

VIOLENCE, NONVIOLENCE AND "POSTWAR" FICTION

VIOLENCE, NONVIOLENCE AND "POSTWAR" FICTION:
A PEACE-STUDIES APPROACH TO
TIME'S ARROW, NOT WANTED ON THE VOYAGE AND MERIDIAN

By

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ABSTRACT

The use of imaginative literature as a source of philosophical inquiry into the nature of social order, oppression or conflict, as well as the role of violence and nonviolence in personal and political action, has been largely neglected by the field of peace studies. Similarly, literary criticism has failed to confront these issues. While war literature has been used, primarily, as a source of insight into the war experience, peace-studies literary critics, such as Michael True, Gregory Mason and John Getz have sought to identify a literary canon which embodies and inspires the values of peace or the principles of nonviolence. In an attempt to open new critical territory for both the field of peace studies and literary criticism, this thesis investigates the relationship between twentieth-century violence/nonviolence and fiction/literary theory. Based upon a historical and theoretical framework concerned with events such as the Holocaust and the American civil rights movement, as well as the philosophical and social issues which arose from these events, Martin Amis's *Time's Arrow* (1991), Timothy Findley's *Not Wanted on the Voyage* (1984) and Alice Walker's *Meridian* (1976) are analysed from a "postwar" perspective. The "postwar", as I conceive of it, refers not to a historical period but to the act, in practical and symbolic terms, of undermining oppressive and violent relations of power. It does not connote an ideal, just and violence-free society, but the process of moving away from warfare and violence to an undetermined end. In each novel, the authors draw upon established, culturally significant stories to "twist around" history to confront the reader, in the present, with the "meaning" of these (hi)stories. These three novels receive critical attention which confronts such issues as violence, nonviolence, resistance to oppression, and the relationship between means and ends.

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CHAPTER ONE

Literature, War and Peace: An Introduction

"Know'st thou not there is but one theme for ever-enduring bards?
And that is the theme of War. . ."
- Walt Whitman, "As I Ponder'd in Silence."

In a 1938 article entitled "Books and World Peace," British pacifist, feminist and writer Vera Brittain outlined her conception of the role of literature as a mirror of war and a vision of peace. Written during the international crisis immediately preceding World War II as the world faced the "grave possibility of complete annihilation" (Brittain 3), Brittain argues in the essay that if war is to be averted, and if peace, as a concept more complex than simply the absence of war, is to be realized, writers must "learn from the masters of historical literature the three main methods by which this saving obligation may be fulfilled" (16). Brittain believes that in the modern era the most efficient vehicle for communicating ideas and shaping the future is the novel. She contends that through the novel writers may seek to realistically portray the experiences and effects of warfare on individuals and society, contribute as intermediaries to aid conflicting groups to understand one another, or present a utopian vision of the world. She notes the depiction of an ideal of organized world peace by such writers as Virgil, Dante and Tennyson, and notes the way in which J.B. Priestley, Cervantes and Swift attempted to combat war through satire. Brittain also places many of the works of Euripides, Byron, Shelley and Tolstoy in a tradition of antiwar realistic writing.

Vera Brittain argues that imaginative literature can foster peace. Certainly the novel is no longer the most efficient means of communicating ideas and shaping the future, if ever it had this latter power. In many respects, however, imaginative literature does have the ability to communicate ideas and experiences more effectively

than other forms of writing: "Art. . . - and the novel in particular - can do what a 'rational' politics cannot: it is the perfect vehicle for the ironies and paradoxes of the moral life and the social history it produces" (Schaub 22). I would suggest that a novel such as Charles Yale Harrison's *Generals Die in Bed* (1930), in its treatment of a group of Canadian soldiers' experience of trench warfare--the muddy wasteland of the Western Front, the experience of killing at close range, the soldiers' disillusionment with the purpose and rhetoric of war--is a more effective "antiwar" text than many philosophical works with these intended ends. Through the depiction of warfare, the novel provides the reader with insight into the war experience.

Just as my reading of *Generals Die in Bed* focuses upon the text as a "realistic" novel, critical analysis of war literature tends to concentrate upon, if not verisimilitude, at least imaginative literature's "documentation" of the individual and collective experience of war. Scholars interested in this century's literature of war and oppression have been concerned with fiction as witness--its ability to communicate experience-- (Craig and Egan 11), or, as in the case of Lucy Dougall in her annotated bibliography *War and Peace in Literature* (1982), with compiling a list of works which "hold a mirror up to war, revealing the ways in which it enhances and even ennoble, as well as destroys and degrades those subject to its demands" (Pickus 2).

In his study of World War II English fiction, Alan Munton contends that because wars are fought collectively, writers must recreate this collective experience. The fiction of the Second World War reveals the futility of warfare, and the disillusionment of those who must fight wars. Munton argues that, while "popular" combat fiction of the period maintains the pre-World War I ideal of the "hero," a heroic portrayal of the soldier is impossible for "literary" writers (22). He focuses upon realism in his analysis

of the texts and bases his judgment of their significance or "literariness" upon their "realistic" expression of the experience of war and collective suffering. Similarly, Holger Klein, in his treatment of Second World War British fiction, emphasizes the way in which literature records the *effects* of war rather than the historical *event*; for instance, fiction depicts the collective experience of war through the actions and sufferings of individuals (12). To some extent, such a critical perspective limits these texts to their historical conditions; yet Klein notes that by exploring the collective human problem of war, "war fiction can enrich and deepen retrospective perception of the war, thereby making a valid contribution to present-day and future consciousness" (43).

If fiction is to have this role in society, however--if it is to make a "valid contribution to present-day and future consciousness"--it must be read and studied. Literary scholars have, in general, ignored the fiction of war. Literary critic Eric Homberger attributes this neglect to the shift in critical enthusiasm away from realism (200). Is all (anti)war* literature realistic, however, or has a "realist" critical approach to war fiction limited our perspective on this genre? The canon of (anti)war literature currently being studied in Peace Studies or English courses in North America¹ is not confined to "realistic" texts. While Great War canonical texts such as Vera Brittain's autobiography *Testament of Youth* (1933), Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms* (1929) and Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1929) are all, to some extent, realistic texts, Robert Graves' satirical memoir *Good-bye to All That* (1929) or the poetry of Wilfred Owen and Isaac Rosenberg, among others, are not simply realistic. Similarly, while Norman Mailer's *The Naked and the Dead* (1949) may be characterized as

*I have chosen to place "anti" in parentheses because, while works such as *All Quiet on the Western Front* are explicitly antiwar, the classification of other texts as war or antiwar is dependent upon the reader.

naturalistic (Abrams 154), other significant World War II novels, such as Joseph Heller's satirical *Catch 22* (1961) or Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five* (1966) certainly are not. I agree that most war literature--whether it be realistic or non-realistic--depicts the collective suffering caused by war through the effects of war upon individuals. The study of war literature, however, does not have to be confined to the portrayal of the war experience.

The most prominent critic of war literature--specifically literature written during or after the Great War by veterans--is Paul Fussell.² In his study of the British experience on the Western Front during World War I, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (1975), Fussell relies heavily upon works of imaginative literature. He does not read these texts simply as "factual" documents of the soldier's experience; rather, he is concerned with the way in which the Great War is remembered, conventionalized and mythologized in literature (ix). Through his analyses of memoirs, poetry and works of fiction, Fussell reveals the impact of the Great War on British culture. The fact that concepts such as glory and honour became hollow (21) and the Battle of the Somme became "one of the most interesting [moments] in the whole long history of human disillusion" (29) are revealed through the characteristic irony and rhetoric of First World War writings. For instance, the images of dawn and dusk, ritualized as the times of stand-tos, are associated with death, melancholy and crucial decisions. The prevalence of the image of twilight "signals a constant reaching out towards traditional significance, very much like the system of 'high' diction which dominated the early stages of the war. It reveals an attempt to make some sense of the war in relation to inherited tradition" (57). Fussell illuminates how British poets utilized a tradition of imagery and motifs to describe what seemed to be utterly incredible. As well, he is concerned with how

"actual events [are] deformed by the application to them of metaphor, rhetorical comparison, prose rhythm, assonance, alliteration, [and] allusion" (172). Through an analysis of *how* writers communicate their war experience--rather than simply the experience that is communicated--Fussell considers the effect of the Great War on the British cultural consciousness through its effect on British literature.

One of the most widely studied novels of the Great War is Erich Maria Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front*. Tracing the experiences of a German soldier, Paul Bäumer, in the trenches of France, this novel criticizes war "as a destroyer of civilized values. . .[and because] it is often fought for reasons that have little to do with improving men morally or ethically" (Firda 9). Characterized as an impressionistic novel rather than a realistic one (41), *All Quiet on the Western Front* has been described as a war or antiwar novel, a "cautionary tale" (Mason 3) or a "quintessential pacifist work" (Firda 11). While I can agree with the three former characterizations, I cannot agree with the latter one. The final image of the novel is one of death and the futility of war, rather than hope of peace: "He had fallen forward and lay on the earth as though sleeping. Turning him over one saw that he could not have suffered long; his face had an expression of calm, as though almost glad the end had come" (Remarque 295). With the emergence of the field of Peace Studies in the past twenty-five years, there has been renewed interest in the study of (anti)war literature. Consequently, *All Quiet on the Western Front* has become a canonical text in the study of peace and war literature. While the novel may provide an effective portrayal of the trench experience and critique of modern warfare, and the death of Bäumer may be Remarque's pessimistic answer to the proponents of war (Firda 51), the tone of the text is ultimately one of hopelessness. It is an *antiwar* novel rather than a novel *for* peace.

For some English scholars with an interest in Peace Studies, courses which comprise war literature, Holocaust literature, or works concerned with social injustice have become unsatisfactory. While (anti)war literature has much to contribute to the study of peace and conflict, critics and teachers such as Michael True have found that "antiwar literature provide[s] little encouragement or hope for young people" ("Teaching" 18). In an attempt to provide the peace-studies teacher and literary critic with an alternative body of works, True, in *An Energy Field More Intense Than War* (1995), has begun the process of reclaiming the tradition of nonviolence in American literature. The literature of nonviolence, as True defines it, includes stories, poems and essays which "explore concrete ways of resolving conflict, resisting injustice, and building a just social order without harming persons" (*Energy* xi). *An Energy Field More Intense Than War* provides an introductory history of the tradition of nonviolence in the United States from the seventeenth century to the present day. True focuses upon poetry and autobiography rather than fiction, and provides a survey of texts in their historical context rather than a peace-studies or nonviolence-based analysis. Just as the texts Fussell studies provide a perspective of the history of the Great War, True uses literature to investigate a neglected, persistent counterculture which rejects the moral or practical legitimacy of violence (xii). While he proposes that literary critics study selected works of Hawthorne, Thoreau, Whitman, Cummings and Faulkner from a new perspective, he also notes the significance of works by writers who have not traditionally been prominent in the American canon; for instance, poets Muriel Rukeyser, William Stafford, Denise Levertov, Allen Ginsberg and novelist Norman Mailer.

While True is concerned with the literary manifestations of the tradition of American nonviolent social movements, critics Gregory Mason and John Getz have

begun to theorize (and practise) a peace-studies approach to literary criticism. Mason argues that the task of the peace-studies literary critic is to "identify and propagate a body of literature which more clearly embodies and inculcates the values of peace" (3). He suggests that "peace literature" might be defined as possessing six qualities: i, a positive embodiment of peace; ii, a blend of pragmatism and idealism; iii, a realistic account of constraining factors; iv, a convincing channelling of aggression; v, a sense of humour; and vi, a sustaining core of hope (4). He suggests that peace literature scholarship might seek to recover a neglected body of works which has been obscured by the war orientation of the traditional canon, submit well-known texts to fresh readings, and encourage the production of new texts with his criteria for peace literature in mind (4-5).

Like Michael True, John Getz began to seek an alternative, peace-centred canon of literature after coming to the conclusion that, while the texts he was using in a course, "Literature and War", condemned war or shattered its romantic illusions, they did not provide a vision of positive peacemaking ("Peace Studies" 3). Following the lead--and, to an extent, the criteria--of Mason, Getz is actively searching literature "for convincing alternative societies and peacemaking heroes. . .who resolve conflicts . . . successfully and nonviolently" (9). Getz's theoretical framework for analyzing fiction is based upon theories of nonviolence and conflict resolution. For instance, his analysis of Ursula K. LeGuin's science-fiction novel *The Left Hand of Darkness*(1969) focuses upon the way in which the novel exemplifies prominent ideas in the field of peace studies and reveals specific strategies for nonviolent conflict resolution (see "A Peace"). Peacemaking texts, as Getz defines them, explore alternate methods to conflict resolution without either endorsing or rejecting them uncritically ("Peace Studies" 22).

Vera Brittain did not suggest that literature could prevent World War II, or war in general, on its own. The lessons of the Great War revealed in the poetry, memoirs and fiction of its veterans, and the hope for peace expressed in literature written during the inter-war period, did not prevent the Second World War. Instead, the mass bombing of civilians, the gas chambers of the Nazi extermination camps, and the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki have had a profound effect upon Western thought and literature. Like those who fought in the Great War, veterans of World War II, and wars since, have recorded their experiences in fiction and poetry. More significantly, for the purposes of this thesis, the issues of warfare, humanity's technological capability to destroy modern civilization, and the legacy of the Holocaust, as well as their effect upon Western culture, have become significant themes in the fiction of the latter half of this century.

While the study of literature has become a significant aspect of Women's Studies and other cultural-studies fields, and feminist and cultural criticism have become prominent theoretical approaches in the field of literary criticism, the use of a peace-studies approach to literary criticism is underdeveloped. I recognize the merit in studying the literature of war and in developing an awareness of literature that documents nonviolence and movements for social change. My endeavour in this thesis, however, is not simply to identify violence and nonviolence in literature. Rather, I will investigate the way in which the horrific events of World War II, as well as Martin Luther King, Jr.'s and Mohandas Gandhi's experiments with nonviolence, have affected, and are affecting, fiction.

This thesis is active in conceptualizing "postwar" fiction and criticism. I am

developing one approach within peace-studies literary criticism. While the words "postwar" and "post-war" have been used interchangeably to connote literature, culture or critical theory since 1945, my use of "postwar" departs from standard usage. While I am focusing upon works of fiction written over the past fifty years and am concentrating upon issues of war and peace which are specific to the latter half of the twentieth century, I do not mean to confine the term "postwar" to fiction written after the Second World War, or any war for that matter. Rather than referring to a historical period, "postwar" connotes the moving away from warfare or violent systems of social order. As such, the "postwar" includes issues of history, social organization, violence and nonviolence that have influenced the themes and styles of imaginative literature, as well as concerns brought to a work of fiction by the reader.

In Chapter Two, I will discuss the relationship among twentieth-century violence, nonviolence and literary criticism, as well as introduce a peace-studies approach to literary criticism based upon, what I call, the "postwar". In the following chapter, I will critically discuss Martin Amis's *Time's Arrow* (1991), Timothy Findley's *Not Wanted on the Voyage* (1984) and Alice Walker's *Meridian* (1976). Each of these novels portrays war, violence and injustice, and, either literally or figuratively, depicts alternatives to violence. Rather than (anti)war or peace literature, each of these novels is an example of postwar fiction.³

CHAPTER TWO

Conceptualizing "Postwar" Fiction and Criticism

"It's really a wonder that I haven't dropped all my ideals, because they seem so absurd and impossible to carry out. Yet I keep them, because in spite of everything I still believe that people are really good at heart."
- Anne Frank, *The Diary of a Young Girl*, 15 July 1944.

I. The Gas Chamber, the Bomb and Post-World War II Literature.

The mass extermination of Jews, Gypsies and other "undesirables" by the Nazis, the mass bombardment of civilian populations by all parties in the Second World War, and the detonation of atomic weapons on Hiroshima and Nagasaki by the United States, while they seem incomprehensible, were perpetrated. Although there seems to be no way of adequately talking about these events, there is no way of not talking about them. Novelist Marguerite Duras writes, "All one can do is talk about the impossibility of talking about Hiroshima. The knowledge of Hiroshima being stated à priori by an exemplary delusion of the mind" (qtd. in Kristeva 142). Hiroshima and Auschwitz, as historical events, are indelible realities of history and indelible aspects of twentieth-century Western cultural consciousness.

In his autobiographical novel *Night* (1960), Auschwitz survivor Elie Wiesel describes his experiences during the Holocaust:

. . . as the train stopped, we saw this time that flames were gushing out of a tall chimney into the black sky.

Madame Schächter was silent herself

We looked at the flames in the darkness. There was an abominable odor floating in the air. Suddenly, our doors opened. Some odd-looking characters, dressed in striped shirts and black trousers leapt into the wagon. They held electric torches and truncheons

We jumped out. I threw a last glance toward Madame Schächter. Her little boy was holding her hand.

In front of us flames. In the air that smell of burning flesh. It must have been about midnight. We had arrived--at Birkenau, reception centre for Auschwitz.

(25-6)

A few hours before they arrive at Auschwitz, Madame Schächter screams about a fire and a furnace. The others in her boxcar dismiss her screams as madness. Months earlier, the Jews of Elie's native Sighet, in Transylvania, dismissed the warnings of Moché the Beadle. He had narrowly escaped death in a Gestapo-perpetrated slaughter of Jews. His stories seemed incomprehensible, so they were not believed.

The narrator of Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five* (1966) believed that it would be easy to write a book about the fire-bombing of Dresden on February 13, 1945. He would simply have to document what he saw and did there. After many years, he finally completed the book; it was not as easy as he had expected: "there is nothing intelligent to say about a massacre. Everybody is supposed to be dead, to never say anything or want anything ever again. Everything is supposed to be very quiet after a massacre, and it always is, except for the birds. . . .All there is to say about a massacre, things like 'Poo-tee-weet?'" (19). Ultimately, the novel includes little direct description of what has come to be regarded as the "biggest massacre in history" (Craig and Egan 3)¹, the narrator, instead, making caustic references to the "corpse mines" of Dresden.

While Vonnegut presents the spatially and chronologically disjointed odyssey of Billy Pilgrim to express the effects--upon an individual and upon humanity--of the firestorm which consumed Dresden, in his *Hiroshima* (1946), John Hersey documents in a journalistic fashion the stories of six survivors of the first atomic bombing of an urban target. In agonizing detail, Hersey describes the experiences of these individuals during the "noiseless flash" and ensuing fire and their aftermath: "[Mr Tanimoto] was the only person making his way into the city; he met hundreds and hundreds who were fleeing, and every one of them seemed to be hurt in some way. The eyebrows of some were

burned off and skin hung from their faces and hands. . . . Some were vomiting as they walked. Many were naked or in shreds of clothing" (29). Hersey describes the horror of Hiroshima in stark, literal images, yet they are images which become metonyms for the horrors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and symbols of suffering.

Paul Fussell argues that World War I "detaches itself from its normal location in chronology. . .to become. . .all-encompassing, all-pervading. . .the essential condition of consciousness in the twentieth century" (321). To support this claim, Fussell points to the use of Great War imagery and referents to describe World War II, and the preponderance of young novelists who draw upon the images and myths of the First World War. Surely, however, this claim is overstated. As Fussell demonstrates in *The Great War and Modern Memory*, World War I had a profound effect upon Western culture. It is difficult for me to accept, however, that the legacy of the horrors of the Great War constitutes the *essential* condition of consciousness in this century. Fussell goes as far as to claim that writers have "eschewed" the Second World War as a source of myths and motifs "expressive of the modern existential predicament" (321). I am not sure that this was the case in 1975 when Fussell published *The Great War and Modern Memory*, but it is certainly not true today. It would be inaccurate to claim that the accumulated horrors of the First and Second World Wars--including trench warfare, the Nazi death camps and the bombing of Hiroshima and Dresden--constitute the *essential* condition of consciousness in this century, but the legacy of these events has pervaded post-war literature and contributed to shaping contemporary Western thought and culture.

Social and political violence is not a phenomenon unique to the twentieth century. Similarly, warfare has always been shaped by the technology of the era; with

each new technological era, the ability and efficiency of humans to kill has increased. While the use of the Gatling gun in the American Civil War made it "possible to kill too many people" (O'Reilly 107) and the use of the machine gun and poison gas in the Great War dramatically changed the way in which wars were waged, with the Second World War came, for the first time, "total war". The technological advances and bureaucratic efficiency of the mid-twentieth century were utilized to annihilate large populations and create the means to destroy modern human civilization.

The ideological and technological tools of the Second World War separated individuals from their actions. The bombing of Rotterdam, Hamburg, or Nagasaki was perpetrated by individuals hundreds of metres above their targets, physically incapable of seeing their human victims and the tremendous suffering which was the consequence of their actions. Similarly, the elaborate system erected to fulfil the "Final Solution" created an emotional distance between perpetrator and victim. Individual members of the Nazi party, citizens of the occupied territories and concentration camp inmates filed reports, drove trains, manufactured Zyklon B, confiscated and sorted clothing, eye-glasses, gold tooth fillings, but no one individual was singly responsible for the murders. Modern technology and bureaucracy created both a physical and psychological space between perpetrator and victim.

Similarly, "to what extent does 'imaginative precedent'--the kind we effect in metaphor--prepare the human sensibility for its worldly reification?" (Young 93). While the Nazi propaganda campaign which portrayed Jews as vermin is generally well known, for both the Axis soldier and the Allied soldier, the enemy was "evil", barbarous, and, most significantly, *inhuman*. Through metaphor, the victims of the Second World War's atrocities were dehumanized. Following the war, the horrors of the Holocaust

and Nazi aggression were attributed to the Nazis being "evil". Just as Jews were dehumanized prior to, and during, the Holocaust, the Nazis (and Germans) were dehumanized during and following the war. As Thomas Merton notes, however, "the demonic sickness of Auschwitz emanated from ordinary people, stimulated by an extraordinary regime" ("Auschwitz" 156). To recognize the humanity in those who perpetrated such crimes is to accept one's own potential for committing similar crimes, yet such a viewpoint also assuages the guilt of those who did perpetrate the atrocities. The capacity of modern life to dehumanize is a common theme in this century's fiction (Taylor *After* 172). If the gas chambers and crematoria of Auschwitz are not attributable to the specific "evil" of the "inhuman" Nazis, they are more likely to be attributed to the innate "evil" of all humankind or regarded as the inevitable consequence of scientific progress and reason².

While Western society's naive perception of its own innocence may have been shattered as a result of the Great War, the horrors of World War II raise questions about the nature of humanity and its social institutions, and the precedent of atomic warfare places human existence in jeopardy. With the creation of atomic weapons and their detonation over Hiroshima and Nagasaki, humanity has pursued knowledge to its logical, apocalyptic conclusion (Appleyard 40). The death camp, with its intricate bureaucratic and technological infrastructure, is "the ultimate example of Rationalism gone mad, and madness rationalized" (Hirsch 12). While the "evil" of the Great War was regarded as an aberration of human social conduct, in the wake of the Auschwitz killing centre and the bombing of Hiroshima, "evil" is regarded as banal; these events are viewed as indicative of humanity's violent nature³.

In his analysis of the psychology of genocide, *The Nazi Doctors* (1986),

psychologist Robert Jay Lifton describes a paradox of healing and killing. The Nazis sought to *create* an ideal, "pure" society by *destroying*. Rather than mere rhetoric and propaganda, this metaphor was internalized by those who embraced Nazi ideology. Dominant Western ideologies continue to paradoxically posit killing as a means of healing, violence as an acceptable, and necessary, means of eradicating violence and injustice. For instance, for more than forty years, the economies of the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R. were focused toward and dependent upon the manufacture of weapons of mass destruction--weapons built to "protect" or "save" particular human communities. While the Nazi genocide was perpetrated as a means of "cleansing" society, critic Ronald Granofsky notes the way in which the concept of the Holocaust "is used symbolically to suggest the insidious nature of man's destructive and self-destructive potential" (172). Similarly, as early as April 1941, Albert Camus encapsulated the disillusionment of humanity in the symbol of the plague (Craig and Egan 277). Rather than being a means of eradicating a virus, for Camus violence *is* a virus which poisons human society.

While novels such as *All Quiet on the Western Front* and *A Farewell to Arms* attempt to record the experience of the Great War, prominent post-World War II novels, such as William Golding's *Lord of the Flies* (1954) and George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949), reveal the effect of the experience of World War II on Western consciousness in the immediate post-war period. In Golding's novel, a group of British schoolboys is stranded on a desert island during a nuclear war. Their attempts to recreate British civilization on the island deteriorate into acts of brutality. Any attempts by the boys to work cooperatively are doomed to self-destructive failure. As Golding writes, the boys' attempt to construct a civilization on the island "breaks down in blood and terror because the boys are suffering from the terrible *disease* of being human"

("Fable" 89, emphasis added). Following the arrival of the British naval officer to "rescue" the boys, the surviving children sob, "And in the middle of them, with filthy body, matted hair, and unwiped nose, Ralph wept for the end of innocence, the darkness of man's heart, and the fall through the air of the true, wise friend called Piggy" (*Lord* 223). The novel presupposes humanity's "dark" nature and expresses little hope of avoiding its destructive consequences.

Golding's disillusionment with humanity is a direct result of the atrocities committed during the Second World War. Of the attempted extermination of European Jewry, Golding states that these acts were committed

skilfully, coldly, by educated men. . .with a tradition of civilization behind them, to beings of their own kind. I do not want to elaborate upon this. I would like to pass on; but I must say that anyone who moved through those years without understanding that man produces evil as a bee produces honey, must have been blind or wrong in the head. ("Fable" 87)

Golding's fiction is an expression of his profound disillusionment with human nature and was a result of the bombing of Hiroshima and the Nazi gas chambers. Similarly, in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, the story of a rebel whose identity is destroyed by a repressive, technology-dependent regime--symbolized by the ever-watching and manipulating "Big Brother"--George Orwell mythologizes modern society's communal anxiety (Appleyard 41). Orwell's novel reveals how political systems utilize science and technology to control and manipulate individuals, and ultimately strip them of their humanity. Both of these novelists draw upon horrific images of World War II to envision a bleak future.

In addition to the explicit expressions of disillusionment and despair for the future in fiction, the reality (and threat) of atomic annihilation and the Holocaust created a philosophical and literary crisis. How were these events to be documented or communicated? And how were they to be processed by the human consciousness?

Marguerite Duras's contention that our *a priori* knowledge of Hiroshima is a delusion reveals a paradox; while we cannot comprehend the horrors of these events, these horrors are an ever-present part of our consciousness. French feminist theorist Julia Kristeva argues that in the wake of Hiroshima and the Holocaust, there existed (and continues to exist) a crisis of identity and of meaning due to humanity's "brutalized" consciousness: "Our symbolic modes are emptied, petrified, nearly annihilated, as if they were overwhelmed or destroyed by an all-too-powerful force. At the edge of silence the word *nothing* emerges, a prudish defense in the face of such incommensurable, internal, external, disorder" (139, original emphasis). Kristeva contends that two opposite, but complementary, means of expressing these horrors have developed: the profusion of images, and silence or "nothingness". In reading the images of this century's brutality, the gaps and the "not-said" produce as much meaning as the stark and horrifying images (139).

As a result of first the Great War and then the horrors of World War II, it has been widely argued, "reality itself became so extreme as to outstrip language's capacity to represent it altogether" (Young 16). Yet, it is because all reality cannot be "recorded" that language cannot imitate these events (Scholes, qtd. in Young 17). Many critics argue that the horrors of the Second World War are only communicable through symbolism, metaphor, archetype or myth⁴. Literature, therefore, has been a primary means of contemplating these events. While film (both photographs and documentaries) has "recorded" the images that have become central to our perception of these horrors, it is primarily through language--memoirs, diaries, novels and poetry--despite its limitations, that the experiences of the atomic bomb and the gas chamber have been communicated, and the "meaning" of these experiences has been examined.

In his analysis of Holocaust literature, *Writing and Rewriting the Holocaust: Narrative and the Consequences of Interpretation* (1988), James Young considers the relationship between the literary text and the events of the Holocaust. He argues that as contemporary literary and historical theories have developed, Holocaust scholars have come to recognize the inter-relationship between the text and the event (1). All texts, whether they be historical documents, memoirs, photographs, documentary films or works of fiction, *construct* reality, limiting perceptions of that reality, rather than *record* it. Despite the vast amount of historical research, our understanding of the Holocaust is being shaped by novelists and memoirists rather than historians (6). Because the desire to *record* this history has been so pervasive, however, Holocaust writers have been compelled to fulfil the role of witness: "the more realistic a representation, the more adequate it becomes as testimonial evidence of outrageous events. . . .For the survivor's witness to be credible, it must seem natural and unconstructed" (17). As post-colonial and feminist theorist Trinh T. Minh-ha notes, imagination is equated with falsification, and if "I am not told or do not establish in so many words what is true and what is false, I or the listener may no longer be able to differentiate fancy from fact" (121). The paradox emerges that the survivor/witness must represent the inexplicable "realistically", and the seeming impossibility of presenting a "realistic" account of such incomprehensible horrors increases the necessity of attempting to do so.

For me, Auschwitz is comprised of statistics and summaries in history books, but it is also, more significantly, black and white images of children walking down a barbed-wire corridor or heaps of emaciated corpses in television documentaries. It is stories and poems, and it is a sunny June afternoon in 1994 upon which I could not "transcribe" these images, statistics or stories. Despite the physical presence of the rail-

line in Birkenau, the sign at the entrance to Auschwitz, "ARBEIT MACHT FREI" (with which I was first confronted in Elie Wiesel's *Night*) or the chimneys, these were not the same images as those of the documentaries, poems or novels. My experience or understanding of Auschwitz, Hiroshima or Dresden is one received vicariously through literature and film, through pictures and language.

The meaning of (hi)story for the initial story-teller (the survivor) is not the same for the hearer. Yet, in writing, the witness attempts to extend "'I write, therefore I am' to 'I write, therefore the Holocaust was'" (Young 38). Only through tellings of the story of the Holocaust, the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, or the carnage of Dresden, do these events exist for others. Both teller and hearer must

be willing to pass the story from teller to teller, to have the patience both to listen to the story and to retell it, and to accept the responsibilities of becoming a storyteller. Storytelling engages the patient art of thinking, for thinking is an act of imagining from the standpoint of someone else, an act, therefore, fundamentally of conversation and communication. (Siebers *Cold War* 140)

Although Holocaust writers have attempted to portray their experiences realistically, the historical *truth* of the story is not as important as the *meaning* of the story: "we might come to these tales precisely to see how the author's metaphoric structures and artful language inevitably created understanding of these events for both the victims *and* the readers" (Young 50, original emphasis).

More than twenty years pass before the narrator of Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five* can write his experience. He begins his story with the qualification, "All this happened, more or less" (1). In writing, he cannot record the reality of his experience, yet the act of writing helps him, and his reader, to understand his experience.

Following each reference to death, whether it be the death of nameless thousands in the

fire of Dresden or the death of Valencia, the wife of Billy Pilgrim, appear the words, "So it goes". This phrase reveals the banality of death in the twentieth century, yet it also emphasizes each death. After being told how the Nazis made soap and candles out of murdered Jews, the narrator confesses, "All I could say was, 'I know, I know, I know'" (10, original emphasis). The narrator struggles with how one can know the unknowable and describe the indescribable.

While the realization of the horrors of World War II caused disillusionment and despair among many in the immediate post-war period, these events have also shaped what some critics have called the "modern condition." As recently as 1987, Julia Kristeva declared, "[in] our time, the only event is human madness. Politics, especially in its murderous outbursts, is part of that madness. . . . The modern political realm is massively, and in a totalitarian way, social, leveling, killing" (Kristeva 143). The modern era has been described as an era of endless war beginning in 1914 and continuing to the present day. The term "war", once used to represent the Great War and then the Second World War, has become "War anywhere, anytime - War that has never ended, War as the continued experience of twentieth-century [humanity]" (Kazin 81). For many of the writers of the past fifty years, the legacy of the horrors of World War II and the threat of nuclear annihilation have permeated both the themes and the language of their work. In her treatment of the fiction of Timothy Findley, Lorraine York argues that Findley's work has been profoundly affected by the legacy of the atomic bomb and the Holocaust. Warfare, or violence, is the "text" of Findley's culture, and he "speaks about war in his fiction not as the condition which the novelist undertakes, as his or her main aim, to represent, but rather as a means of tapping into those other systems of violence which exist in culture" (York xvii). The signifying

system of Findley's fiction, the process by which meaning is created, is war, as a literary device and as a cultural "text" (xviii).

Thomas Pynchon's *V.* (1961) also appears to be working within this cultural text of war. Drawing upon Henry Adams's conception of the three successive moral forces of the Western world⁵--Venus, the Virgin and the Dynamo--Pynchon represents Adams's conception of the Dynamo, the moral force⁶ which succeeds the Virgin in modern history, with the nameless character V. Throughout Pynchon's (post)modern novel are the echoes of the horrors and crises of the twentieth century; Malta's experience of war, the Nazi genocide, the failure of Versailles. Pynchon describes a (post)modern landscape in which the century's atrocities, and humanity in general, are associated with technological production; androids threaten humans with impending, literal, dehumanization: "Me and SHOCK are what you and everybody will be someday" (286). It is a landscape in which Henry David Thoreau's Walden Pond, a symbol of nonviolence and the hope of peace, has been desecrated by modern civilization (350).

While some Holocaust stories draw upon traditional tales or myths, because of the unprecedented nature of the massacres, Holocaust literature has developed its own mythos to describe the horrors of the ghettos and the camps. Holocaust writings use "the Holocaust as its own trope or archetype. . .its own point of reference as well as point of reference for all subsequent pain, suffering, and destruction" (Young 92). The story(ies) of the Holocaust--and I would add Hiroshima--have "impurified" language (Langer 77). Words such as "boxcar", "chimney", and "shower" as well as the "flash" of a nuclear explosion, the "mushroom cloud" that ascended over Nagasaki or the terrifying images of human suffering in Hersey's *Hiroshima*, have become metonyms and tropes of these horrors. Not only do these words and images assume an added

significance within stories of these atrocities, but these tropes are used by other writers to signify horror and suffering.

Many of the works of poet and novelist Margaret Atwood and poet Sylvia Plath draw upon these tropes and may be read in the context of a "cultural text" of war. In Atwood's poem "It's Dangerous to Read Newspapers", the speaker's life is described in relation to warfare although her/his experience of war is received second-hand through the newspaper: "While I was building neat/ castles in the sandbox,/ the hasty pits were/ filling with bulldozed corpses" (1-4). In many of her short stories, the horrors of the Second World War are used metaphorically or are the topics of conversation. Atwood also conflates the discourse of warfare and the symbols of the horrors of World War II with interpersonal conflict. In "Uglypuss", after receiving a crank call, Joel, in attempting to persuade himself not to be paranoid, states, "[no] Gestapo here" (71). When Alma, the woman with whom anti-nuclear protestor Theo is having an affair, passes out near the end of "The Salt Garden", just before she hits the floor "there is an obliterating flash of light" (204), reminiscent of the flash of a nuclear explosion. The poetry of Sylvia Plath also reflects the "modern condition" of warfare. Active in the British Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, Plath declared that "poetry should be relevant to issues such as the military-industrial complex, Hiroshima and Dachau" (Sinfield 223). By conflating the language and images of Nazism and patriarchy, in poems such as "Daddy", Plath "is saying that Jews and women, both, have been among the victims of institutionalized violence in Western civilization" (224).

While writers such as Sylvia Plath and Margaret Atwood have been concerned with the political and social realities of the age, some critics argue that contemporary critical theory has not. Thomas Hill Schaub contends that the experimentalism of post-

war American literature was not a result of a confrontation between forms of writing or aesthetic values but the result of political and social turmoil, namely the historical facts of Hiroshima, Nagasaki and the Holocaust (vii). In the wake of World War II, critical theory was concerned with the state of human society, and literature was used as a guide in thinking about world events (Siebers *Cold War* 150). Yet, the legacy of the Holocaust and the bomb--namely the moral dilemmas these events have raised with respect to humanity's relationship to violence--which is evident in so much of the literature of the past fifty years, has not been a prominent concern of literary theory. Tobin Siebers, in *Cold War Criticism and the Politics of Skepticism* (1993), argues that the Holocaust requires of the theorist recollection and judgment. Siebers contends that post-war critical theory has been unwilling to remember and to judge. Instead, theorists prefer information, formulas and amorphous scepticism, and this alienates them and their work from "real" experience (*Cold War* 128-9). While an investigation of the roots of post-structuralist or deconstructionist thought lies outside the scope of this paper, the contemporary theoretical tendency of scepticism and the deconstruction of the human subject may be safely regarded as, at the very least, related to the events of World War II. Jacques Derrida, for instance, contends that Auschwitz has "obsessed" everything he has ever been able to think (212). Critic David H. Hirsch, however, contends that postmodern literary theory makes no sense outside the context of what occurred at Auschwitz (164). Hirsch goes as far as to argue that the "postmodern" age may be more accurately defined as "post-Auschwitz". It is an age of total war, mass murder, genocide, the death of God, the eclipse of Western culture and the end of illusions about human goodness (245). While I agree with Hirsch, Siebers and Kristeva, among others, that Auschwitz and Hiroshima have had a significant impact upon

Western (or human) culture, the legacy of these events does not singularly define this age.

II. "Re-visioning History" (and Literature): Nonviolence in the Twentieth Century

There can be little argument against the fact that the scope and scale of violence in this century have been greater than any other in history⁷. Whether or not the "cultural text" of this age is war or violence, however, is another matter. Certainly, the violence of this century has focused attention upon issues, which, though they are not novel, are crucial for the fate of humanity. Having experienced the horrors of World War II, in the post-war/postwar era, humanity faces the dilemmas of how conflict can be managed constructively and whether or not violence is morally or pragmatically justifiable. While the carnage of this century has brought these issues to the fore, the history of the twentieth century has also provided reason for optimism. Martin Luther King, Jr. asserted in 1956, just eleven years after the bombing of Hiroshima and the discovery of the Nazi death camps, that we are privileged to live in the twentieth century, for "it is an exciting age filled with hope. . . . We stand today between two worlds--the dying old and the emerging new" ("Facing" 135). The old order to which he refers is that of imperialism, colonialism and warfare. King envisioned the post-war era as potentially a *postwar* era; a climate in which society seeks to develop an alternative political and social order and alternative means of resolving conflict. Thirty years after King made this statement, and in direct contradiction of the notion that "evil" is innate to human beings, a group of prominent scientists published the Seville Statement, stating that human beings are not biologically or genetically predisposed to violence and war ("Seville" 37). While this century has witnessed an enormous increase

in the number of victims of war and violence, it also has a rich history of nonviolence. Just as the gas chamber and the atomic mushroom cloud have become a part of our consciousness, "the model of nonviolent action. . .today is an integral part of the world psyche" (Kling 192).

During the American civil rights movement of the fifties and sixties, Martin Luther King, Jr. often spoke of love. The "love" of which King spoke was not romantic love but that connoted by the Greek term *agape*: "*agape* is understanding, creative, redemptive, good will to all men" ("Love" 46). Similarly, Mohandas Gandhi stated that *ahimsa* (nonviolence) is the law of love. I think it is important to be mindful of this association. Taken literally, "nonviolence" means "without violence". The negative prefix connotes a lack. Nonviolence, as it has come to be understood (and practised), however, is not, simply, the absence of violence⁸, and it should not be mistaken for non-resistance or passive resistance: "By non-violence Gandhi means. . .the technique of conducting social relations characterized by constructive, peaceful attitudes, and infused with the determination to enlarge areas of agreement and to achieve resolution of conflict by persuasion" (Bondurant 193).

In its broadest sense, I associate nonviolence with *agape* or love. Nonviolence also refers to strategies and techniques of active resistance to oppression, injustice or violent aggression. In many ways, the essence of nonviolence, as I understand it, is approached in Muriel Rukeyser's poem, "Wherever." The word "wherever" connotes both a temporal and geographical constant. It is not a destination in time, space, or politics, but a way of life; it is a process. "Wherever/ we protest/ we will go planting" (4-6), the speaker asserts; "Whatever we stand against/ We will stand feeding and seeding" (11-12). Nonviolence seeks to undo the healing-killing paradox. The aim of

protest is not destruction but creation, and the object of protest is not the perpetrator of injustice but injustice itself. The practitioner of nonviolence, rather than seeking to destroy an "enemy," loves the adversary; the adversary is fed and seeded. If a just end is to be achieved, just means are required. As Martin Luther King, Jr. asserts: "The ultimate weakness of violence is that it is a descending spiral, begetting the very thing it seeks to destroy" (*Where* 594).

As a "means" rather than "ends" oriented philosophy, nonviolence is something which is lived daily rather than theorized. This is not to say that the nonviolent campaigns initiated by Gandhi and King were not structured and planned. While many examples of nonviolent resistance are, at least initially, spontaneous events- for instance, the Czechoslovakian resistance to Soviet military aggression in 1968 or the gathering of a "human shield" of over fifty thousand people to protect Rev. Laszlo Tokes from Romanian dictator Ceausescu's police in 1989 (Wink 247, 250)--there are principles of nonviolent action. Nonviolence is an active rather than passive philosophy of life and strategy of social change, and it is not easily practised.

One of the most difficult aspects of the practice of nonviolence is the willingness to love the perpetrator of injustice or violence. Gandhi writes, "I know how hard it is to follow this grand law of love. But are not all great and good things difficult to do? Love of the hater is the most difficult of all" (83). Because nonviolent resistance to oppression appeals to the reason and conscience of the oppressor, rather than inflicting harm upon the oppressor, the practitioner of nonviolence willingly suffers. Not only must nonviolent resisters willingly accept the consequences of their actions, such as imprisonment for breaking unjust laws, but fasting and other techniques of self-sacrifice are utilized. Suffering, argues Gandhi, is infinitely more powerful than war "for

converting the opponent and opening his ears, which are otherwise shut, to the voice of reason" (86). The practitioner of nonviolence must be willing to die, but is unwilling to kill. In contrast to warfare and violence, the basic principles of nonviolence emphasize the humanity of both oneself and one's "opposition". The hatred necessary for violence dehumanizes both the victim and the perpetrator, whereas love actively acknowledges the humanity of the other while maintaining one's own self-respect.

Ultimately, civil disobedience and non-cooperation are last resorts. Martin Luther King, Jr. identifies four stages in nonviolent action against oppression or violence: first, facts must be collected to determine whether injustice exists; second, attempts to negotiate are made; if these endeavours fail, there is a period of "self-purification" as King calls it, or training in nonviolence; finally, having prepared a plan of action, a campaign of nonviolent direct action, which may include non-cooperation or civil disobedience, is initiated ("Letter" 290). In her close analysis of Gandhi's use of *Satyagraha*, *Conquest of Violence* (1965), Joan Bondurant theorizes a similar schema. Victims of oppression and injustice must first appeal to the reason of their opponent. Nonviolent techniques of conflict resolution seek not to defeat the "opponent" but to achieve a mutually desirable resolution to conflict. Should these initial overtures fail, practitioners of nonviolence attempt, through suffering, to dramatize the injustice of which they are victim. It is only after these appeals to the reason and conscience of the oppressor have failed that civil disobedience and noncooperation are practised.

In the chapter entitled "Re-visioning History: Nonviolence Past, Present, Future" in Walter Wink's *Engaging the Powers* (1992)--from which this section takes its title--Wink outlines the history of nonviolent resistance to social injustice and war, an aspect of history which has largely been ignored. It is interesting to note that one of the

earliest accounts of nonviolent direct action cited by Wink is that presented in a work of literature. In Aristophanes's *Lysistrata* (411 B.C.E.), the women of Greece end a war through an act of non-cooperation, a mass strike in which they withhold sex from their husbands: "He was wise and never spoke a truer word, who said, / 'We can't live with women, but we cannot live without them.' / Now I'll make a truce with you. We'll fight no more" (IV, Choral Episode 25-27). Wink cites cases of nonviolent action by individuals and groups from 1350 B.C.E. to the present and from nearly every region of the world. Demonstrations, boycotts, strikes and other acts of collective and individual nonviolent non-cooperation and disobedience have deposed dictators, produced profound political and social change in such places as the former Soviet bloc nations, and have brought attention to injustice, oppression and the immorality and impracticality of violence.

While the twentieth century has arguably been the most violent era in history, nonviolence, as a strategy of social change, has also been practised more frequently and with greater resolve in this century than in any other period. Poems such as Karl Shapiro's "The Conscientious Objector" and e.e. cummings's "i sing of Olaf glad and big" express the experience of--as well as the moral and political reasons for and consequences of--the refusal of thousands of individuals to fight in the wars of this century. In 1923, German non-cooperation resulted in the end of French and Belgian occupation of the Ruhr, and in 1990, strikes and demonstrations precipitated the end of authoritarian one-party rule in Benin (Wink 246, 250). The nonviolent movements which have captured the imagination of millions around the world, however, and the practitioners of nonviolence whose names, voices and actions have become a part of the human cultural consciousness, are the Indian independence movement led by Mohandas

Gandhi, and the American civil rights movement led by Martin Luther King, Jr.

After experimenting with nonviolence in South Africa, Gandhi returned to India to lead many nonviolent campaigns or *Satyagraha* (literally, truth-force) in India's attempt to assert its independence from British colonial rule. The objective of the Salt *Satyagraha*, conducted between March 1930 and March 1931, was to reveal to the British government the injustice of imposing a tax upon salt and laws against the production of salt by Indians. These laws had a detrimental material effect upon the daily existence of millions of Indians and also symbolized the injustice of British rule. Following a publicity campaign and letters to government officials which set forth the concerns of the campaign, Gandhi and his *Satyagrahi* (practitioners of *Satyagraha*) embarked upon a twenty-four day "Salt March" from Ahmedabad to Dandi. Along the way Gandhi urged villagers to pursue constructive endeavours, remain nonviolent and participate in civil disobedience. At the beach at Dandi, Gandhi and his followers contravened British law by preparing salt from sea water. News of the march inspired the people of India and, throughout the country, demonstrations and civil disobedience followed. In many cases, *Satyagrahi* were beaten by police but accepted this suffering without retaliating. Although the salt regulations were not immediately repealed, the objectives of the campaign were realized. (Bondurant 88-101)⁹

Although African-Americans have struggled for their human rights since the first slaves were brought to the Americas, the post-war civil rights movement began in earnest with the Montgomery bus boycott. On the evening of December 1, 1955, Montgomery, Alabama citizen Rosa Parks refused to give up her bus seat to a white passenger. With this active assertion of her own humanity, this act of nonviolent resistance to injustice, Rosa Parks "changed us from a racist nation to one with a dream

of equality partly realized, though we have further to go yet" (Holloway 62). The 381-day strike which followed Mrs Parks's act of civil disobedience resulted in the integration of the Montgomery bus system.¹⁰ In many of his writings, Martin Luther King, Jr. notes the influence of Gandhi upon the campaign in Montgomery, and the civil rights movement in general, as well as Gandhi's influence upon King's own philosophy and action: "By all standards of measurement, [Gandhi] is one of the half-dozen greatest men in world history" ("My Trip" 26). For King, the Montgomery bus boycott provided the resolve to practise, steadfastly, nonviolence:

At the beginning of the protest the people called on me to serve as their spokesman. In accepting this responsibility my mind, consciously or unconsciously, was driven back to the Sermon on the Mount and the Gandhian method of nonviolent resistance. . . Christ furnished the spirit and motivation while Gandhi furnished the method. The experience in Montgomery did more to clarify my thinking on the question of nonviolence than all of the books that I had read. . . Living through the actual experience of the protest, nonviolence became more than a method to which I gave intellectual assent; it became a commitment to a way of life. ("Pilgrimage" 38)

This campaign for civil rights was a postwar movement; it sought to dismantle rather than usurp an old order and depended upon unorthodox means to foster social change.

Just as the work of Gandhi influenced King and the U.S. civil rights movement, the tradition of African-American nonviolence has had a profound influence upon the means of resistance utilized by other disenfranchised and oppressed groups around the world. In his *Hope and History: Why We Must Share the Story of the Movement* (1990), Vincent Harding notes that "We Shall Overcome," the "anthem" of the African-American freedom movement, was a prominent slogan of Chinese demonstrators in Beijing's Tiananmen Square in 1989, and that the song was sung in the streets of Leipzig, East Germany, prior to the fall of the Berlin Wall (3-4). While the names

Gandhi and King have become synonymous with love, compassion and nonviolence, because nonviolence has not received the same critical and historical attention as the violence of this century, it is more difficult to determine the effect of nonviolence upon literature and vice versa. Walter Wink notes that the film, *Gandhi*--as an artistic reordering of actual events rather than a documentary--had a profound influence upon the decision of the Lithuanian government to adopt nonviolent defense in that country's struggle for independence from the Soviet Union, independence which was achieved in 1991 (237). Similarly, the 1993 film adaptation of Thomas Keneally's novel/biography *Schindler's List* (1982) exposed to a mass world audience the fact that nonviolent resistance was a practical and successful means of resisting Nazi tyranny.¹¹

The experiments with nonviolence in this century have also influenced the stories of fiction writers. In R.K. Narayan's *Waiting for the Mahatma* (1955), the young protagonist Siram becomes interested in Gandhi's nonviolent campaign to liberate India from British rule after meeting a beautiful girl at a rally. Siram finds it difficult to abide by the code of conduct for *Satyagrahi* and his will to live nonviolently is constantly tested. The novel presents the individual's difficulty in adopting and adhering to nonviolence. It may also be read "as a kind of parable with Siram as a figure representative of the Indian nation, attracted to the Gandhian teachings but lacking the moral fibre necessary for faithful and continued adherence to them" (Driesen 366-7).

Margaret Atwood portrays resistance to the tyranny of a totalitarian patriarchal society in her novel *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985). Unlike Winston Smith, in Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, who is dehumanized and ultimately destroyed by Orwell's dystopian totalitarian state, the protagonist of Atwood's novel asserts her humanity. During the revolution which created the Republic of Gilead, nonviolent demonstrations

were too small to be effective (*Handmaid's* 168), but, while the protagonist is not active in the "Underground Femaleroad", she is saved by this resistance network. As a young girl, she was told of the ovens of the Nazi death camps. Although she did not comprehend the meaning of her mother's stories at the time, she survives her experience as a handmaid in much the same manner as those who survived the concentration camps: "in the death camps simply holding on to one's humanity was an act of resistance" (Kling 189). The protagonist survives by remembering her life before being renamed "Offred", and by recognizing, "I am, I am, I am, still" (264). Criticism of novels such as *The Handmaid's Tale*, however, tends to focus upon the conflict and the warning of a dystopia (an "end"), rather than the act and means of resistance.¹²

Because the tradition of nonviolence is firmly based in practice, it feels awkward, if not inappropriate, to separate nonviolence from the practical world to consider its theoretical implications. Unlike Marxism or Liberalism, which apply theory to the social world, nonviolence theory is based upon practice. Because the practical responses to oppression and conflict of movements led by such people as Gandhi or King, however, depart so radically from traditional Western political and critical theory, it is important to consider nonviolence in relation to these established theories. Joan Bondurant theorizes the "Gandhian dialectic" based upon the practice and principles of *Satyagraha*. As a theory of conflict, the "Gandhian dialectic" reconciles ends and means. Because the end result of conflict cannot be determined beforehand, the means of resolving conflict must be the focus. As well, as outlined above, the practitioner of nonviolence respects the adversary, seeks a mutually satisfactory resolution and is prepared only to suffer injury rather than inflict it.

Traditional political theories, such as Liberal Democracy or Conservatism

maintain a dichotomy between ends and means, ultimately privileging the end and ignoring the "problem of means - the development of a technique of action which, in the hands of individual members of society, can be used for the constructive resolution of conflict" (Bondurant 230). Conservative theory holds that the social process is controlled by inherent principles and not by deliberate contrivances of individuals (207); means are therefore not an issue. For Liberal Democratic theory, concepts such as "equality" and "liberty" are ends rather than means; the theory presupposes compromise as the only way to resolve conflict and "it has raised questions, less of *how* a people may struggle towards an end, than through what *devices*" (217, original emphasis). In both theories, as a last resort, the means of maintaining order or precipitating social change is violence. While Marxism has concerned itself with the problem of means, it views history and conflict as having a predetermined structure and direction (194). Consequently, Marxist theory regards violence as an acceptable and practical means of social change. Feminist theorist bell hooks, in contrast, contends that the struggle to end racial or class oppression, like feminism's struggle to end sexual oppression, "is necessarily a struggle to eradicate the ideology of domination that permeates Western culture on various levels as well as a commitment to reorganizing society so that the self-development of people can take precedence over imperialism, economic expansion and material desires" (24). If the system of domination must be dismantled--rather than an unjust regime deposed--violence is necessarily precluded as a means of social change, for violence is dependent upon domination.

Thomas Merton, in a discussion of pacifism in Joyce's *Ulysses*, states, "we are not used to considering moral and political issues in the light of contemporary literature, but perhaps we would be wise if we did so more often" ("Peace" 71). In *Iris*

Murdoch's *The Nice and the Good* (1968), Murdoch expresses her philosophical position on the nature of "the Good" in fiction. Through the actions and beliefs of her characters she reveals the confusion and difficulty of transforming moral ideals into practice.

Similarly, John Irving's *A Prayer for Owen Meany* (1989), set in the United States during the Vietnam War, is concerned with virtue and self-sacrifice. The narrator John Wheelwright expresses anti-war and anti-Vietnam War sentiments throughout the novel. The central issue of the work, however, is not so much violence as altruism and nonviolence. Owen Meany joins the army not to kill in Vietnam but to fulfil his "destiny" of sacrificing his life to save a group of children. Like tiny Owen's determination to dunk a basketball, the "heroism" of virtue and selflessness, which seems impossible, is accomplished.

Although disillusionment with the nature of humanity is prominent in many post-World War II novels, twentieth-century fiction is also active in critiquing this philosophy of pessimism and in analysing nonviolence, love, and self-sacrifice. Similarly, as feminist ethics seeks in the theory and practice of nonviolence an alternative to the violent order of patriarchy, the ideal of nonviolence has been problematized in fiction. The ways in which violence and nonviolence, especially in interpersonal relationships, are portrayed, both literally and symbolically, in fiction, have therefore become an object of feminist critical inquiry.¹³ It seems, however, that this example is an anomaly. Apart from the initiatives of True, Mason and Getz to identify nonviolence and peace-making in literature, and to bring theories of conflict resolution to literary criticism, prominent critical theories have, to this point, largely ignored nonviolence.

III. The "Postwar": A Peace Studies Critical Approach

Despite the historical successes of nonviolent initiatives to resist oppression and violence and to alter society, the effect of the violence of this century dominates Western cultural consciousness and thereby pervades much of the literature of this century. Tobin Siebers argues that the task facing modern criticism is to "create a politics of literature that is at home in the world," and he suggests that the foundation of what he calls a post-cold war criticism may reside in such taboo words as emancipation, trust, altruism, love, community, and truth (*Cold War* 70). In its most basic sense, the interdisciplinary field of peace studies is concerned with the study of war and peace. As a form of cultural criticism, it examines and challenges the values and structures of society which perpetuate systems of domination and subordination. In my view, peace-studies literary criticism is concerned with the way in which the social order, particularly with respect to various forms of inequality and injustice, as well as violence and nonviolence, is represented symbolically in literature. It is the task of peace studies literary critics to investigate the representation in literature of the issues of concern to peace studies, as well as to investigate the relationship among literature, peace and war. Rather than confine itself to "peace literature"--literature that embodies or inculcates pacifist values--I feel that it is important that peace-studies criticism, with an acknowledgement and critique of its own theoretical position, submit literary texts to a re-examination, based upon uncovering assumptions of power relations, conflict and violence, and, just as significantly, the way in which traditional power relationships maintained through violent coercion are undermined by various forces, including

nonviolence.

As I have argued above, while I disagree with the notion that the "cultural text" of the twentieth century--or that the essence of this era--is violence and war, the central issues facing humanity, which the horrors (and the hope) of this century have precipitated, include the nature of human society and the role of violence in human relationships. Our understanding of the events of this century and their resultant issues has shaped, and has been shaped by, literature: "[the] historical circumstances of our era lead. . .writers to project into the past and into the future, in symbolic terms, the one great question of the present: human survival" (Coward 29). This thesis is active in formulating a prescriptive and descriptive way of characterizing works of fiction and a theoretical approach to analysing these works. My purpose is to extend the critical path of Michael True, Gregory Mason and John Getz, developing a new critical territory for both the field of peace studies and literary criticism.

Through an analysis of Amis's *Time's Arrow*, Findley's *Not Wanted on the Voyage* and Walker's *Meridian*, I will illuminate the way in which postwar fiction, as I conceive of it, is thematically concerned with oppression, injustice, and violence, as well as the means of resisting these forces and precipitating social change. As I mentioned in the introduction, "postwar" refers not to a historical period but to the act, in practical and symbolic terms, of undermining conventional oppressive and violent power relationships. It does not connote an ideal, just and violence-free society, but the process of moving away from warfare and violence to an undetermined end. The three novels I have chosen to analyse, and from which my conception of postwar fiction and

criticism has developed, are not (anti)war texts in the tradition of *All Quiet on the Western Front* or *Catch 22*. Nor may they be characterized as "peace literature" in terms of the criteria proposed by Gregory Mason. Similarly, these novels present neither a dystopian nor a utopian vision of society; rather, they confront the issue of the fate of humanity in terms of means rather than ends.

Ultimately, I believe that the issues of the "postwar", notably the issues pertaining to the nature of conflict and the strategy of nonviolence raised by Joan Bondurant, may be useful in the analysis of poetry and drama, as well as works of literature written prior to World War II. Melville's *Billy Budd*, poems by Shelley, and Aristophanes's *Lysistrata*, among many other works of fiction, poetry and drama, may be characterized as postwar and benefit from a "postwar" reading. In this thesis, however, I am concentrating upon illuminating the "postwar" in three recent works of fiction. By focusing upon three contemporary novels, my analysis of conflict, violence and nonviolence in these texts must be contextualized in the historical realities of this age, namely the horrors of the Holocaust and the atomic bomb, and the experiments with nonviolence of Gandhi and King. Consequently, I must acknowledge the cultural specificity of this thesis. The legacy of Hiroshima and Auschwitz is not evident in *all* literature written since 1945. As well, throughout my discussion--especially my consideration of the effects of the horrors of the Second World War--I have referred to the impact of these events on "Western" culture. For many--including individuals and groups in the Western industrialized nations--the horrors of World War II, and the philosophical issues these atrocities have raised, are not a prominent part of their cultural

consciousness, simply because contemporary crises have affected, or are affecting, their lives currently.

It is for this reason that I have included Alice Walker's *Meridian*. Unlike the other two novels under consideration, World War II and its consequences are neither literally nor symbolically evident in this work. In this novel, the legacy of slavery is of greater significance, for instance, than the legacy of the bombing of Hiroshima. Nonetheless, this is a postwar novel, for it is acutely concerned with the historical legacy of systemic social violence. As well, the way in which *Meridian* reflects and shapes one's understanding of nonviolence, specifically the American civil rights movement, lends it to a postwar reading. The same is true of Narayan's *Waiting for the Mahatma*; this novel is concerned with nonviolence in the context of the legacy of colonial oppression rather than war. While many writers may not be influenced by the effects of the Holocaust and the Atomic bomb, in this century, most regions of the world have been affected by war or political violence. Similarly, while the Salt *Satyagraha* or the Montgomery bus boycott may not hold the same cultural currency as Auschwitz or Hiroshima, the works of Gandhi and King are widely recognizable as symbols of nonviolence¹⁴ and less ethically-based--or more pragmatic--uses of nonviolence have many precedents worldwide. Further, I have included *Meridian* because it reveals the way in which interpersonal and societal violence, oppression and nonviolent resistance are inter-related.

Peace studies recognizes the necessity of looking backward to history and precedents of warfare and peacemaking, as well as forward to the future (Klare 64).

The term "postwar" connotes the way in which these texts draw upon the past to consider the present and the future. Paul Fussell argues that Great War literature draws upon established myth and is active in generating new myths which are a part of our lives (ix). As Northrop Frye explains, rather than the "whole" story, *mythos* "includes a historical theme, but it twists it around so that it confronts us in the present" ("Koine" 8). In each of the novels I will analyse from a "postwar" peace-studies perspective, the authors draw upon established, culturally significant stories, or myths; for instance, Findley retells the Biblical Flood myth, Walker draws upon African-American folklore, and Amis's story is shaped by our knowledge of one of the most significant events and stories of our age, Auschwitz-Birkenau. In each case, the novelists utilize established stories to "twist around" history in order to confront the reader with the nature of conflict, violence and nonviolence in the post-World War II era.



CHAPTER THREE

Three Postwar Novels

"Something must be said. Must be said that has not been *and* has been said before." - Trinh T. Minh-ha, *Woman, Native, Other* p.119.

I. *Time's Arrow* -- The Nature of the Offence, the Nature of Yesterday and Tomorrow.

With the death of Tod T. Friendly, a.k.a. John Young, a.k.a. Hamilton de Souza, a.k.a. Odilo Unverdorben, seemingly comes the birth of the narrative voice of Martin Amis's *Time's Arrow*, a "parasite" or "passenger" within a Nazi doctor: the whisper of conscience (Amis 56). Moving forward "out of the blackest sleep" (11), this voice narrates a journey backwards in time through the life of Odilo to his dark secret and beyond, before. Depicting life literally in reverse, the novel presents inverted images of human existence which are, at times, humorous, absurd, and, at times, deeply disturbing. Defecation and eating are described in reverse, and Tod Friendly becomes progressively younger and healthier. The world the voice describes is one in which pens remove ink from the page. It is also a world in which women escape crisis centres to await the men who will "come along and rape them, and then they're okay again" (39); it is a world in which violence heals. Seemingly unaware of Odilo's past, the voice watches Odilo "piece together" love letters "found" in the trash, and witnesses Odilo's nightmares. The narrative voice travels backwards to Odilo's experience as a doctor at Auschwitz; a journey in which the voice attempts to understand--ultimately misinterpreting--reality in a world where past, present and future are confused, and events seemingly have no cause.

In terms of its narrative technique, its imagery and its perspective, *Time's Arrow*

is a difficult novel. It is a story which distorts our image of Auschwitz, a story of the perpetrators of the Holocaust, a story we do not want to hear. During Odilo's arrival in (escape from) Europe before (following)* World War II, the priest at the Vatican does not need to hear Hamilton's story, for he claims to "understand". Similarly, when Irene asks Tod to reveal his secret, promising to forgive him, the voice states: "She doesn't want to know. I don't want to know. No one wants to know" (66). Yet, this is a story we must know. The horrors of Auschwitz are seemingly inconceivable; the narrative voice claims that there is no why or how or where or when in Auschwitz, only chaos: "We ask no questions. Because here there is no why" (134). Perhaps there is no why, but as difficult as it may be to contemplate--or even to desire to contemplate--*how* the Holocaust was perpetrated is a question which must be asked and answered if we are to understand, rather than simply acknowledge, this event, and if similar atrocities are to be prevented.

In *The Nazi Doctors*, Robert Jay Lifton investigates the role of doctors in the Nazi genocide and the psychology of these doctors who, in perpetrating horrendous crimes, disregarded their Hippocratic oath to "abstain from all intentional wrongdoing and harm" (Amis 32). Nazi ideology, Lifton contends, resulted in a policy of applied biology, or applied biological purification. Shortly after the Nazis took power in 1933, Nazi ideology manipulated the field of medicine into a tool for establishing "racial purity". Beginning with sterilization programs, the "Nazification" of medicine led to eugenics programs which, first, euthanized mentally and physically "impaired" children.

* Because discussing this inverted narrative as I would a conventional chronological narrative may be confusing, throughout my treatment of *Time's Arrow*, I will describe the events of the novel as they occur in the text, and in parentheses I will state the corresponding actions that occurred in the 'real' time of the past.

In 1939, the T4 euthanasia program of adults was established, involving much of the Nazi-German psychiatric community. The programme involved doctors in systematically killing--initially by injection and later by gassing--patients with psychological diseases which prevented them from performing labour, patients who had been institutionalized for at least five years, "criminally insane" patients, and psychiatric patients of non-German nationality or "race" (Lifton 65-66). Ultimately, this policy of applied biology led to the mass extermination of Jews and Roma (Gypsies).

Although millions of human beings died of disease and starvation in the Jewish ghettos or were killed in mass shootings by the *S.S. Einsatzgruppen* in Eastern Europe, millions more were killed in a system of murder which was either overseen and organized, or physically perpetrated, by doctors. As the narrative voice states, "I or a doctor of equivalent rank was present at every stage in the sequence" (128). Auschwitz is a time and place in which convention is distorted by an atmosphere which confuses killing with healing, in *Time's Arrow* a world turned "around" by the "godlike" doctor Josef Mengele (127). Rhetorically, rather than murder human beings, doctors performed "selection" for "special treatment" in accordance with the *Endlösung der Judenfrage* (Final Solution to the Jewish Question). These terms have obvious medical connotations and denotations of creation, rather than destruction, in an ideology which utilized the metaphor of healing or curing; the doctor's aim was to prevent the Aryan "race" from being *infected* by the *disease* of the Jewish "race".

I cannot accept the view that the Nazis were inhuman and inherently "evil", or that their acts were a manifestation of humanity's innate predisposition towards "evil". How, then, was it possible for human beings to commit such atrocities? Lifton describes circumstances which allowed, or made it necessary for, doctors to actively

harm rather than heal. In part, this paradox of killing as healing was created due to the privileging of the community over the individual in Nazi ideology. While the Nazi doctors were harming individual bodies, they perceived themselves as "healing" the communal body, and therefore continuing to act as doctors. Experiments were "legitimate" acts because the victim was fated to die in the gas chambers anyway (Lifton 321). Similarly, by "selecting" sick and diseased individuals for the gas chambers, doctors were maintaining the hygiene of the camp (433) or were sending people to a "better," less painful end. In the extermination camps, doctors were conditioned or desensitized to the stench of faeces and cremated human corpses, participating in selection, performing experiments on human subjects, and injecting individuals with phenol, among other lethal substances. Among other factors, through the numbing effects of alcoholism and the psycho-social need to be accepted by one's peers in such an extraordinary atmosphere (195-7), doctors were socialized to kill.

Participation in the crimes of the death camp also required psychological doubling, or the development of an "Auschwitz self". As Lifton describes it, the Nazi doctor developed a second aspect of his/her self which was holistic, was perceived as a form of psychological survival in an environment of death, allowed the doctor to avoid guilt--for the "Auschwitz-self" was the criminal--and was only in part unconscious (419). Most significantly, each "self" was autonomous and connected: "the individual doctor needed his Auschwitz self to function psychologically in an environment so antithetical to his previous ethical standards. . .[and] needed his prior self in order to continue to see himself as a humane physician" (419). The conscience of the doctor was temporarily transferred until after the war when the "healer self" (456) could once again become prominent. By focusing upon the displaced conscience or soul--the "passenger"

or "parasite"--of a doctor perpetrator of Nazi crimes, Amis, in fiction, presents an aspect of *how* the Holocaust occurred. Like the doctors Lifton describes, Odilo loses himself in alcohol, and when he departs from (arrives in) America before (after) World War II, he does not admit to being a criminal (Amis 81), for, in Lifton's terms, his healer self rejects this notion. The narrative voice is distinct from the voice of Friendly/Young/de Souza/Unverdorben, yet it is not independent. While this "passenger" will speak of Odilo in the third person or its relationship with Odilo as "we", it is also, at times, the voice of the doctor: "I sit there in my white coat. . . .My patients are even older than I am" (34). "I", "we" and "I" are interchangeable. Yet, in blocking out his conscience at Auschwitz, Odilo psychologically separates himself from his actions and moral responsibility. ★

This displaced voice of conscience distances the reader from the human being, the perpetrator of genocidal crimes. While Lifton's findings are based upon interviews with Nazi doctors who were willing to share their experiences--in some cases seeming to speak about themselves in the third person¹--the narrative voice of *Time's Arrow* does not present a testimonial. To some extent, then, because this is not a "realistic" novel, the text serves to mystify the crimes of the Nazis. Nonetheless, the image of the Nazi doctor Amis creates is not that of an amoral monster. The voice reveals the guilt and shame of Odilo, yet by no means does this expression of shame assuage the doctor(s)'s guilt. In his social interaction, Tod T. Friendly, and his predecessor pre(post)Auschwitz identities, behave in a fairly normal way. He performs his duties as a physician well, has intimate relationships and participates in social activities. The voice concludes following (prior to) the Holocaust, that "Odilo Unverdorben, as a moral being, is absolutely unexceptional, liable to do what everybody else does, good or bad" (164). ★

As Lifton states of Mengele, Odilo was a man, not a demon (Lifton 383). Just before (after) World War II, Odilo attempts suicide. Whether he did so in remorse, or as an alternative to being caught and tried by the Allies, is unclear. In the world of this narrative, however, suicide is impossible; life must be lived to its end (beginning) - the past cannot be altered.

The unalterable past haunts Odilo. Born (dying) in a room full of doctors, the voice tells us immediately of his hatred for them (Amis 11); he replaces recognition of his own personal responsibility for his actions with a hatred of the medical profession, an abstract entity. Further, while a participant at Schloss Hartheim--one of the main killing centres of the T4 euthanasia program--and earlier (later) at Auschwitz, Odilo suffers from sexual impotence, which the voice associates with powerlessness. Among his many nightmares, there are two prominent recurring images. The first is a male shape or "essence" in a doctor's coat and with a "certain kind of smile": "an entirely unmanageable aura containing such things as beauty, terror, love, filth and above all power" (12); Tod's past as Odilo, comrade of Josef Mengele, is an ever-present part of his (sub)consciousness. The second recurring image is that of an infant. The narrative voice desires to avert his eyes from the dream but cannot. Without knowledge of the future (recollection of the past), the voice must "discover" what he/Odilo will do (has done): "He hasn't done it yet. So the dream must be about what Tod will eventually do" (48). After first mistakenly concluding that the dream is about the abortions Tod performs in America, the voice is confronted with the real "bomb baby". After (before) working at Auschwitz, Odilo serves with the *Waffen S.S.* in the East. After digging up a mass grave and placing the bodies in a van to be made animate by carbon monoxide, the S.S. drive the frightened Jews to a town and rush them into a warehouse. Odilo

crouches by the wall listening to the weeping baby (150). The child's cries exposed the secret of the hiding Jews, and the child's cries become one of Odilo's dark memories.

To commit genocidal crimes during World War II, the Nazi doctors replaced their Hippocratic oath with an oath of allegiance to the Nazi party. In the wake of the war, in some cases the doctors cast off their Auschwitz self, becoming, once again, healers (Lifton 456). They returned to "normal" medical practice, and Lifton cites one case in which a Nazi doctor sought to establish a moral "balance" by practising medicine in the Sudan, becoming something of a "Good Samaritan" (284). Although the voice tells us that Tod takes no pleasure in his work, he is characterized by his co-workers as "incredibly dedicated," a "glutton for punishment," a "saint" (Amis 92). Yet, in "viewing" Odilo's life in reverse, the narrative voice "misremembers" the past; psychologically, Odilo attempts to "undo" what happened and thereby displace his responsibility for his actions. Hamilton tells the priest, "I still want to heal, Father. Perhaps, that way, by doing good. . ." (121). In "real" time, he makes this confession after Auschwitz. In the chronology of the novel, it comes before his work in the death camp. Consequently, the voice perceives Odilo's actions as healing. Odilo's practice of injecting phenol into concentration camp inmates becomes a war against the death agent phenol; the poison is extracted from the victim, giving life. Because he is a healer, seemingly, everything he does heals. In order to invert his Auschwitz past, however, the voice must also invert Odilo's American past. In Odilo's pre(post)Auschwitz life, his acts of benevolence and kindness are perceived as malice by the voice. When Tod gives unsuspecting children toys, it appears to the voice that he is taking the toys away (22). His attempts to "undo" the past are delusory; Odilo cannot morally reinterpret his life.

By narrating the story of Odilo Unverdorben in the voice of Odilo's displaced soul or conscience, Martin Amis illuminates the psychological dimensions and consequences of the Nazi doctor's experience in the Holocaust. Although the answer to *why* the Holocaust happened may be incomprehensible or irrelevant--the event itself, and its consequences, being of greater significance--Amis presents a story of *how* the Holocaust could and did occur and *what* occurred, from a perspective of the perpetrator. He is describing "the nature of the offence". As I explained in the first part of Chapter Two, the memoirs and autobiographical novels of survivor writers are regarded as testimonial proof of the events of the Holocaust. As James Young notes, "docu-novelists" of the Holocaust explicitly reinforce the factual authority of their narratives--acknowledging the memoir and auto-biographical sources of their stories--in fear that the "rhetoricity of their literary medium inadvertently confers a fictiveness onto events themselves" (51). Although many reviewers of *Time's Arrow* read the novel within the tradition of Holocaust literature or Holocaust "docu-fiction"--arguing that Amis has explicitly attempted to legitimize his text by acknowledging in the novel's afterword the influence of Lifton, Primo Levi and others²--this novel is clearly not simply a documentary of the crimes and experiences of a Nazi doctor. While the novel is *about* the Holocaust, it is not Holocaust literature, in the commonly accepted/expected sense.

Survivor-writers of Holocaust literature have been active in creating the written images through which others may gain some understanding of the events of the Holocaust. Similarly, "docu-novelists" have repeated these images for the same purpose. While Amis is revealing some insight into the psychological "how" of the Nazi genocide, he is *drawing upon* established images of these horrors to do so. (Mis)perceiving the function of Auschwitz, the narrative voice watches a group of

inmates:

There they go, to the day's work, with their heads bent back. I was puzzled at first but now I know why they do it, why they stretch their throats like that. They are looking for the souls of their mothers and their fathers, their women and their children, gathering in the heavens - awaiting human form, and union....These familial unions and arranged marriages, known as *selections on the ramp*, were regular highpoints of the KZ routine. (131-2, original emphasis)

This is a disturbingly ironic and deeply emotional scene, for, of course, selection on the ramps separated families rather than united them; children and the elderly were sent to the gas chambers, while the able-bodied became labourers. Amis, here, is not documenting the events of the Holocaust. He is not simply sharing information with the reader. As readers, we know that the narrative is inverted and so we must actively reinterpret the scene, realizing--or reconciling the scene with--the "real" nature of selection. Amis draws upon "knowledge" presupposed in the consciousness of the reader, and therefore the reader is active in both reading and writing (hearing and telling) this story.

The surrealistic, or anti-realistic, style of this narrative suggests that it should not be read within the tradition of Holocaust literature. Amis's narrative is conscious of its own artifice. The narrative voice of this novel witnesses dreams as "late shows screened in Tod's head" (54). Amis was born in 1949; his knowledge of the Holocaust, like my own, has been received through documentary film and literature. He cannot write as witness. Yet his failure to do so resulted in criticism by some of the novel's reviewers. D.J. Taylor condemns Amis for presenting an "account of possibly the greatest act of inhumanity in the history of humanity by means of a device" ("Backward" 55). Similarly, Judith Dunford argues that the narrative technique of this novel is objectionable for it is merely "technical wizardry" (Dunford 77). If it had been Amis's

intention to write a "docu-novel", to present in narrative fiction Lifton's theory of psychological doubling,³ why did he feel it necessary to narrate Unverdorben's story in reverse? More importantly, what are the effects of this inverted (meta)narrative?

As I wrote in the first part of Chapter Two, horrific events such as the Auschwitz death camp or the bombing of Hiroshima are expected to be realistically recorded in literature. Memoirs, diaries and docu-fiction are active in a process of communicating (or creating) knowledge. This association of realism with historical or factual legitimacy is likely the main cause of negative critical reviews of *Time's Arrow*. Not only does this novel tell the story of the perpetrator, but it tells this story in an "illegitimate way." While all literature constructs reality rather than records it, the construction of *Time's Arrow's* narrative style is explicit. Any literary or critical project, however, which focuses upon the "meaning" of atrocities such as the Holocaust risks displacing the actual event with this "meaning." Although I do not believe that this novel ever lets one forget the actuality of Auschwitz, it is important that the reader be ever mindful that Auschwitz is not a symbol but an actual event, while also realizing that *Time's Arrow* is active in enhancing our understanding of both the event of Auschwitz and its socio-cultural repercussions.

At Auschwitz-Birkenau, the world was turned upside down. As James Young writes, "expectations and conventions are perverted at every step; . . . victims are inscribed in the books and ledgers of death (not life), and the women, children, and elderly are the first to be murdered (not saved)" (44). In *Time's Arrow*, the narrative voice is deceived by Nazi euphemism and is trapped in the healing-killing paradox; creation is destruction and destruction is creation. Consequently, a modern American hospital becomes a factory of pain: "Some guy comes in with a bandage around his

head. . . .He's got a hole in his head. . . .We stick a nail in it. Get the nail--a good rusty one--from the trash or wherever. And lead him to the Waiting Room where he's allowed to linger and holler for a while. . ." (Amis 85). In such a context, the notion of violence healing is absurd, yet post-war Western ideology has promoted such a notion; peace is (or was) supposedly achievable through nuclear deterrence, and among the posited cures to society's ills, such as crime, are capital punishment and handguns.

Amis illuminates this healing-killing paradox through the inverted chronology of his narrative. The rhetoric of Nazi ideology appears literal to the narrative voice--and to the reader--rather than metaphorical. The main Ovenroom at Auschwitz, the voice states, is called "*Heavenblock*", its main approach road is "*Heavenstreet*" and the gas chambers are known as the "*central hospital*" (133). As the voice perceives events at Auschwitz, the gas chambers act as a sort of hospital, "healing" the "dead", creating life. The souls of Jews, in the form of ash, descend to the *Heavenblock*. Such disturbing imagery reveals the pervasiveness of Nazi ideology and its effect on medicine, as well as the irony of the ease of creation in the novel as a mirror to the ease of destruction in modern human society. Literally, and metaphorically, the Auschwitz camp was the anus of the world--*anus mundi*. The narrative voice not only describes the "actual" ordure that was everywhere in the camp, but describes it as having surged "outward and upward on to the floor, the walls, the very ceiling of life" (125). Under Nazism, metaphor shaped policy and perceptions of reality. While the "reality" of Auschwitz may not be expressed or recorded in this novel, Martin Amis contributes to our understanding of these events and considers the modern dilemma of systemic violence.

By inverting the image of Auschwitz as *anus mundi*, ordure becomes the basic

substance of creation rather than the product of destruction. Birkenau becomes a "factory of life". *Time's Arrow's* imagery of Auschwitz, therefore, is that of benevolent creation. Although such imagery has an obvious ironic affect, has Amis used this narrative "device" simply for the purposes of irony or to achieve a literary technical feat? In his afterword to the novel, Amis states that while he was writing, at the "back of his mind" was "a certain paragraph--a famous one--by Kurt Vonnegut" (175). In Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five*, Billy Pilgrim seems to view a television movie backwards:

The formation flew backwards over a German city that was in flames. The bombers opened their bomb bay doors, exerted a miraculous magnetism which shrunk the fires, gathered them into cylindrical steel containers, and lifted the containers into the bellies of the planes. The containers were stored neatly in racks. The Germans below had miraculous devices of their own, which were long steel tubes. They used them to suck more fragments from the crewmen and planes....

When the bombers got back to their base, the steel cylinders were taken from the racks and shipped back to the United States of America, where factories were operating night and day, dismantling the cylinders, separating the dangerous contents into minerals. Touchingly, it was mainly women who did this work. The minerals were then shipped to specialists in remote areas. It was their business to put them into the ground, to hide them cleverly, so they would never hurt anybody ever again. (Vonnegut 74-5)

The movie, itself, is not running backwards. Rather, Billy has become "unstuck" in time and only perceives the film in this way. He therefore assumes that the process of events he witnesses will eventually lead to the perfection of the human race, Adam and Eve. Disturbingly, this is a similar end to that intended by Nazism; a perfect, "pure" society. Yet, Billy's vision is of a process in which the means of achieving a utopian, peaceful society are congruous with these ends. Weapons are collected and dismantled by "enemies" who are concerned with the welfare of all.

The influence of this passage upon *Time's Arrow* is clear. In a passage

describing the American economic climate of the 1960s, Amis echoes Vonnegut's vision of societal resolve to figuratively (and literally) turn swords into ploughshares: "there is a burly altruism abroad. . . .Just as they clean up all the trash and litter, they also clean up the earth and the sky, transmogrifying cars, turning tools, parts, weapons, bolts into carbon and iron" (Amis 57). By inverting destruction, Amis envisions a technological, bureaucratic and spiritual system which is creative. From the ovens,

[t]he patients, still dead, were delivered out on a stretcher-like apparatus. The air felt thick and warped with the magnetic heat of creation. Thence to the Chamber, where the bodies were stacked carefully. . . .Sometimes my face rippling peculiarly with smiles and frowns, I would monitor proceedings through the viewing slit. There was usually a long wait while the gas was invisibly introduced by the ventilation grilles. The dead look so dead. . . .I always felt a gorgeous relief at the moment of first stirring. Then it was ugly again. Well, we cry and twist and are naked at both ends of life. We cry at both ends of life, while the doctor watches. It was I, Odilo Unverdorben, who personally removed the pellets of Zyklon B and entrusted them to the pharmacist in his white coat....

Clothes, spectacles, hair, spinal braces and so on - these came later. Entirely intelligible, though, to prevent needless suffering, the dental work was usually completed while the patients were not yet alive. . . .Most of the gold we used, of course, came direct from the *Reichsbank*. But every German present, even the humblest, gave willingly of his own store -- I more than any other officer save "Uncle Pepi" himself. . . .Hair for the Jews came courtesy of Filzfabrik A.G. of Roth, near Nuremberg. (129-30)

The dark irony of this scene cannot go unnoticed. Odilo's "gorgeous relief" is a result of the last movements of the Jewish victims before they die, not their first stirring. As well, by transforming the actions of the Nazi doctors from malice to benevolence, Amis does not dismantle the doctors's feelings of omnipotence. Years after (before) the Holocaust, the narrative voice recognizes Jews as his children; Odilo perceives himself as a god-like figure.

Yet, in guiding himself (and the reader) through the journey of Odilo's life, the voice presents (or creates) images, such as this, which depict elements of human society

as it should have been or as *it should be*. While Nazism sought an "ideal" society, and cloaked the language of the malevolent means of creating this society in benevolent rhetoric, Amis envisions an ideal *process* of society-building. The institutions and individual members of society are involved in a collective endeavour which seeks to create harmony, and to genuinely save or cure. It is a long process, but ultimately, in the novel, anti-Jewish laws are repealed and Jews are, to a great extent, accepted into German society. For Odilo, the commitment to society-building is difficult. As the narrative voice states, "there comes a point where you have to call an end or at least announce a limit to sacrifice. Oh, I'm no saint, God knows. I wasn't put here just to live for others" (146). Odilo sacrifices others rather than himself. He is no saint. Yet, he could have been. The Holocaust seems inconceivable and the metaphorical basis of the ideology from which it resulted seems absurd; yet the Holocaust occurred. Literally, Amis's vision of altruism and benevolence seems inconceivable and absurd, yet the sentiments or values underpinning these images can be practised.

While images such as that I have quoted above may psychologically "undo" Odilo's guilt, the past is irrevocable. Like Billy Pilgrim's perception of the television movie, it seems to the narrative voice that a "film is running backwards" (16). Regardless of how fast or slow a Holocaust documentary is shown, or whether it is played backwards or forwards, the Holocaust happened. Amis's consciously non-realistic text does not alter the actual Auschwitz. The past has been determined; it cannot be changed. The past and future, however, are eerily similar. In 1970, the voice is conscious of the "preparations" for a world war (58). In the inverted future of the novel, the world is preparing for the horrors of Auschwitz and Hiroshima, while in "real" time it is preparing for nuclear holocaust. The future is conflated with the past,

as the populace of this novel continually look "forward" to where they have come from rather than where they are going.

There is no "why" at Auschwitz, so no one questioned what was happening there. "Nobody can pretend for a minute that they don't know what's going on" (84) at the "atrocities producing" American hospitals, the voice asserts. By simply witnessing history, simply looking at where we come from--as Tod/John seems to do in automobiles--and resisting a confrontation with the *why* and *how* of where we come from (for instance, Auschwitz), we resign ourselves to simply being witnesses to a pre-determined past, present and future. When Odilo visits the Treblinka death camp, the voice notices that the clock has been painted on the artificial façade of the rail station; Treblinka is a place without time. Although, in general, this narrative follows the traditional pattern of fiction--beginning with limited information it builds towards a recognition--the voice is a timeless entity, speaking in the present, past and future tense. When Odilo visits Oświęcim and Brzezinka, Poland in 1929, the voice remembers the Holocaust, but there are no remnants of Auschwitz and Birkenau, for these camps do not yet exist. The assumption that every event has a chain of causes, then, breaks down in this novel: "one thing [leads] to another -- actually it [is] more like the other way around" (56). Amis, by depicting the psychology of the Holocaust perpetrator, is attempting to make sense of Auschwitz, yet the text dismantles the traditional, "rational" notion of sense-making.

The more the world seems not to make sense, however, the greater our need to make sense of it. We must confront the questions *why* and *how*. Frank Kermode suggests that *Time's Arrow* says something new about our world by defamiliarizing it and imagining another one (11). Amis, however, does not imagine another world. He

does not alter what is "known" about the Holocaust; rather, he broadens that knowledge while problematizing the "known". *Time's Arrow* dismantles the narrative of history and the notion of knowledge, contemplating the event of Auschwitz and its socio-political repercussions from an alternative perspective. The novel begins with a death which is a birth. It concludes with a birth which is death. Yet, there is no beginning or end to Amis's story. Amis does not allow the complacency of an absolutely established past or dystopian/utopian future. This novel is involved in a *process* of understanding the Holocaust (the past) as well as the present state of human society. Odilo does not return to the womb, to innocence, for as he closes his eyes, the voice sees "an arrow fly -- but wrongly. Point-first. Oh no, but then . . . We're away once more, over the field" (173). The novel concludes with Odilo's life still to be lived (again). Odilo's life and the actuality of Auschwitz are irrevocable, but they were not inevitable. Each moment is a beginning in the perpetual process of life. "They wouldn't believe me, even if I could tell them," the voice laments. "They would turn away, in excruciation and contempt. . . .I don't have a face. I don't have any eyes to cry. Nobody knows I'm here" (102). The voice speaks as the conscience of Odilo Unverdorben and the conscience of humanity desperately seeking to understand the past and point towards alternatives to the violence that has plagued that past.

II. Imagining other Possibilities: Remythologizing the Past in *Not Wanted on the Voyage*

While Martin Amis draws upon his reader's knowledge of Auschwitz in *Time's Arrow*, in *Not Wanted on the Voyage* Timothy Findley rewrites a story we think we know and understand: the Biblical myth of the Deluge. Findley, however, undermines

the "truth" of the Flood story. Following an epigraph from Genesis describing the boarding of the ark by Noah and his family, the first line of Findley's prologue reads: "EVERYONE KNOWS it wasn't like that" (3). The Bible does not provide a factual account of an actual flood, for the significance of the Deluge is not its historical accuracy but its meaning for humanity. Northrop Frye contends that societies contain a body of "serious" stories that are not important because they actually happened, but because knowledge of these stories is particularly urgent for the community ("Koine" 5). As part of the Biblical *mythos*, the Flood story serves to confirm humanity's obedience to God and to justify the domination of nature by humanity. Findley's novel is characteristic of Frye's definition of myth as sacred story. "The real interest of myth," Frye argues, "is to draw a circumference around a human community and look inward toward that community" (*Great* 37). It is this looking inward at society with which Findley is concerned. By remythologizing the story of the Deluge and anachronistically layering the imagery of this story with the imagery of the horrors of twentieth-century fascism (as well as imagery of nonviolence), Findley considers the nature of social order, and the role of violence in this order.

The Biblical Flood is punishment for disobedience; it occurs as a consequence of humanity's failure to practise the ways of God: "And God looked upon the earth, and behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth" (Gen. 6.12). In Findley's version, Noah argues that human society has become progressively more violent due to the worship of deities other than Yaweh. Gangs of brutal ruffians rule the countryside, and the cities pollute the environment. Yaweh has become the object of scorn and ridicule and is depicted as a pathetic, tired and frail entity who, due to His smell, seems to be human rather than divine. He writes to Noah, "WE ARE IN A

TOWERING FURY. . . WE ARE SPEECHLESS WITH HORROR. . . OUR HEART IS BROKEN AND WE WEEP WITH SORROW. . . WHAT HAVE WE DONE THAT MAN SHOULD TREAT US THUS?" (49). After witnessing Noah's penny-in-the-bottle trick, Yaweh resolves upon punishing the disobedience of humanity with the Flood and rewarding Noah's allegiance with salvation. In the Biblical story, human society is cleansed by the Flood. In contrast, this novel reveals the deadly paradox of associating killing with healing.

Lorraine York contextualizes Findley's fiction within a cultural "text" of war, and argues that *Not Wanted on the Voyage* may be read as an allegory of warfare and fascism. It is at once a historical fable of the horrors of World War II and an allegorical warning of nuclear holocaust. It is the story of the modern world, yet it does not follow the linear chronology of history (York 105); instead, Findley conflates images and allusions from throughout history, preventing the "message" of the work from being fixed in time. Nonetheless, much of the imagery of Findley's retelling of the Flood myth is reminiscent of the Second World War. Noah's experiments on Mottyl's kittens echo the horrors of the concentration camps. Like Hitler and Mengele, Noah regards himself as omnipotent and attempts to impose upon the natural world his conception of order and "purity". Similarly, Emma's younger sister Lotte, who is murdered by Japeth upon the command of Noah, is "emblematic not only of the physically handicapped who were sacrificed in the Holocaust, but also the Jewish victims of the camps" (York 107-8). Physically deformed, Lotte subverts Noah's notion of purity--the illusion of a pure order--and is therefore killed.

Through twentieth-century imagery, Findley expands upon the Biblical story, imagining the horrors which such a flood necessitates but which are not acknowledged in

the Biblical account. Referring to the Deluge story in Genesis, Findley's narrator remarks, "they make it sound as if there wasn't any argument; as if there wasn't any panic. . . none of the animals howling - none of the people screaming blue murder. They make it sound as if the only people who wanted to get on board were Doctor Noyes and his family" (3). Of course, it was not like this at all. Like the horrors hidden by the euphemisms of Nazi propaganda, the Deluge myth tells nothing of the millions who perished. Prior to the great rains which will drown the Earth, Findley's Noah sacrifices thousands of animals:

Mrs Noyes fell down. . . Suddenly she was on the ground beneath the smoke and the palms of her hands had been scorched -- and what had scorched them was a burning piece of flesh and, looking up, she recognized at last the shapes of what it was that was moving all around her. It was sheep and cattle and goats and dogs....

...She fathomed what it was that was happening here -- and the panic this caused turned her legs to stone and her mind to paste and she was frozen before a single piece of knowledge: *all that is happening here is deliberate and the meaning of this fire is the sacrifice of hundreds.* (124, original emphasis)

Such an image echoes images of the horrors of the Holocaust. (Or is it the other way around?) In describing the mass slaughter of animals, Findley emphasizes humanity's mandate to exploit and dominate the natural world, inherent in God's covenant with Noah following the flood (see Gen. 9.2). As the animals--or "cargo"--are loaded upon the Ark, "Some were trampled on the hillside. Some were attacked by panic-stricken others and left to die. Some ran away beneath the ropes, while others leapt beyond the fences. . . Indeed, the sound of the great parade and round-up was heard on the other side of the forest and it went on for one night and two days" (122). These animals have been "chosen" to be delivered into a new world -- they have been saved from perishing in the flood -- yet, ironically, the description of their salvation is similar to that of the

evacuation of the Jewish ghettos during the Holocaust.⁴

The novel also speaks to the order of human society, and the maintenance of that order, during the cold war era. In an interview, Findley argues that former United States President Ronald Reagan creates an enemy "by forcing [the Soviet Union] to take stances against his war-like stance because he's accepted that war is the only way to solve that problem" (Qtd. in York 106). When dolphins attempt to board the ark in hopes of making friends with its passengers, they are massacred. Noah is both a religious and a political leader; as York notes, he is a pope and a dictator, the figurehead of two patriarchal institutions (113). As such, his sole desire is to maintain his position within this power structure. Consequently, he has a paranoid fear of the "other" or unknown, and it is he who has the power to name the "enemy"; the dolphins are pirates because pirates or enemies are what Noah expects. Like Reagan, Noah perceives all relationships as adversarial, while Yaweh believes that humanity can only be "saved" by its destruction. Noah establishes authoritative "reality". He imposes his conception of order upon nature through, among other means, the distortion of language. When ash falls upon the Noyes's farm in summer, Noah declares that it is snow. Similarly, Noah and Yaweh, *demand* love. Love is the "one true bond" between God and his angels, between God and man, Lord and vassal, Master and Slave (87). Love, as they define it, is not *agape*, but domination and subordination. By developing the story of the Deluge, Findley reveals the fascistic hierarchical and patriarchal order inherent therein, and inherent in twentieth-century Western society.

As a "fable", *Not Wanted on the Voyage* communicates a moral. Findley critiques human society, revealing a hierarchical order which is established and maintained by physical, spiritual and linguistic violence. Findley characterizes himself

as a "dedicated anti-fascist writer and thinker" (Benson 113). While he contends that he abhors violence of any kind, he recognizes violence within himself: "there's a lot of it in me, and I have had to learn not to turn the other cheek, to re-channel, to find a new channel for the violence" (113). Consequently, the way in which Findley explores violence in his fiction--whether it be physical or emotional violence, domestic or political--has been a prominent focus of the criticism of his work⁵. While a consideration of Findley's fiction, as a whole, lies outside the scope of this thesis, *Not Wanted on the Voyage*, although its focus is tyranny and violence, is not simply an "anti-fascist" or "anti-war" work. As a fable, this novel departs from the modern precedents of George Orwell's beast fable *Animal Farm* (1946) or Golding's *Lord of the Flies*. In Orwell's novel, revolution simply reproduces the tyranny it was designed to destroy. Although Orwell reveals how an unjust social order cannot be displaced using the means--namely violence--of injustice, the novel provides no hope of an alternative. Like Golding's novel, which presents only disillusionment with humanity, Orwell's *Animal Farm* simply critiques society and humanity. Findley's passionate concern with societal violence is seemingly confined by the discourse of oppression and violence; in reference to violence, he states that we must "destroy what is destroying us", "we must kill what is killing us" (Cameron 62). In much of his work, violence is a legitimate or "necessary" means of resisting violence or resolving conflict, but Findley does recognize that human beings are gifted with choice and may *choose* not to kill (61). It is possible to resist oppression without using the tools of oppression.

Those who fail to conform to the expectations of a strictly ordered society are regarded as a threat by that order and are targeted for destruction. Consequently, among the forest creatures which are either *not wanted on the voyage* or do not survive

the voyage are the Faeries and the Unicorn and Lady. As symbols of love (in the sense of *agape*) and imagination, they are extinguished. The Faeries are altruistic creatures who seek to teach and protect other species, including humans: "Every creature assembled on Noah's Hill had known the Faeries from the day of birth. . . . One time or another - young or old - almost everyone had been rescued by the Faeries. . . . and this because the Faeries were the only creatures not afraid of dragons or of caves with voices in them and a dozen other universal terrors" (192). The Faeries exemplify Gandhi's notion of fearlessness and self-sacrifice; as long as one fears the oppressor or the "other", there can be no social harmony (see Bondurant 28-29). When they reveal to Mrs Noyes the symbol for infinity, the Faeries reveal to her the power of the imagination to transcend the boundaries of time and space, a power Noah does not hold. Mrs Noyes realizes that cruelty is nothing more than "fear in disguise" and that fear is "nothing more than a failure of the imagination" (252). Because Noah lacks imagination, he is unable to recognize the Faeries, and so they perish in the Flood.

Similarly, the Unicorn does not survive the Deluge. The Unicorn is a shy and pure creature whose "hoofprints in the earth [were] considered good luck - and if water had gathered there, drinking it was meant to bring good health" (54). The benign innocence of the Unicorn makes its use as a tool of rape all the more disturbing. Seemingly, the Unicorn, and, by association, benevolence or goodness, may be corrupted and destroyed by humanity. The extermination of the Unicorn by Noah, however, is not an image of hopelessness, or suggestive of this text's disillusionment with human nature. As Lucy counsels the distraught on-lookers at the Unicorn's deathbed, "All the moments of this creature's life can be with us in an instant. All we

have to do is remember it alive. If we can forget its death - it will live. . . .not beyond the moment of its death - but before its death where life is constant" (280). It is our responsibility to cherish life rather than dwell upon death.⁶

Among the humans who resist Noah's violent order are Ham and Emma. In contrast to the Biblical myth, in which Ham is punished by Noah for accidentally witnessing his naked father, Findley's Ham actively subverts his father's order. Despite Ham's wonder at the natural world and his inexperience with, and aversion to, ritual sacrifice, Doctor Noyes commands Ham to perform the sacrifice of a lamb: "A shining moon-shaped wound had sprouted on his arm where the arm had pressed against the lamb - and the blood that flowed into Noah's basin was as much his son's as it was the slaughtered beast's" (27). While Ham does not disobey his father, he asserts his individual moral principles, willingly suffering injury, a symbolic act which links him with the natural world and illuminates the moral injustice of the ritual. Ham not only rejects the violent, patriarchal order in this novel, but he behaves in a life-affirming manner. Following the first attempted revolt, Noah recognizes Lucy as a man, for violent power, in this novel, is the domain of the human male. Like the resistance of the Faeries and the Unicorn to the established order, Ham is punished for failing to conform; he deviates from the social expectations of masculinity, and is therefore banished to the depths of the ark's lower decks.

At least initially, Emma too is confined to the lower decks. Unlike her sister-in-law, Hannah, who is Doctor Noyes's ideal daughter-in-law, for she is passive and subservient, Emma resists Japeth's sexual control of her. She tells Hannah, "He couldn't gain entry 'cause I wouldn't let him!" (269). Throughout the novel, sex is

associated with physical violence and patriarchal power: "Japeth, boiling with youth, could think of nothing but sex. Every day, he put on and took off his swords and knives. . . .and before he could stop himself, his organ would rise into his hand and demand attention" (232). In asserting her will, Emma resists oppression and prevents Japeth from asserting his "manhood" or conforming to societal expectations.

Ultimately, in an attempt to "cleanse" her, Noah brutally rapes her with the Unicorn's horn. Her resistance is ruthlessly punished, yet Hannah, who does not resist, also suffers: "She desperately needed - and wanted - someone to talk to. . . .All her pride was shuttered in silence: all her ambition was locked in the choice she had made to sit on the right hand of power" (267). She submits to the will of patriarchy in order to survive, and consequently isolates herself in shame for doing so (288).

In addition to Findley's introduction of named female characters into his reworking of the Flood myth, he also introduces the figure of the Fallen Angel, Lucifer. After "leaping" from heaven after his brother Michael Archangelis attacks him for questioning Yaweh (102), "Lucy" finds refuge in the Noyes's forest, and, in the guise of a woman, she survives the Flood by marrying Ham. Unlike Lucifer in Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Lucy does not seek to overthrow Yaweh, yet her "crime" is just as defiant. As her brother Michael Archangelis condemns her: "'All you ever said was *why?* Why this and why that and why everything. How *dare* you.'" (108, original emphasis). As Amis reveals in *Time's Arrow*, there is no "why" at Auschwitz because the horrors of that place are incomprehensible and because those horrors were committed in a climate of fear and domination which did not permit questioning. In Yaweh's

parable of the four men who enter the Sacred Orchard of Wisdom, it is only Rabbi Akiva who returns from the orchard, for it is only he who is not curious (100). One is not permitted to question the order of Yaweh and Noah, and those who do are labelled "evil."

Lucy, however, is seemingly evil in the same sense as the evil in William Blake's "The Marriage of Heaven and Hell": "Without Contraries is no progression. Attraction and Repulsion, Reason and Energy, Love and Hate, are necessary to Human existence. . . . Good is the passive that obeys Reason. Evil is the active springing from Energy" (61). Lucy is stifled by the monotony of heaven. She desires difference, but difference is not tolerated: "[Lucy] is looking for difference in skin colour and erotic preference. . . in anything and anyone that defies the unillogical, misogynist, heterosexist, anthropocentric world view of the patriarchy" (Pennee 92). To what extent, however, is Lucy really different from Yaweh, Michael Archangelis or Noah? While she has been characterized as a positive figure by many critics,⁷ does Lucy entirely reject or defy Yaweh's and Noah's order? Despite her assurances that the Unicorn may survive eternally in the imagination, her fear of dogs and wolves reveals the failure of her imagination to dismantle barriers between herself and the "other." As well, she actively deceives Ham by withholding her identity, and when Ham wonders about the origins of the lantern Lucy possesses, she warns him to accept the light rather than question (*Not Wanted* 217). Similarly, the resurrection of the Unicorn is only a "temporary miracle;" it is a fleeting illusion, a trick used to assert her authority or superiority over the others, little different from Doctor Noyes's penny-in-the-bottle trick, Masque of Creation or

dove which returns to the ark with an olive branch Noah has supplied. Further, in the "promised land" of her hopes, life is eternal just as it is in heaven (283). She does not question Yaweh's order itself, but only her position in that order.

Following Mrs Noyes's and Ham's resistance to the slaughter of the dolphins, the door to the lower decks is locked. It is the death of the Lady, however, who dies of starvation and sorrow following the murder of her mate the Unicorn, that those confined to the lower decks resolve upon a revolution. Lucy instigates the plan of revolt, and it is she who takes command. Like Doctor Noyes's ordered, rational preparations for the Flood--the construction of the ark, the organization of the animals, the "great sacrifice"--the inhabitants of the lower decks prepare for war. Ham is ordered to collect an arsenal of weapons, including pitchforks, broomsticks and paring knives, while Lucy and Mrs Noyes descend deeper into the ark to *capture* four demon *allies*. Mrs Noyes does not understand how the demons can be allies if they must be captured, and Ham conscientiously objects to the prospect of killing. Lucy counters his objections, patronizingly, "I'm sorry to have to say this to you - but the fact is, if you aren't willing to kill *them* - we aren't going to *win*" (300, emphasis added). She accepts the us/them dichotomy imposed by Noah and accepts the notion of *victory* over an adversary. While she desires "another world", a "promised land", Lucy is incapable of imagining an order other than that of the pre-Flood world. Unfortunately, while Ham secretly determines not to kill, he passively allows Lucy to lead them into combat. The revolt is cloaked in the traditional terms of warfare--it is important that "*The Revolt of the Lower Orders*" (302) maintain the element of surprise--and ultimately fails to achieve its objective. In

orchestrating the revolt, Lucy and her "army" reconstruct Yaweh's order, and any "victory" would have been a victory over Noah and his regime, rather than the construction of a new, life-affirming order.

The objective of the revolutionaries is to ascend from the lower decks of the ark and from their subordinate subject-positions. Because the object of their revolt is not the social order--oppression and violence--but their subject-positions within that order, because they are pre-eminently concerned with the revolution's desired *ends* and not the *means* of fostering social change, their revolt perpetuates the cycle of violence. After the "battle" with the dolphins which makes Noah aware of the discontent of Mrs Noyes and the others, he vows to maintain his position of power: "This time, mastery by whatever means. This time the will of God would triumph, no matter what the cost" (239). Similarly, Lucy and the others seek to "liberate" themselves by whatever means are necessary, and by whatever means are at their disposal. In Genesis, God, paradoxically, exterminates life on Earth because life, both "man and beast", has corrupted the Earth with violence (Gen. 6.7-11). He wishes to *cleanse* the inhabitants of the Earth by destroying them. Throughout *Not Wanted on the Voyage*, violence is *avenged* with, or perpetuates, violence. The effect of Japeth's ill treatment at the hands of the Ruffian King is his idolization of the physically powerful and ruthless--namely Michael Archangelis--and his desire to become a warrior (84). Similarly, when Lucy's violent attempts to liberate those of the lower decks are repelled violently, and her beloved demons are exterminated, she seeks vengeance against Japeth: "*Japeth would never know a moment's peace from his flesh as long as he lived. Where the wolves had*

bitten, he would fester forever" (308, original emphasis). She inflicts upon him wounds which will never heal, and, in turn, the "revolutionaries" are confined once again below decks, this time in perpetual darkness. By using the tools of the oppressor, Mrs Noyes, Ham and the others perpetuate Noah's oppressive, patriarchal order rather than dismantle it.

In their second revolt, rather than *use* the natural world for their purposes, the human revolutionaries imitate alliances found in nature (York 121). In contrast to the first revolt, Lucy does not "command" the "forces". Instead, the rebels depend upon cooperation and "wage" a more humane battle (it is, however, still a battle.) In practical terms, they are without the resources to match Noah's means of violence: "Without light - without weapons - their *strength* depleted and their chances of *victory* ridiculously low - they had nothing, now, with which to win but the will to *win*" (322, emphasis added). By necessity, they must imagine, and practise, new ways of seeking freedom. Although this revolt is described in the adversarial terms of battle, and although it is through violence that they are liberated, "victory" in this case is not dependent upon the willingness to kill. As a messenger for those confined below decks, Crowe appeals to the conscience of the oppressor (albeit to Emma, the one person above decks who is not there by her own will) to help liberate them⁸. Emma sacrifices her own safety to remove the locks and boards from the door, and, to protect herself and complete her task, she strikes Japeth with enough force to push him off the deck and into the water (327). Yet, Japeth is not left to die, a casualty of battle; instead, Ham and Lucy save him from drowning. By no means does this "successful" revolt result in

a new, "just" order, but the altered objective of the revolt and means of achieving that objective, are indicative of a progression towards a more humane type of conflict, as York asserts, "if such a thing can be imagined" (120).

Of course, resistance which does not depend upon the tools of oppression can be "imagined". Just as Findley uses imagery of twentieth-century horrors to expand upon that written in the Biblical Deluge myth, this novel investigates what twentieth-century historians and writers have, thus far, failed to adequately explore: nonviolence. The dilemma with which Mrs Noyes struggles throughout the narrative is the same as that of the post-war/postwar era: how and when does one resist injustice and oppression? If Findley has transformed the Deluge myth into a parable of fascism, in doing so he reveals how any system of authority, including fascism, is dependent upon the cooperation of those over whom one has authority. Mrs Noyes reflects the "power" of the governed. In order for God's edict to be fulfilled, Noah and the animals must be accompanied on the ark by Noah's sons and their wives, as well as his own wife (Gen. 6.18). When Mrs Noyes disappears, having refused to board the ark, Noah is frantic: "'She will kill us all!' Doctor Noyes shouted at the sky. 'SHE WILL KILL US ALL! STOP HER!'" (131). Although the result of disobedience is often violent punishment--Noah, Shem and Japeth all physically strike Mrs Noyes--by not cooperating with Noah's order, Mrs Noyes has the power to undo that order.

Mrs Noyes is, at once, the most inspiring character in this novel and the most distressing (or should I say frustrating?). She is not a saint, perfect. Nor is she a nonviolent visionary in the tradition of Gandhi or King (which would not have been strange in such an anachronistic text). Throughout the narrative, she oscillates between

resistance and passivity, as her name suggests, between No and Yes. Although initially she is able to yell "Stop" during the massacre of the "pirates", it is only in her heart that she is able to warn the dolphins, "*go back. Go back. They will kill you all*" (237, original emphasis). As Lucy describes them, tyranny and oppression lack imagination, yet not only is she unable to imagine an order other than Yaweh's, she is dependent upon an imaginary "end" or other world. Mrs Noyes, in contrast, is capable of imagining resistance, and a way of life that departs from that of Noah's order. Her difficulty, however, is in acting upon the imagined. Prior to Ham's traumatic sacrifice of the lamb, Mrs Noyes "*went at once and kissed it on the forehead and picked it up and held it and carried it all the way down the hill in her mind and gave it back to the field from which it had been taken. . . .*" (26, original emphasis). Her impulse is altruistic, yet she does not act upon her vision. Ultimately, she does not resist boarding the ark, passively accepting her new social position.

Although Mrs Noyes fails to resist as consistently as she imagines she might, she exemplifies, both literally and symbolically, an alternative order to that which dominates prior to the Flood and seemingly after. While Noah's ark symbolizes the structure of a tyrannical, patriarchal, anthropocentric society -- Noah, other men and subservient women on the upper decks; women, resisters and animals on the lower decks -- Mrs Noyes becomes an ark, transporting the Faeries, and then Lotte, across the water. She willingly risks her own life to save others. She does not regard the natural world as a *resource* for human ends. In stark contrast to her husband, Mrs Noyes is identified with the natural world. Consequently, she is recognized as a threat to Noah's position of

power: "‘I was thinking of your mother,’ he said. ‘And her innate susceptibility to acts of *kindness*’. . . .‘*kindness* is wasteful at the best of times, but in times like these - it is criminal’" (205, original emphasis). It is her own failure to act consistently upon this kindness, to resist, however, that Mrs Noyes regards as criminal. Although she is by no means to blame for Emma’s rape, it is her complicity with Noah’s order and orders that allows Emma to be removed from the lower decks. She feels guilty for willingly participating in preparations for the voyage, and is ashamed of having been weaker than Lotte’s parents, killing, rather than keeping, her "deformed" child.

Closely aligned with nature in the novel, Mrs Noyes has the power to communicate with the animals of the forest and the ark; she converses with Mottyl, teaches the sheep to sing and recognizes the Faeries. In a sense, Findley has "humanized" the beasts of the forest and the ark, producing greater sympathy for their plight and thereby revealing that humans are not the only victims of systems of hierarchy and violence. As Findley emphasizes in an interview, however, the animals in *Not Wanted on the Voyage* are not given human voice (Gabriel 31). Instead, the animals are presented as being capable of communicating with one another, and with certain human beings. The forest is a violent place, but the violence of the forest is not that of malevolence. In the ark, the animals (and humans) live in cramped, dark and unsanitary conditions: "No single space had ever held so many lives in its embrace, and none had ever been so peaceful at its heart" (250). It can be a place of danger, for, while foxes and raccoons lie side by side (251), instinctual systems of predator and prey continue. Through the inter-relationships of the passengers in the lower decks, however,

Findley reveals an alternative, albeit imperfect, order. Life in the depths of the ark is mutually inter-dependent for survival. It is in this environment that Mrs Noyes is able to overcome fear: "'There, there, there,' said Mrs Noyes, and only realized what was in her arms when she patted [the bear] soothingly across the back. Fear and fury battled for possession of her, but in the end, it was practicality that won out" (234). When Mottyl falls into the Well, the community of animals saves her, and when Mottyl's kitten Silver goes missing, it is the community that searches for him. During their sojourn upon the flooded Earth, the animals of the ark do not concern themselves with the "new world" but with survival, not as individuals but as a community.

Of what the "new world" will consist is left, necessarily, undetermined. Hannah believes that "all our terms of reference have been changed forever" and that never again will there be armies (257). Hannah's hope for an end to war and tyranny, however, is revealed to be naive when Noah discloses the Covenant between himself and Yaweh. It is Doctor Noyes who has drafted the Covenant, for Yaweh has died, and this treatise, in content and as itself a deception, prefigures the resurrection of the pre-Flood order. In contrast to Hannah's hopeful vision of the effects of the Flood, Lucy expresses disillusionment. Despite her assertions about the Unicorn living on in the imagination, Lucy contends that all that was magical and wonderful in the world drowned in the flood (283-4). Although Mrs Noyes loses the ability to communicate with non-human creatures, she, as well as Ham, the community of creatures on the ark, and the novel's message of the infinite possibilities of the imagination, reveal that while much was lost in the Flood, the imagination, and the hope of alternatives to violence, remain. It is unclear whether Mrs Noyes resigns herself to, or affirms, the fact that "the

voyage will never, never end" (352), but in doing so she expresses the fact that human existence is not static. Noah may want "another world and more cats to blind," but Mrs Noyes will resist his attempts to re-establish the ante-diluvian social order, seemingly, finally asserting, "No!" (352).

As much as *Not Wanted on the Voyage* investigates the nature of fascism -- as much as it is an "anti-fascist" text -- it explores the nature of resistance to oppression and violence. Findley writes, "sometimes months and sometimes years after a publication, the writer will realize that something more than he originally intended has been articulated in what he has written. The words do not change, but something extra gradually emerges from the way they have been put together. They conspire to tell more than it was thought they told" ("Comparing Notes" 56). This novel conspires to tell more than it was thought it told. Findley layers one (hi)story upon another, undoing the notion of chronological history and clearly defined ends. The meaning of the Flood myth is more important than its historical accuracy. By undermining the contents of the story, however, by revealing the narrow perspective of the story or presenting another perspective upon the story, *Not Wanted on the Voyage* resists the message of obedience, domination and violence of the Biblical Deluge. Northrop Frye characterizes Noah's ark as a "gigantic seed of a new world with all future human and animal life in it" (*Great* 177). In Findley's version of the story, this "seed" marks neither an absolute end nor a beginning, containing both the ante-diluvian social order and the hope of an alternative order. The Flood does not *create* a new, just order by *destroying* the Earth. In praying for rain, Mrs Noyes places her faith in nature rather than a patriarchal god (*Not Wanted*

352), imagining both a different perspective on, and possibilities for, this story. Unlike the Word of Yaweh (or Noah), Findley's word does not presume to be the final word.

III. The Question of Killing: *Meridian* in a Tradition of Folklore and Resistance.

Alice Walker's *Meridian* begins with a modern-day folk-tale. In "The Last Return", Meridian Hill's former lover Truman Held arrives in a small town in the southern United States to find Meridian resisting an inter-connected web of racism, patriarchy and economic oppression. Unlike *Time's Arrow* and *Not Wanted on the Voyage*, which are set during chaotic manifestations of tyrannical violence, *Meridian* is situated in a historical context of systematic oppression. Set in the mid-1970s, after the energy of the civil rights movement and black power movement has dissipated, "The Last Return" reveals that the struggle for human rights in America continues. Marilene O'Shay is killed by her husband Henry for leaving their home to seek her "pleasuring". After her corpse washes ashore, Henry "forgives" her and decides to exhibit her body as "a way to make a little spare change in his ol' age" (22). Expected to be passive and subservient--a possession--Marilene is punished for failing to conform to social expectations, and, in death, becomes a symbol of the ideal woman--an "Obedient Daughter," "Devoted Wife," and "Adoring Mother" (19)--a commodity. The children of the guano plant workers, predominantly African-American and economically disadvantaged, are only *allowed* to see the carnival-like exhibit of Marilene's corpse on Thursdays. Symbolic of the struggle for civil rights--the hope of justice amidst seemingly overwhelming odds--Meridian commits an act of nonviolent resistance by defying the police, and their white-washed tank with red and blue ribbons, to allow the children, free of charge, to witness the exhibition. In doing so, however, she does not

simply allow an excluded community to participate in American society, but reveals to that marginalized community the illusory and fallacious nature of the power of the dominant culture. The children realize that the corpse is fake: "They said she was made of plastic and were glad they hadn't waited till Thursday when they would have had to pay money to see her" (26).

In the "Last Return", Walker tells a story of oppression and resistance, introducing the themes, issues and images which will appear throughout *Meridian*. In this novel, she "weaves together" (Daly 246) stories of racism and sexism, and, more significantly, resistance to an oppressive social order. In terms of imagery, motif and narrative form, African-American folklore informs much of contemporary African-American literature. Trudier Harris contends that the prominent themes of this folk tradition, including contemporary African-American fiction, include the quest for freedom, the nature of evil, and the powerful versus the powerless (2). While Alan Nadel states that in the first chapter of *Meridian* "the present is embedded with, and thus constantly informed by, various layers of 'pastness'" (58), this is true of the entire novel. Story-telling provides a way to remember and teach about the past, and a medium for considering the issues of justice and freedom. As well, the act of story-telling is a means of creative (as opposed to destructive) resistance to oppression, for it allows the teller to assert her will and creativity.

Walker explicitly draws upon this tradition of story-telling in the third chapter of the novel "Sojourner", in which the narrator explains the origins of a magnolia tree on the campus of Saxon College. In relating the story of Louvinie, a slave and story-teller on the Saxon plantation, Walker places the civil rights struggle of the sixties in the context of a history of racial oppression in the United States, and places the story of

Meridian Hill in the context of a folk tradition which may be traced back to Africa. In West Africa, it had been the responsibility of Louvinie's parents to tell stories that would entrap murderers and thereby bring them to justice. While Louvinie's stories provide entertainment for the white children on the plantation, the act of telling stories is a way for Louvinie to assert her humanity and undermine white authority--a means of resistance. One of her stories, a tale about a man in Africa who tortures white children--a story about the nature of evil, power and justice--literally frightens the son of the plantation owner to death. In punishment, Saxon clips Louvinie's tongue out at the root:

Choking on blood, she saw her tongue ground under the heel of Master Saxon... Without one's tongue in one's mouth or in a special spot of one's own choosing, the singer in one's soul was lost forever. . . .In her own cabin she smoked it until it was soft and pliable as leather. On a certain day, when the sun turned briefly black, she buried it under a scrawny magnolia tree on the Saxon plantation. (44)

By the time Meridian arrives at Saxon College, the tree has received the name Sojourner and is the largest magnolia tree in the country.

The tree's name is a reminder of prominent ex-slave and nonviolent emancipation activist Sojourner Truth⁹. For the students at the college, The Sojourner acquires a rich cultural significance beyond the story of Louvinie. The tree provided refuge for slaves and is the focal point of a May Day student ritual in which all of the women on campus, for the only time in the year, regard each other as equals. In addition, Meridian associates The Sojourner with the Native burial ground on her parents' farm: "This tree filled her with the same sense of minuteness and hugeness, of past and present, of sorrow and ecstasy that she had known at the Sacred Serpent" (93). The tale of Louvinie and the mythical stature of The Sojourner provide an important link to the

past, as well as a positive symbol of resistance to slavery, racism and patriarchy.

As a chronologically-disjointed collection of tales which are connected through the character of Meridian Hill, this novel does not document the civil rights movement; rather it places this era in a history of oppression, violence and resistance. Significantly, the novel reveals the complex inter-relationship of oppressive forces. A racist and sexist society depends upon economic and social forces to exclude individuals from, or confine them to, specific social positions. Just as Master Saxon attempts to suppress Louvinie's creativity--her voice--by cutting out her tongue, Meridian recognizes the social and psychological oppression, or voicelessness, of motherhood. Meridian realizes that "creativity was in [her mother] but it was refused expression" (51). Similarly, with the birth of her child, Meridian's "frail independence gave way to the pressures of motherhood and she learned--much to her horror and amazement--that she was not even allowed to be resentful that she was 'caught'. That her personal life was over" (50).

Meridian's father recognizes a complex system in which he perceives himself as both victim and oppressor. He makes a spiritual connection with the Native burial mound on his land, realizing that African-Americans are not the only group to suffer in America. He attempts to return this land to a Native person--indicative of his acceptance of the dominant social order's belief that nature can be *owned*--and, just as his acquisition of this land deprived Native people of sustenance as well as a link to their cultural past, the government confiscates the property without compensating Mr Hill. With respect to Native and African-Americans, Mr Hill states, "I never said either side was innocent or guilty, just ignorant. They've been a part of it, we've been a part of it, everybody's been a part of it for a long time" (55). Racism and sexism, among other forms of oppression, are based upon an ideology of domination and subordination.

Consequently, as long as oppressed groups seek to "liberate" themselves by achieving a position of equality with their oppressors without eradicating the problem of systems of domination, others will continue to be exploited and victimized. As bell hooks argues, "An important stage in political consciousness is reached when individuals recognize the need to struggle against all forms of oppression" (hooks 40). Ideologies based upon systems of domination must be replaced by an ideology which entails inclusion and equality.

While racial equality and justice was the central issue of the civil rights movement and the Black Power movement, and race was the predominant concern of writers during the Black Aesthetic movement of the late 1960s, in this novel Alice Walker examines how racism and sexism are inter-related forms of oppression. Madhu Dubey notes that "the works of the 1970s black women writers insistently questioned, at a thematic level, the gender assumptions of black nationalist discourse" (20). For instance, Truman Held, a committed member of the Movement, fails to recognize the plight of women in American society, especially black women. Just as African-Americans are dehumanized in American culture--Meridian notices how a white television reporter holds a handkerchief over the microphone while interviewing African-Americans (72)--magazines promote the objectification of women. While an inanimate (plastic model of) Marilene O'Shay represents the ideal woman, Meridian believes that Truman would have liked her better had she been attractive but asleep (110). The effect of oppression is dehumanization; Lynne regards African-Americans as art and Truman creates a mythological "ideal" black woman in his sculpture.

Racism, sexism and economic oppression in this novel are maintained by a complex web of psychological and social factors. While Mr Hill, after the integration

of the school system, is excluded from the teaching profession because he is black, initially Meridian feels ashamed of failing to conform to society's expectations of women's behaviour and motherhood. Throughout the novel, however, violence, or the threat of violence, is a prominent means of maintaining social systems of domination and subordination. Placed in the context of the violence faced by Mrs Hill's slave ancestors and mother, and thereby a cycle of violence against black women, "The Recurring Dream" chapter includes a story of Meridian's mother's early life: "Mrs Hill had spent the early part of her life scurrying out of her father's way. Later, when she was in her teens, she also learned to scurry out of the way of white men- because she was good-looking, defenseless and black" (123). While bell hooks argues that one must struggle against all forms of oppression, the Movement depicted in *Meridian* is male-centred, perpetuating sex-role divisions that maintain male domination, including the association of power with physical force.

Coming out of a bar one evening, Truman's friend Tommy Odds is shot, resulting in the loss of part of his arm. Tommy's reaction to his victimization is violent rage. "All white people are motherfuckers," he says. "I want to see them destroyed" (132). Because she is a woman, and therefore an object, and because she is white, Tommy, in his rage, fails to recognize Lynne's humanity, seeing her only as an "it" to be punished (161). His rape of Lynne is both a political and personal act. While she suffers the emotional trauma of a personal violation, she realizes that this violation was politically motivated. Further, because of a history of false accusations of rape by white women, Lynne cannot tell her story, for she fears not being believed by her black friends and fears that these friends will be endangered if she tells the police. Like Odilo Unverdorben, who associates his impotency with powerlessness, and like Noah Noyes,

who equates sex with violence, brutality and control, Tommy attempts to compensate for his marginalized and victimized position as an African-American by physically controlling women.

In this novel, the failure to conform to one's social position or the active attempt to resist the social order, result in violent punishment. Near the end of "The Last Return", Walker lists prominent spokespeople and actors for social change who lost their lives for resisting oppression in "a decade marked by death. Violent and inevitable" (33). The town authorities whom Meridian resists by allowing the children to see the fake corpse of Marilene O'Shay purchase a tank to "defend" themselves against civil rights activists. Paradoxically, it is violence against African-Americans, among other means of oppression, which precipitates activism for social justice. After a Movement house is bombed in April of 1960, Meridian becomes "aware of the past and present of the larger world" (73). As an activist, she observes, and is a victim of, brutal state-perpetrated violence:

The scenes she personally witnessed in the Atlanta streets. . .caused the majority of her waking moments to seem fragmented, surreal. She saw small black children, with short, flashing black legs, being chased by grown white men brandishing ax handles. She saw old women dragged out of stores and beaten on the sidewalk, their humility of a lifetime doing them no good. (96)

While scenes such as this reveal the political nature of violence, the murder of Truman and Lynne's daughter Camara reveals the personal trauma consequent of this violence.

The association of violence with power is not limited to the dominant society. Tommy Odds believes that violence will, if not lead to freedom, execute justice. His violent retaliation against racist violence which manifests itself in the rape of Lynne, however, is a means of destruction rather than creation. He is perpetuating the system of domination rather than dismantling it. Violence is not only a pragmatically futile

form of resistance, but it is self-destructive. The chapter entitled "Wild Child", a story about a homeless girl who is accepted and supported by Meridian before being hit by a car, is followed by "Sojourner", which includes not only the tale of the story-teller Louvinie but the funeral of the Wild Child. Following the refusal of Saxon College's president to allow the girl's funeral to be held in the college chapel, the students riot on campus. After singing "We shall overcome", a song of hope and resistance, the students spend the night chopping The Sojourner to pieces. In doing so, the students seemingly destroy the symbolic source of their own sense of community "as well as the (literally) buried possibility of their political voice" (Dubey 131). Louvinie asserted her humanity and resisted the tyranny of Master Saxon by telling her own stories and by controlling the resting place of her tongue. Instead of resisting oppression, the students contribute to their own marginalization and sever links to their cultural past.

The students of Saxon College use violence to destroy a symbol of nonviolence. While individual and organized acts of violence against slave-holders occurred during the anti-slavery movement, the African-American struggle for freedom in America has been largely nonviolent, if only for practical reasons. John Hope Franklin contends that while the African-American protest tradition includes two prominent strains, violence and nonviolence, nonviolence is the more prominent of these strains: "long before he spoke on the subject, Martin Luther King's spiritual ancestors adhered to his view that violence in the face of the overwhelming power of one's adversaries was not only imprudent but futile" (109). Meridian is first confronted with the moral and practical dilemma of killing for the revolution after she leaves Saxon College with her college room-mate Anne-Marion. In the mid-1960s, she finds herself in New York with a group of students and intellectuals who have accepted the political necessity of violence

in order to end the violence perpetrated against civil rights activists (28). Asked whether she is willing to kill for the revolution, Meridian answers no. At a time when the nonviolent ethic of Martin Luther King, Jr. was under critical review by the leadership of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, and the black power movement was promoting armed self-defence and violent revolution (Walker, M. 179), Meridian rejects the violent musings of her peers and returns south to take part in constructive measures designed to bring about equality and freedom.

This question of the moral and practical acceptability of violence is of paramount importance for Meridian. In the chapter entitled "Free at Last", Meridian witnesses the funeral procession of slain civil rights leader Martin Luther King, Jr. In this story, parents tell their children stories of the horrors of slavery, and stories of resistance to racism; the life and work of King and the freedom movement of the fifties and sixties are placed in historical context. Disturbingly, this story seems to signify the end of the nonviolent civil rights movement rather than describe the funeral of a human being: "The sun came from behind the clouds, and the mourners removed their coats. . . Those who had never known it anyway dropped the favorite song, and there was a feeling of relief in the air, of liberation, that was repulsive. Meridian turned, in shame, as if to the dead man himself" (186). Although situated temporally many years after this scene, juxtaposed with "Free at Last" is "Questions". In this chapter, Meridian discusses the issue of violence with Truman. While Truman believes their conversation academic and pointless, Meridian is captivated by the complexity of the question. Truman asks her, "Do you realize no one is thinking about these things any more? Revolution was the theme of the sixties: Medgar, Malcolm, Martin, George, Angela Davis, the Panthers, people blowing up buildings and each other. But all that is gone now" (189). Meridian

did not take part in the violence of the sixties, but she is still preoccupied with the moral issues of revolution. While she knows that killing is never the *right* thing to do, she resolves that it is, sometimes, the *correct* thing, the necessary thing. Despite being a witness and victim to the horrors of violence and domination, Meridian accepts the notion that killing can be *correct*, a notion maintained by the dominant ideology of America.

Because the story of King's funeral and Meridian's acceptance of the necessity of violence are juxtaposed in this narrative, the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. and Meridian's change of mind seem to have a cause-and-effect relationship. Symbolically, his death is the death of nonviolence. Published just eight years after King's death, *Meridian* is active in mythologizing, or demythologizing, Dr King. Seemingly, the African-American nonviolent movement for freedom was not only symbolized by the work and entity of Martin Luther King, Jr., but it was dependent upon him¹⁰. Yet this was not the case. While Truman contends that it is no longer in vogue to act for equality or discuss revolution, these questions and issues are still significant, despite the fact that the prominent figures of the movement are gone.

Just months after King's death, in the chapter entitled "Camara" Meridian attends a church service. While the preacher keeps the voice of Dr King alive by imitating King's preaching style and by urging his hearers to act constructively and to vote, the image in the stained-glass window is not the traditional image of Christ but a black man with a guitar and a bloodied sword. After an emotional memorial by a father for his murdered young activist son, Meridian resolves upon the acceptance of revolutionary violence. She promises herself that "indeed she *would* kill, before she allowed anyone to murder his son again" (200, original emphasis). In this scene, and throughout the

novel, Meridian oscillates between a willingness to kill and a rejection of violence. Although she is sceptical of her own capacity to kill, she resigns herself to the necessity of systematic, armed resistance: "I have been allowed to see how the new capacity to do anything, including kill, for our freedom - beyond sporadic acts of violence - is to emerge, and flower, but I am not yet at the point of being able to kill anyone myself, nor - except for the false urgings that come to me in periods of grief and rage - will I ever be" (200). Meridian realizes that it is only in the heat of passion--when she sees a starving child or illiterate adults who will not vote because they cannot vote--that she is urged towards violence, but

On those occasions such was her rage that she actually felt as if the rich and racist of the world should stand in fear of her, because she--though apparently weak and penniless, a little crazy and without power--was yet of a resolute and relatively fearless character, which, sufficient in its calm acceptance of its own purpose, could bring the mightiest country to its knees. (201)

This, however, is an ambiguous passage. Meridian recognizes her own inability to commit violence, yet she *does* have the ability to dismantle the oppressive social order of the United States; in practice, she lives by an alternative, altruistic order.

Throughout the novel, Meridian resists the order of the dominant culture. She is involved in constructive activities such as protests, marches, and voter registration campaigns. She also sacrifices her own well-being to help others, and, in doing so, helps herself. Meridian's struggle against oppression is symbolized by her ill-health; for instance, her fits of paralysis and loss of hair. In attempting to *heal* the nation, she is healing herself, and in healing herself she is *healing* the nation (25). Although, in theory, Meridian accepts violence--accepts a paradox of killing to heal--the final stories of this novel reveal, in practice, a contradiction to this ethic. Juxtaposed with Meridian's discussion with Truman about violence in "Questions", Meridian takes the

corpse of a young child who drowned in a ditch to the mayor's office, collapsing after she has done so. When the town's people thank her for her sacrifice and courage, Meridian asks them to vote. In "Pilgrimage," Meridian watches "workmen from the city begin to clear the debris from the ditch, preparatory to filling it in (yes, the voters had won this small, vital service)" (213). While Meridian may not be the leader of a revolution, in the traditional sense, she is positively changing people's lives. Although she accepts violence in theory, in practice she reveals an alternative, more effective, means of resisting oppression and fostering social change.

In "Travels," Meridian and Truman visit a black family in hopes of registering them for the vote. Impoverished, in order to support his children and ill wife Agnes, Johnny rolls newspapers to sell to neighbours as kindling. For him, the vote seems meaningless. Providing for his family is his main concern. In an act of good-will, Meridian and Truman help roll newspapers, while Meridian attempts to explain to Johnny the importance of voting: "It may be useless. Or maybe it can be the beginning of the use of your voice. You have to get use to using your voice, you know. You start on the simple things and move on" (205). The tale of Louvinie reveals the importance of possessing one's own tongue, exercising one's voice. Through their kindness, Meridian and Truman share this lesson with Johnny. Just as Johnny will agree to register to vote, Miss Margaret in "Treasure" signs her name to the registration list after Meridian and Truman take her to a doctor. While helping others to assert their voices, Meridian is building a community that is not dependent upon relations of domination and subordination.

In "Settling Accounts," the penultimate chapter in the novel, Truman notices that among Meridian's few possessions is a photograph of a gigantic tree stump. Out of the

stump grows a tiny branch. The photograph had been sent to Meridian by Anne-Marion along with a brief note: "Who would be happier than you that The Sojourner did not die?" (217). The Sojourner survives; the students did not, entirely, sever ties to their cultural past and to the African-American tradition of nonviolent, life-affirming resistance to oppression. This tradition survives in the symbol of The Sojourner and in the symbolic figure of Meridian Hill. In "The Recurring Dream" Meridian dreams that "she was a character in a novel and that her existence presented an insoluble problem, one that would be solved only by her death at the end" (117). Yet, Meridian does not wish to be a martyr. She desires to avoid the standard fate of the hero in stories and the fate which elevates, or mystifies, the lives of real people, such as Martin Luther King, Jr. and Malcolm X. Jesus Christ should have refused crucifixion and King should have refused assassination, Meridian muses: "All those characters in all those novels that require death to end the book should refuse" (151). The story of Meridian Hill, composed of this collection of stories and tales of personal and political suffering and resistance, has no beginning or end. It is grounded in an ever-present past which includes Meridian's great-grandmother Feather Mae who rejects the hierarchal nature of Christianity, her mother's great-great-grandmother, a slave, who refuses to allow her children to be sold, and her own experiences as a child in the south, an activist in college, and a kind stranger travelling from town to town. Meridian refuses the traditional fate of the hero; she simply walks away, leaving Truman to continue in her role.

Before Meridian walks away, however, she exercises her voice. She tells Truman a tale of a woman who leaves her husband because he loves his dog more than her. The woman agrees to return to her husband only if he promises to kill the dog,

and he makes this promise. Truman wonders if the man fulfils the promise, but Meridian replies that this is not the point (218). What, then, is the point? While Meridian is an altruistic, loving person, she believes in being willing to kill for freedom. The importance of the tale she tells Truman, perhaps, is not whether the man kills the dog but that he is willing to do so. More importantly, I think, this tale gives us insight into reading *Meridian*. In the tradition of African-American folklore, contemporary black fiction tends to be "open-ended stories which do not force a resolution upon conflicts which are, both in literary and historical terms, inherently unresolvable" (Byerman 9). This novel resists traditional resolutions by having no resolution. The point of the story is not what happens to Meridian Hill, or whether she is ever able to kill for the Movement, but the issues raised by the conflict between violence and nonviolence in theory and practice.

Conclusion: Regarding the Meaning of "Fire" and "Water"

In *Hope and History*, Vincent Harding relates an anecdote of the power of storytelling. Based upon an historical event, Harding, in cooperation with an audience of American military personnel, develops a metaphor for the nature of resistance and conflict resolution. After briefly discussing the 1963 civil rights campaign in Birmingham, Alabama, he asked the group how many guns were taken on the march. He received the obvious answer; they took no guns:

I said, "What do you mean, they had no guns? How could they go into that violent city without guns? Aren't we taught here that you meet violence with violence, that you have to talk the language that people understand?" I continued the questions. "Aren't we taught here that you have to fight fire with fire?" For a moment no one spoke. Then, out of the eloquent silence, a young, Black enlisted woman sitting up front spoke slowly, thoughtfully, emphatically: "You don't fight fire with fire," she said, "you fight fire with water". . . . Other significant, moving comments came forth, exploring, probing not only the meaning of "water" in Birmingham and across the American South of the 1960s, but what "water" might mean now. . . . (Harding 94)

The central object of peace-studies literary criticism is the analysis of themes, structures and symbols in imaginative literature which contribute to the exploration of the meanings of "fire" and "water".

Time's Arrow, *Not Wanted on the Voyage* and *Meridian* differ greatly with respect to form, setting, narrative style and structure, the stories they tell, and the literary traditions in which they may be placed. Yet, each of these novels may be characterized as postwar fiction. While in *Time's Arrow* Amis describes one of the most significant events in modern human history -- Auschwitz-Birkenau -- chronologically backwards, *Not Wanted on the Voyage* is an explicitly and implicitly anachronistic retelling of an established didactic story, and *Meridian* is a collection of stories -- and

stories within stories -- juxtaposed with one another out of their temporal sequence.

Consequently, the structure of each of these narratives frustrates the distinction between past, present and future, revealing the way in which the present is not simply the "effect" of the past as "cause", but is comprised of all that came before.

Each of these novels provides an examination of a particular period in history. *Time's Arrow*, set primarily during and after the Second World War, is overtly concerned with how the Holocaust occurred. In *Not Wanted on the Voyage*, Timothy Findley retells the myth of the Deluge, commenting upon social order in the twentieth century. Finally, *Meridian* contemplates the central issues and events of the American civil rights movement. None of these novels, however, "documents" a particular period or event. These texts are not histories, but stories. As Trinh T. Minh-ha writes, "Poetry, Aristotle said, is truer than history. Storytelling as literature (narrative poetry) must then be truer than history. If we rely on history to tell us what happened at a specific time and place, we can rely on the story to tell us not only what might have happened, but also what is happening at an unspecified time and place" (120). While historical discourse is as much a construct as imaginative literature, story (or postwar fiction) is conscious of its own artifice. In each of the novels I have analysed, the narrative undermines the traditional structure of storytelling and resists conventional notions of history. These three stories transcend the histories upon which they are based, to confront the present (and the future) with the "meaning" of these events. In each of the novels, readers are left with an enigmatic, ambiguous, or unconventional conclusion, requiring them to make sense of the text. Rather than "recording" reality, each of these novels, through the representation of tyranny, violence and nonviolence

both literally and symbolically, contribute to an understanding of both significant events of this century and the issues consequent of these events. They tell us what might have happened, and they tell us what is happening.

I would not simply characterize any of these novels as anti-fascist, anti-war or anti-oppression. Yet, none of these three novels may be characterized as peace literature. Each presents the complexity of oppression and resistance, both literally and symbolically. Amis draws upon images of the horrors of the holocaust, Findley's narrator describes the carnage of the pre-Flood sacrifice and the Deluge, and Meridian literally participates in marches and voter registration campaigns. Symbolically, *Time's Arrow* illuminates the healing-killing paradox, Mrs Noyes becomes an ark -- a symbol of an alternative order -- and the survival of The Sojourner tree symbolizes hope of a continuation of a tradition of nonviolent social action. Although each of these novels is concerned with political, social and moral issues--and my peace-studies reading of them emphasizes these issues--they are not polemical novels.

I have attempted to formulate a poetics of the "postwar" not in hopes of delineating a new genre, but to provide a basic framework for *one* approach within peace-studies literary criticism. The label, I recognize, is insignificant. What is important is that imaginative literature (in this case post-World War II fiction), whether it be well-known works or previously neglected texts, receive critical attention which confronts the moral and social issues of violence, nonviolence, resistance to oppression, and the relationship between means and ends. It is important that literary criticism illuminate the way in which the meanings of "fire" and "water" are explored in imaginative literature.

NOTES

Chapter One

1. For an example of war (or war and peace) in literature course syllabi, see Klare and Thomas.
2. Fussell's *The Great War and Modern Memory* provides the historical and theoretical framework for many war literature courses. See Klare and Thomas.
3. Tobin Siebers argues that we do not need a "post-something" criticism. Rather, we need a modern criticism which is in touch with its contemporary politics and context (*Cold War* 157-8). The issues and concerns of the "postwar" are not, admittedly, unique to this century, but they are issues and concerns which are prominent in this era.

Chapter Two

1. Craig and Egan cite the death toll from the one night of bombing of Dresden at 202 040 (3). Kurt Vonnegut's narrator estimates that 135 000 were killed at Dresden and over 70 000 at Hiroshima (188). John Hersey places the Hiroshima death toll at more than 100 000. Of the more than nine million victims of the Nazi genocidal policies, the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum in Poland calculates the number of victims at that extermination camp to have been at least 1.1 million (Piper 62).
2. Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe (cited in Siebers *Cold War* 148-9) argues that the philosophy of Martin Heidegger "allows us to understand" that Auschwitz is the product of Western civilization--the final end to which the myth of progress will lead. Similarly, Craig and Egan displace human responsibility for the Allied bombing of German and Japanese cities by stating that these policies were not "distinctly willed or envisaged by those who gave the orders" (64).
3. Paul Fussell states that David Jones's *In Parenthesis* "poses for itself the problem of re-attaching traditional meanings to the unprecedented actualities of the war" (146). The title of the work is indicative of the post-Great War perception of the horrors of the war being an aberration of human society. In contrast, the horrors of the Second World War were regarded, by many, as indicative of the true nature of human civilization.
4. See Siebers *Cold War* 132, Young 17, Granofsky 181, and/or Hirsch 218.
5. See Henry Adams, *The Education of Henry Adams*.
6. In 1905, Adams described the moral force of the modern age as the Dynamo, or technology. V.S. Naipaul, writing in 1965, declared that "Fear of death is central to simple religious faith. God has been replaced by the bomb, and virtue continues to reside in great fear" (107).

7. Walter Wink notes that in the sixteenth century, approximately 1.6 million people were killed in wars, 19.4 million in the nineteenth century and nearly 108 million to this point in the twentieth century (see Wink).
8. While the term "nonviolence" seemingly does not connote the positive and constructive element of the word's meaning, I feel that it is the most appropriate term to use, for it has academic currency within Peace Studies and greater cultural currency than terms such as *ahimsa*. See Bondurant 23 or True *Energy* xix.
9. For more detailed accounts of the Salt *Satyagraha*, see Bondurant and/or Miller.
10. For a detailed account of the Montgomery campaign, see King's *Stride Toward Freedom* (1958).
11. The representation in literature and film of Schindler's endeavours to save more than one thousand Jews from the gas chambers is not an example of nonviolence, in the sense of the Gandhian tradition. Nonetheless, it was through the medium of the creative arts that a Nazi resistance story has achieved world-wide attention. Nonviolence is often criticized as a futile means of resisting brutal tyranny, such as Nazism. In *Conscience and Courage: Rescuers of Jews During the Holocaust* (1994), Eva Fogelman recounts numerous stories of individuals, groups and governments saving Jews from the Nazis. Walter Wink states that the Nazis did not know how to counter the nonviolent resistance campaigns in Denmark, Norway and Holland; Nazi generals "found friendly noncompliance more frustrating than any other form of resistance, and had no effective means to counter it" (255).
12. Hilda Stael provides a notable exception to this tendency in an article about Atwood's novel. See Stael.
13. The use by feminist theorists of nonviolence theory is not yet a prominent approach to literary criticism, but critics such as Kathleen Martindale have investigated the way in which violence and nonviolence in fiction contribute to the ethics of feminist nonviolence. See Martindale.
14. Vincent Harding notes that the Sandanistas took King's *Strength to Love* into the mountains during their struggle against the Somoza and disciples of King worked among the people of the Philippines while they prepared for their nonviolent revolution (5).

Chapter Three

1. Lifton writes of his interviews with Nazi doctors: "not a single former Nazi doctor I spoke to--arrived at a clear evaluation of what he had done, and what he had been part of . They could examine events in considerable detail, even look at feelings and speak generally with surprising candour--but almost in the manner of a third person. The narrator, morally speaking, was not quite present" (Lifton 8).

2. Judith Dunford claims that "what seems to concern Amis is that *Time's Arrow* be placed squarely in the company of Holocaust literature" (77). The reviewer in the 5 October 1991 issue of the *The Economist* also assumes the novel to be an attempt to document the Holocaust: "Mr. Amis's narrator has nothing of interest to say about the real Holocaust" ("Scream" 10). Similarly, Pearl K. Bell argues that "such manipulative 'irony' [of the narrative style] denies the essential horror of Auschwitz" (285).
3. In the afterword to *Time's Arrow*, Amis acknowledges his great debt to Lifton, and further states that the novel could not have been written without *The Nazi Doctors*.
4. There are numerous other echoes of the Holocaust and World War II in *Not Wanted*. In Genesis, the builders of the ark are left nameless and faceless. In this novel, Noah enslaves hundreds of workers. Blind to their fate and with their individuality obscured by the sheer size of the workforce and the project, an atmosphere is created of "'no more questions asked - no more questions needed'" (119). Like the German labour force and slave labour utilized as pawns by Adolf Hitler, Noah's workforce performs their orders without resistance or question. Lorraine York argues that Emma's separation from her family is a concentration camp motif (107) and suggests that in saving Mottyl, One Tusk symbolizes underground movements throughout Europe which attempted to save Jews (110, see *Not Wanted* 227-229). While I am not sure that I agree with York's reading of this scene--it is certainly not a one-to-one correspondence--I am sympathetic to her reading, for it reveals the precedent of nonviolent (and violent) resistance to oppression at work in this text.
5. York argues that Findley depicts the violence of modern history in his fiction. Similarly, George Woodcock focuses upon the novel's concern with cruelty and injustice (see Woodcock). Violence and tyranny is also the focus of other critical analyses of *Not Wanted* and Findley's other works of fiction: See, Keith, Ingham, and Pennee. In each case, these critical analyses have been concerned with Findley as an anti-fascist/violence writer without adequately critiquing violence and nonviolence in *Not Wanted*.
6. In his short story "The Unicorn and the Grapevine," Findley further develops this theme. The storyteller of this tale speaks of the "new-day" writer of *Not Wanted*. The storyteller retracts the notion that the extinction of the Unicorn caused all the magic to fade from the world.
7. Lucy has been characterized as a positive or benevolent figure by Pennee 82, Keith 128, and Ingham 44.
8. By no means does Emma desire to remain above decks with those responsible for her horrendous suffering, but, as Japeth claims--if in self-deception--following her rape, Emma "is one of us, now" (276).
9. Sojourner Truth is characterized by John Hope Franklin as a "stern but nonviolent enemy of slavery" (104). A slave herself in New York State, Sojourner Truth, after

being freed, was a national figure in the emancipation movement before and after the Civil War. While she supported the war, she urged forgiveness of slave-holders, peace and forbearance (See Mabee).

10. Thomas Merton notes the common perception that the death of King "marked the end of an era in which nonviolence could have any possible significance" ("Note for 231). In the introduction to *We Shall Overcome* (1990), the editors of this collection of essays state that one of the main objectives of the works are to "demythologize" King: "King was as vulnerable as any other dead hero to the processes of co-option, canonization, and commercialization that conspire to replace with a more comfortable legend the stark truth of a courageous life cut short by an act of cowardice and bigotry" (Albert 3). By this line of interpretation, in no way do I mean to demean the life and work of Martin Luther King, Jr.; nor do I mean to interpret Alice Walker's own sentiments toward King. Walker makes her feelings of admiration clear in "The Civil Rights Movement: What Good Was It?" and "Choice: A Tribute to Martin Luther King, Jr." Both essays are included in Walker's *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens*.

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