his new life...'"(3). Mimi must deny any duty to herself as both an individual and a wife. She must subjugate her personal needs and those of the marriage itself to Steve's

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[5]In his Dorothy Parker, Arthur F. Kinney identifies the piece as "a painful autobiographical story" detailing Parker's experiences during W.W.II when she was separated from her husband, Alan Campbell. Before W.W.II, Parker had written war stories such as "Soldiers of the Republic" (1937) about the Spanish Civil War, which A. Woollcott praised as being "better than Tolstoy or Steven Crane"(Kinney 62). Woollcott later included several of Parker's stories in anthologies, such as As You Were, for servicemen (67).

need to be unencumbered by any thoughts and feelings that would hinder his performing his duty to his country.

The strain of Mimi and Steve's separation (the first one in the marriage) is reflected in their growing inability to relate to each other the times they are together, two brief times when Steve is given leave. Mimi's anxiety about Steve's return stems from the failure of his last leave and that of her struggling to make this leave "lovely." Mimi's struggle with her emotions about and reactions to Steve is evident in her inability to find words to articulate her feelings. She recalls that last leave Steve appeared as a stranger to her and she "could bring nothing but monosyllables from her throat"(4). She had been "sad and slow of words"; they had quarrelled, and when he left she had remained silent, giving him "no tender words to keep"(4).

Writing letters was even more difficult, for she continually had to remind herself that she wasn't writing to "[her] husband, [her] man, [her] love ... [but] to a soldier"(6). Moreover, without the benefit of being able to "see and hear and touch each other" she must agonize over every word, thus producing more stiltedness than tenderness.

Mimi's difficulty in communicating with Steve does not come from a problem in their original relationship. Their closeness coupled with the knowing way they can kid with each other demonstrates that before the war the marriage was good. Mimi's problem comes from trying to negotiate the new

relationship of a marriage in war.

War requires men and women to abide by new rules in their relationships, rules that prohibit communication. Mimi must deny her natural feelings as Steve's wife. "There had been rules to be learned in that matter, and the first of them was the hardest: never say to him what you want him to say to you"(5). When Steve returns, we see that he too must abide by the rules and deny his feelings as a husband. The conflict in the story arises from Mimi's desire that they both break the rules and talk to each other honestly and from Steve's resolve that to do so would be disastrous. In having to choose between his marriage and his military position, Steve must choose his position because it means his life.

On one level Mimi understands Steve's dilemma, but on another, she wants him to understand hers. When Steve informs her that the leave (only twenty-four hours to begin with) has been cancelled, she protests, "'Couldn't you have said something?'"(10). Alluding to "the rules," Steve replies, "'Come on, now Mimi, ... there's a war on,'... and Mimi immediately apologizes for not obeying protocol. Still, she continues to vacillate between displaying her emotions and stifling her desperation in bitter resignation.

The hour they spend together is marred by continual miscommunication. When Steve sits down and Mimi sits "on the arm of his chair and buried her face in his shoulder," Steve remarks "'This is more like it...I've kept thinking about

this'"(10). At first, Mimi nods agreement, but she is not agreeing to what Steve means. He continues, "'If you knew what it was to sit in a decent chair again,'" and Mimi realizes he was referring to a piece of furniture, not as she originally thought, their physical closeness; when he said he'd been "'thinking about this,'" she thought she understood that he had missed touching her as much as she had missed touching him. However, Steve is thinking about the army not about Mimi or their relationship, not even the physical part of it. When Steve reminds her that they have "'only a little while darling,'" she initially understands him to be suggesting sex, and willingly agrees. But, he wants a different comfort, "'if you knew how I'd been looking forward to ...a hot bath...'"(14).

As their reunion draws to a close, we see that Mimi and Steve have not connected in any meaningful way as husband and wife. Mimi had looked forward to their time together to rekindle their marriage both emotionally and physically. Steve spends the time talking about the military, taking a bath, reading a magazine, and polishing his brass. When he asks Mimi for "'a Blitz Cloth ... or a Shine-O,'" she replies, "'If I had the faintest idea what you were talking about, I might be better company for you'"(15). Mimi's sentiment is true in regard to more than brass polishing; it is true for all aspects of their relationship.

In 1946, divorces in America reached the record number of

600,000 (Hartmann 165). What hope is there that Mimi and Steve will be able to save their marriage? Parker offers a pessimistic possibility by repeating the scene from the end of the first leave in the scene at end of this leave. Both leaves end as Mimi goes "over to the window and stood looking out, as if casually remarking the weather"(5,17). This verbatim repetition indicates the perpetuation of the problem and the possibility Mimi's voices that, "'you have a whole new life--I have half an old one...I don't see how they're ever going to come back together,'" will come true (11).

More significantly, the story ends with Mimi and Steve again playing by the rules of war, which necessitate their lying to each other and to themselves through omission, redefinition, and abstraction. Steve admonishes Mimi for attempting to discuss their feelings. "'Don't do that kind of talk' ... 'I can't go through this kind of thing ... neither can you,'" and most importantly, "'I can't talk about it. I can't even think about it--because if I did I couldn't do my job'"(16-17). Here, Steve recognizes that the original structure of their marriage, which included understanding, honesty and trust must be replaced by this newly-imposed structure that involves avoidance, denial, and lying. After he leaves, Mimi lies to an inquiring friend by redefining what the friend calls, and what was in fact true to a good extent, "a shame," "simply awful," "absolutely terrible," as a "lovely leave" (18)--as Kinney says "the first lie the war will cost

her"(144).

Parker is best known for her witty style and ironic revelations, but in this story, she sublimates her satiric wit to the more serious, straightforward treatment of what Kinney cites as "[her] chief concern in her fiction...the failure of human sympathy, of human communication"(143). In "The Lovely Leave," both characters fail to sympathize with each other because both fail to communicate understanding. They fail themselves, using omission and redefinition to deny their true feelings, sublimating their natural desires to the abstractions of patriotic spirit and duty to one's country over their concrete relationship.[6]

"Home is a Place" and "The Lovely Leave"examine the many ways war affects language and damages husband/wife relationships. Nancy Hale's "Those Are As Brothers" and Breuer's "Bury Your Own Dead" demonstrate that in order to understand fully the effects of war, we must look beyond combatants, gender relationships, and ideas of polarities to the comprehensive repercussions of war's destruction on effective communication and meaningful connection.

As Higonnet,in Behind the Lines, Cooke and Woollacott,in Gendering War Talk, and Hanley in Writing War assert, during W.W. II, the lines that delineated the binarisms of war no

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[6]In her Writing War, Lynne Hanley speaks of the effect of abstraction on gender relationships by recalling that Vera Brittain "was infuriated" at her lover during W.W.I, when he placed "'heroism in the abstract' ahead of their relation in the concrete"(135).

longer remained distinct. These binarisms include assigning war, violence and aggression to men, peace, pacifism, and compassion to women; the battlefront to men, the homefront to women; and, as Hanley suggests (because women and children were mistakenly thought to be protected behind battle lines) danger to men, safety to women. But as Hanley points out, the idea of a protected zone for women and children during W.W.II was a myth. Citing Sylvia Plath's "Daddy," Hanley demonstrates that war did more than blur the lines between zones of human experience:

> As father is to daughter, so Nazi is to Jew, so man is to woman. In 'Daddy,' the combat zone invades the protected zone of intimate relations between men and women, forcing these relations to conform to the law of the battlefield.(138)

Looking at Hale's and Breuer's stories, we can extend Hanley's assertion to say that all relations between human beings are affected by war and we can no longer separate the war's effects into different levels of experience.

The idea that the homefront is not necessarily a safe zone is central to Nancy Hale's "Those Are as Brothers," published in Mademoiselle and collected in O.Henry Memorial Award Stories in 1941.[7] In Hale's depiction of a Connecticut housewife, Mrs. Mason's friendship with Mr. Loeb, an exiled

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[7]Kay Boyle's "Defeat" won first prize this year, but Edith Mirrielees, whose "What is Wrong with the American Short Story" appeared in the Atlantic Monthly of the same year, voted Hale's story for first prize.

Jew from Germany, she presents an optimistic view of the ability to overcome the barriers of difference and to unite in spite of, or because of, experience with cruelty and suffering.

Although Hale never explicitly tells us, it is obvious that Mrs. Mason has escaped an abusive spouse. Mr. Loeb has escaped a concentration camp. But despite their apparent safety in "the long, clear American summer...dreaming over the Connecticut Valley...without fear and without apprehension" both remain terrified (197). The problem is that neither can communicate his/her feelings to others. Mrs. Mason, as a young divorceé, attracts the attention of Mr. Worthington, "who was all gentleness and generosity" but could neither understand nor protect her from her fear(201). Mr. Loeb, who speaks little English, spends time with Fräulein Strasser, Mrs. Mason's children's German governess, but she does most of the talking, making allowances for him, "knowing that he was a laborer and a Jew"(202).

The story's main point is revealed in a scene where all four characters discuss the war together. Mr. Worthington's attempts to sympathize with Mr. Loeb come across as arrogant, and the Fräulein remains equally disconnected from Mr. Loeb, "not entirely understanding nor especially interested" in the conversation (205).

But Mrs. Mason, who earlier thought to herself that "her life was a tiny scale model of the thing that was happening in

Europe"(199) understands. In answer to Mr. Worthington's lack of comprehension, "'How do you mean?'" she replies "'He means oppressed,'" and "Mr. Loeb bowed to her"(205). In response to Mr. Loeb's characterization of his experience, to which Mr. Worthington again claims "'I don't see what you mean, exactly'" Mrs. Mason affirms, "'I do...They all remember the same thing together.'"

"'Yes,' Mr. Loeb said"(206).

Mrs. Mason is successful not only in relating to Mr. Loeb, but also in transforming that understanding into beneficial action. When Mr. Loeb's employer, Mrs. Mason's neighbor, threatens to send him back to Europe and she promises to intercede in his behalf, "She did not feel at all afraid..."(209). And, after she assures Mr. Loeb that she will talk to his employer and write the Refugee Committee, Mr. Loeb appears relieved. "The tension had gone away from his eyes, the look of fear that she recognized had gone"(209).

Hale's story shows the extent to which the dangers of war permeated human relationships, but its optimistic view has not survived. Today, we know that Mrs. Mason's promise to Mr. Loeb, "'I wouldn't ever let anything happen to you,'" albeit well-intentioned was obscenely naive. America was more like Mr. Worthington and the Fräulein in their understanding of and response to the Holocaust and did little to protect the Jews. Moreover, Mrs. Mason's ability to overcome the barriers between English and German and achieve mutual understanding

with Mr. Loeb, connecting to him from shared suffering would be deemed illogical and ultimately impossible before the war was over.

As Hanley says, the logic of human relations is shaped by the logic of war (138). The logic of war is the senseless tragedy of the dead and the pointless existence of the living, both horrible actualities that cannot be contemplated, cannot be articulated, and therefore cannot be overcome. No story demonstrates this reality better than Bessie Breuer's "Bury Your Own Dead," which appeared in Harper's Bazaar 1945 and is included in the O.Henry series of the same year. The story is an example of the ways in which literature changed during the war--in tone, in style, in conflict resolutions. Breuer uses spare language and tightly controlled setting (the action takes place between only two characters, in one principal setting, and lasts only a few hours)to render the tragedy of a young WAC whose fiancé has been killed in the war, and a young fighter pilot, whose brother is missing and presumed dead. The true tragedy that Breuer reveals, however, is not so much that these people have lost loved ones to war but that war has destroyed their ability to communicate and empathize with each other, thus preventing the possibility for healing.

The story takes place in a diner where a young WAC gratefully eats alone, happy to be free of having to think about the war or to talk to anyone about it. A young Air Force fighter pilot intrudes on her dinner, searching in

desperation for some way to cope with the news of his brother's probable death. The conflict of the story centers on the pilot's search for comfort and the WAC's response--resisting at first, then finally trying, but ultimately failing to find any consolation for either the pilot or herself.

Louisa (the WAC's name, as we learn later when she grudgingly reveals it to the pilot) has lost her lover, but worse, her job involves mailing pictures and condolence letters to families of men killed or missing in action. The pilot may sense that Louisa has experience dealing with death, and/or he may assume that her role in the war fits a gender stereotype; i.e., women are expected to act as healers. Louisa, while sensing the pilot's suffering, fights to keep thoughts of death and war away:

> Even then it was best forgotten. You had to go on. Otherwise <u>you</u> would go crazy. She wished she could say something like this to the man so he wouldn't talk to her about it.(64)

But Louisa is not successful either in preventing the pilot from sharing his pain or in helping him. Their attempts at communication continue, but they continue to fail.

From their first encounter, Louisa responds to the pilot in one way--she is silent. She nods "stiffly" and silently when he first asks to sit down(61). She remains silent during his first awkward attempts to be polite. As he tells her about himself, she maintains a long period of silence, at one

point refusing any contact with him entirely by closing her eyes. She is silent again, after he tells her of his brother's fate, silent when she first turns to leave outside the diner, and finally silent, as is he, when they part at her door. In all, periods of silence dominate their encounter over ten times throughout the story.

Her initial refusal to communicate leaves them both silent in anger, staring at each other in a way that could signify "almost...the hate of deadly enemies"(62). When she finally relents and listens to his account of his brother, all she can say is "'I'm sorry.'" As they do throughout the story, words fail, and the pilot stares "at her angrily as if furious at her words"(69). The WAC again remains silent because there are no sufficient words for such tragedy.

Breuer also conveys the inadequacy of language by using negative words throughout the narrative. The words "no," "none," and "nothing" appear over fifty times--four times in the final paragraph--emphasizing the characters' failure to articulate their pain, discover their common wound (Louisa never tells him about her fiancé), and comfort each other. She sits and "stubbornly [says] nothing because she could imagine all the words for herself and there was nothing to say...She would ask none of the questions and give none of the expected answers"(67).

When she finally acknowledges his obvious pain by asking, "'What <u>is</u> the matter! For heaven's sake, what is it!

Please!'" he replies, "'nothing,'"(68). And when he tells her, she feels "nothing"(69). In response to her offer to help, he says, "'There is nothing to do'"(71). After she thinks about it for a while, she concedes that when Rab died "nobody could do a thing for her that day and there was nothing she could do for the major now"(72). He would have to find a way to "bury his own dead, quietly"(70). At the end of the story when they part in "disgust and despair," she thinks again that "there was nothing she could say or do" and, "It had nothing to do with her"(74). At one point in the story, the pilot accuses Louisa of denying her gender. "'Aren't you a woman?,'" he demands. "'No, I'm a soldier,'" Louisa replies (67-68). In one sense, Louisa could be rejecting the pilot's assumption that being female means she must be nurturing. But it is not only a gender stereotype that Louisa is denying. As her final thoughts show, it is also her humanity.

In "Home is a Place," Breuer makes Georgie's pain palpable by carefully avoiding sentimentality and abstraction. In "The Lovely Leave," Mimi and Steve's relationship suffers from the misuse, by omission, redefinition, and abstraction, of language. In her story, Hale trades abstractions--hope for despair, courage for fear. In "Bury Your Own Dead," Breuer has done more than create characters who misuse language; she shows a world at the end of the war as a place where people feel they must omit all language in order to survive. The story's tragedy is that the depth of emotion they possess and

their need to communicate about it can never be satisfied. War has killed their ability to connect, and no redefinition or relocation of meaning could possibly obscure the annihilation war has wreaked on them. Breuer's focus on war's effects on relationships combined with a respect for the "aesthetics of silence," has produced one of "the best war stories of all time."

CHAPTER FOUR

Stories That Must Somehow Be Told: Kay Boyle's Short War Fiction

Since the 1980's, Kay Boyle's writing has regained critical recognition. This recognition comes mainly for her contributions as a feminist writer (a title she denounced) and/or for her contributions as an experimental stylist. Joan Mellen's recent biography, Kay Boyle: Author of Herself, emphasizes Boyle's personal life and prodigious publications over her literary achievements, citing uneven quality in Boyle's lengthy canon. Still, every critic, Mellen included, regards Boyle's short stories as her best writing. The reissuing of her short fiction in 1980, under the title Fifty Stories, groups the works according to time and national setting ("Early Group 1927-1934," "Austrian Group 1933-1938," "English Group 1935-1936," "French Group 1939-1966," "Military Occupation Group 1945-1950," and "American Group 1942-1966"). Of the fifty stories, over thirty are war stories. These stories illustrate both Boyle's greatest talent and her greatest concern. Her greatest talent lies in her ability to realize the power of words and to use that power in her storytelling. One of her greatest concerns involves the same theme--the power of words, especially in war. Since Boyle's major short stories offer one of the most prescient warnings of World War II, retain some of the most insightful lessons of

war in general, and provide the best example of her contribution to American literary style, it is particularly important to focus on her short war fiction.

Boyle was one of the first Americans to recognize the true nature of the Nazi threat, and she was one of the first to identify its insidious evil in fiction. She was one of the most prolific writers to publish works **during** the war, ultimately producing over thirty short stories and five novels between 1935 and 1950, most of them war stories and several of them award-winners.[1] Boyle's major critics, Susan Spanier, Marilyn Elkins, and Elizabeth Bell, have all identified characteristics that distinguish her fiction. One of Boyle's greatest contributions to the war-literature canon specifically and the American literature canon in general is that she refutes the previously-accepted view that male

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[1] Kay Boyle won two O.Henry Awards for her short stories, "The White Horses of Vienna" and "Defeat" (both war stories). She also received two Guggenheim fellowships and the Edward J. O'Brien Award. Hemingway pointed to the difficulty of writing in the midst of a war, saying that "the good and true books finally start to come out" after a war, when writers are no longer emotionally traumatized and/or concerned with censorship (Men at War, xv). Understandably, some distance both in time and place from the war helps a writer gain clearer perspectives such as readers find in Heller's Catch-22 and Vonnegut's Slaughterhouse V, both written and published in the 60's. Still Boyle managed to produce not only "good" works, but also "true" ones. Her novel Avalanche, while excoriated by critics such as Edmund Wilson, remains one of the first "fairly accurate" descriptions of Resistance fighting (Elkins 180). Edward M. Uehling acknowledges the difficulty of producing quality writing "during or shortly after war" and asserts that "the relative speed with which Boyle could write about World War II [coupled with] her control of difficult materials invite[s] our closest attention"(375-376).

experience is universal experience. Instead, she successfully communicates female experience in a way that represents the "fullness, complexity, and richness in human nature" by offering "an unusual combination of gender-based virtues" that refutes the idea that men and women have fixed roles in war (Elkins 15, and Spanier, Faith, 68). While these scholars consider Boyle's perspective on the flexibility of male/female gender roles in war of major importance, they also cite Boyle's style as among her most vital qualities.

Elizabeth Bell, in her book Kay Boyle: A Study of the Short Fiction, credits Boyle's use of nuances and subtleties with making her short stories so effective. Bell, along with others, has also praised Boyle's willingness to experiment with narrative structure and language. From the beginning of her career, with the expatriates in Paris in the twenties, to her award-winning periods in the thirties and early forties, to her sometimes radical political activism in the 60's and 70's, Boyle's attitudes towards and experiments with language have been central to her fiction.

Boyle's subtle handling of plot and characterization and her linguistic concerns are particularly integral to an examination of her war fiction. As Bell says, the potency of Boyle's war stories comes from her ability to put a "human face" on international political movements, from her working to bring alive not some grand-scale story of armies and battles but one of "the lives and decisions of the misplaced--

...the everyday ordinary people" for whom certain realities of war were ever-present (A Study 4 & 45). Edward M. Uehling, in "Tails, You Lose: Kay Boyle's War Fiction," examines Boyle's "fascination with the possibilities and failures of language" in two of her war stories, "Army of Occupation" and "The Lost." These stories illustrate that a dissolution of language occurs in war that reflects and affects war's destructiveness (375-382). War destroys lives, homes, cities, and language; conversely language can be used to perpetuate ideas and images of violence and destructiveness that make war possible.

Boyle recognized the paradoxical quality of language--words have power, often dangerous power, while at the same time language is limited and can convey only restricted meaning. As a result, she was primarily concerned with language's dual potential, one manipulative and destructive, the other redemptive and healing. Throughout her war fiction, Boyle utilizes the latter as effectively as possible to expose the former.[2] According to Spanier,

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[2]In City of Words, Tony Tanner explores the ambiguous attitude towards language inherent in American literature. He sees American writers as moving between two poles of fixity and fluidity, fearing the rigidity of fixed structures while recognizing the perils of a lack of structure, an amorphousness. So despite language's limitations, we need language since we cannot have pure unconstructed consciousness. In addition, using language is a way to discover and establish a sense of self, an endemic quest of American literature. Tanner examines Ralph Ellison's unnamed narrator in Invisible Man as someone who can find himself in writing, in "symbolic freedom and lexical space"(59). Interestingly, Ellison originally conceived Invisible Man as

> It was the willful distortion and corruption of language..that enabled the Nazi state to corrupt human thought to make a political weapon of the German tongue....In her "Declaration of 1955" she stated directly her belief that the fate of humanity lies in the power and purity of the Word, and therefore in the hands of the writer. ("Introduction,"TCL 252)

In Breaking the Silence: Why a Mother Tells Her Son about the Nazi Era, Boyle establishes a connection between language and morality. In this book, Boyle wants to use language in a way that will make "the concept of genocide ... part of the cultural consciousness of every nation" so that readers will realize that if language is corrupted, people are corrupted too (33-37). Although not appearing until 1962, this book contains a more explicit expression of an idea that appears in Boyle's short fiction as early as 1935 in "The White Horses of Vienna." In war, the dissolution and corruption of words are dangerous especially for the images the words produce, the myths they perpetuate in the collective imagination of a people. The key role of a writer then is to use the powerful possibility of language to create stories that expose the destructive linguistic patterns while constructing images that offer the possibility of peaceful resolutions. For this reason, Boyle produced most of her war stories for popular magazines so that the greatest number of people could hear the

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a war novel.

truth about the war (Spanier, "Intro," 246). And, for this reason, Boyle regarded her narratives as more than "'mere anecdote, but the projection of a metamorphosis of reality'"(qtd. in Spanier, "Intro" 246).

In each of her war stories, Boyle presents certain universal conflicts, between ignorance and understanding, control and chaos, hope and despair, innocence and experience, good and evil. These conflicts, while not specific to war, exist in distinctly different ways in war and are examined most effectively in "The White Horses of Vienna," "Major Engagement in Paris," "Defeat," "Winter Night," and "Army of Occupation."

Readers can perceive the stories' messages from examining two similar, interconnected aspects. First, the stories all involve characters who wrongly attempt to resolve their conflicts through some sort of denial. Boyle's characters deny each other's humanity, others' capacity for evil, their own vulnerability to it, others' mortality as well as their own, and especially their own immorality, an immorality that is inescapable in war, which by its very nature taints all it touches. Boyle's characters practice these denials in a variety of specific ways, but they all have one thing in common--their denials involve storytelling. The major characters tell stories (to themselves as well as to others), and their storytelling comprises the major action and impetus that moves the narrative forward. Whether or not the

characters successfully resolve their conflicts depends upon the language that they use and the stories they create. Most are unsuccessful because their stories contain and perpetuate words and images of destructiveness and self-delusion, but some use the power of language successfully to create images and patterns of thought that oppose war.

One of Boyle's first war stories, "The White Horses of Vienna," involves two main characters whose storytelling provides an insight not only into their individual personalities but also into the atmosphere that fostered the rise of fascist power in 1930's Europe. The story, set in Austria at the time of Dollfuss's assassination, appeared in Harper's Magazine (April 1935). In part it is significant because it is one of the first accounts of the 1930's political and economic climate and "the mind-sets that allowed Nazism to come to power"(Bell 33).[3] Boyle uses her

[3] Despite its historical significance and critical acclaim (it won the O.Henry Memorial Prize for 1935), this story has been grossly misunderstood. Some have mistakenly interpreted it as evidence of Boyle's pro-Fascist sympathies. These preposterous misapprehensions are not so worrisome as those that involve confusion from a lack of historical knowledge. Boyle does not write the story as a history lesson; she provides few details of the story's historical context because, as Bell reminds us, she "expects her readers to ...jolly well know..the shape of world events"(30). Bell provides the historical specifics to fill in Boyle's narrative. Engelbert Dollfuss, a "right-wing, so-called Christian, rabidly antisocialist, dictator [who] fought to counter the growing German presence on [Austria's] border," was assassinated in July 1934. His assassination reflected both the growing frustration at the poverty that resulted in part from policies established in the Treaty of Versailles and the growing nationalism that seemed to be the only remaining source of hope and pride (Bell 30-31). Even

characters' stories to expose not only the danger of this vision but also the danger of denying its destructive power.

Briefly, the story involves an Austrian doctor who, after being injured, takes young Dr.Heine into his home to help with his practice. When the older doctor and his wife see that Dr. Heine is Jewish, tension among the characters arises. Throughout the story, the Austrian doctor's wife, Dr. Heine, and the doctor himself all perform some sort of denial. In microcosm, their denials signify those that persisted before, during, and even after the war, contributing to the rise of Hitler's aggression in Europe and to the creation of an environment that was able to permit the atrocities of the Holocaust.

During Dr. Heine's stay, the wife resists any feelings of compassion she has for him, denying his humanity by refusing to relate to him as an individual. When Dr. Heine accidentally sets fire to his coat, she rescues him, offers to repair the coat, and then stops herself; "she bit her lip suddenly and stood back, as if she had remembered the evil thing that stood between them."(156). Dr. Heine refuses to

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though Boyle believed that people should be up on their facts, in actuality without Bell's description, readers will probably not fully understand what's going on in the story. Boyle wrote in part to inform readers of what she felt they needed to know, in part to criticize an ignorance that could be naive at best, but was often more deliberately apathetic. The fact that we can glean only a vague sense of the story's historical situation is a message in and of itself--that we still haven't learned from history--that we're still practicing a dangerous, indifferent ignorance that can lead to many of the evils of war.

recognize the threat of anti-Semitism and fascism even though he is living with it daily. He ascribes to his hosts the idealistic virtues of sensitivity and nobleness that he so values. The Austrian doctor feigns a simple, innocuous demeanor, using deliberately obtuse language that masks his true malevolence, making it difficult to believe him capable of complicity in fascist activities.

The story is divided into three parts, with the first being exposition, the third resolution. The second involves Dr. Heine's and the Austrian doctor's telling stories. These stories reveal the individual characters' world views and present the major philosophical conflict of the story--between naive ignorance and realistic understanding. Dr. Heine believes that art, science, and "a naive reliance on the intellect" can be a "saving power" (Bell 33). The Austrian doctor, as a result of living the reality of the post-W.W. I depression, embraces Nazi philosophy and acts upon it out of "desperation," a desperation representative of "a people crushed by economic instability and political humiliation, grasping at any promise..."(Bell 33).

Dr. Heine's story recounts an episode from a time and a way of life that is now gone and never will return. He tells the tale of a groom who so loves one of the Lippizaner stallions he tends that he kills the horse and himself rather than let the horse be sold. For the young doctor, this story symbolizes the tragedy of something beautiful and noble being

lost. The wife fashions the moral from Dr. Heine's story to fit her own prejudices, accusing the young doctor of using the story to "'poison my sons with the poison of money and greed!'"(157). But it is not her misinterpretation of the story that is as serious as Dr. Heine's own misapplication of its meaning, equating the Austrian doctor's nature to the one of the Lippizaner stallions. Immediately after Dr. Heine tells the story, soldiers come to confront the Austrian doctor. They boldly accuse him of being involved in Dollfuss's assassination and in setting the swastika fires since "he wouldn't have been injured if he stayed home instead of climbing mountains himself at night!" (159). But Dr. Heine comes to his defense, refusing to see "the inexplicable signals" that surround him, the "long-burning fires of disaster [that would] cast him and his people out, forever out upon the waters of despair"(159).

Worse still is Dr. Heine's attitude about the use of language. He wants to use language and storytelling to escape the ugly reality growing around him. He laments that politics have made it "impossible to have casual conversations or abstract discussions anymore"(159-160). In other words, he longs for abstraction over concrete reality, and as Boyle stresses, abstractions in war are particularly dangerous.[4]

But while Dr. Heine seeks ways to "'[take] one's mind off

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[4]Other American writers have stressed the danger of abstractions in war, e.g. Hemingway in A Farewell to Arms.

things,'" the Austrian doctor believes "'now there is something else to do'" (160). That something else is, of course, to aid the Nazis, as the Austrian doctor reveals through the puppet show he performs. Readers have a limited understanding of the doctor's true intentions before he tells his story because he conceals them in a careful choice of his own words and a calculated response to others' words. When his wife angrily confronts him, expecting him to respond to Dr. Heine's being Jewish, he responds with deliberate obtuseness:

> "But don't you see ... what he is?" asked his wife's wild whisper.
> "He's Viennese," said the doctor, working. (154)

He goes on to defend Dr. Heine, reminding his wife that the young doctor came highly recommended. Readers may at first interpret the older doctor's response positively, regarding his refusal to understand his wife's words and to actively participate in a discussion with her on the subject (he never uses the word "Jew") as his refusal to condone her antiSemitism. But after he performs the puppet show, we realize that his quiet, noncommittal way of responding to situations indicates a sinister duplicity.

The Austrian doctor's story, of a clown on the way to his own funeral encountering a grasshopper and arguing about "the power of the Church" and "the independence of the individual," conveys his political philosophy--the grasshopper always wins the arguments. The clown represents Dollfuss, the grasshopper,

Hitler. While not all readers may recognize Dollfuss, they have little difficulty in identifying "The Leader" (as the grasshopper is called). He reveals his identity through his speech, which has "a wild and stirring power that sent cold wonder up and down one's spine"(163). Here, even though the doctor has once again masked his menacing message in metaphor, casting Hitler as a wise grasshopper with "the power of stallion life ...leaping in his limbs," the reader realizes the full meaning of his story. Unfortunately, Dr. Heine still does not. He misinterprets the doctor's intentions in performing the puppet show as an attempt to keep "artistic thing[s] uppermost even with times as they are"(161) even though the wife "bitterly" reminds him that people are hungry and a whole generation has gone without work since the last war. At the end of the story, after the doctor is arrested for his fascist activities, Heine mistakenly associates the older doctor's plight with that of the stallions: "He was thinking in anguish of the snow-white horses, ... the relics of pride, the still unbroken vestiges of beauty"(165). Using the idealistic images of his story, Heine denies the Austrian doctor's evil threat. "...He was thinking of the pure-white horses of Vienna and of their waltz, like the grasshopper's dance across the state"(165). But the grasshopper would not go the way of the stallions. For ten more years it would ravage the world with a deadly dance.

Four years before World War II began, Boyle identified

its dangerous potential through the doctor's storytelling, in which he uses language ostensibly to amuse but in reality to control others by manipulating their thoughts and imaginations. In Boyle's story the Austrian doctor sets warning fires on the mountainside, but the Jewish doctor sets fire to himself. These incidents illustrate the catastrophic results that occurred when people responded to Nazi aggression with ignorant denial rather than informed resistance: by ignoring the Nazi threat, people only allowed it to grow stronger.

As early as 1940, Boyle recognized not only that European ignorance and denial fueled Fascism but also that American attitudes did nothing to help quell the escalation to war. Most analysts have interpreted Boyle's "Major Engagement in Paris" as a criticism of the way Americans responded to Hitler's aggression, denying his danger not with naive unawareness but with deliberate apathy. The story appeared in American Mercury August 1940 and depicts two women, Mrs. Hodges and Mrs. Peterson, who fight over toothpicks (Hav-A-Picks) while Paris is under German attack. The satiric parallel to the story's title is obvious. Bell ascribes the characters' preoccupation with triviality to indifference, saying that the women's actions constitute "a form of apathy too prevalent in 1940, an apathy born of the desire to look at

the war as a personal inconvenience"(46).[5] Bell cites an incident in which Mrs. Hodges' makes a "disparaging comparison" between World War I and the present situation. While Bell makes a good case (certainly American's apathy was involved in the way the war developed at its onset), Mrs. Hodges speaks frequently of the previous war in a way that, coupled with her extreme obsession about the toothpicks, signals some sort of denial more complex than indifference. Furthermore, a discussion of the story cannot rely solely on Mrs. Hodges' character. Mrs. Peterson contributes a significant perspective with her Automat story. These two stories within one larger narrative reveal two women struggling to maintain a sense of security and control in an environment of increasing danger and chaos.

The story begins in a Paris restaurant where Mrs. Hodges relates two anecdotes to the waitress illustrating that she is familiar with the horrors of war. In her first story, a man's house is "shot away," and he is saved only because he isn't home at the time. In the second, Mrs. Peterson loses both her geraniums and her servant, who quits in fear after a bombing. At first, Mrs. Hodges' comments appear callous: "'Every geranium Mrs. Peterson had put out that year was cut to

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[5]Bell compares this story to an essay Boyle published in the Nation in 1944, entitled "The Battle of the Sequins," where women in America appear more worried about the "dwindling supply of consumer goods" than about the deteriorating world situation (46). Still, the women in "Major Engagement in Paris" are not safely in America.

pieces. She lost her bonne too with it'"(240). Moreover, the waitress is not too interested in the stories since "that was the other war, not the war outside and in the newspapers today"(240). But the "other war" is all Mrs. Hodges talks about when she mentions war.

Through her stories and her comments, Mrs. Hodges advances the idea that in the "last war," people did things right; they behaved properly. When readers examine Mrs. Hodges' remarks about World War I, they see a woman not so much apathetic as desperate to control the situation.

> "Last war,...the sirens made quite a different row. They screamed out loud...there seemed some sense to it. More life to it....Last war everybody came down cellar....Nobody lolled around in bed. We had...some esprit de corps." (244)

Her use of phrases such as "some sense to it," "more life to it," and "some esprit de corps" could be read as superciliousness. However, they appear to exhibit some degree of anxiety and desperation for meaning, survival, and vitality in a time of senseless death and destruction. The fact that Mrs. Hodges does go to the bomb shelter and holds in contempt those who do not indicates that she considers the war as more than a trivial inconvenience.

Mrs. Hodges' repeated references to the "last war" may constitute a way for her to cope with the present war. For many people who had survived the horrors of World War I, the impending ones of World War II seemed unimaginable. By remembering incidents from a war with which she is familiar

and that she survived, Mrs. Hodges is attempting to create for herself some sense of security. In Writing War: Fiction, Gender, and Memory, Lynne Hanley cautions that war stories told by those who survived war at first-hand can promote a false sense of security. Here, it would appear that Mrs. Hodges is telling herself war stories as a way of reassuring herself; however, if, as Hanley says, this sense of security is not to be trusted, then readers can understand how these reminiscences cannot truly comfort Mrs. Hodges and why she transfers her frustrations to Mrs. Peterson. Her obsessiveness over the toothpicks and her mounting impatience and unreasonable anger over Mrs. Peterson's inability to use them properly illustrate the tight control necessary to fight her fear.

Mrs. Hodges isn't the only character to tell stories in Boyle's narrative. Mrs. Peterson contributes a significant perspective into the mounting feelings of terror many experienced at the beginning of the war with her tale about the New York Automat. She recounts a rumor about an old beggar-woman who goes into an Automat, buys a bun, and fills it with poison in order to commit suicide. The beggar-woman succeeds, but the tragedy is compounded when an innocent family man enters the Automat and unwittingly eats the remaining part of the bun (242). The story is outrageous, but even more outrageous is the fact that Mrs. Peterson is under German attack in Paris and considers an Automat in New York as

"'so dangerous.'" Mrs. Peterson displays her terror of the war not only through her choice of story, which seems irrelevant to her present situation, but also through the way she tells it. She is so overcome with fear that she can hardly bring herself to relate the tale, unable at first to say that the woman filled the bun with poison and fumbling over details of the man's family: "'I don't remember,...he had a little baby--yes, a little boy or a little girl, I don't quite remember which'"(242). Equally revealing is Mrs. Hodges' reaction to the story. She impatiently interrupts Mrs. Peterson twice, once to hasten her narration, "'say it, Helen, say it,'" and once to change the subject--back to the proper use of Hav-A-Picks.

Storytelling as a means of escaping war's realities continues as a theme in one of Boyle's best-known and highest-regarded stories, "Defeat." While analysts have interpreted "Major Engagement in Paris" as a criticism of American apathy, they interpret "Defeat" as a criticism of France's complacency to the German invasion.[6] Boyle won her second O.Henry award

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[6]Both Susan Spanier in Kay Boyle and Elizabeth Bell respond similarly to these two stories. Spanier emphasizes Boyle's "sarcasm," "disgust," and scorn at the American and French behavior (Kay Boyle 154-155) even though in her discussion of some of Boyle's other war fiction, Spanier asserts that Boyle wrote stories to dispute the American impression that the French lay down on the job(Intro, TCL 246). Bell grants that Boyle's indictments are "gently stinging"(45). Still, I believe that Boyle is more sensitive in her criticism than either Spanier or Bell believes. I do not take this sensitivity as any sort of condoning on Boyle's part but as an approach to understanding the true nature of her characters' denials and as an element that contributes to the

for "Defeat," which appeared in The New Yorker May 17, 1941. The story is set between June and July in 1940 when the defeated French army returns home. Boyle creates the tension in the story by exploring the fine line between hope and despair. France has surrendered to Germany, but the characters in the story cannot accept the reality so they tell stories instead. They believe their denial will invalidate their defeat.

Boyle divides "Defeat" into two sections of storytelling; however, in this story the sections are not so obviously distinct as in "White Horses of Vienna." Moreover, her style is more understated than in previous stories although just as powerful. Structurally and stylistically, then, Boyle's subtle juxtaposition of two divergent accounts of France's rout by the Germans conveys the message of the story. "Defeat" begins with a collection of reports told by anonymous men that differ slightly in detail but represent, in total, a single attempt to justify their participation in Germany's overthrow of France. When these men are called upon to account for their actions--"like men...in a courtroom...[mounting] the witness stand"--they lie, not about the defeat itself but about the part they played in it. "You could see them getting the words ready, revising the very quality of truth..."(295). They exaggerate the German army's strength, claiming that it was able to advance "bareheaded, in

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quality and effectiveness of her short stories.

short-sleeved summer shirts...singing" before the ineffectual French machine guns (295-296). Despite their attempts to justify their retreat, by claiming their ammunition was sabotaged or that the officers were the first to desert, eventually they must admit defeat.

Boyle gives the single, detailed account of France's surrender to a mail-bus driver who tells a different version, "only once" to two travellers. He recounts how he was taken prisoner and escaped with a copain, July 13, the day before Bastille Day. The two men encounter a schoolmistress folding a French banner, who instructs them to get out of their uniforms and gives them the banner to cover themselves. The image of "just two Frenchmen in their underwear sitting quietly inside the color of their country's flag" (given by Boyle without comment) is a pathetic yet poignant representation of France's fall (299-300). At this point in the story, we hear the words with which the mail-bus driver formulates the only hope he can hold onto. "'A country isn't defeated as long as its women aren't'"(300), said to the schoolmistress, who gives him hope by preparing for Bastille Day in spite of the German soldiers occupying the town.

He continues his story, focusing on how he perseveres in this belief until the next day, when German soldiers take over the Bastille Day celebrations. As he watches the Germans prepare for the dance, he consoles himself with the thought that they would not have any partners, for the French women

would do what the French soldiers had been unable to do--stand up to Hitler's army. He watches the German soldiers' preparation for hours, continually reassuring himself with the belief that the French women would refuse the German soldiers and with the idea that "'as long as the women of a country aren't defeated, it doesn't matter if its army is'"(300). [7]

In the end, however, the women do acquiesce, and the mail-bus driver rationalizes the women's defeat in the same way the other soldiers rationalized theirs--the Germans had put forward an insurmountable force: they had put out tables with great food, drink, chocolates, and fruit tarts. And "'maybe if you've had a dress a long time that you wanted to wear and you hadn't had the chance...I mean I worked it out...maybe the time comes when you want to put it on so badly...,'" the mail-bus driver explains(304). One of the travellers listening to the story tries to revive the feeling of hope that the busdriver lost when the French women come down to celebrate with the German soldiers. "'Well,'" he says, "'that was just one town.'" But the Frenchman cannot hope anymore. "'Yes, that was just one town'"...and when he picked up his glass to drink, something as crazy as tears was standing in his eyes"(304). That crazy something is despair, and when the Frenchman gives into despair, he is truly

[7]Elkins informs us that "Boyle sees women's limited participation in government as at least partially responsible for France's downfall" and that Boyle continued to advocate more active participation in government by women throughout her career (159-160).

defeated.

The key to Boyle's point in this story is found in the distinction between "right" hope and "wrong" hope. On the one hand, not giving up hope is good, but on the other, denying human weaknesses, however hopefully, is not. Giving into despair is tantamount to defeat, but denying the realities of human nature is even worse. As Bell notes, Boyle explores in this story the "gap between one man's--and one nation's--expectations of human behavior and the reality that he--and the world--have to face"(48).

One reality that the world still has trouble facing is the Holocaust. In "Winter Night," (The New Yorker, January 19, 1946), Boyle attempts gently but firmly to make Americans face that reality.[8] The story operates on a number of levels revealing the difference between the American view of the war and the European view, between a child's experience of the war and a woman's, specifically, and between innocence and experience in general.

Boyle structures the narrative around two pairs of mothers and daughters. One child and (surrogate) mother are victims of the Holocaust. The other pair is from America, where the story is set. One character from each pair is absent; the European child has presumably died; the American

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[8]This story is Boyle's most often anthologized. It's interesting to compare it to Cynthia Ozick's "The Shawl" (1989). Boyle's story is sensitively restrained; Ozick's is brutally graphic and representative of a post-Vietnam mindset.

mother is continually out, either at work or socializing. The story begins when the European woman comes to babysit the American child, Felicia. Once again, the principal part of Boyle's narrative involves storytelling, in this case, the babysitter, or "sitting parent" as she is called in the story, tells Felicia about the other little girl she once took care of.[9]

Felicia's situation illustrates the problems American families, and especially children, faced during the war. Felicia's father is absent; perhaps he is fighting overseas; perhaps he has been killed in the war. Because of his absence, and because of the war, Felicia has also lost her mother, who must work during the day and tries to escape her loneliness at night by going out. Felicia's world is more than lonely; it is insecure. Her mother tells her "'Nobody stayed anywhere very long any more.'" Still, there is hope that

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[9]This story illustrates two important aspects about motherhood, one involving the Holocaust and one specific to Boyle. In their essay "Gendered Translations" in Gendering War Talk, Marianne Hirsch and Leo Spitzer examine how the Holocaust robbed women of their identity as mothers: "Holocaust mothers cannot protect or nourish their children, they cannot keep them alive, and they cannot [because their maltreatment caused infertility] produce more"(11). An understanding of the torture that women endured in addition to all the other injuries they suffered adds depth to our understanding of the sitting parent.
Moreover, Boyle saw motherhood as the most essential counteragent to war. In Generation Without Farewell her protagonist testifies to the power of motherhood. In Open Secrets Boyle says,"I believe strongly that if more mothers had political power, government positions, we would have a more rational world"(qtd. in Spanier, Faith 63). For Spanier, Boyle's "'mother-complex'" was really the motivation of her writing (Faith 68).

"when the fathers came back, all this would be miraculously changed" (598). In her characterization of Felicia, Boyle shows both the pain and the lack of understanding war can cause.

Bell suggests that Boyle uses light and darkness to symbolize Felicia's loneliness (53-54). When Felicia is frightened and feeling insecure she is framed in shadow. Before the sitter arrives, Felicia is waiting for her mother in the encroaching darkness of a winter's evening. As the maid tells her that her mother is not coming home, but that a sitting parent will come instead, Felicia asks questions "from the edge of dark"(597). As she remembers happier times, when her father came home, for example, she "[steps] quickly into the clear angle of light, and [leaves] the dark" (598). She moves in and out of darkness and light as she moves in and out of feeling vulnerable.

When the sitting parent arrives, the maid turns on the lights in the living room and "the shadows were suddenly bleached away"(598). At this point in the story, Boyle's use of darkness and light comes to exemplify more than Felicia's feelings; it symbolizes the difference between the darkness of incomprehension and the light of understanding. Felicia represents more than innocence, more than a child; she represents all Americans who, whether because of naivete or cavalier indifference, cannot fathom the reality of the Holocaust. The story the sitting parent tells, then, is to

enlighten the American public. We are children to the European experience.

The woman's storytelling involves three aspects. First, the woman needs to tell her story more than Felicia wants to hear it. Second, Felicia never fully comprehends what the woman is talking about and her ingenuous questions only underscore the horror of the woman's experience. Finally, whatever understanding the woman's story imparts must be grasped by the reader. Despite the story's subtlety, Boyle's effort to make the Holocaust a reality for Americans produces a response like the "startling slap across [the] face" that Felicia's mother imagines feeling when she comes home and finds her "asleep within the woman's arms"(606).

The woman begins her story, speaking quietly, but with "an eagerness behind her words, of a thing that seemed of singular importance to her"(600). This eagerness signals that telling the story, sharing her experience, functions as a release for her.[10]

The woman's story details events that occurred continually in concentration camps: men were separated from women; women with children were separated from women without children. Decisions about who would live and who would die were arbitrary, but women with children were more frequently

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[10] Collections of personal memoirs such as A Piece of My Heart and In the Combat Zone, both about the Vietnam war, attest to the therapeutic release war survivors experience when they can share their stories with others.

killed first. The little girl that she had cared for lost her father, then her mother. Finally, the children were separated from the adults, and the woman never saw the little girl again.

As Felicia listens to the story, she tries to comprehend it from her own experience. When the sitting parent tells her that "'the fathers were somewhere else, in another place,'" Felicia responds, "'Yes, ... I know'"(603). But Felicia does not, cannot, know the horrors the other little girl experienced. The sitting parent tells Felicia that she started to take care of the little girl after her real mother "'had to go away'"(603). Readers understand that the woman had been sent away for execution, but Felicia wonders, "'Did the mothers have to go out to supper?'" and "'did she take a taxi when she went?'"(602-603).

At various points, Felicia interrupts the woman by offering to show her a pirouette or asking for a story about the ballet instead. With every interruption until the last, the woman returns to her story. Finally, it is Felicia who interrupts the ballet story and prompts the woman to return to her tale. At this point, the woman provides explicit details that unequivocally verify her Holocaust experience. She tells how the mother was sent away "'standing up in a [train]'" and how the children "'must all be asleep somewhere and not crying all night because they are hungry and because they are cold'"(606).

But she also appears to withhold information. When Felicia asks her "persistently, 'what happened to the little girl?'" the woman replies, "'I do not know. I cannot say'"(606). And, while Felicia may accept her response, readers comprehend that the woman does know what happened to the child. The question remains, does she withhold the information to protect Felicia or because she cannot bring herself to articulate the child's death and thus make it real? In either case, Boyle elicits a stronger response from her readers by leaving the specific words of the girl's fate unsaid and the image of her death open to the reader's imagination. Most likely, the woman (as well as Boyle) could stop her story for the simple reason that there is nothing left to say. Her final words on the subject are that for three years she has been trying to console herself with the idea that "'they must all be asleep, and...nothing matters to them--'"(606). Perhaps Boyle is saying that whether one is telling the story to a child, an innocent, or any American, there is only so much she can say to explain such an atrocity. Still we must face the reality that the Holocaust occurred, no matter how inexplicable and unimaginable it is.

In addition to the Holocaust's horrible reality, Americans had, and still have, difficulty accepting another reality--that the Germans weren't the only ones who committed atrocities in W.W.II. Historical accounts, as well as two quintessential World War II stories, Catch-22 and

Slaughterhouse V, attest to the immorality and crimes of the United States Armed Forces. Despite the evidence, though, disavowing any evil in our actions has become the biggest denial our nation practices.

In the February 1944 issue of Atlantic Monthly, Jan Struther published a poem, "Wartime Journey," that describes an idealistic encounter between a black soldier and an elderly white woman. In his Wartime, Fussell summarizes the message of Struther's poem as, "all have learned goodness"(172). Unfortunately, Americans did not all learn goodness in World War II. [11] In her story about an encounter on a train, "Army of Occupation," Boyle illustrates that war can corrupt us all, causing people who are supposed to be the "good guys" to act like the enemy. Here it is not so much what the story's characters tell each other or themselves but the lack of communication that is important. In "Tails, You Lose: Kay Boyle's War Fiction," Edward M. Uehling explores how Boyle uses her characters' inability to communicate successfully to show "the full cost of war"--"a failure of human understanding and sympathy that suggests complete spiritual sterility" (375-379).

Boyle illustrates the soldiers' immorality through the

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[11] Fussell's point in his book is that Americans still do not recognize and understand the numerous immoralities they participated in during the war. He sees almost all American literature until Vonnegut, Heller, and Pynchon as perpetuating the lie that Americans were on the side of virtue, morality, and goodness (170-180).

ways they use, or more accurately, fail to use language.[12] She illustrates the woman's efforts to deny that immorality through her thoughts, formatted in italics throughout the story. The story is set immediately after the war when American soldiers are returning on a troop train from Paris to their stations in Germany. A young woman war correspondent, taking the train to meet her husband, is assigned to share a compartment with three American soldiers, a young farmboy, a big, red-haired soldier, and a sergeant. Throughout the trip, the big soldier and the sergeant threaten the woman, first with obscenity, then with physical force. The woman distracts herself with thoughts of her husband, and the farmboy sleeps with his head turned away from them. When he does speak, he mutters derisively about French women. None of the characters' interchanges signify any meaningful connection among them.

Despite his drunkenness and vulgarity, the sergeant insists that "'We're the good guys. We're all right guys'"(444) and proceeds to tell the story of his infant son's funeral to elicit the woman's sympathy. The way he presents his story, however--showing her a document verifying his presence at the funeral--fails to establish any bond between him and the woman. Rather than speak to the her, he uses the

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[12] In her Words that Must Somehow Be Said Boyle compares the degradation of "the dignity of human speech to the level of baying wolves" (qtd. in Spanier, "Intro," TCL 252). In his article, Uehling notes that "The sergeant's first 'words' are not words at all but a baying wolf call"(377).

document to try to get the woman to understand him, letting the paper speak for him. When he does speak, he attacks the woman scornfully, before she even has time to respond to what she reads. "'Surprises you, uh?' ...He was almost smiling, as if relishing the wiliness of some trick he had played"(445). His meager attempt at communication, coupled with his verbal assault on the woman, emphasizes the way discourse has dissolved, leaving humans unable to relate to one another with understanding and compassion.

Words fail not only the sergeant but also the woman. At first, she tries to use words to ameliorate the situation. The woman tells them the story of her husband and while she speaks, she believes "the tumult and outcry had seemed to cease in the train so that these strangers might listen...so that these others might hear more clearly the inimitable sound of love"(443-444). After she learns of the sergeant's son's death, she responds sympathetically, despite the sergeant's contentiousness, saying "'I'm sorry'" (445). But other than that, the woman has no words to offer. The big soldier interprets her silence as boredom and encourages the sergeant to tell her more interesting stories about travel. But the woman is not bored; she is simply at a loss as to how to respond. Most significantly, one simple word fails her--"no." She repeatedly rejects the soldiers' attempts to get her to drink brandy, but despite her resolute refusals (she says "No" four times, twice in immediate succession), the soldiers

persist, finally trying to force themselves on her physically.

At this point, a young corporal enters the compartment and offers to switch places with the woman. While he treats her gallantly, he still does not relate to her as an individual. Instead of talking **to** her he talks **at** her, praising her for being American. "'You're American. You're wonderful,' he said"(440). As he speaks of marrying her and moving to Alaska, it becomes obvious that she is not real to him but a character in some fantasy he's been harboring. The corporal cannot make the woman understand his feelings; she is interested only in his offer to switch compartments. He is so caught up in trying to persuade the woman to join him in his fantasy that he doesn't heed the threats from the sergeant and the big soldier. The story ends when the sergeant attacks the corporal, hitting him over the head with the Courvoisier bottle, and the woman runs away.

The connections between war, immorality, language, and denial become most clear in this scene. The soldiers' corruption exceeds words and gestures and develops into violent action. Worse still, this violence is directed against their fellow Americans. They speak of the woman as an object--"'You take it first. I'll take what's left'" (448). They speak of the corporal as if he's the enemy; "'Let's kick the guts out of Oregon for interfering where he wasn't wanted,' said the big soldier"(452).

The woman's thoughts reveal that she does not comprehend

the large-scale damage war causes to the victors as well as to the defeated, to the human spirit as well as to the human body. Her lack of understanding exposes a misconception about war that persists today. She believes that the sergeant and the big soldier are exceptions. As she runs down the train's corridor, she thinks, "There're other people on this train,like people you know...People who understand words, if I can get to them, if I can say the words to them"(453). But throughout the story no words said to anyone have been able to prevent the violent climax. And, while the woman believes she is escaping some anomaly of evil, she is running towards the same "sad, sweet, distant" voices that have continually been singing the lewd "Roll me over/in the clover." In other words, as Uehling suggests, "what she runs from may be no worse than what she runs to"(379). Unlike Struther's poem, Boyle's story offers no idealistic resolution to the characters' dilemma. Despite the fact that they are victorious survivors, they are still war victims, victims of war's pervasive corruption. In this story, Boyle shows unequivocally that the ways in which language fails illustrate the destructive aspects of war.

It seems paradoxical to say that Boyle's literary skill lay in her ability to use words to demonstrate the danger of failed language. Still, her war stories certainly support this assertion. For, while language often fails for the characters in Boyle's stories, it succeeds in enlightening her

readers. "The White Horses of Vienna," "Major Engagement in Paris," and "Defeat" detail the complex nature of war as it proceeds from an insidious threat to terrifying reality. "Winter Night" and "Army of Occupation" illustrate war's legacy: war, a human-made phenomenon, destroys all other human-made structures, most significantly our structures of morality and language. The total failure of language in "Army of Occupation" shows the total destructiveness of war. "Winter Night" shows that despite language's limits (the sitting parent can communicate only so much understanding to Felicia), it is all we have and we can sometimes be successful in communicating love--our only remedy to war. In this sense, the power of language can do more than enlighten us; it can heal us.

Unlike her characters, Boyle does not deny humans' capacity for ignorance, cowardice, selfishness, or evil. William Carlos Williams cites Boyle's attitude towards storytelling as something "aberrant," feeling that Americans preferred literature with a somnolent "opacity" rather than simple directness, since we "Fear to vary from the average, fear to feel, to see, to know, to experience..."(314).

Though many wartime writers may have felt it necessary to write stories that would boost morale, both at home and at the front, Kay Boyle was convinced her obligation lay in telling the truth about war. In her collection of essays Words that Must Somehow be Said, Boyle reminds writers of their moral

duty to use words responsibly. She condemns not only those who manipulate language for their own profit but also those who do not strive to use language for its redemptive/healing power. She writes, "Had they, [the German intellectuals] through their works and by their vision, made richer promises than those he made, the man called Hitler would have been forced into exile instead of the writers..."(qtd. in "Intro" TCL 252).

Lynne Hanley, in Writing War, asks us to examine the way war acts on our imaginations. In the Introduction to Fifty Stories, David Daiches says that Boyle's war stories haunt and hold the reader's imagination by

> the human implications of the moments in modern history which they are designed to illuminate....They exist in their own right as stories, works of the literary imagination in which the skill of the artist has...prompted at each point the appropriate handling of language so as to achieve a special kind of permanence.... (13-14)

While still containing significant insight into the times in which they were written, Kay Boyle's war stories retain a sense of timelessness, continuing to operate actively in the reader's imagination revealing a comprehensive understanding of the subtle complexities and contradictions of human nature. By creating stories of great literary merit and great moral integrity, Boyle has produced more than what Marilyn Elkins cites as "narrative innovations" that "add an important alternative to the modernist canon..."(248). Boyle's war stories serve as more than "alternatives" to traditional ones;

they serve as "complements," making the war literature canon whole. They are not battle stories; they are not heroic stories, but they are stories that must somehow be told.

CHAPTER FIVE

A TIME OF PEACE

Ecclesiastes avows that "to everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven...a time of war, a time of peace"(3:1-8). But how can we call the years following V-E Day and V-J Day "a time of peace"? War and the idea of war have continued unabated since the end of W.W.II--from the initiation and escalation of the Cold War, to the Korean War, the Vietnam War, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Grenada, The Gulf War, now Bosnia.

The body of short war fiction about W.W.II has continued to grow since the war ended, but most of these stories continue to focus on war experiences; few directly discuss peace.[1] Moreover, the stories about peace and/or the ones set during peacetime present neither a world at peace nor individuals who can find and sustain a sense of peace. In the "Foreword" to The Best American Short Stories of 1948, Martha

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[1] Not only is it hard to find W.W.II stories that consider peace a possibility, it is equally difficult to find any short fiction by women that presents a time of peace. Carter lists three, all written ten years after Vietnam and all science fiction that imagine peace only in the distant future. Sherry Goldsmith's "Caruso" from When the Music's Over (1991) depicts characters in a future century clutching at the ideology of peace despite the fact that war still exists. Winnifred Harper Cooley's "A Dream of the Twenty-First Century" (1984) is the most optimistic, imagining that the world has successfully abolished war by 2001. Alice Hastings Sheldon's "Beam Us Home"(1985), depicts a dying soldier who can envision peace only by fantasizing that he has escaped wartorn earth "as a member of the Star Trek crew" (Carter 248-249, 267).

Foley designates one word to describe post-W.W.II short stories--"tension"(ix). She writes that an "overwhelming tension, the terror, the specter of undefined guilt which permeated Poe's work are the most obvious attributes of today's short story writing"(vii). She wonders whether the return to the "old-fashioned ghost story" (albeit with no ghosts) epitomizes America's desire to represent reality or to flee from it. Still, she marks the increased interest in psychological stories a significant trend, asserting that our national attitude is one of "anxiety neurosis"(ix).[2]

Of the collected short war fiction, three stories, "The Honeyed Peace" and "Weekend at Grimsby" by Martha Gellhorn, and "The Maiden," by Jean Stafford, deal primarily with individuals' psychological responses to the idea of peace in the years immediately following the end of W.W.II. "The Honeyed Peace," set in the fall of 1945, and "Weekend at Grimsby" set in November 1949, examine the lives of two American women as they struggle with depression, cynicism, anger, and disappointment. "The Maiden" exposes the "barbarism of the victorious New World beside the monstrous refinement of the Old" (Boston xvii).

In The Face of War (1959), Gellhorn writes that "after the victory in World War II,...peace was uneasy and

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[2] Foley underscores the post-W.W.II literary trend toward pessimism by noting that even the popular, "slick" magazine stories that used to have a happy ending, "no matter how forced," now have forced unhappy endings (ix).

unconvincing," and she despairs that the world has learned anything from either journalistic war accounts or experience: "If the agony of the Second World War did not teach [people], whatever would?"(3). Although Gellhorn continued to write fiction as well as non-fiction after publishing Face, she resigned herself to the probability that writing would not be a "guiding light" to the world, only a means of keeping her own record straight (4). Still, this book, which is an account of Gellhorn's first-hand experiences during "The War in Spain," "The War in Finland," "The War in China," and "The Second World War," belies her introductory protestations and provides one of the most highly-regarded collection of war non-fiction.[3] Most significantly, a comparison of her non-fiction accounts to the short fiction she collected in The Honeyed Peace provides an instructive example of the ways autobiographical war stories and fictional ones intersect.

The attitude toward war and peace that Gellhorn reveals in The Face of War (1959) appears first in her fiction, especially the short story collections The Honeyed Peace

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[3] Her "The First Hospital Ship" from The Face of War is one of only two W.W.II stories by women that Fussell includes in his The Norton Book of Modern War (1991). As noted previously, William Peden cites her "Till Death Do Us Part" from Two by Two (1958) as one of the "best" war stories. Daniel Jonah Goldhagen's Hitler's Willing Executioners (April 1996) concurs with her "Das Deutshes Volk." Still Gellhorn has received virtually no critical attention. The DLB bibliography included with her profile lists only Carlos Baker's biography of Ernest Hemingway, her first husband, an autobiographical memoir by Thomas Matthews, her second husband, and a 1978 dissertation by Jacqueline Orsagh, the author of the DLB article.

(1953) and Two by Two.(1958).[4] In "The Honeyed Peace," Anne Marsh, an American Red Cross worker, struggles to maintain her sanity in post-war Europe. Susanne Carter, in War and Peace Through Women's Eyes, identifies Anne's problem as one of wanting to avoid the uncomfortable situation of consoling a friend (112-113). But Anne's problems are more complex. When she is faced with attempting to comfort Evangeline, whose husband, Renaud, has been imprisoned as a collaborator, Anne must confront her own ideas about what constitutes courage and heroism, evaluating her own post-war psyche--one of anger, cynicism, disappointment, and ennui. This evaluation provokes a disturbing revelation, one that may represent Gellhorn's view of Americans' post-war condition in general as well as a measure of her own state of mind at the end of the war.

Gellhorn sets the story in the post-war European climate, showing a world where prejudice and pettiness, bitterness and apathy appear to be winning over honesty, courage, and heroism. Readers gain access to this world through Anne Marsh's perspective, both her external world view and her internal, personal one.

What Anne observes about the world is that it is filled

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[4]"Till Death Do Us Part" is a straightforward war story, whose depiction of a famous photographer's life during the Spanish Civil War and W.W.II and his death during the Asian conflict in Java parallels Gellhorn's accounts in Face. Moreover, her stance in Face, that Java is the "postwar new-style little war [which she] never wanted to see any more of...again anywhere" (3), mirrors that of the characters in her short story.

with people like Lady Elizabeth Beach, the Englishwoman and former airplane factory worker, who stands at Van Cleef and Arpels' window, admiring a necklace and believing that the war and her part in it were futile. The jewelry store "had their necklace and she had nothing but grained hands and a sense of soul-destroying shabbiness"(22). Sites like Weber's café, which Anne remembers "with tenderness," are now places where "no one laughed about anything at all [and] there was not even one couple holding hands"(25). "There was a terrible discretion between [the] friends..." at Evangeline's party, where they laugh and gossip only to refrain from talking about the war(18).

But Anne's greatest struggle is with her own attitudes towards her friends and most especially herself in a post-war world filled with moral uncertainty. Anne's view of her friends reflects her own desires. Her opinion that Evangeline is lucky to be rid of Renaud reflects her wish to be unencumbered by the discomfort she now feels around her friends. Her discomfort stems in part from her misgivings about their conduct during the war. "It had been very awkward a year ago to be received so warmly by acquaintances who had been equally cordial in their reception of the Germans"(19). As Anne attempts to distance herself from her pre-war friends (note she now refers to them as "acquaintances"), she longs for a time "when one's friends were just one's friends and there were no problems that could not be solved"(25).

Although she is initially surprised to think that Lucien could be a hero, she is reassured by the thought, "glad to have [him] safely ticketed in her mind"(19). Still, she is disturbed by Tommy Grainger's comment "'Terrible nuisance, isn't it? ... "'One's old friends'" probably because she fears his attitude truthfully reflects her own (33).

As readers follow Anne's journey through the moral minefield of post-war Paris, they grow to understand her confusion and frustration. She cannot fathom a clear sense of morality for herself in a world where everything and everyone seems immoral. She knows Renaud was wrong, but ethical distinctions are now blurred. Renaud was no more a collaborator "than a lot of other people," hypocritical people who are just as guilty as he but haven't been caught (26). She's disgusted that "no one really does anything about collaborators"; still, she tries desperately to help Evangeline, hoping for her sake that nothing does happen to Renaud. Lady Elizabeth suggests that Anne's feelings stem from being a "moral" American (23), but Anne's admission that she is resentful, angry, and cynical after the war does not constitute morality; indeed, the only "morality" Anne admits to is bitter sarcasm: "'It's probably my American morality, ... I cannot seem to forget that stinking war'"(26).

Anne learns many things from her experience. She learns that the true meaning of courage involves more than laughing when you want to cry; it means loving as Evangeline does,

unconditionally and in the face of impossible odds. She learns that Evangeline's power to love makes her a true hero and that no one else, especially Anne herself, is as heroic. She learns that she does not really know what peace means nor can she ever hope to find a "honeyed peace." In this post-war world where Anne's convinced that "'the war is over'" and atrocities like "'people being shot on the road between prisons [have] stopped,'" people like Renaud can still feel such a sense of impending doom that they are compelled to commit suicide and people like Evangeline can still become totally destroyed. Peace has not brought better times. It has produced a society of depleted people like herself who believe that the war has destroyed everything and that life is purposeless--"she might do anything, if there were anything she wanted to do" (28).

In "Weekend at Grimsby," (Atlantic Monthly 1951 and Best American 1952), Gellhorn's character, Lily Cameron, appears to be a continuation of Anne's. Like Anne, since V-E Day, Lily has led a dislocated, meaningless life, hating what the war has done to the world and to herself, longing for simpler, more ideal times. Unlike Anne, who is just discovering the seeming meaninglessness of her existence, Lily has had four and a half years to contemplate her condition--one of a ghost in a world of ghosts who are neither alive nor dead, but in a "present intermediate state, "a ghost whose only usefulness is to remember (60). Also unlike Anne, Lily does not appear to

be representative of others around her. Her former comrades have moved on and while their lives are a failure materialistically, their psyches appear more healthy and strong. Sims, her former comrade and lover, attributes Lily's sadness and world-weariness to the fact that "war is too hard on women," and to the tragedy that since Lily continues to love a dead man (her pilot lover) "naturally [she was] not alive"(76-77).

But Lily's suffering evolves from the fact that the war lives on inside her. As Gellhorn maintains in Face, the world's struggle and failure to find peace after W.W.II was ongoing. Gellhorn represents this world view in Lily's thoughts and use of language. Despite her vivid memory of war's violence, she feels that wartime was better than the present. Then they were "all young and in love with everyday...feeling anything was possible after the war"(65-69). They felt that peace would be different. But, for Lily peacetime is not a time when anything is possible. It is a time when nothing is possible--not love (note her cynical comments about the married couple on the train); not passion (she refuses Sim's suggestion that they sleep together because while they once were "gay and wild [with an] immense joy in being alive" she believes they now could act only out of "pity" and "desperation" [74-75]); not life (as her thoughts reveal, her life involves more than mourning the dead, "they live with me"[61]). She does not try to deny that she thinks

"always in terms of war"(83). She firmly believes that a post-war existence involves an understanding that "it was normal to be dead" and that peacetime is "much harder and longer than war ever was"(76,83). Using militaristic language, Lily thinks "she had demobilized herself," not from the army but from the world (86).

When she finally leaves Grimsby, she believes even her single purpose is gone because "there is no one to remember for"(88). Lily's state of mind at the conclusion of "Weekend" approximates Anne's at the conclusion of "Honeyed Peace":

> How did you pick up the habit of living, once you had lost it? How did you live with yourself after you had guessed for the first time, with disbelief and certainty, with horror, that you were a coward?("Weekend" 88)

Both Anne and Lily appear ashamed of their friends, then ashamed of themselves. In Face, Gellhorn concludes that we all share complicity in the horror that was W.W.II, that "we are all guilty of stupidity, the ruling human sin," and she realizes while visiting Dachau that we are all ashamed, "ashamed for mankind" (6, 236).

In her DLB profile on Martha Gellhorn, Jacqueline Orsagh identifies Anne and Lily's sin and shame as ones that comprise the major philosophy found in all of Gellhorn's fiction:

> Gellhorn concentrated on the individual's struggle to find happiness and purpose in a world that seemed to deny both. She recognized, as is perhaps most evident in "Miami-New York,"...the great emptiness in the lives of most modern men and women....Gellhorn believed
> that one must attempt to bridge the existential gulf with personal relationships and responsible

> actions. To isolate oneself...is both self-condemning and criminal. (247)[5]

In the introduction to The Face of War, Gellhorn admits that for a time she had imagined herself a hero because she was a journalist. Like Anne and Lily she "hung on in the climate of war" after W.W.II (3). Eventually she came to believe that journalism, though still "essential" and "a form of honorable behavior," did not make her a hero: "I am no longer a journalist; like all other private citizens, the only record I have to keep straight is my own" (4). Gellhorn's stories in The Honeyed Peace represent her attempts to keep her own record straight as they provide readers with keen insights into the problems of imagining a time of peace in the modern world.

Jean Stafford's "The Maiden" (1950) first appeared in The New Yorker and is collected in Wave Me Goodbye (1989), edited by Anne Boston. Like Anne and Lily, Stafford's main character, Evan Leckie, is an American in post-war Europe, longing for a place and time untouched by W.W.II and all its consequences. While most critical attention has been paid to Stafford for her novels, in particular The Catherine Wheel

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[5]Though Orsagh is correct to assign Gellhorn's philosophy to "Miami-New York," (collected in The Best American Short Stories of 1948 and in The Honeyed Peace), I assert that the story is not so well-written as the two discussed in this chapter. Additionally, the story's situation approximates that of Bessie Breuer's "Bury Your Own Dead"(a woman and a soldier attempt to bridge gaps of isolation and alienation and fail), the clearly superior story.

(1952), Maureen Ryan in Innocence and Estrangement in the Fiction of Jean Stafford (1987) contends that "it is within the genre of the short story that she reached her artistic maturity"(80).[6] With its male lead character, "The Maiden" is somewhat of an anomaly, for Stafford's short fiction concentrates primarily on female experience. Still, for its examination of "the pervasive influence of World War II on modern society," the story is representative of "the war-inspired nihilism and loss of faith in human ideals [that] reverberate throughout her stories"(Ryan 5-6).

In her "Truth in Fiction" (1966), Stafford insists that telling the truth must remain an author's main purpose, despite being "scared...a good deal of the time." By "telling the truth...the whole truth" a writer can "disperse [the] hobgoblins" that haunt the postwar world (qtd. in Walsh 11). Stafford understood the necessity of autobiographical experience in creative writing but knew that for an author to tell the truth, she must "add a portion of lies" to the mix (Walsh 11). Stafford draws her knowledge of "The Maiden's" setting, Heidelberg, Germany, from the time she attended the university there during 1937-38. When Hitler began his Nazification of the university, she escaped to Boston, where she met and later married Robert Lowell. The "lies" she

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[6]Charles Eisinger calls The Catherine Wheel "the finest example of its kind that the new fiction produced in the years after the war"(Fiction of the Forties 302). Ihab Hassan has offered similar praise.

embellishes the story with may include any number of details about Evan and the dinner guests at Mrs. Andreas' party. However, these "lies" help present the powerful truth of the postwar American psyche to the reader.[7]

At the Andreas' dinner party in Heidelberg, Evan Leckie, a recently-divorced American journalist, accurately observes his environment (250). He perceives his hostess' hypocrisy--a condescending attitude of the "conquerors" towards "the vanquished"--when no one else, including Mrs. Andreas herself, does. He understands that people cannot speak of the "war and the Occupation" directly (251), and he is keenly aware that the world has changed so drastically that negotiating true peace with the Germans is fraught with difficulty:

> If chivalry...were ever to return to the world, peace would come with it, but evenings like this were isolated, ... lost in the vast, arid wastes of the present hour within the present decade....it was only a past that was now irretrievable [which] could bring [the Germans and the Americans together in] harmony. (251)

Still, as the evening progresses, Evan escapes to a fantasy about the past, a delusion whose exposure Stafford

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[7]Ryan says that despite their universal qualities, Stafford's short-fiction characters "are defined by their Americanness and a communal postwar American experience"(80). More significantly, despite the fact that Stafford's personal experiences with nomadic living, spousal abuse, and alcoholism appear indisputably in her fiction, so does an admiration and emulation of Twain and James (Walsh 11). In his The American Short Story, William Peden praises Stafford for her skill in handling the issues of "mental and physical illness, violence, and the bizarre" in a manner that places her work firmly in the context of American literary tradition as developed by Poe, Hawthorne, and Bierce (97).

exploits to reveal the true condition of the postwar world. Evan concocts a romantic scenario involving two German guests, Dr. Reinmuth and his wife, Liselotte. His view of Frau Reinmuth is especially clouded by his own depression and bitterness over the state of the world and his recent divorce. He now believes society incapable of human relationships, "...the world had moved into a new era dominated by a neuter body called Personnel whose only concerns were to make history and to snub the history [they] made"(251-252). He admires the German couple who "in an unloving world...loved"(256) each other as he elevates Frau Reinmuth to superwoman status.[8] In his thoughts he praises her for having "been challenged by violence," ignoring it and remaining untouched by war: "To look at her, no one would know that the slightest alteration had taken place"(252). As he continues to note and report the fine details of the Reinmuths' interactions with each other, he concludes that their "compassionate amity [proves to the world] that there was no longer a state of war between their country and his" and that everybody can be friends (255). Obviously his journalistic powers of observation and judgment are impaired!

Evan's transference of desirable attributes to the

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[8]Maureen Ryan compares Evan to another of Stafford's male characters, Jack Onslager in "Beatrice Trueblood's Story." She says that the two constitute the "(rare) sympathetic Male character, who nonetheless exposes his true ideas about women" [and thus exposes] his "unenlightened," scornful attitudes towards anything feminine in the world (106).

Reinmuths (at one point he calls them "two pacific Germans" [256]) represents his longing for peace, not just in present world, but in the past. But now the world is so different that even the past cannot remain unchanged and unsullied. It is a world where when young girls dream of the theater, it is the war theater, not Broadway (251). It is a world where the Reinmuths' courtship is not a romantic, love story, but a disturbing account of the confluence of violence and death with the Reinmuth's marriage. As Dr. Reinmuth recounts watching the guillotine execution of a former client, the other dinner guests surmise that the experience deeply disturbed him. Instead, since he was "'all dressed up'" and "'it was a glorious morning in May,'" he went home and convinced Liselotte to marry him (257-258). Dr. Reinmuth's story appears briefly after the reader has shared a lengthier one, that of Evan's fantasy. Like the dinner guests, then, readers are shocked and left confused about what disturbs us the most. Have we, like Evan, been so caught up in a fantasy about peaceful times and beautiful people that Dr. Reinmuth's unflappable linking of violence and love surprises us? What are we to think about Stafford's report that "the party suddenly was no longer a whole" and "the Germans...had triumphed"(258-259)?

The story's title provides a clue. Readers' initial expectation when considering it probably involves the common association for a "maiden," that of a young, virginal woman,

an ideal romantic companion. As we share Evan's thoughts, we assign that association to Frau Reinmuth. But the only "Maiden" mentioned in the story is the name of a guillotine a guest once visited in "antiquarian...Edinburgh"(259). It is a guillotine to which Dr. Reinmuth's client is sentenced, a guillotine where Dr. Reinmuth, after witnessing a man's bloody execution, decides not to let his formal attire go to waste and proposes. We discover then, along with Evan and the rest of Mrs. Andreas' guests, that the shocking revulsion many felt at the end of the war, manifested in the revulsion they feel at the end of Dr. Reinmuth's story, is nothing new. This revulsion derives from our propensity to mythologize war. As there are two stories in "The Maiden," Evan's story and Dr. Reinmuth's **true** story, there are two kinds of stories about W.W.II: Ones generated by our propensity to romanticize the experience and idealize the war's results and ones like Stafford's.

In The Face of War, Martha Gellhorn writes

> There is a single plot in war; action is based on hunger, homelessness, fear, pain and death. Starving wounded children in Barcelona in 1938 and in Nijmegen in 1944 were the same...The shapeless bundle of a dead American soldier in the snow of Luxembourg was like any other soldier's corpse in any other country. War is a horrible repetition. (7-8)

Jacqueline Orsagh finds this philosophy in the structure of Gellhorn's fiction: "This cyclical structure is Gellhorn's reminder that nothing really changes. Peace comes and men

return to their old lives"(247).

The story of war, then, is like something out of Ecclesiastes where there is nothing new under the sun.[9] Still, women writers continue to tell war stories as a way to prevent war because, as Gellhorn contends, "memory and imagination, not nuclear weapons, are [war's] great deterrents"(Face 8). And we need to continue to pay more attention to women's war stories because as Hanley says in Writing War,

> The prevention of war would seem to require...the reconstruction of the prevalent form of the relation between the sexes in Western culture, so as to erode the boundaries between male and female, white and black, the abstract and the concrete, the professional and the personal. (139)

W.W.II short fiction by women merits greater recognition for its contribution to American literature, a contribution that proves works of memory and imagination can make a valuable impression on America's collective history.

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[9] In Radical Innocence, Hassan notes that any story of human history is "nearly always the same"(11-12).

CONCLUSION

> [(Woman) writers] spiritually witness routine social brutality, tell stories about and for those previously left out of the literary and social text, make claims for the powerless, and reveal the courage and resourcefulness of people generally believed to be unimportant and unheroic. ...They respond to a male American fixation on untrammelled individualism with the reminder that the freedom of self is empty without relationship and responsibility. Women writers are concerned with what one needs to be free <u>for</u> rather than <u>of</u>. (Hilfer 190)

This study demonstrates the significance of American women writers from 1935-1953 supporting the claim that their work needs to be recovered and revalued for many reasons. 1940's women writers witnessed the "routine social brutality" called war and its aftermath. The stories they tell reclaim the experiences of many courageous and resourceful people previously "believed to be unimportant and unheroic" while asserting the necessary connection between individuals and relationships, freedom and responsibility. Women's short W.W.II fiction allows us to examine the literary changes that occurred during the 1940's--a major transitional period in American literature. Moreover, the literature points up the tensions which developed in the post-W.W.II American psyche: "the contrast between the real and the illusory"(Peden 188); "between the non-identity of pure fluidity and the fixity involved in all definitions--in words or in life..."(Tanner 18); between incarnating our history and recreating it "with artifice"(Hassan 7); "between actuality and the language

invoked to describe it"(Fussell, Modern 23).

Most importantly, these stories illustrate the ways in which experience, ideas, memories, and language interact. A study of this fiction allows us to see the relationship between imagined and real experience, between narrative structures and post-World War II American thought. Current commentators devote lengthy study to what W.W.II women fiction writers knew: there is a direct connection between the manipulation of language and the perpetuation of war; there is also a direct connection between the immorality of war and the corruption of language. Since war narratives are linguistic constructs, it's especially important to examine how words, images, and stories intersect.

The significance of this study, then, exceeds literary concerns to include philosophical, sociological, and cultural ones. By listening to the voices of Kay Boyle, Bessie Breuer, Martha Gellhorn, Nancy Hale, Hazel Hawthorne, Shirley Jackson, Dorothy Parker, Ann Petry, Katherine Anne Porter, and Jean Stafford, among others, readers gain more than a literary experience. We gain a sense of women's place in society and culture at a time in our history that forever changed women's position in America. Boyle, Gellhorn, Porter, and Stafford provide fictional accounts written from their personal knowledge of Europe during the pre-war, war, and post-war years. Parker and Petry write from their personal experiences in America during the war. Breuer, Jackson, Hale, and

Hawthorne imagine the numerous ways war affects relationships, not only male and female but also human. All these writers sound a warning about our responsibility to recognize truthfully and to report honestly our experiences. They do more than elevate our consciousness of the W.W.II period; they engage our consciences, reminding us that we need to understand and thus remember our past accurately if we are ever to hope for peace.

Hilfer reminds us that women's literature adds significantly to the canon not because it provides a woman's perspective in a female "literary voice"; that element of women's literature comprises only "one dimension of the book's identity"(206). According to Hilfer, women's literature deserves valuing for the way it

> enters into dialogue with other forms, styles and genres, defined more by the richness and variety of its products than by any single schematic identity. (206)

He characterizes American Fiction Since 1940 as reflective of the "paradoxes of centrality and marginality in American literary culture" that have developed over the last fifty years (210). We need to valorize and include more literature of all types in the "play between the margins and the unstable center" (Hilfer 210). Therefore, the specialized scope of this dissertation should not imply that the works included in it deserve discrete categorization. Recognition and valuing of this diverse group of stories helps to fill the gap, not only in women's literature but also in American literature.

American women's short World War II fiction should be read and studied not as an alternative literature but as a necessary complement to the American literary canon.

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FIGURE 1
COLLECTED SHORT WAR STORIES BY WOMEN

YEAR	AUTHOR	TITLE	COLLECTIONS
1935	Kay Boyle	White Horse of of Vienna	O.H.
1939	Kay Boyle	Anschluss	O.H. B.A.(40)
1940	Kay Boyle	Poor Major Panalitus	O.H.
1941	Kay Boyle	Defeat	O.H. 55NY, WMG
	Kay Boyle	T'en Fais Pas	Harper's*
	Nancy Hale	Those Are As Brothers	O.H. BA(42)
1942	Kay Boyle	Their Name is Macaroni	O.H.
	Ruth Oppersdorf	I Was Too Ignorant	WMG
1943	Kay Boyle	The Canals of Mars	O.H. WW
	Bessie Breuer	Pigeons en Casserole	O.H. 55NY
	Dorothy Canfield	The Knot Hole	O.H. BA(44)
	Edna Ferber	Grandma Isn't Playing	WMG
	Hazel Hawthorne	More Like A Coffin	BA (44)
	Josephine Johnson	The Rented Room	WW BA(44)
	Edita Morris	Heart of Marzipan	BA (44)
	Ruth Portugal	Neither Here Nor There	BA (44)
1944	Bessie Breuer	Home is a Place	O.H. WW
	Dorothy Parker	The Lovely Leave	WMG
	Katherine Anne Porter	The Leaning Tower	**
	Ruth Portugal	Call a Solemn Assembly	O.H. BA (45)
	Donna Rowell	A War Marriage	BA (45)
	Allison Stuart	Sunday Liberty	O.H.

1945	Bessie Breuer	Bury Your Own Dead	O.H. BA(46)
	Ethel Edison Gordon	War Front: Louisiana	O.H.
	Emily Hahn	The Baby Amah	55NY
1946	Kay Boyle	Winter Night	O.H.
	Ann Petry	In Darkness and Confusion	CS
	Jo Sinclair	The Brothers	CS
1947	Martha Gellhorn	Miami-New York	BA (48)
1948	Dorothy Canfield-Fisher	Americans Must Be Told	4
1949	Shirley Jackson	The Lottery	O.H. 55NY
1950	Jean Stafford	The Maiden	WMG
1953	Martha Gellhorn	The Honeyed Peace Weekend at Grimsby	*** BA (52)

Abbreviations are for The O.Henry Memorial Award (O.H.), The Best American Short Stories (BA N.B.: The dates for this collection's eligible stories typically run one year later than O.Henry), It's A Woman's World (WW), Cross Section 1947 (CS N.B.: These stories were chosen from those published in 1946), 55 Stories from The New Yorker (55NY), Wave Me Goodbye (WMG) and Four Square (4).

* This story does not appear in any collection, but Brickell cites it as a close runner-up to "Defeat" in O.Henry 1941. Much of Boyle's short war fiction is collected in her Fifty Stories.

**This story appears in a collection of Porter's stories by the same name.

***These stories appeared originally in magazines such as The Atlantic Monthly, Scribner's and Esquire. They are collected along with "Miami-New York" in The Honeyed Peace (1953).

FIGURE TWO
MAGAZINE AVERAGES
JANUARY 1 To DECEMBER 31, 1939

The following table includes the averages of distinctive stories in twelve Americanperiodicals. One, two, and three asterisks are employed to indicate relative distinction. Three.asterisk stories' are considered worth reprinting in book form. The list excludes reprint. Figures in columns three and represent stories with one or more asterisks: figures in columns four and seven, stories with two or, more asterisks: figures in columns five and eight,stories with three asterisks.

PERIODICALS	Number Of Stories Published	Number of Distinctive Stories Published			Percentage of Distinctive Stories Published		
	*	*	**	***	*	**	***
American Prefaces	27	23	13	3	85	48	11
Atlantic Monthly..	25	18	12	9	72	48	36
Cosmopolitan	109	13	8	3	12	7	3
Esquire	115	74	31	20	64	27	17
Harper's Bazaar (NY)	49	35	29	19	70	58	38
Harper's Magazine (except December)	17	14	9	7	89	53	41
Household Magazine	32	7	5	2	22	16	6
New Anvil	31	24	9	1	77	29	3
Prairie Schooner	19	14	8	1	74	42	5
Saturday Evening Post.	39	31	7	1	14	3	1
Southern Review			7	7	100	78	78
Story	54	4	32	20	81	59	37

The following tables indicate the rank, by number and percentage of distinctive short stories published, of nine periodicals coming within the range of my examination which have published an average of 50 percent or more of distinctive stories. The list excludes reprints, but not translations.

By PERCENTAGE

1.	Southern Review	100%	6.	Prairie Schooner	74%
2.	Harper's Magazine	89%	7.	Atlantic Monthly	72%
3.	Amirican Prefaces	85%	8	Harper's Bazaar (New York)	70%
4.	Story	81%	9.	Esquire	64%
5.	New Anvil	77%			

By Number

1.	Esquire	74	6.	Atlantic Monthly	19
2.	Story	44	7	Harper's Magazine	14
3.	Harper's Bazaar (New York)	35	8:	Prairie Schooner	14
4	New Anvil	24	9.	Southern Review	9
5.	American Prefaces	23			

The following periodicals have published during the same period seven or more 'two asterisk' stories. The list excludes reprints, but not translations.

1	Story	32	8.	Harper's Magazine	9
2	Esquire	31	9.	New Anvil	9
3.	Harper's Bazaar (NY)	29	10.	Prairie Schooner	8
4.	New Yorker	28	11.	Cosmopolitan	8
5.	Hairenik Weekly	16	12.	Southern Review	7
6.	American Prefaces	13	13.	Saturday Evening Post	7
7.	Atlantic Monthly	12			

The following periodicals have published during the same period four or more 'three asterisk' storiel The list excludes reprints but not translations.

1.	Story	20	5.	New Yorker	9
2.	Esquire	20	6.	Southern Review	7
3.	Harper's Bazaar(NY)	19	7.	Harper'sMagazine	7
4.	Atlantic Monthly	9	8.	Hairenik Weekly	4

BIOGRAPHY

Ellen G. Bonds was born Lydia Ellen Ginter June 29, 1953 in Quakertown, Pennsylvania to Dorothy Sanders Ginter and Louis Fisk Ginter.

She completed her B.A. English in 1974 at The University of Louisville, Louisville, Kentucky. She completed her M.A. English in 1983 at West Chester University where she served as graduate teaching assistant to Dr. Robert Weiss, President, Pennsylvania Writing Project and as editorial assistant to Dr. Bernard Oldsey, Editor, College Literature. She earned her Ph.D. in English, specializing in Twentieth-century American literature, from Lehigh University in 1996. She attended Lehigh on full scholarship and earned distinction on her written and oral comprehensive exams.

She has taught at the college level since 1983, concentrating primarily on freshmen composition classes, but also teaching literature, humanities, and advanced composition. From 1983-1985 she also served as a private consultant designing and conducting business and technical writing courses for a variety of companies. She is co-author of A Desk Guide to Business Writing (1984). She continues to teach Core Humanities Seminar: Modern Thought and The Literary Experience at Villanova University where she has been since 1987.

Her publications include, "Storytelling Characters and the Mythmaking Process in Andrew Lytle's The Velvet Horn in The Southern Literary Journal, Spring 1993; A Review: "Terry Otten After Innocence: Vision of the Fall in Modern Literature" in College Literature Spring 1983; and A Review: "Free Writing a Group Approach by Joseph Brown and Peter Elbow" in Pennsylvania Writing Project Newsletter February 1992.

She has presented two workshops, "Getting Students to Rewrite" at Lehigh University Fall 1992 and "Using Popular Song Lyrics to Teach Poetry" at Villanova University Spring 1990.

She was appointed to serve on the Committee to Establish New Guidelines for Teaching Evaluations in the Department of English, Villanova University, Fall 1992-Spring 1993. She continues to serve on the Part-Time Faculty Committee, Villanova University to which she was elected in 1990.

Her teaching interests include multicultural literature, war and peace literature, as well as all Twentieth-century American literature. Her personal interests include her family, swimming, tennis, and music.