

CHAPTER THREETHE SEMI-FABULISTS

One is not being facetious in using a cartoon as an epigraph for this Chapter. In their treatment of violence and madness, the semi-fabulists often employ comic-book techniques. Catch-22 specially, is like an elaborately written comic book, a series of word cartoons where no one would blink if an officer asked a soldier to take a chair outside and shoot it. It would be perfectly in order in this fantasy world if the chair drew out a gun and shot the soldier. General Dreedle, in fact, does order the shooting of Major Danby for a minor offence and is surprised when he learns that he does not have the power to do that. Like a comic, Catch-22 is full of wild improbable happenings, hysterical colonels, screaming majors, monadic characters obsessed with a single aspect of life (in the manner of Uncle Toby and his clan), usually something as trivial as marching.

In the works of the semi-fabulists the characters, like comic-strip figures, are cultural shadows thrown up by the unconscious. The comic-strip produces frightening moments of insight into our world and through the cartoon technique we are made aware of the hideous reality lurking behind our routine

lives. The shocking truth is revealed when the trivial is twisted into something macabre. As in Alice in Wonderland there is a vast field of subliminal terror suddenly glimpsed through the aperture of the familiar. One would like to suggest that the comic-strip is a distancing device which does not mute the horror. This horror is mediated through comedy of the strip-cartoon sort which verges on the most terrifyingly cruel.

Of the semi-fabulists it is Heller who capitalizes most on the comic-book technique. It has been said that Heller employs this technique to make a political statement. To say this is to reduce Catch-22 to a morality. Heller, in fact, uses the comic-strip technique to reveal - at different levels - the horrors inherent in our present-day existence. The Air-Force is a metaphor for life on our planet with its mindless violence. Its connotations certainly transcend American bureaucracy. This is not to say that Yossarian is not like the likeable G.I. of the wartime comic-strip caught up in a highly specialized situation. He is the innocent who is continuously frustrated by the technically right bureaucracy.

In a comic-strip there is an endless series of crises presented with a great economy of form. Since it adopts this technique Catch-22 is episodic and each episode is delivered in this syncopated manner, hammering in a blow along with the humour. But Yossarian's pranks unlike that of Beetle Bailey, are meant to prevent inner turmoil. This is siphoned off

through comic fabulation which functions as a psychic drainage system. Yossarian's nausea for the outfit to which he belongs, while subterranean is always dangerously close to the surface and the strip-cartoon comedy disguises it but only upto a point.

The following quotations illustrate the difference between what may be termed 'realism' and comic fabulation. The situation is the same: Yossarian and Minetta (The Naked and the Dead) pretend to be sick so that they can stay on at the hospital. The doctors know that they are faking and this is how each reacts:

- (a) 'Stand up' the doctor said. He looked coldly at Minetta.

'Sir?'

'Minetta, the Army's got no use for men like you. That gag you pulled was pretty low!'

'I don't know what you're talking about Sir'...

'Don't give me any of your lip', the doctor snapped. 'I'd have you court-martialed if it didn't take too long and if it wasn't just what you wanted anyway'.

...

'You pull that trick again and I'll see to it personally that you get ten years for it'.¹

- (b) "... I won't tell anyone you've been lying about your liver symptoms". Yossarian drew back from him further. "You know about that?"

"Of course I do. Give us some credit..."

"... Why didn't you turn me in if you knew I was faking?" "why the devil should I?" asked the doctor with a flicker of surprise. "we're all in this business of illusion together. I'm always willing to lend a hand to a fellow conspirator along the road to survival..."²

What these illustrations prove is that comic-book characters suggest alternating modes of reality. They alter the structure of reality and offer a model which would be purely solipsistic were it not for the comedy which provides it with a radically human analogue to life.

While writers like Joyce try to capture reality with language the comic fabulists create a different reality. The structure of violence and madness in Heller's work is not to be found in contingent reality. It is abstracted and stretched beyond its known limits as in strip-cartoon fantasy. This is done in order to suggest modes of violence and madness inaccessible to the average imagination. In Catch-22, Dickstein points out "the arbitrary, the terrible and the irrational have been routinized".³ In it, as in comic books, outlandish violence is taken for granted.

At this juncture the difference between popular comic-strip and comic fabulation must be defined. Whereas a cartoon figure is a satirical caricature, figures in comic fabulation acquire traits of caricature through being dehumanized in the sense in which Ortega Ye Gasset uses the term. These are characters drained of all consciousness.

The soldier in white is a case of extreme depersonalization. No one knows what he is or what he looks like. No one even knows if there is somebody inside the mummy-like swathe of bandages. All that is visible is the dark hole of his mouth. There are two jars connected to him: one to his elbow from which he is fed fluid; the other to his groin into which drips waste from his kidneys. When the two jars are full, they are switched so that "the stuff could drip back into him".⁴

One of the most frightening remarks in the book is like the punch line from a horror comic. The artillery captain says, "Why can't they hook the two jars up to each other and eliminate the middleman?"⁵ The human being is disposed of. All that remains is the clinical process.

To this aesthetically achieved dehumanization is added the psychological state of being reduced to a one-dimensional object like a puppet or a caricature which is the condition of a schizophrenic as defined by Laing:

In this position the individual experiences his self as being more or less divorced or detached from his body. The body is felt more as one object among other objects in the world than as the core of the individual's own being. Instead of being the core of his true self, the body is felt as the core of a false self, which a detached disembodied, 'inner', 'true' self looks on with tenderness, amusement, or hatred as the case may be.⁶

(emphasis Laing's)

Slocum in Something Happened seems to echo a similar experience of the disembodied self:

I have these perfectly controlled conversations...
 I'll float away outside them a few yards to watch
 and eavesdrop and begin to feel I am looking down
 upon a pornographic puppet show of stuffed dolls
 in which someone I recognize who vaguely
 resembles me is one of the performers...⁷

Besides depersonalized and protean characters, Catch-22 has an endless parade of comic-book people. Their repetitive acts suggest a ritualization of form. Character is transformed into a mechanical object through iterative eccentric acts. These characters also suggest an inner void. They are not very different from the soldier in white. There is Major Major Major Major who is promoted to Major for no reason and will never be promoted further because Major Major Major Major sounds nicer than General Major Major Major. Major Major instructs his deputy to let people come into his office to see him when he is not there and not while he is there. There is Captain Black, the comic-book villain, who loves to see people miserable and likes to watch them "eat their liver"; Colonel Cathcart who alternates between exultation and misery over each "real feather in his cap" and "black eye" in everything he does. When he is specially depressed he thinks everyone hates him. "Nobody loved him",⁸ he thinks like Charlie Brown. He has a side-kick, Colonel Korn, who is smarter than him; there is Lieutenant Scheisskopf who loves marching more than anything else and spends all his time devising marching innovations;

Orr who puts crab apples in his cheeks in order to get apple cheeks. Captains Piltchard and Wren do everything together like Tweedledum and Tweedlede; Doc Daneeka's assistants with the comic-book names of Gus and Wes who have "succeeded in elevating medicine to an exact science"⁹: those who have temperatures above 102° are sent to hospital and those with temperatures below 102° have their gums and toes painted with gentian violet solution and are given a laxative to throw away; the C.I.D. man who, while investigating the strange case of Washington Irving, gets his gums and toes painted purple. One could go on. Even Yossarian believes that he is a mixture of all sorts of comic-book and fable heroes:

... he was Tarzan, Mandrake, Flash Gordon.
 He was Bill Shakespeare. He was Cain, Ulysses,
 The Flying Dutchman, he was Lot in Sodom,
 Deirdre of the Sorrows, Sweeney in the
 nightingales among tress. He was miracle
 ingredient Z-247.¹⁰

Yossarian in one way, is not unlike Snoopy because Snoopy, as Berger says, "strives with dogged persistence and unyielding courage to overcome what seems to be his fate..."¹¹ In Snoopy's case this fate is the fact that he is a dog, in Yossarian's case the fact that he is trapped as pilot.

Seeing Yossarian as a comic-strip hero would serve to explain the controversial end. One of the requirements of a comicbook hero is that he survive against all odds and the only way Yossarian can survive is by fleeing to Sweden.

Yossarian says that the young men who share his tent remind him of "Donald Duck's nephew's".¹² Major de Coverley of the "the craggy face and Jehovean bearing"¹³ seems a Biblical character transformed into a comic-book character.

A comic-book character being a caricature adapts himself to any radical change in his status without experiencing any trauma. It may be Yossarian's defensive strategy to assume the status of a caricature as a strategy against Milo's kind of proteanism: matching protean externals with similar changes in self. Yossarian wants to fight violent reality with his own brand of absurdity, with cartoon-strip technique. Thus the cartoon-strip is used as a literary device for highlighting as well as for combating horror.

With comic-book characters one gets comic-book situations:

- (a) The Glorious Loyalty Oath Crusade has everyone signing an affirmation of loyalty each time they want something - their map case, their flak suit, their pay, their food, their hair-cut.
- (b) Moaning breaks out in the briefing room before the mission to Bologna. Yossarian looks at General Dreedle's nurse and moans because he might not see her again. His moaning is picked up by the others so that the room resonates with "0000000000h"s.

Reality imposes isolation, whereas comic-book technique reduces characters' sense of alienation and allows for free entry into absurdities. As in Alice in Wonderland they enter a field of innocence.

(c) Identities get mixed. Yossarian who assumes the name A. Fortiori whenever it suits him in hospital, is certified insane by the psychiatrist who recommends that he be sent back. The real A. Fortiori is sent back and not Yossarian.

(d) People keep popping out of nowhere. Nately's whore does that to kill Yossarian. And after Yossarian refuses to fly any more missions pilots "popped out at him from trees and bushes, from ditches and tall weeds, from around the corners of tents and from behind the fenders of parked cars".¹⁴ They do that to ask him how he is doing.

Yossarian as comic-book hero also reaches deep down into his culture to locate the common terrors. This strategy reveals Yossarian's internalized horrors and his self threatened by protean reality. Yossarian's marching naked is both defiant and Adamic. Inner horror and the state of innocence - these two are played against each other.

(e) There are swiftly-reversed situations. General Dreedle first approves of the Chaplain's presence in the Officers' Club, then disapproves, then approves, all of which leaves Colonel Cathcart very confused.

(f) In an alternating consciousness comic fabulation is also gestural. Yossarian moves a bomb line over Bologna on the map and all the officers assume that it has been captured.

(g) Hungry Joe has screaming nightmares. One of these is that Huple's cat is sleeping on his face. He wakes up to find Huple's cat sleeping on his face.

But unlike comic-books, the underdog does not triumph. The vicious, ambitious people do. The Chaplain never wins though he does get more spirited at the end of the book.

Figures from comics are parodies of culture. Their continuity is jerky, Brechtian. They move from scene to scene, frame to frame with frequent visual changes unsettling our perception spatially. But Heller leaves clubs behind, encouraging reader response.

Violence erupts with the suddenness of comic-book violence. It has the improbability of comics where unpredictable, unimaginable violent things happen to the characters who come bouncing back like Micky Mouse even after great violence is done to them. In Catch-22 violence is not presented as a conflict between individual and society but as a thing in itself. It is not something observed and then produced mimetically. It does not have a source, a history, a tyrant-victim situation. It is a phenomenon by itself that is made problematic. Shorn of simple distinctions of good and evil, it is recreated in unrecognizable forms so that it emerges not as something familiar but as something one cannot understand. It becomes a game. Milo, for instance, bombs his own men because he has signed a contract with the Germans to do so. The destruction of Bobbs' plane is described in the language of comic slang: "... and Dobbs at the pilot's controls in his formation zigged when he should have zagged..."¹⁵ In spite of

"Thank you, Colonel. That will be all".
 "It's a pleasure, Colonel", Colonel
 Catchcart replied and he stepped back
 out of the basement, closing the door
 after him'.¹⁷

The playing-off of comic-strip against realism is best illustrated in the presentation of three kinds of deaths:

(1) The slow piecing together of Snowden's death (which incidentally, always has a serious tone unlike the other horrors where the comic is usually present) recurs throughout the different episodes weaving into them like a thread. It is brought to us bit by bit (somewhat like Faulkner's technique of scrambled time in Absalom, Absalom!) till at the end we are told what Snowden's "secret" is. Earlier on we are told that Snowden had lost his guts but how are we to know that Heller means it literally?

Yossarian ripped open the snaps of Snowden's flak suit and heard himself scream wildly as Snowden's insides slithered down to the floor in a soggy pile and just kept dripping out... Here was God's plenty, all right, he thought bitterly as he stared - liver, lungs, kidneys, ribs, stomach and bits of the stewed tomatoes Snowden had eaten that day for lunch.¹⁸

(2) The sudden collapse into grim reality from a hallucinatory situation can be seen in Kid Sampson's death. There is a cruel transformation of childish game into violence. Kid Sampson's death takes place in the midst of a beach scene where people are romping happily. McWatt who enjoys flying, flies low over people to frighten them. He goes too low over Kid Sampson who

jumps up in childish joy. The propeller chops him in half. His legs remain balanced for a few eerie seconds before toppling over. Heller springs this on us. We are not prepared for this death as we are for Snowden's (though even there the final revelation comes as a shock).

(3) Kid Sampson's death leads to two more deaths. The suicide of McWatt and the official death of Doc Daneeka. McWatt's death is described in almost a light-hearted tone. It is as though some dare-devil adventure of a school-boy is being narrated, as though Buck Rogers is zooming off after a spatial skirmish: "McWatt turned again, dipped his wings once in salute, decided, oh well, what the hell and flew into a mountain".¹⁹

Turning to the last two novels of Heller one finds that their dramatic setting provides an opportunity for comic-book backchat. The backchat is retained without the frame of fabulation. The constant slanging match going on between Slocum and his daughter is reminiscent of the elliptical unresolved dialogue between comic-strip antagonists. The relationship between Gold and his stepmother also suggests the same style.

In Good as Gold the cruel image of the soldier in white whose jars are exchanged each time, is transformed into the knitting of Gold's stepmother. She has been working on the same strip of knitting for decades. The wool comes up from one end of the bag and the knitted piece goes into the other end.

One gets the impression that the same process is taking place here, except that in Catch-22 a human being is involved, here it is a bag. This transference of a savage image into a mild one is itself a pointer to the difference in the scale of horror in Catch-22 and Good as Gold.

There are other instances of corresponding patterns of humour : Greenspan the detective is finally like Nately's whore because he keeps springing up from nowhere. Greenspan however is not violent. He wants to look after Gold, protecting his person as well as his morals.

Catch-22 is filled with sentences which end in an unexpected manner: "One of the finest, least dedicated men in the whole world".²⁰ This humour occurs throughout the book. In Good as Gold it occurs only in Ralph's speech where he keeps contradicting what has been said: "We want everyone in Government to read it, although we've stamped it secret so nobody can".²¹ In Catch-22's mad world this is perfectly acceptable. In Good as Gold Gold questions it. "Ralph... don't people here laugh or smile when you talk that way?"²²

In Good as Gold and Something Happened there are moments when the narrative seems to achieve almost a fabulist sense of hallucination. But the all-embracing fantasy technique of Catch-22 is missing here appearing sporadically to enliven a scene or too. For instance, the Governor who heads the Special Committee in Good as Gold is a bit like the Queen of Hearts in

Alice in Wonderland, ready to shout "Off with his head" at the slightest pretext.

As in Alice in Wonderland people grow tall as they get successful. Harris Rosenblatt who had been obese and shorter than average, has grown tall and lean after he has become a financial wizard. People also get short. Ralph thinks that Andrea has lost height since she met Gold.

The irrationality of the Alice in Wonderland situations with the destruction of causal links between events and the syncopated time scheme are familiar strip-cartoon devices employed to shock the audience into an awareness of the absurdity of human existence. The average strip-cartoon stresses the irrationality lurking behind the normal.

The incidents in Catch-22 and Something Happened don't take place chronologically but are telescoped into each other and scrambled up so that the past can move into the present. This does not happen in Good as Gold. Good as Gold seems a conglomerate, or more unkindly, a hotch-otch, of different novel forms: a fantasy, novel of ideas, bildungsroman, satire, farce.

In Catch-22 fantasy sustains the strip-cartoon technique by generalizing it and the strip-cartoon technique gives the fantastic a local habitation. Catch-22, as Todorov would put it, "embraces the antithesis between the verbal and the transverbal, between the real and the unreal".²³ The other two

novels do not although Heller continues to make the gesture toward the non-verbal without the same spectacular success because the absence of the 'generalized fantastic' thwarts the transition from one to the other leaving only the linguistic gesture in full view, sometimes pretty awkwardly as in Good as Gold.

The cartoon technique is employed - to a lesser degree - in the works of the other semi-fabulists.

In Kesey's One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest the world of the asylum is so mechanical that it has the quality of a cartoon world. Forrey in a virulent attack on One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest calls it "very low, if not downright lowbrow, in terms of the level of sensibility it reflects, a sensibility which has been influenced most strongly... by comic books..."²⁴ Although Forrey means this as criticism he has stumbled upon the fact that One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest is often like a comic book with comic-book characters. What he does not realize is that Kesey deliberately employs the comic-strip technique mainly to stress the mechanical life at the asylum. Kesey himself draws attention to this method in statements like the following:

The assistants "go trotting off... like cartoon men - or like puppets, mechanical puppets in one of those Punch and Judy acts..."²⁵

"Their voices are forced and too quick on the com^eback to be real talk - more like cartoon comedy speech".²⁶

The nurse watches from her glass case: "The scene before her takes on that blue-steel clarity again, that clean orderly movement of a cartoon comedy".²⁷

Cartoon characters are fixed in a particular trait, manner and stance: Phantom is invincible, Superman flies and defeats evil, Snoppy is inventive, Beetle Bailey is lazy and will conversely go to a lot of trouble to be allowed to be lazy. In the same way, the asylum is like a cartoon-strip with the inmates fixed in their mental states, bodies frozen in a rigid stance to match the unchanging condition of the mind:

Ellis: go to your place at the wall, hands up to receive the nails... Pete: wag your head like a puppet. Scanlon: work your knobbly hands on the table in front of you, constructing a make-believe bomb to blow up a make-believe world...

Like a cartoon world, where the figures are flat and outlined in black, jerking through some kind of goofy story that might be real funny if it weren't for the cartoon figures being real guys...²⁸

The scene which portrays the inmates watching avidly a blank TV screen with the nurse ranting and raving like a defeated comic-book villain is like the ending of a comic. But here, of course, the villain has not been defeated and the book has not ended. Harding calls her the big, bad wolf haunting a bunch of scared rabbits. Mac who is a comic-book hero or Brer

Rabbit, teaches the rabbits to be men again. Like a comic-book character Mac keeps bouncing back to life no matter how great the violence done to him. When he is given shock treatment for instance, he comes back to the ward in better spirits than ever, saying, "Fulla piss an vinegar buddies; they checked my plugs and cleared my points and I got a glow on like a Model T spark coil. Ever use one of those coils around Halloween time? Zam! Good clean fun".²⁹

Ellison and Irving do not utilize the comic-strip technique in the manner in which Heller and Kesey do. Where one finds elements of the comic-book in their work is in the presentation of certain characters as comic-book characters.

In Invisible Man Ras the Exhorter suddenly appears on a black horse somewhat like an African chief in a Phantom comic: "... Ras the Exhorter become Ras the Destroyer upon a great black horse. A new Ras of a haughty, vulgar dignity, dressed in the costume of an Abyssinian chieftain; a fur cap upon his head, his arm bearing a shield..."³⁰

This figure does not strike awe but is made comic by the fact that it appears on the streets of a big city. Further incongruity is added by the fact that Ras is armed with a spear and a spear in a race riot has shades of the Quixotic.

The narrator often refers to himself as Buckeye the Rabbit and Brer Rabbit - the figures out of black folk tales who outsmart Brer Fox or the whites.

The lack of reason for the violence against the blacks produces an unreal comic-book atmosphere. The narrator puts this feeling into words during the speech he makes at Todd's funeral when he describes the killing in the following manner: "The blood ran like blood in a comic-book killing, on a comic-book street in a comic-book town on a comic-book day in a comic-book world".³¹

In Irving's books bears frequently make an appearance. The World According to Garp features a motorcycle-riding bear who keeps falling off. In The Hotel New Hampshire there is a bear who stays in a hotel and rides a motorcycle. Says Irving:

I feel the way about bears in my fiction that the mystery writer John MacDonald does about guns: "When in doubt, have a man come into the room with a gun in his hand", he said... In my fiction I've always felt that as soon as I get the bear on stage, everything is all right. I can focus the reader's attention in specific ways, maybe because most readers are quicker to show sympathy for animals than for other humans".³²

The bear in Irving's books has the quality of a children's book where animal and human consciousness can overlap - bears can take on human characteristics and even, as in Goldilocks or Winnie the Pooh, talk. In the Hotel New Hampshire Susie-the-bear escapes life in the guise of a bear. The technique of the cartoon-strip and children's books creates an ambience which allows for the overlap of animal and human.

The cartoon-strip technique is used by these writers to highlight violence, but one discovers other forms of violence as well. In Catch-22, for instance, variations of violent death appear and reappear in different guises in Yossarian's Dickstein calls Catch-22 a book which is "drenched in death on all sides, like an epidemic that breaks out everywhere at the same time".³³ Yossarian does not have to strain himself to think of the many horrible ways of dying. He prefers people to die in hospitals because in a hospital:

They didn't explode into blood and clotted matter. They didn't drown or get struck by lightning, mangled by machinery or crushed in landslides. They didn't get shot to death in hold-ups, strangled to death in rapes, stabbed to death in saloons, bludgeoned to death with axes by parents or children or die summarily by some other act of God... there was none of that tricky now-you-see-me-now-you-don't business so much in vogue outside the hospital, none of that now-I-am-and-now-I-ain't.³⁴

There is a sudden intrusion of raillery in the last sentence which is out of key with the general mood of the passage yet its playfulness accentuates the horror of life instead of trivializing it.

In Something Happened real tragedy is present in the death of the little boy. He has had an accident and Slocum, instead of rushing him to a doctor, smothers him because he is unable to watch him suffer. It turns out that his injuries were quite minor. The horror of this scene is unrelieved and does not quite jell with the rest of the book. This may be

because the book lacks the cushioning provided by comic fabulation to cruelty in Catch-22.

If Heller succeeds in making a transition from the comic excess of earlier episodes to the last section of Catch-22, it is because one is able to reach beyond contemporary Rome into that of Petronious and Gibbon.³⁵ That is why the title "Eternal City" can make sense - in the context of the archetype hovering beyond Heller's nightmare city. The image of the imperium in decline is subtly recalled through deft linguistic suggestion. It presents a ruined city and a ruined civilization. There is also the contrast of the present ruined city with the past city which was the epitome of culture and art, the ideal Roman order. All great writers had this order as their reference point, as Kermode maintains in The Classic.³⁶ Now this order is destroyed. Rome can be any modern town - London, Paris - where civilization has faded into a distant echo. That mythical Rome rises before us with Yossarian assuming the persona of the narrator of Satyricon. This enables Heller to make the necessary transition from the fabulist mode of narrative to one of ironic parallel. This section is Joycean. What is common between the two Romes - Heller's and Petronius' - is the sense of fiction modelled on a symbolic reality. Here too all the known categories of violence and madness are demolished because the old categories do not evoke a moral response any more. The old categories have lost their ability

to shock people into moral awareness. Hence new categories are introduced but without fabulist mediation.

One might even say that the Rome Scene puts into words seriously all the horror underlying the hilarity present in the previous sections.

With the exception of this section Heller resorts often to fantasy to present violence. For instance, eighteen planes fly into a white cloud. Only seventeen come out:

No trace was ever found of the other, not in the air or on the smooth surface of the jade waters below. There was no debris. Helicopters circled the white cloud till sunset. During the night the cloud blew away, and in the morning there was no more Clevinger.³⁷

Heller uses fabulation to relate the incident. On the other hand, something as improbable as Milo bombing his own men is narrated realistically with the planes bombing calmly, the men running helter-skelter, the doctor tending the wounded.

Besides violent deaths, Heller also writes of people doing violence to themselves by imagining all kinds of violence befalling themselves or their families. Constantly exposed to violence, Heller's characters - Yossarian, the Chaplain, Slocum - become morbidly obsessed by death. One finds the same pattern in Irving Garp who is paranoid about his children's safety, tortures himself by imagining terrible accidents happening to them.

Heller's vision encompasses not just wartime violence but the violence found in life itself. Something Happened revolves around the violence caused by the pressure of living in America. The American is in a constant state of tension due to the highly competitive atmosphere which exists in offices: will someone else be promoted?, will he be sacked? - these are everyday worries faced by a person living in what Toffler calls "The Age of Transcience"³⁸ - meaning, an age where nothing is permanent, buildings are torn down, products are thrown away, jobs are changed, people are fired. The one man in Slocum's office who has not caught up with the idea of transcience and lives in the past where humanity and kindness meant something, is sacked because he cannot fire anyone.

Violence is not confined to the office, it extends to the home as well. Slocum constantly has the urge to hit or kick his fifteen-year old daughter. Though he suppresses this desire for physical violence he makes up for it by the way he talks to her. He is often cutting and nasty to her when he should be understanding. She retaliates by being aggressive and sullen. Slocum's discussions with her become a contest which he has to win: "I try to embarrass and defeat her in debate: I want to top her always when we trade taunts and wise crack and I usually succeed... It is very important to me that I beat her in all our contests".³⁹

The competitive spirit of the office is carried over to the home. The compulsion to beat everyone else is so ingrained that even one's children are seen as opponents to be subdued and subjugated. According to Rollo May⁴⁰ this indirect kind of aggression - which involves the techniques of upmanship and subtle put-downs of the other person - is very destructive. We can see the effect this has on Slocum's daughter who, although she is just a teenager, always broods and is morose.

There is an attempt to inculcate the competitive spirit in human beings right from school. Slocum's little son who is very sweet and generous - "the most compelling character in the book", Klenther calls him, "the unacknowledged hero"⁴¹ - is the modern version of a freak because he cannot see the point of beating others. The violence he senses everywhere has filled him with fears, although he is only nine: "He isn't afraid of monsters or ghosts so much, because monsters and ghosts are silly. He is afraid of human beings".⁴²

Violence is not limited to the Slocum or Gold family. Other families are riddled by it too. When Slocum asks his colleague what his son wants to be when he grows up, he answers, "A suicide".⁴³

While the young are trained in violence, the aged are subjected to violence when their children pack them off to old people's homes because they do not want the bother of looking after them. Bellow shares this concern with Heller as we noticed in the last chapter.

Good as Gold satirizes the workings of the Government. The book keeps moving back and forth from Gold's family in New York to Washington. Gold wants to join the Government and escape the violent scenes generated by his family. But as Aldridge points out "the Washington and the family experiences finally assume a portentous similarity. Both represent aspects of the same condition: the collapse of those values that once made humanity and rationality necessary".⁴⁴

Like Heller, Irving writes of the violence involved in living in present-day America. Both The World According to Garp and The Hotel New Hampshire have this to say: the world is grotesque and ugly and violent and no one is safe in it. Unlike the brutes inhabiting it, Irving's characters are sensitive. They may have been driven slightly mad by having to adopt the defensive posture constantly but they are the ones who are capable of suffering. Out of the desperation of their suffering they would seek a haven for themselves and their loved ones where they can hide from the world. But they come to realize that however one tries, life has to be let in.

It is not that Irving is a sociological writer. His main concern is with living in a violent age. Closely linked to this is his concern for the family. Because he wants others to feel the terror of the world Irving makes certain choices as a writer:

1. He makes his narration simple and linear. The experience is embodied in paradigms which are subverted upto a point. But the paradigms of beginning, middle and end are never jettisoned. "I'm very conscious", he says, "of attempting to make my narrative as absolutely linear as I can make it".⁴⁵
2. He wants to communicate.

In his earlier works Irving had used fabulation with a great deal of sophistication. But now he makes his narrative simple because he wants people to understand what he is saying.

To produce a sense of unmitigated terror with the material existing around one is more difficult than presenting abstract horror. He tries to revitalize the structures of reality without destroying the paradigms. This, as he says, is not easy: "It's no triumph to be difficult to read or understand, in fact, I think it's a triumph to be readable... It's terribly easy to be hard to understand".⁴⁶

Irving, like Heller and Kesey, is readable because of his ability to strike terror not through imaginary horror but by investing known horror with a sense of urgency. Their skill is in making people re-experience what they know at a more sensitive level, employing the technique of defamiliarization,

Irving's method is not to present extreme situations which are not likely to happen but to invest his characters with the sensitivity to react to the horror of life. It is Garp, for instance, who feels the degradation of rape as much as the victim.

Irving also gives his characters everything they want and then visits them with the worst possible calamity. The contrast between their past happiness and present misery is reflected in their reaction. Violence is fraught with the menace of a long suppressed nightmare surfacing with the finality of irreversible fate. Irving deals with extreme emotion - he says that one should not be afraid of being emotional because what affects us most deeply are "love trysts, birth trysts and death trysts - all of the most emotionally wringing kind imaginable".⁴⁷ This is a feature of writing that the abstraction of fabulation can never permit. As Wymard says, Irving is not interested in "redesigning the human lot". Rather he encourages "belief in love and celebrate(s) the glories of the natural world".⁴⁸ The blending of emotion and violence does not always work and Epstein points out that while reading Irving one sometimes gets the feeling that "one is reading a weird collaboration between J.D. Salinger and John Hawkes, a strange effort to be simultaneously adorable and gruesome".⁴⁹

The violence of the world is measured against the bear. Even a violent creature like the bear is "not smart enough for the world".⁵⁰ The story of the parents' meeting and of the bear with which The Hotel New Hampshire begins is fixed in the period just before the persecution of the Jews began: "And the world's going to be no place for bears",⁵¹ says a character. The surreal violence of that mass killing is carried over to the new kind of surreal violence, the sort of violence that Irving is concerned with.

Much of the violence in Irving's book has to do with rape. He has been accused of excessive violence in his fiction. - Epstein, for instance, says that like his wrestler characters "one needs to be in a certain shape oneself to read a John Irving novel; rather a strong stomach, specially is required for the violence that is integral to his novels. Characters are set upon by bears and other wild animals; body parts drop off people with a more than fair regularity; bombings and rapes are provided..."⁵² and to this charge of excessive violence Irving replies:

People who take exception to the so-called excesses in my work can point out the fact that there's an awful lot of screwing, rape, violence and other stuff in it that is usually associated with cheap cinema and fiction. I maintain the the stuff of cheap-thrill fiction of film is at our throats all the time. And we all fear it...⁵³

Irving explores this violence, the outrage of rape, for instance, to make it all the more vivid and intolerable. The World According to Garp has continuous reference to the Ellen James case. Ellen James is an eleven-year-old girl who is raped by two men. They cut off her tongue so that she would not be able to identify them. The shock and anger of people takes concrete shape in the Ellen Jamesian society whose members cut off their own tongue as protest. Irving seems to raise the question of the validity of a grotesque, violent and ultimately useless gesture to protest a violent event.

Some of the Ellen Jamesians are crazy but a few of them genuinely want to do something and feel they have found a stunning way to publicize the indignity of rape. Many of the members are themselves victims of rape who feel as if their tongues are gone, because in a "world of men, they felt as if they had been shut up forever".⁵⁴

But however genuine the feeling behind their action, none of them has considered that they are doing further violence to Ellen James. Eleven when she was raped, she would have preferred to have got over it by herself. She hates the Ellen Jamesians because they have been responsible for keeping her horror fresh before her.

The World According to Garp has also the narration of the rape of a ten-year-old in a park. Garp helps the police to catch the child molester. This is the first time he has been caught because he has an ingenious method of escape - he grows a mustache, rapes a girl, then shaves off the mustache so that the child cannot identify him.

The rapist is portrayed as someone who does not feel anything. When the horse of the mounted policeman knocks him down he loses his upper teeth but he does not seem to feel the pain. Garp thinks that "something had probably happened to this kid so that he didn't feel very much - not much pain, not much of anything else".⁵⁵ One is reminded of Fromm's discussion of malignant aggression in which he talks of people who are

"affectively frozen, feel no joy - but also no sorrow or pain. They feel nothing".⁵⁶ Fromm says people of this kind at times deliberately inflict physical injury on themselves or others in order to convince themselves that they exist. Perhaps this boy rapes for the same reason - only when he rapes does he feel he is alive.

Months later Garp sees the molester at a baseball game. The inadequacy of law has given him his freedom. That he will continue raping little girls is indicated by the fact that he is growing another mustache.

Violence centres around rape in The Hotel New Hampshire as well. Franny Berry is gang-raped in school. Susie-the-bear has also been raped and tries to escape from this fact by living in a bear suit as a bear, which becomes a grotesque kind of suicide. Later Susie - after the Berry family has helped her to be more at peace with herself-starts a Rape Crisis Centre to help fellow victims.

Sex is the source of most violence in Irving. Besides the rapes and the sordid facts of prostitution there is the violence which people do to their loved ones. Garp seduces the baby-sitter. Helen has an affair with one of her students. This affair ends in an unimaginably ugly horrendous accident in which Garp's and Helen's son, Walt, is killed and their other son, Duncan, loses an eye.

The accident is only gradually revealed to the reader. Walt is not mentioned for a long time so that we forget that he was involved in the accident. For about twenty pages there is no mention of him at all. Then in the recall of the accident we are told:

Something else frightened him. It was not Helen's screaming, it was not Duncan screaming... It was something else. It was not a sound. It was no sound. It was the absence of sound.⁵⁷

And then we are told: "Many wrestlers' children have hardy necks, but not all the children of wrestlers have necks that are hardy enough".⁵⁸

By thinking up dreadful ways of making people die or be maimed Irving sickens his readers into an awareness of the violence surrounding them which they generally try to ignore.

The only way Garp can cope with this kind of violence is by writing about it. His book - The World According to Bensenhaver - is an extremely violent one about rape and guilt.

In making Garp a writer, Irving has two advantages: he can use the technique of embedding - the book has many stories written by Garp. The second is that he can also draw attention to the violence done by publishers to writers: the jacket flap tells the reader how Garp had lost his son and "out of the anguish that a father endures in the aftermath of an accident, this tortured novel emerges..."⁵⁹ Garp is not shown this jacket till the book is published. One reason the book sells so well is because of this.

Both The World According to Garp and The Hotel New Hampshire mention the violence done to writers by publishers, readers, by critics and finally by the writers themselves. Garp once bitterly makes the remark that the only way a writer is taken seriously is when he commits suicide. In The Hotel New Hampshire, in fact, Lilly, the writer, commits suicide. She drives herself to write and finally kills herself when she realizes that she is not as good a writer as she wants to be.

Violence often assumes a grotesque shape in Irving. Garp has his revenge on a dog who had bitten part of his ear off, by biting off part of the dogs' ear. The Berrys plan elaborate revenge on Chipper Dove who had raped Franny. Acting out a wierd, almost Gothic script, in Dove's presence, they let him think a bear (actually Susie in a bear's costume) wants to rape him.

Both books take into account the violence generated by politics - Jenny Fields is shot while campaigning for a woman candidate for Governor's post. In The Hotel New Hampshire the Radicals who stay on the second floor of the hotel in Væenna plan to blow up the opera during a performance and also want to take the American family as hostages. This attempt is frustrated by the Berrys: Win Berry kills the leader, Ernst, with a baseball bat; Freud deliberately blows up the car with its sympathetic bomb killing himself and Schraubenschlüssel;

John crushes Arbeiter to death. Lilly the writer, describes in poetic terms the colours Arbeiter changes as he is being crushed to death - from magenta to blue, "A slate blue colour... the colour of the ocean on a cloudy day".⁶⁰ And when he dies "He was the color of a pearl".⁶¹ The description of a dying human being in this manner as though a landscape is being depicted, appals one. This may reflect comic cruelty but it also raises a question in one's mind: is it justifiable for a good man to kill another man however evil he may be without any sense of guilt or compunction?

Garp himself is killed as the result of madness. The mentally deranged among the Ellen Jamesians make it a personal mission to kill him because he has criticized them in writing. As he is shot in the gymnasium one of his dying thoughts is "The world is not safe".⁶²

Death is closely linked with violence so that there are as many people dying in Irving's books as there are in the last scene of Hamlet. "The planet of Garp" say Wymard, "... is indeed, fragile and threatened, Because death is the only conclusion".⁶³

Irving uses the interesting technique of creating a symbol of death which is repeated throughout the book. This symbol starts off as harmless but later becomes the family's private euphemism for death and doom.

In The World According to Garp Walt is warned as a child to beware of the undertow. They find him one day looking into the sea, trying to find "the Under Toad".⁶⁴ The Under Toad becomes the Garps' code phrase for anxiety, for a feeling of foreboding. This feeling is usually followed by death.

In The Hotel New Hampshire the Berrys have a dog named Sorrow. When he is old he is put to sleep. This is done just before Franny is raped. After this, disaster always takes the form of Sorrow. Frank stuffs Sorrow as^a surprise for Franny. He hides it in his grandfather's closet but it falls out and its attacking pose is so real that Iowa Bob dies of a heart attack. After this Sorrow assumes the "shape of death".⁶⁵

Frank re-stuffs it into a gentle looking dog. Egg loves it and takes it with him when he flies with his mother to Vienna. The plane crashes killing them. Sorrow is spotted first, floating in the sea. "Sorrow floats", say the children after that to indicate further grief. When the Radicals build the bomb it is strangely animal-like in appearance. This is another face of Sorrow.

Thus as we have just seen both Heller and Irving in diverse ways, focus the reader's attention on violence. Ellison does the same in Invisible Man. Those expecting a simple protest novel will be disappointed because although Invisible Man deals extensively with the racial problem, it crosses this boundary and goes beyond it to explore new territories

where the colour of a man is not the main issue but man is. If the whites are seen as doing violence to the blacks, so are the blacks. For Ellison blacks are not the epitome of perfection, the eternally wronged ones. They are human with all the failings human beings are capable of. Ellison's palette is not limited to black and white but contains the many shades of life.

Though the book does not have the conventional kind of racial situation, it does enumerate instances of the violence whites do to the blacks—physical as well as the sort perpetrated through sly, underhand methods used to undermine the blacks. But Ellison has the honesty and the range to see beyond this and so he also writes about the violence blacks do to the whites. The narrator beats a white man brutally on the street because he speaks to him rudely. Ellison also knows that the blacks can do violence to other blacks. The antediluvian Ras the Exhorter, for instance, wants to destroy the narrator because he associates with the whites. Bledsoe, the powerful President of the black college the narrator goes to, is capable of chicanery. Posing as the subservient and humble black when the white patrons of the college come to visit, he is in reality contemptuous of them. For a minor transgression he throws the narrator out of the college because to keep his position he would he says, if need be "have every Negro in the country hanging on tree limbs by morning..."⁵⁶ Lecturing to

him about how blacks should keep to their place, he even calls him "nigger".⁶⁷ Bledsoe gives him seven letters of recommendation addressed to trustees in New York but the narrator is never called for an interview and one day finds out why. The letter, like Hamlet's, passes a death sentence. Instead of recommendation the letter condemns in violent terms, asking the trustee not to give him a job but to let him keep hoping. It is like the letter he sees in a dream: "To whom it May Concern. Keep this Nigger-Boy Running".⁶⁸

Ellison develops a subtle technique for portraying violence done to blacks by whites thus subverting a conventional situation to one fraught with frightening implications. A common incident is charged with a sense of nightmarish anguish, somewhat like an expressionist painter giving an ordinary landscape different dimensions just by the application of unexpected colours and lines.

To the commonplace event of a black being shot by a white policeman, for instance, Ellison brings the clarity of a camera shot. The delineating of the scene is such that we feel we are watching a well-made film.

The narrator sees the killing from across the street and each detail is clearly visible as though the camera were panning, focussing on one object after another - the rails, the fire hydrant, the pigeons, the feather from the pigeon's wing and the slow-motion quality of a fast action: Tod hits

the policeman and there is a leisurely unfolding of a dancer's movements, the arms, the legs, the strap of the box he is carrying, all perfectly co-ordinated. This is violence formalized into a strip-cartoon, - the cops and robbers variety - the kind found in Bonnie and Clyde when, at the end Bonnie and Clyde jerk through the movements of a dance as their bodies are riddled with bullets. This stratification of characters from naturalism to strip-cartoon figures has a desolating impact of something living reduced to amechanical generality. The comic-strip does not appear suddenly in Ellison as in Heller (who may have been influenced by the former), its emergence suggests a way of transcending the immediate and the familiar. The stereotype is a mask like any cartoon-strip figure and can be used for exploring the meaning of alienation. Reducing the human to a mask is to reduce it to an idea.

The following is the passage describing the killing:

... I saw the rails in the asphalt and a fire plug at the curb and the flying birds... just as the cop pushed him... and Clifton... going forward as one of the pigeons swung down into the street and up again, leaving a feather floating white in the dazzling backlight of the sun... And I could see the cop bark a command and lunge forward, thrusting out his arm and missing, thrown off balance as suddenly Clifton spun on his toe like a dancer and swung his right arm. Over and around in a short, jolting arc, his torso carrying forward and to the left in a motion that sent the box strap free as his right foot traveled forward and his left arm followed through in a floating upper cut... And... I heard rapid explosions and saw each pigeon diving wildly as though blackjacked by the sound, and the cop sitting

up straight now... and the pigeons plummeting swiftly to the trees, and Clifton still facing the cop and suddenly crumpling.⁶⁹

In this passage the sentences are long and there is a conspicuous use of the conjunctive 'and'. This could be because Ellison wants to suggest the action taking place quickly and continuously without break or pause.

The stylization of Todd's death is a way of transforming what is contingent into something abstract. An interesting point that can be raised in regard to Invisible Man is that Ellison has made clear his resentment at the stereotyped image of the black. But in destroying the stereotype of the black he moves to the stereotype of the sufferer, the alienated victim. Tod performing his dance of death is another variant of the alienated dangling man. Ellison is suggesting that equality in treatment would not solve all the problems of the blacks - they too experience the existential predicament that the whites do.

In the Battle Royal scene ten young blacks are forced first to look at a naked blonde and then are blind-folded for a boxing match. The whites are presented as beasts, shouting, getting vicarious excitement from the crude happenings. The blacks are made to scramble for gold coins-which turn out to be brass tokens advertising a car - scattered on an electrically-charged rug. This realistically presented scene is given the quality of a nightmare: vivid visuals, a variety of voices, fear seeping into the atmosphere.

When the narrator has an accident in the paint factory he has to undergo treatment. Ellison, like Bellow and Heller, does not think of doctors as beneficial to mankind. All these writers see them as sadists using patients for gruesome experiments. When the narrator is given shock treatment the doctors find his torment entertaining:

"Look, he's dancing", someone called.
 "No, really?"
 An oily face looked in, "They really do have rhythm, don't they? Get hot, boy! Get hot!" it said with a laugh.⁷⁰

Heller sees doctors in the same light. When he describes the treatment of a patient he uses the terms of violence: "They hurled lights in his eyes to see if he could see, rammed needles into nerves to hear if he could feel".⁷¹

The violence of eviction is dramatized not so much through the pain of the old couple but through a list of trivia they have collected through the years. Their whole sad life is presented through the things littering the pavement:

Pots and pots of green plants were lined in the dirty snow, certain to die of the cold, ivy, canna, a tomato plant. And in a basket I saw a straightening comb, switches of false hair, a curling iron, a card with silvery letters against a background of dark red velvet reading "God Bless Our Home..."⁷²

Ellison is dubbed 'Uncle Tom' by some militant blacks because they feel the book does not protest strongly enough against the injustice done to them.

One might say that there are two types of black writers - those who would stress their blackness and those who would stress the universality of man even while writing of the blacks. It seems redundant to say that Ellison is the second type of writer. One would agree with Schafer when he says, "Ellison subsumes local and temporal questions of human insight and social justice to more profound inquiries into the human mind and the justice of the heart".⁷³

It is not as though Invisible Man does not protest. Even if it cannot be put into the slot of 'Protest Novel', the protest is covert, more in the form of symbols and images than direct presentation. The central image of the invisible man is itself a form of protest. To be black, Ellison is saying, is to be a fictional character, since it means existing as a series of ideas formed by others. The white does not see a black man as a person but sees only his own image of the black.

Ellison protests twice against the stereotyped image whites have of blacks as dumb entertainers: once in the cast-iron figure of a black, red-lipped, wide-mouthed Negro. Put a coin on his hand, press a lever and the hand flips the coin into the mouth. The second time is in the song Tod sings to sell his black dancing paper dolls:

Shake him, shake him, you cannot break him
 For He's Sambo, the dancing, Sambo, the
 prancing, Sambo, the entrancing, Sambo
 Boogie Woogie paper doll.⁷⁴

In "The Shadow and the Act" Ellison talks about the film. The Birth of a Nation and how it "forged the twin screen image of the Negro as bestial rapist and grinning, eye-rolling clown - stereotypes that are still with us today".⁷⁵ These anti-black images are "acceptable because of the existence throughout the United States of an audience obsessed with an inner psychological need to view Negroes as less than men".⁷⁶

Ellison uses some direct methods as well to make clear his protest. The most direct are the speeches of the narrator protesting the treatment of the blacks by the whites and the fatalistic attitude of the blacks. There are some references to slavery - in Barbee's speech, in the possessions of the evicted couple, in Brother Tarp's story.

Howe thinks of Richard Wright as the practitioner of the true expression of black freedom. Though he admires Ellison and Baldwin, he castigates them for rejecting the straight protest of Wright. In his rebuttal to Howe, Ellison says that Wright in Black Boy thought of black life as being devoid of hope. Ellison himself has a positive vision of Afro-American life, of a strong spiritually-sustaining culture.

Some rabid blacks assume Muslim names, Afro-hair styles, exotic clothes - external signs of the renunciation of Western culture. Through the portrayal of Ras the Exhorter as a comic figure, Ellison points to the futility of the segregation of black culture and white culture because American culture is an

inseparable mixture of the two. Even in the white consciousness there is consciousness of the black. This is symbolized in the white paint produced in the factory where the narrator works for a day. The white is made brilliantly white by mixing in ten drops of a dead-black liquid. Ellison affirms his identity as a Negro-American: "I don't recognize any black culture the way many people use the expression", "I don't recognize any white culture. I recognize no American culture which is not the partial creation of black people".⁷⁷

To foreground the vitality of the Negro-American experience Ellison turned to mythology and folklore. Ellison describes the Negro-American consciousness as "a tragicomic confrontation of life", best exemplified by the blues which are "perhaps as close as Americans can come to expressing the spirit of tragedy".⁷⁸

Ellison's "black aesthetic" consists not only of the blues but also spirituals, gospels, folk song, speeches made in the style of hustlers, boxers, preachers. Ellison also uses the myth of rebirth and the final escape into the underground. Schafer points out, is like a descent into the tomb where heroes rest like "the heroes of myth who disappear and are believed to wait should the world require them - like King Arthur and Finn MacCool... The invisible man, now grown into Jack-the-Bear, turns to New York's sewer system, a black and labyrinthine underground - a fitting anti-hero's mausoleum".⁷⁹ The folk

tradition, as Kent says, "affords the Black writer a device for instant movement into the privacy, tensioned coherence, toughness, terror, and beauty of Black experience..."⁸⁰

But violence is not simplified as a structure by being rooted only in the black context. In order to transcend the black cultural context Ellison turns to fabulation and fantasy.

The scene in the Golden Day saloon, for instance, is like something out of Inferno. The people in the saloon are shell-shocked victims but the narrator is not sure if they are really insane as they are supposed to be. At times he feels that "they played some vast and complicated game... a game whose goal was laughter and whose rules and subtleties I could never grasp".⁸¹ Ellison turns the scene into one of comic nightmare when the men beat their bullying attendant unconscious, revive him with cold beer, beat him into unconsciousness again. With mad people filling the bar, whores looking on from upstairs, an enormous attendant bleeding on the floor, speeches, and loud music from a piano that is out of tune, the atmosphere of a mad hallucination is created.

There are flashes of fantasy. When the narrator who is about to join the Brotherhood looks at himself in his new blue trousers and wonders like Alice, "But how do you know they're your legs?"⁸²

The final riots are presented in a hallucinatory manner like scenes from the crowded circles of Inferno. These scenes

dissolve into total fabulation with the arrival of Ras the Exhorter become Ras the Destroyer, riding a horse and holding a spear. Ras, the central figure in this fabulist scene is a Quixotic megalomaniac like Hitler. The madness of Ras is meant to represent mass insanity, the inherent Quixoticism of society. This is different from the individual idiocy of Benjy. This is why Ras is made to appear as a fabulated figure.

The burning of the apartment by its tenants... recalls May's idea that violence can erupt against oneself: "... the direction and the aim of violence is secondary, only the eruption is important at that moment. This is the point at which suppressed tendencies for aggression are transformed into violence. Strictly speaking, the object of the violence is irrelevant".⁸³

The race riots represent the triumph of the symbol-makers. The blacks exploit the riot situation to steal as many consumer goods as they can. Shops are looted and this results in one of the most grotesque scenes in the book - the hanging mannequins:

Ahead of me the body hung, white, naked, and horribly feminine from a lamp post. I felt myself spin around with horror and it was as though I had turned some nightmarish some-rsault. I whirled... and now there was another and another, seven - all hanging before a gutted store front... they were mannequins... Hairless, bald and sterilely feminine... I... expected the relief of laughter, but suddenly was more devastated by the humor than by the horror.⁸⁴

Sybil, like Nate's whore has been popping up out of nowhere all evening and as the narrator looks at the hanging mannequins he has a frightening thought: "But are they unreal, I thought, are they? What if one, even one is real - is ... Sybil?"⁸⁵

Fabulation becomes an imperious need for writers whose response to contemporary events compels them to formulate an apocalyptic vision. In an interview Ellison says that he had started writing about assassinations in a comic mode almost eight years before the Kennedy and King assassinations. "Suddenly life was stepping in and imposing itself upon my fiction."⁸⁶

The implications are that violence in literature is not merely a response to violence in life but a feature of the apocalyptic vision the writer formulates. The fable in its extra-temporality projects the future imaginatively. Comedy does not trivialize violence but lifts it from the here and now by providing aesthetic distance and as a structure it facilitates fabulation. This is also coincidentally the technique of the blues where a tragic episode in the life of a black is presented with wry humour. Comedy mediates contemporary tragedy and violence with the sense of the future, of 'ending' by transferring the here and now to a visionary plane.

This form leads to the creation of an anti-hero. Fabulation also makes for universality, an encompassing vision rather than

a limited one. Bellow finds Negro Harlem both primitive and sophisticated:

It exhibits the extremes of instinct and civilization as few other American communities do. If a writer dwells on the peculiarity of this, he ends with an exotic effect. And Mr. Ellison is not exotic. For him the balance of instinct and culture or civilization is not a Harlem matter, it is the matter. German, French, Russian, American, universal, a matter very little understood.⁸⁷

The anti-hero is not a black man but a universal man. Ras is a universal Quixote - the final vision of Ras seeks to emphasize the futility of romanticism in any struggle.

Fabulation, then, provides the writer with the freedom to express himself artistically, unfettered by racial demand. Violence in Ellison does not appear as a raw physical event confined to a particular context nor is it a matter of epiphany as in the case of Quentin (The Sound and the Fury). It assumes the form of apocalyptic vision. Unlike Quentin's personalized generalized violence this is a depersonalized violence.

In realistic writing violence centres on the experience of a single person. Here violence becomes a mode of encountering reality. In the past the enemy was a known person, now the enemy is faceless. The aggressor is as much a pawn as the victim. Ellison's use of fantasy defines the process of life ahistorically. The treatment involves the creation of protean

characters. Rinehart wears many masks, those of gambler, shyster, Reverend. Says Tanner, "Rinehart is the figure most at home in the sub-terranean world, a fluid darkness flowing on underneath history and society, beneath their shaping powers".⁸⁸

Rinehart is Ellison's name for "the personification of chaos. He is also intended to represent America and change. He has lived so long with chaos that he knows how to manipulate it".⁸⁹

In work designated as semi-fabulist there are protean figures - Milo, Rinehart - but they are not the central figures. The central figure is in search of his identity and is tempted by the protean character. The protean character is the tempter like the archetypal protean figure, the devil. Even though the central character is tempted by proteanism he finally turns his back on it. In Ellison violence is employed artistically in the process of self-discovery, through an encounter with the protean forces of life. The invisible man changes from a country bumpkin to a cool cat communist to an underground man. His maturity lies in his rejection of the proteanism of Rinehart and the Quixotic romanticism of Ras.

Fabulation enables Ellison to transcend the black experience. As he says:

If Invisible Man is even "apparently" free from "the ideological and emotional penalties suffered by Negroes in this country", it is because I tried to the best of my ability to transform these elements into art. My goal was... to transcend, as the blues transcend the painful conditions with which they deal.⁹⁰

The most extensive treatment of madness is found in Kesey's One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest. The asylum reminds one at times of the mad tea party of Alice in Wonderland except that here the intruder makes a greater impact than Alice does. At one point the Mad Hatter mournfully complains that ever since Time stopped being friendly with him, "It's always six O'clock now".⁹¹ It's always six O'clock in the ward as well because here time has lost its meaning. It is a frozen world. Kesey also compares an idiot to an "old clock that won't tell time but won't stop neither, with the hands bent out of shape and the face bare of numbers and the alarm bell rusted silent, an old worthless clock that just keeps ticking and cuckooing without meaning nothing".⁹²

But while the characters in Alice in Wonderland are free to enjoy their madness, in One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest they are confined and watched over by Big Brother's female counterpart. Big Nurse is always watching, not just the outward gestures but also the mind, watching it and controlling it.

One finds certain common patterns in One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest and Catch-22. While Catch-22 has the Air-Force

as its setting, the malignant force in One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest is the Combine. The Combine has the aim of turning all human beings into well-adjusted, packaged products, one like the other;

The ward is a factory for the Combine. It's for fixing up mistakes... When a completed product goes back out into society all fixed up good as new, better than new sometimes, it brings joy to the Big Nurse's heart. Something that came in all twisted different is now a functioning, adjusted component, a credit to the whole outfit and a marvel to behold. Watch him sliding across the land with a welded grin...⁹³

Like the Air-Force, the Combine is highly organized and well-equipped to deal with madness and rebellion. Each like some giant carnivorous spider, draws men into its web and is not willing to relinquish its hold on them.

McMurphy and Yossarian fight this system. They have different reasons for doing this and different ways of fighting. Yossarian fights because he does not want to get killed. Mac fights for others. Yossarian assumes madness to fight madness. Mac's method is not so sophisticated, it is more like a cheeky boy's technique to annoy his teacher. Catch-22's world is peopled with madmen. So is that of One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest. The difference is that in Catch-22 all the characters are eccentric - even those who represent the establishment. In One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest^s people in the asylum are mad in the clinical sense while the establishment

is brutally sane. Although both Mac and Yossarian assume madness, Mac does it to escape the work farm and Yossarian to fight collective madness.

Both novels draw the social context from contemporary America whose main characteristic is manipulation. They are not social critiques but artistic visions of the social crisis outlined in Whyte's The Organization Man and Packard's The Hidden Persuaders, Catch-22 and One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest deal with the same material in an ironic way.

That American society has become manipulative is revealed by Packard who talks about how our "hidden weaknesses" are probed so that our behaviour can be more efficiently influenced. In this "probing and manipulating nothing is immune or sacred".⁹⁴ Big Nurse employs the same method in the group meetings. Intimate details of the patient are ferreted out so that he can be kept under control.

Whyte talks of the social ethic, "that contemporary body of thought which makes morally legitimate the pressures of society against the individual."⁹⁵ Individualism is discouraged. What is encouraged is the belief in organization, in the "belongingness" to a group. The main task of the Combine is to tame everyone, making them do whatever the organization wants them to. Protestant ethics, says Whyte, celebrated individualism. Against this, social ethics cultivates the sense of belongingless in a group.

The Combine not only reminds one of Whyte's organizational apparatus, it also embodies society's hunger for power over the destitute in terms Foucault applies to his study of madness. Big Nurse wholeheartedly subscribes to the theory of the therapeutic community which teaches a person to get along in a group so that later on he will be able to function in a normal society which will be an extension of this group. The ward is a microcosm of the world outside.

It is run smoothly and ruthlessly by Big Nurse. Everything is done according to schedule. It is a world systematically divided between the sane and the insane, and further divided into various categories of insanity as they were in the Classical Age where "each form of madness" found "its proper place, its distinguishing mark, and its tutelary divinity".⁹⁶ A "world of disorder, in perfect order"⁹⁷ as is the ward where patients are neatly classified as though they are broken down goods in a repair shop tabulated and slotted: Acutes who are "sick enough to be fixed",⁹⁸ Chronics who cannot be mended, further divided into Walkers, Wheelers and Vegetables.

It is a time-bound world: teeth brushed at such and such an hour, fixed time for medication, fixed time for card playing. Because of the rigid time scheme, time has lost all meaning.

During the Renaissance, as Foucault tells us in his history of insanity, a common part of the sea-scape was the Ship of Fools. Mad people were herded on a ship because "folly,

water and sea, as everyone then "knew", had an affinity for each other. Thus, "Ships of Fools" crisscrossed the seas and canals of Europe with their comic and pathetic cargo of souls".⁹⁹ Toward the end of the Middle Ages leprosy disappeared. Leprosariums, lying in wait for centuries, were turned into houses of confinement in the 17th century. The absence of lepers created a void and society found its new scapegoat in madmen. The Ship of Fools stopped sailing and madmen were grounded. This resulted in the loss of their liberty. With confinement to a single space madmen must have lost their sense of space, the sense of the world that they had in their ship. This vast world was substituted by the closed space between four walls. Instead of being allowed to roam freely they came under organization. The asylum became:

a quasi-absolute sovereignty, jurisdiction without appeal, a unit of execution against which nothing can prevail - the Hôpital Général is a strange power that the King establishes between the police and the courts, at the limits of the law: a third order of repression.¹⁰⁰

In Kesey's book the power of the King is transferred to the Combine, that of the Hôpital Général to the Big Nurse. The Big Nurse epitomizes an authority which cannot be questioned.

Confinement and all-pervading authority has a detrimental effect on patients. But cure does not seem to be the aim of the asylum - control is the main purpose.

Kesey's mad people have, at times, recognizable case symptoms. Billy, for instance, has a dominant mother who treats him like a child. Big Nurse has taken over from his mother. Pete is a born idiot because of forcep delivery. There are the vegetables who just sit or sleep and have to be fed.

But not all the inmates are mad in the clinical sense. Most of the Acutes stay in the ward voluntarily because they cannot face the outside world. The Chief acts deaf and dumb because he had realized as a child that as far as the whites are concerned he is deaf and dumb since he is an Indian - like the invisibility of the black. As he goes through life he feels safe pretending to be deaf and dumb and makes it his strategy to hide from the world.

The asylum for the Chief houses mechanical horrors where people are turned into puppets manipulated by Big Nurse with the help of wires. He sees the ward as a nightmare world with a big machine and robot workers who butcher patients and indulge in macabre practices. Losing touch with reality, the Chief switches off for days. His explanation for this is that the ward has a fogging machine which smothers the ward in fog - a comforting feeling because it prevents one from thinking. He is almost at the stage when he will get lost in the fog forever. This is the way Kesey envisions madness. He seems to suggest that madness for some people is a need. They desire madness because it induces a state of euphoria where one forgets all that is unpleasant.

In this comforting fog of madness time is irrational - going terribly fast or slowing down completely and as far as the Chief is concerned, it is Big Nurse who sets time according to her will. When time is fast "the scene in the picture-screen windows goes through rapid changes of light to show morning, noon, and night... But usually it is slow when she will "freeze the sun there on the screen..."¹⁰¹

In a solipsistic reading Forrey insists on treating One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest in sexual terms. What we get in the book, he says, is:

Yet another group of American males trying desperately to unite into a quasi-religious cult or brotherhood which will enable them to sublimate their homosexuality in violent athletic contests, gambling, or other forms of psychopathological horse play.¹⁰²

This reading besides being lopsided, ignores the fact that Kesey is using the asylum to explore the power wielded by the government and the organization which affects different aspects of life. It is the exploration of a culture which reduces man to robot. The vegetables are symbols of human beings who have been brought to a child-like state by the organization.

Foucault has the theory that the control society exerts over mad people is practised in a very subtle way by transforming the asylum into a simulated bourgeois family. Kesey's asylum is a simulacrum of this idea in viewing the

the asylum as a family and Big Nurse as the mother. "We are the victims of a matriarchy here",¹⁰³ says Harding. For Kesey the asylum is not only a metaphor for American society but is an impetus for exploring the relationship between madness and power.

Big Nurse is the mother who keeps her children under control. She treats the grown-up men like children, humouring them, chiding them, being patient with them. Foucault describes Tuke's Retreat - a place where madness was treated in the 19th century and where it was reasoned that "madness is childhood. Everything at the Retreat is organized so that the insane are transformed into minors. They are regarded as "children who have an overabundance of strength and make dangerous use of it".¹⁰⁴

Families are structured around the parents who make the laws. If these laws are broken the children are punished and are made to feel guilty. This was the logic behind Tuke's Retreat where the madman was not punished physically if he violated the rules of the house. He was made to feel guilty by being held responsible for the transgression. Tuke, says Foucault, did not liberate the insane as is proclaimed: he created an asylum "where he substituted for the free terror of madness the stifling anguish of responsibility; fear no longer reigned on the other side of the prison gates, it now raged under the seals of conscience".¹⁰⁵

In the beginning the madman was not expected to act in a normal way. Now he was supposed to act as a normal member of the family, held responsible for his own punishment.

This kind of treatment instead of helping is detrimental to the patient's progress and creates a great trauma. It is of benefit to the staff because a guilty person is easy to subdue. As Foucault says, the asylum "organized that guilt; it organized it for the madman as a consciousness of himself..."¹⁰⁶

The Combine-asylum is the well-organized family and the insane is required to follow the family's code of conduct very strictly. Any infraction of the code is treated so censoriously that the insane is wracked with guilt and is shamed into submission. The suicide of Billy comes under this category of treatment of the mad as expostulated by Foucault.

Critics have called the asylum Kesey's metaphor for tyranny but that alone would not account for the book's power. It makes such an impact because it presents a critique of the organization at so many different levels: like the organization which looks after man's professional life, the bourgeois family is also an organization where individualism is discouraged.

Whyte presents American society as a highly organized one. This organization is a form of tyranny which does violence to its captives through very efficient methods: "The messiness of intuition, the aimless thoughts, unpractical questions - all these things that are so often the companion to discovery are anathema to the world of the administrator".¹⁰⁷

The ward is a microcosm of the mechanical American society where group 'thinking' is encouraged and where one's originality and individuality is crushed. Group therapy is practised with great vigour by Nurse Ratched. The group meeting which takes on the colouration of a ritual with its sacrificial victim is seen by Mac for what it is - an exercise causing great internal damage. The victim is made to confess intimate facts, facts which he would try to hide even from himself. In reality, these confessions are a form of blackmail, operating as a subtle way of reinforcing Big Nurse's all-embracing power. Mac calls these meetings pecking parties: when a flock sees a spot of blood on a chicken it starts pecking it. In the process the chickens get blood on their own bodies so they all peck at each other.

In Big Nurse's family system patients are taught to sneak. They report chance remarks of their friends which are later used against them in the meetings. By these methods, the Big Nurse does so much violence to the minds and pride of her patients that finally there is no chance of recovery. Three people commit suicide in the book: Billy, Mr. Rawler and Cheswick. Two of these can be directly linked to the suffocating feeling produced by Nurse Ratched's authority.

In the staff meeting the Nurse is again in control. There is green seepage in the staff room, says the Chief who sees it as an evil place, a laboratory run by a mad scientist.

who through schemes concocted in his twisted brain does harm to his innocent victims.

When a patient asserts himself he is given shock treatment. Shock treatment instead of being seen as cure is seen as violence done to a patient. It is a form of punishment, a threat held out for good behaviour: "You pay for the service", explains Harding to McMurphy, "with brain cells instead of money..."¹⁰⁸ McMurphy thinks of it as a real form of physical violence, "like electrocuting a guy for murder".¹⁰⁹

If the patient is not subdued by shock treatment, the extreme step of performing lobotomy is taken as the final punishment and the sure cure of individuality.

While shock treatment - supposedly a cure - is treated as brute violence, the truly violent act of killing becomes, as in Of Mice and Men, an act of love. Chief Bromden murders Mac because he cares for him deeply and that is the only way he can allow him to fly over the cuckoo's nest.

Mac has to be allowed to escape the asylum because it is mechanical and dead and he is so full of life and vitality. This vitality is symbolized by his laughter which rings through the sterile ward and infuses it with life. It is a laugh which represents sanity : "... it's free and loud and it... spreads in rings bigger and bigger till its lapping against the walls all over the ward."¹¹⁰ Mac laughs - and his constant effort is to make the inmates laugh - because he

knows one has to laugh at things that hurt one: "... he won't let the pain blot out the humour, no more'n he'll let the humour blot out the pain".¹¹¹

Mac and Yossarian are able to step outside the organization and fight it. Beginning as a personal fight it finally becomes a crusade for others against a vicious system.

When Mac sees the extent to which the Big Nurse has succeeded in emasculating the men and the extent of their dependence on him, he fights her tooth and nail. This time it is a deliberate sacrifice since he knows that she can keep him in the ward for years.

Mac is a typical character of American myth - Billy Bud, Huckleberry Finn - the country bumpkin who outsmarts the smart folk. Mac uses two strategies : a folk strategy and what might be called the cartoon-strip technique.

By taking recourse to folk strategy Mac introduces the Robin Hood kind of spontaneity into a mechanical world. As a folk hero he fights with methods practised by delinquents. Vandalism is one - he keeps breaking the Nurse's glass window by running his hand through it and follows this act with an apology, saying it was so clean he had forgotten the glass was there.

The cartoon-strip impersonality is a strategy to combat the impersonality of the machine-like organization. He is like Superman who is able to penetrate an evil, life-reducing world

with his own brand of sophistication. Mac has more of the qualities of Superman than of a politician as Klinkowitz would have it. Klinkowitz makes out a case for Mac and Yossarian as politicians, saying that in the Kennedy era, Kennedy himself was like a hero while the books written during the new cultural climate of the '60s had heroes who were politicians: "... one can look at Kennedy... in literary terms, while such literary craftsmen as Vonnegut and Ken Kesey may be studied for their historical and even political suggestions".¹¹² Klinkowitz says that both Mac and Yossarian are political forces rebelling against authority and arguing for a new reality and both "become politicians in a larger sense, as cultural heroes for the bold new decade of the American 1960's".¹¹³ But in their stance one does not find much reformative zeal or the desire to create a new order. Theirs is more a mythic tourney against evil, Yossarian's being a desperate struggle to keep from being sucked into a system where wrong is condoned as long as it carries the tag of Catch-22 and Mac's the fight of a cowboy against all odds, fighting for his fellow men before riding into the sunset.

As a figure out of American myth, he is compared time and again with a cowboy. His first entrance is like the dramatic entrance of a cowboy in a Western: "... he sounds big in the way he walks... he's got iron on his heels and he rings it on the floor like horseshoes. He shows up in the door and stops and hitches his thumbs in his pockets, boots wide apart, and stands there with the guys looking at him".¹¹⁴

When he deliberately sacrifices himself Mac becomes almost a Christ figure. Rollo May talks of the humanity of the rebel who unlike the revolutionary, is not interested in power. The function of the rebel is to shake the rigid order of civilization is order to save society from apathy. May calls Christ an authentic rebel because He willingly sacrifices Himself for others: "The rebel and the savior then turn out to be the same figure. Through his rebellion the rebel saves us...".¹¹⁵

The references in Kesey's book to this sort of metamorphosis from the cowboy to the Christ-figure are clear. When they go on the fishing trip, for instance, Chief Bromden says, "... McMurry led the twelve of us towards the ocean".¹¹⁶

The shock treatment he is made to undergo is likened to crucifixion. He "climbs on the table without any help and spreads his arms out to fit the shadow" and he says, "Anointest my head with conductant. Do I get a crown of thorns?".¹¹⁷ The Chief calls the shock conductors "crown of silver thorns".¹¹⁸

When Nurse Ratched offers him a way out by asking him to admit that he was wrong - again like Christ he does not recant.

Mac's 'madness' is a challenge to organized power and so he is finally crucified by the Combine. His description after the lobotomy operation is : "... a swirl of red hair over a face milk-white except for the heavy purple bruises around the eyes".¹¹⁹ Except for the red hair this might be Christ after he was taken down from the cross.

Foucault mentions the myth in which Christ is presented as a madman. Christ becomes mad on behalf of mankind and is crucified for the world's madness:

Christ did not merely choose to be surrounded by lunatics; he himself chose to pass in their eyes for a madman, thus experiencing, in his incarnation, all the sufferings of human misfortune. Madness thus became the ultimate form, the final degree of god in man's image, before the fulfillment and deliverance of the cross.¹²⁰

There is an actual presentation of Mac, as Christ, aboard the Ship of Fools. When Mac takes the men out to sea, the boat with its mad passengers becomes a stand-by for the old Ship of Fools. By removing the fools from an enclosed place and giving them their ship back, he is giving them a sense of space, a sense of the world. He also gives them a sense of freedom by releasing them from a stifling time-bound place.

This "bigger-than-life McMurphy" says Martin, is pitted against the "bigger-than-life Miss Ratched" who are "opposed in every way. He is the stud, she the "ball-cutter", he is the brawler, she the manufacturer of docility; he is the gambler, she the representative of the house - where chance has no meaning".¹²¹

Big Nurse, like Mac, is different things but while all these things represent the lack of life, Mac's roles are representative of life: she is the female counterpoint of Big Brother, always watching over one. She is a malignant

mother-figure who has the black orderlies, the shock treatment, lobotomy at her disposal as means of punishment. "These are weapons of terror" says Martin, "dedicated to the proposition that the best man is a good boy..."¹²²

She is a witch out of a fable who, according to the Chief, can blow herself up big: "... she blows up bigger and bigger, big as a tractor..."¹²³

She is a voodoo doll who goes through life-like gestures because of the machinery inside. The language suggests time and again, that she is a machine, a thing, made not of flesh and blood but cogs and wheels that are well-oiled. The attendants are more robots than human beings, mechanically carrying out Big Nurse's commands. Fromm shows how sometimes man becomes identified with his social organization and forgets that he is a person: "... he becomes, to use Heidegger's term a 'one', a non-person. He is, we might say, in a negative ecstasis; he forgets himself by ceasing to be 'he', by ceasing to be a person and becoming a thing".¹²⁴

In contrast to the machine-like staff, the inmates are human. Thus the asylum is an inverted metaphor. The world outside is the crazy one because it lacks humanity.

In Heller, too, as in Kesey madness is all-pervasive. As Yossarian puts it succinctly, "Everywhere he looked was a nut..."¹²⁵

The pressure on the men during wartime, when the spectre of death is ever-present, is tremendous and many of them go to pieces. Hungry Joe's screaming nightmare is one instance of a man on the point of nervous collapse. He cannot bear any kind of noise - even the ticking of a watch "crashed like torture against his unshielded brain".¹²⁶ In Teicher's¹²⁷ list of symptoms of a combat fatigue patient, are repeated catastrophic nightmares; a "startle reaction" where anxiety and fear are produced by sudden noises. The fundamental basic pillars of the neuroses in war he says, are based on the drive for self-preservation - its affective aspect is present too - and fear of death, among others.

Aarfy is totally mad when flying. His madness takes the form of Buddha-like calm in the midst of anti-aircraft firing. He puffs reflectively on his pipe, saying, "I can't hear you"¹²⁸ whenever someone talks to him. Even when Yossarian is badly wounded, his leg saturated with blood, Aarfy continues saying, "I can't hear you", :

"Can't you see me? Yossarian cried incredulously...
 "I'm wounded! Help me, for God's sake! Aarfy,
 help me!"
 "I still can't hear you", Aarfy complained
 tolerantly... "what did you say?"¹²⁹

On ground he seems more sane but he still has an element of insanity which makes him amoral. He rapes and kills a prostitute and thinks it is alright to do so. Madness is prevalent everywhere, specially in the organization because

Aarfy is not arrested for murder but Yossarian is, for being out without his pass.

In Something Happened, Heller depicts the tensions caused by working under the conditions of peacetime. The office, in fact, can be seen as a little replica of the war-front. Here too skirmishes go on to get to the top; the defeat of one's enemies is meticulously planned; and replacing the fear of death is the fear of being superseded or thrown out.

This sort of pressure produces mental aberrations, the kind Slocum reveals. He is unsure of his identity. The reason is that he keeps changing according to the expectation of the person he is with. He even takes on the characteristic of the person he is with - if he is with someone who limps, he limps; if the other man has a distinct accent Slocum too speaks that way for sometime. This is the type of emulation Lasch talks of when he says that it "becomes almost entirely unconscious and expresses not the search for models but the emptiness of self-images".¹³⁰ The book reverbrates with the pathetic cry of "Who am I?" His schizoid tendencies have already been discussed earlier.

There is a constant reference in Something Happened to people going mad or committing suicide. Martha who is in the typing department of Slocum's office is slowly going crazy. No one tries to help her. They wait and watch, wondering just when she will reach the point of total insanity.

In Good as Gold, Gold's step-mother is crazy but she is more of a comic character. Heller does not create her madness as an example of society's insanity or for probing the mental states of man. She is somewhat like Bellow's mad people. Her dislike for Gold is irrational and intense. Each time he publishes an article she makes the remark that he has a screw loose. (It is interesting to note that both Heller and Malamud use the image of a hat to suggest madness).

Gold's father is not mad but he is eccentric. His self-obsession results in cruelty when he says whatever he feels about people without considering their feelings. He vacillates between extremities of mood - ranging from high spirits to total indifference. His greatest eccentricity is his dislike for chipped china. If he is served in cracked china he hurls it to the floor and breaks it - Gold's private name for him is Karamazov.

Though Andrea has got a Ph.D. there is an emptiness at the core so that though she is beautiful and rich none of her boy friends is willing to see her again. Though brilliant in her studies there is something totally missing from her mind. She has no conception of moral values and talks casually of the most intimate subjects. Her part-insanity can be traced to her father who is corrupt and shows many signs of madness. He is openly racist, goes into a fit when he thinks of bald men, loves gelding horses.

But Heller also deals with madness in its clinical sense. In Something Happened, Slocum's son is born an idiot. He cannot even speak, all he does is produce a few sounds. Derek is presented to us only through Slocum's musings ("They'll call him Benjy",¹³¹ says Slocum). He never appears once in person, unlike the idiots of Faulkner, Steinbeck and O'Connor. It is almost as though Slocum is ashamed to bring him face to face with his readers as he is to have his friends see him.

The way Derek is treated by his family is an indictment of the present-day family. Like the family in Kafka's "Metamorphosis", the Slocum family too behaves toward him as though he were a blot on their fair name. None of them plays with him or makes any effort at communication. They would all - the sweet nine-year-old son included - like to send him to a home although they do not openly say so.

Heller seems to have created Derek more to point out the the disintegration of the family, rather than to explore the state of idiocy.

Slocum often muses on Derek and one passage where he imagines what Derek's mind must be like, describes Benjy's state perfectly as rendered by Faulkner:

I think of him as receiving stimuli linearly in unregulated currents of sights and sounds streaming into one side of his head and going out the other into the air as though like radio signals through a turnip or through some finely tuned, capstan-

shaped, intricate, and highly sensitive instrument of ceramic, tungsten, and glass that does everything but work.¹³²

In Heller it is difficult to think of violence and madness as separate categories. Both are inextricably linked. Violence is not a form of life in city or of culture but is another shape of madness and madness is the essence of violence. Together they create a new reality. Both violence and madness coalesce to generate the comic.

If we examine the Guissepi scene or the scenes involving the soldier in white, we find an extraordinary symbiosis of violence and madness. This provides a third species of human conduct - one that is both comic and cruel. The cruelty does not spring from violence as it would in realistic representation. The cruelty resides in the comedy, in the fact that something tragic is transformed into comedy. In literature comedy is associated with the celebration of life while tragedy induces a fear of death. But in semi-fabulation comedy instils in the reader a fear of life itself.

Catch-22 has scenes of savage humour: the Guissepi incident has death as its theme but it is hilarious with the comic tone giving a different perspective altogether; Milo's bombing of his own squadron; Doc Daneeka's death; the recurrent references to Catch-22, a force that cannot be explained in philosophical or Biblical terms; the continual madness of raising the number of missions to be flown which results in so much violence. All these are scenes of mass

violence mixed with mass madness. The Air-Force representing the violence and madness of America also represents that of the lunatic asylum. The characters go through the gestures of reality but one has only to scratch to discover the madness.

Edgar Allan Poe's short story, ^{"The System of Dr. Tarr} ~~and Prof. Feather~~", anticipates a literary structure where beneath routine appearance lurks horrific insanity. The narrator of Poe's story goes to have a look at an asylum known for its innovative techniques in treating madness. The doctor invites him for dinner where the guests behave in the most bizarre fashion. Finally it is discovered that the guests are the real inmates of the asylum who have locked up the doctors and nurses and taken over the asylum. Poe anticipates Heller's and Kesey's world where the surface of normalcy conceals layers of madness.

Perhaps there is something in the American imagination which ^pcompels it to view the world as chaos. Writers like Melville, Washington Irving, Poe, Traine, Faulkner to Heller and Kesey seem to construct societies hovering between order and chaos, madness and sanity, self and other. These works do not reveal a trail that finally leads to order as enshrined in traditions European or Asian societies take for granted. Order is the other face of chaos and not its antithesis so that the asylum and the Air-Force, the ostensible symbols of order are, in fact, predicated in the notion of anarchy disguised as form.

The savage horror of life is released by trivializing what constitutes its most vital aspects. Even death is reduced to nothingness and treated as a casual happening. The Guiseppi scene is foremost in this respect. One of the funniest scenes in the book ^{it} is also one of the most cruel. Yossarian stands in for the dead Guiseppi when Guiseppi's family comes to visit him. None of the family realizes that it is not Guiseppi and when they start crying Yossarian joins in because he thinks he might be dead soon.

Death is again trivialized in Aarfy's killing of the prostitute. The more serious the act, the more extreme the trivialization.

Yossarian's naked protest is a trivialization of the idea of courage and honour, reminiscent of Falstaff's mockery of honour in war. The old man in Catch-22 makes fun of the concept of patriotism with different peoples dying for different countries. As in Henry IV where the cherished values of the Renaissance are ridiculed, Catch-22 too laughs at what has been considered sacred.

The soldier in white is another instance of comic cruelty. When Yossarian and Dunbar see him a second time they get hysterical. Dunbar keeps screaming "He's back! He's back! He's back!"¹³³ All the patients start screaming and running as well and we go into convulsions over someone who is so seriously injured that he is completely swathed in bandages;

Win Berry's great dream is owning a great hotel and having a bear in it as a pet. He is blind to the lack of practicality in what he plans.

Eccentricity gives a certain depth to Irving's characters. Madness is generally one-dimensional as in The Sound and the Fury or is given the face of total innocence as in The Idiot. But when, as in Irving, the character hovers between sanity and lunacy depth is given to his perception. This is the Lear-like state of blindness as insight in which the character is able to see much more than a rational man could.

Both The World According to Garp and The Hotel New Hampshire have a number of deformed people: a prostitute with a large pockmark on her forehead, a "silvery gouge.... nearly as big as her mouth",¹³⁶ the Ellen Jamesians with no tongues; Tinch with a shutter; Alice with a speech impediment; a man with a glass eye; Lilly as a dwarf (like Oskar in The Tin Drum. Oskar decides to grow in the end and so does Lilly); a midget circus (again like the circus in The Tin Drum); Freud who is a "blind gnome"; the one-eyed, one armed Duncan.

Duncan, looking out of an apartment in New York starts a count of the handicapped people on the street. His tally is: "a man with one arm", "a man with one leg", "one man with one arm, one man with one leg, two people who limped", "someone without any nose", "another person with a limp",¹³⁷ Epstein remarks on all the "wounds, rips, tears, broken bones,

and vitiated organs", in Irving's books. So there arises the question, says Epstein, "to adapt a phrase of Henry James of the disfigurement in the carpet".¹³⁸

There is a comically grotesque scene when Garp dresses as a woman in order to attend the first feminist funeral of his mother, and almost gets lynched when they discover who it is. On the way back in the plane a man makes a pass at him.

In The Hotel New Hampshire one of the prostitutes always carries a purse. Since she is a violent person everyone thinks that she has a gun in it. But the narrator discovers that it is a jar with a human foetus.

The comedy of the grotesque, according to Innesco, is "more conducive to despair than the tragic. The comic offers no way out".¹³⁹ Heller produces comedy by transforming the living into the mechanical. The soldier in white is the most obvious illustration of this technique. He is described variously as something "constructed entirely of gauze, plaster and a thermometer",¹⁴⁰ "an unrolled bandage with a hole in it",¹⁴¹ "a stuffed and sterilized mummy".¹⁴² The nurses keep him spick and span, brushing and polishing him as though he were a piece of furniture.

Heller turns to the grotesque in relation^{to} Kid Sampson's death. When the helicopter chops him in two, the top half of his body is swept away but his legs stay alive for a few moments,

balancing on the raft before toppling slowly into the water. They turn upside down "so that only the grotesque toes and the plaster-white soles of Kid Sampson's feet remained in view".¹⁴³

After a few days the legs float back onto the beach where they lie and "rot like a purple twisted wishbone".¹⁴⁴

Young men who have finished their missions and are waiting for the orders sending them home become grotesque: "They moved sideways, like crabs".¹⁴⁵

Ellison's use of the grotesque is different. It mainly consists of the sudden losing of a false part of the body, shocking both the narrator and the reader. The black who works in the paint factory loses his false teeth in his fight with the narrator. Brother Jack's false eye drops out in his confrontation with the narrator. The narrator is totally shattered and cannot look away from the eye so that there is a refrain about the eye in his mind: "... and there on the bottom of the glass lay an eye. A glass eye. A buttermilk white eye distorted by the light rays. An eye staring fixedly at me from the dark waters of a well".¹⁴⁶ The losing of the eye seems to represent the stripping away of a facade and a revelation of the true self.

An examination of the language reveals how these writers employ grotesque imagery as a means of reinforcing their concerns centering on violence and madness. Here are just a few telling examples:

1. Grotesque

The Bergsonian idea of the presentation of the living as mechanical or vice-versa is elaborated by Kaiser. - "... the mechanical object is alienated by being brought to life, the human being by being deprived of it. Among the most persistent motifs of the grotesque we find, human bodies reduced to puppets, marionettes, and automata and their faces frozen into masks".¹⁴⁷

Mechanical as living

Heller

"... the guilty, banking, forlorn airplane...".¹⁴⁸
 "The engines were howling again as though in pain...".¹⁴⁹
 "A wild crimson blot was crawling upward rapidly along his shirt front like an enormous sea monster rising to devour him".¹⁵⁰

"... the stitches on the inside of his thigh bit into his flesh like fine sets of fish teeth...".¹⁵¹

Kesey

"The wind was blowing the boats at their mooring... so they made a sound like they were laughing at us. The water was giggling under the boards...".¹⁵²

"The metal door looks out with its rivet eyes".¹⁵³

Irving

"... the silence pierced with a metal screaming and the shriek of ground glass... a Land Rover lay up-side-down and bleeding its oil and gas in a puddle...".¹⁵⁴

"... the man's sport car still chugged like an animal interested in eating sand".155

"... the head of his cigar, like the shimmering red eye of an animal".156

Ellison

"... a bullet struck an auto tire, the released air shrieking like a huge animal in agony".157

"... the gears of the huge clock... gnawing upon time".158

Living as Mechanical

Heller

"Like an antiquated building with white X's on the front, he must be demolished shortly".159

Kesey

"He's got hands so long and white and dainty I think they carved each other out of soap, and sometimes they get loose and glide around in front of him free as two white birds until he notices them and traps them between his knees..."160

"He... shakes hands that he has to pick up out of laps like picking up dead birds, mechanical birds, wonders of tiny bones and wires that have run down and fallen".161

" "Harding's got his thin shoulders folded nearly together around himself like green wings..."162

"... his hands begin to creep out from between his knees like white spiders from between two moss-covered tree limbs..."163

"... old guys, welded in wheel-chairs for years with catheters down their legs like vines rooting them for the rest of their lives right where they are..."¹⁶⁴

Man as Creature

Heller

"Major Danby presed forward avidly with a look of vulturous well-meaning."¹⁶⁵

"... she would seize with her shriveled fingers and devour ravenously right from the wrapping paper like some famished, caged, wizened, white-haired animal..."¹⁶⁶

"It's a honeycomb; we drone. Directors die; they're replaced."¹⁶⁷

"... an index finger that curved like a talon".¹⁶⁸
"With fingernails curving like claws..."¹⁶⁹

Irving

"She was a tiny thing, all flutters and twitches and coos..."¹⁷⁰

"... we would shriek at him like violent birds".¹⁷¹

"She was... speaking in an easy clucking manner to him, while he continued to bleat..."¹⁷²

"... Harold Swallow could fly. He had moves like the bird he was named for..."¹⁷³

"... with a pixie face... unpleasantly rodent like".¹⁷⁴

"... the two men stabbing like hummingbirds at a single small blossom".¹⁷⁵

"... his hands like songbirds lighting on his hip pads".¹⁷⁶

Ellison

"... their fists testing the smoke-filled air like the knobbed feelers of hypersensitive snails".177

"His lips parted, bluish, revealing a row of long, slender, amazingly animal-like teeth".178

"Faces hovered above me like inscrutable fish peering myopically through a glass aquarium wall".179

Kesey

In the books of Heller, Irving and Ellison man is equated with creatures. In One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest there is no such imagery. Here man is consistently referred to as machine. Through language Kesey shows the asylum for what it is - a mechanical world ruled over by automatons. The biggest automaton of them all is Nurse Rat,ched. Some examples are:

"... I hear them mumbling behind me... Hum of black machinery, humming hate and death..."180

"What the Chronics are... are machines with flash inside that can't be repaired... by the time the hospital found him he was bleeding rust in some vacant lot".181

"... his eyes are all smoked up and grey and deserted inside like blown fuses".182

"She stands there... eyes whirring while she tries to guage this new man".183

"I watch her hand reach for another empty needle, watch it dart out, hinge over it, drop."184

"She works the hinges in her elbows and fingers. I hear a small squeak... her smile's going out before her like a radiator grill".185

"Gradually the lips gather together again... run together, like the red-hot wire had got hot enough to melt, shimmer a second, then click solid as the molten metal sets, growing cold and strangely dull".¹⁸⁶

"Her voice has a tight whine like an electric saw ripping through pine".¹⁸⁷

3. Images of Violence

Heller

"... the pelting raindrops poking each one like sharp fingernails".¹⁸⁸

"... biting my nail addictively like a starving hunchback...".¹⁸⁹

"I have jagged, wracking inner conflicts, filing slicing, hacking, and sawing inside me mercilessly...".¹⁹⁰

"... two unshaded bulbs dangling overhead from thick black wires like a pair of staring spiders".¹⁹¹

Irving

"The Atlantic Ocean... was the livid color of a bruise...".¹⁹²

"A convulsion of some kind made her whole face shake, and the loose skin on her cheeks made a soft slapping noise".¹⁹³

"Her brown, blood-matted hair was ruffled by the warm summer wind, which blew through the hole where the windshield had been".¹⁹⁴

Kesey

"Now his eyelids hang loose and thin from his brow like he's got a bat perched on the bridge of his nose".¹⁹⁵

4. Images of Decay and Death

Heller

"... the yawning gash of the freshly dug grave".¹⁹⁶

"... this mordant, stultifying sorrow into which she sneaks away to bury herself so often".¹⁹⁷

"... everything green looked black and everything else was imbued with the color of pus".¹⁹⁸

"... dozens of new mushrooms the rain had spawned poking their modular fingers up through the clammy earth like lifeless stalks of flesh..."¹⁹⁹

Irving

"There were times when Elliot park could creak like a coffin changing temperature".²⁰⁰

"... her pockmark looked to Garp like a small, open grave".²⁰¹

"... a big dark car, the color of clotted blood..."²⁰²

"... the sleet... rattled off the big Buick like the tapping of countless hammers, driving little nails... the old car groaning and snapping under its thickening tomb of ice".²⁰³

Kesey

Unlike other books Kesey's does not contain much death or funeral imagery. The book, however, abounds in references to Christ. These are usually found in connection with Mac but at times also apply to other patients. It is almost as though Kesey is suggesting that anyone who is mad has the innocence of Christ, taking us back to the original idea of the fool:

"Now he's nailed against the wall in the same condition they lifted him off the table for the last time, in the same shape, arms out, palms cupped, ... He's nailed like that on the wall..."²⁰⁴

"Ellis pulled his hands down off the nails in the wall and squeezed Billy Bibbit's hand and told him to be a fisher of men".²⁰⁵

The shock treatment is like crucifixion: "You are strapped to a table, shaped, ironically, like a cross, with a crown of electric sparks in place of thorns".²⁰⁶

5. Descriptions of Faces, Bodies

Heller

"His eyes were pulsating in hectic desperation, flapping like bat's wings..."²⁰⁷

"... her eyes would darken and dart about anxiously like frightened little mice..."²⁰⁸

Kesey

"He looked us over with yellow, scaled eyes..."²⁰⁹

Ellison

"... the anger in his thyroid eyes".²¹⁰

"... eyes protruding, luminous and veined like an old biology specimen preserved in alcohol".²¹⁰

Taking stock of the issues raised in the foregoing three chapters one is able to discern certain distinct patterns in

the treatment of violence and madness as encountered in the works of the writers under consideration.

The evolution of Faulkner's art seems to indicate a shift in the treatment of violence as a physical act to something like the disintegration of self under pressure from various psychological and cultural tensions. In the post world-war fiction violence gets assimilated to imagery and its meaning gets ramified to cover many hitherto unexplained areas of social life exposed to forces released by urbanization and deracination.

In the works of the semi-fabulists violence shifts from individual to national consciousness. Violence becomes a collective activity. Whereas in the past works, one man would be depicted as insane in a sane society, now madness appears to overtake the entire nation. The sane man is the exception and stands out as a lone figure confronting mass insanity. Fromm says that when pathological processes become socially patterned, their individual character is lost so that the sick individual feels at home with all the other sick individuals:

The whole culture is geared to this kind of pathology... it is the fully sane person who feels isolated in the insane society - and he may suffer so much from the incapacity to communicate that it is he who may become psychotic.²¹²

The model for mass violence and madness is Germany. The present involvement of the whole nation in violence and madness

calls for parallels with the Jewish holocaust. The power of semi-fabulist fiction derives from the individual's struggle to free himself from the violence inherent in the culture. Boni says that in works like Catch-22, the central figure is one "whose primary strong point is his survival in such a world".²¹³ There comes a stage when the characters struggling to survive seem to be involved in the "comedy of incapacity", in what Kenner calls the stoic comedians.²¹⁴

In spite of this we can see that the humanistic impulse persists in the work of the semi-fabulists. Berger points out that comic-books, "despite the violence and terror... display an underlying optimism about man's possibilities".²¹⁵ The semi-fabulists who employ so many comic-book techniques, have also borrowed this optimism and faith. Though the images of violence and madness are grotesque, the anti-hero resists the grotesquerie. He rejects the necrophilous attitude of those around them. It would be naïve to think of this as the triumph of the American myth but at the same time there is the sense of an individual fighting an insane society: Yossarian, Mac, Invisible Man, Garp, all in their own way wage a war against the prevalent violence. They retain a memory of a normal world but they also make a heroic effort to win back that normacy.

There is a tendency among critics to assimilate the semi-fabulist anti-hero to the Adamic myth but one must remember

that he is not merely the innocent abroad. He rejects the attempt to homogenize life and tries to create a liminal situation.²¹⁶ He presents the liminal moment to counter the modern obsession for homogeneity. This anti-hero, then, plays almost a revolutionary role by assuming a positive schizophrenic mask - which can be seen as an "attempt to preserve a being that is precariously structured",²¹⁷ or by striking a stance of insanity in order to penetrate and subvert language entrenched in bureaucracy committed to necrophilia.

It is necessary to bear in mind this fundamental difference in the perception of those we call semi-fabulists and the fabulists - something most critics fail to do with the result that writers like Heller and Kesey are placed under the fabulist category and their real significance is mainly lost sight of. The difference is that in the works of the fabulists there are no such sentient individuals struggling to retain their individuality. The fabulist characters are cyphers.

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