HEMINGWAY'S JEWISH PROGENY: ROTH AND GOLDSTEIN IN MAILER'S *THE NAKED AND THE DEAD*

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I.

In 1926, Ernest Hemingway published his first novel, *The Sun Also Rises*, which established his lean, hard literary voice—a style that would influence countless American writers. In 1948, a young Norman Mailer published his first novel, *The Naked and the Dead*, to critical and commercial acclaim. In his first novel, Mailer established a tough and unforgiving narrative voice very much in Hemingway's debt. Yet there is another aspect that unites the early work of these two often compared writers: their representation of stereotypical Jewish characters. In *The Sun Also Rises,* Hemingway created his petulant and "superior" Jewish character, Robert Cohn, who is often seen in the narrative as being a step out of line with the other characters. Hemingway sums Cohn up as possessing "a hard, Jewish, stubborn streak" (18). Two of Mailer's characters from *The Naked and the Dead*, Roth and Goldstein, have been described by Morris Dickstein as being "almost anti-Semitic caricatures of sensitive weaklings, too eager for acceptance, as uneasy in their own skin as in a man's army" (33). As one of Mailer's characters in *The Naked and the Dead* says of these two Jewish soldiers, "For that Roth and Goldstein, you could shoot 'em in the nuts and they wouldn't even know the difference" (429).

How is Mailer building on Hemingway's representation of an emasculated Jewish character as well as complicating and subverting Hemingway's

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conception of the effete Jew? Throughout his long career as a writer, Norman Mailer was often condemned for creating stereotyped Jewish characters, or alternately, for not creating enough Jewish characters in his fiction, but I believe that far from slavishly following Ernest Hemingway's anti-Semitic lead, Mailer in *The Naked and the Dead* (much like Philip Roth would do a decade later at the beginning of *his* career) creates a complex portrait of Jewish characters attempting to negotiate the constraints of an anti-Semitic, mid-century America. Although Mailer has often been portrayed as having broken with his Jewish upbringing and eschewed Jewish values and ideas, as we will see in this essay, I believe that Mailer was deeply engaged by both Jewish ideas and values, and that he deals with his complex Jewish identity throughout his long and prolific career, starting with his first novel in 1948 through his last published work in 2007.

II.

When I was a kid growing up on Long Island, my father gave me a short biography of the "The Ghetto Wizard," Benny Leonard, who rose from the tough tenements of the Jewish Lower East Side to become the lightweight boxing champion of the world. I remember reading about how as a young boy Benny always listened to his Jewish mother and how he not only fought with his fists, but with his head as well. A few years later when I picked up *The Sun Also Rises*, I was keenly interested in this Jewish boxing champion of Princeton, Robert Cohn, whom readers meet in the very first line of the narrative. As I read further, I was quickly disabused of any Jewish pride I might have in Cohn. I soon discovered that not only is Hemingway's first-person narrator, Jake Barnes, unimpressed by Cohn's boxing title, he is even less enthralled by the "Jewish" nature of his acquaintance. After showing Cohn to be both emasculated and hen-pecked in the opening chapter of the book, Hemingway quickly adds, in the second chapter, that the extremely wealthy Cohn (after all, he is Jewish) "had a hard, Jewish, stubborn streak" (18). Things quickly degenerate for Mr. Cohn from that point on. By the end of the novel—which tells of the exploits of a group of young friends carousing their way across Europe on their way to the famous bullfights of Pamplona, Spain—Cohn has managed to sucker-punch two of his friends, Bill and Jake, and he beats nearly senseless the handsome, young bull-fighter Pedro Romero. In the process of these altercations, Cohn provokes the hatred and ire of just about every character in Hemingway's book. Toward the

end of the novel, Jake, who in the opening chapters claimed to like Cohn, says to Brett, "I'm not sorry for him. I hate him, myself" (186). To which Brett responds: "I hate him too . . . I hate his damned suffering" (186). Later, in the same conversation, when Brett announces her intentions of having an affair with the young bullfighter Pedro Romero, Jake tells her, "You oughtn't to do it" (187). Brett responds: "Oh darling, don't be difficult. What do you think it's meant to have that damned Jew about . . . ?" (187).

Now, as I pick up *The Sun Also Rises* many years after my first encounter with Robert Cohn and his lost generation friends, I am struck by the fact that Hemingway is not content to simply produce a minor anti-Semitic character in his work, as is customary in the work of other modernist writers, for example, F. Scott Fitzgerald in *The Great Gatsby* with his malevolent Jew, Meyer Wolfsheim.[1] In contrast, Hemingway's anti-Semitic character Robert Cohn is crucial to the entire structure of the novel; I would go so far as to suggest that the emasculated figure of the Jew, most often viewed as a contrasting figure, might even be central to Hemingway's credo of "grace under pressure" and the tough-guy persona that he embodied to the bitter end of his life. Hemingway portrays his Jew as the perfect (if obvious) foil to his WASP hero, Jake Barnes, a man who clearly lives up to the code. Barnes is a man of few words, but he is a man full of grace and, what critic Thomas Strychacz has termed, "emotional restraint" (141). In short, Barnes is all the things that Hemingway's imagined Jew is not.

It was not only Jewish readers who were concerned about Hemingway's Jewish characters, but Jewish writers of the period were just as anxious about the long shadow Hemingway cast over American literature. This apprehension, some might even call it a preoccupation, is perhaps most clearly seen in the very beginning of Saul Bellow's first novel, *Dangling Man*, where his narrator, Joseph, frets over his masculinity. He worries that keeping "a journal nowadays is considered a kind of self-indulgence, a weakness, and in poor taste" (9). Although Joseph admits that this concern with his emotions and feelings is a "weakness," in his present state of demoralization, in the midst of the fiercest fighting of World War II, suspended between civilian and military life as he waits to be inducted into the US Army, Joseph has no choice but to keep his diary. Joseph ends these thoughts with an obvious nod to Hemingway when he writes, "The hard-boiled are compensated for their silence; they fly planes or fight bulls or catch tarpon, whereas I rarely leave my room" (10).

As a young Jewish American reader, I remember being so unsettled by Hemingway's Jewish character Robert Cohn that I asked my father about what it all meant. He thought for a while and then replied, as was his custom, with a little story. He said that Grandpa, a survivor of several Nazi concentration camps in Belgium, used to define an anti-Semite as someone who hates Jews more than is normal. I was left to infer from this anecdote that Hemingway's mild form of social anti-Semitism in America did not bear all that much resemblance to the horrors perpetrated upon my family by the Nazis in Europe. In short, Hemingway's anti-Semitism was, while not particularly nice, a respectable, long-accustomed "normal" form of Jew-hatred practiced the world over. At the time, laboring to enjoy Hemingway's novel despite the disturbing use of the term "Jew" as an adjective, I tried to "read around" the offending passages.

More recently, I was asked to substitute for a colleague who was teaching a class on modernist American writers; the class I taught was focused on *The Sun Also Rises*. Upon re-reading Hemingway's novel, I was more than a little disturbed by my fictional co-religionist, Robert Cohn, and due to his centrality in the novel, this time there was no "reading around" the offending passages. Perhaps more disturbing was that at the same time I had been re-reading Norman Mailer's monumental World War II tome, *The Naked and the Dead*, for a course of my own dealing with war fiction. In my reading of Mailer's novel and his portrayal of two Jewish soldiers, Roth and Goldstein, I was often, and uncomfortably, reminded of Hemingway's disparaging portrait of the Jew in *The Sun Also Rises*. So maybe Hemingway, the arch WASP American writer had a bit of a Jew problem (as did so many of the great modernist writers from T.S. Eliot to F. Scott Fitzgerald, dare I even bring up Ezra Pound?). But Norman Mailer? Nachum Malech, the proud grandson of a Rabbi? Perhaps the fault was mine? Maybe there was something in the text that I was missing? What was this Jewish American writer Norman Mailer up to in his first novel, and how might his fraught construction of Jewish characters help reveal his aims? When Morris Dickstein calls Mailer's two Jewish characters "sensitive weaklings" and "almost anti-Semitic caricatures" (33), he is wholly correct in his assessment: Roth and Goldstein are definitely stereotypical constructions of ethnic characters, as are many of the other characters in Mailer's novel, from Martinez the Mexican American scout who in many pensive moments worries obsessively if he is a "true American,"

to Mailer's cliché-ridden portrait of an uneducated southern hick, Private Wilson.

My reading of Hemingway's and Mailer's constructions of Jewish stereotyped characters will explore the complicated legacy of Jewish fictional representation that Mailer tapped into in his first novel—so while it would be easy to suggest that in an effort to ingratiate himself to his literary hero Ernest Hemingway and to distance himself from his own biography (the good and obedient, middle-class Jewish boy who was Bar-Mitzvahed in Brooklyn), Norman Mailer slavishly copies Hemingway's lead in creating distasteful Jewish characters—I believe that there is something far more complex going on in Mailer's creation of his two Jewish soldiers a generation after Hemingway's first novel was published. In fact, I would argue that Mailer is not creating his stereotypical Jewish characters in homage to Hemingway, but rather as a response and a challenge to Hemingway's literary legacy.

III.

The editors of *The Norton Anthology of Jewish American Literature*, in their introduction to Norman Mailer, claim that "Mailer's work occasionally includes Jewish and part-Jewish characters, good and bad, but the most deliberate avoidance of what seem to be centrally and recognizably Jewish issues in the greatest part of his prolific output over six decades has been noted and decried by almost all concerned with Jewish American literature" (815). I couldn't disagree more with this assessment of Mailer's career. Mailer's portrait of Jewish characters and his sustained focus on the inherent anti-Semitism of the US Army, from the enlisted man all the way to the top of the chain of command, force readers of his first novel into a place of discomfort, a place where they will need to rethink their own preconceived notions about American ideals of pluralism and democracy in the immediate postwar period and reconsider their views on Jewish Americans' place in that postwar pluralistic culture. I believe that Mailer is dealing with the nexus of decidedly Jewish and American issues in almost all of his works, perhaps not as explicitly as some of the critics would like to see these issues addressed, but that would seem to be beside the point. Indeed, Mashey Bernstein quite convincingly argues that "Mailer's ideology, as an American writer and social commentator, stems from both the intellectual ideas of Judaism and how these ideas make themselves manifest in our daily lives" (377). This

focus is evident at the very beginning of Mailer's career in *The Naked and the Dead* with those two stereotypically Jewish characters: Privates Roth and Goldstein.

IV.

In *Advertisements for Myself*, Mailer recounts the story of how he sent a copy of his third novel, *The Deer Park*, to his literary hero Ernest Hemingway. The short piece, titled "Literary Pain and Shame," reprinted in Mailer's massive 1999 retrospective, *The Time of Our Time*, suggests that close to a decade after writing *The Naked and the Dead*, Mailer was still enamored of Hemingway and still obviously ambivalent about his feelings towards his literary forefather. Mailer's inscription reads,

> TO ERNEST HEMINGWAY
> —because finally after all these
> years I am deeply curious to know
> what you think of this.
> —but if you do not answer, or if you
> answer with the kind of crap you
> use to answer unprofessional writers,
> sycophants, brown-nosers, etc., then
> fuck you, and I will never attempt
> to communicate with you again. (207–8)

Despite not receiving a reply from Hemingway, Mailer was still eager to meet with his hero when Hemingway was in New York City in 1958 to be interviewed by George Plimpton for *The Paris Review*. Plimpton was friendly with both writers and attempted to set-up a dinner meeting. Although the dinner was scheduled, it never came off. In a 2002 interview with The Guardian, Plimpton told the story of why Mailer never did get to meet Hemingway. In the article, "Hemingway, Mailer and Me," Plimpton recalls,

> "I set it up, and then Hotchner stopped me. Said it wouldn't be a good mix. Oh, it was awful. Poor old Norman sat by the telephone. It was," he concludes, still smiling, "very bad." He pleads intimidation: "Hemingway? Scared to death of him. Not an easy

> man to be around. Although I must say, I do treasure that relationship." (4)

To the casual observer it might seem that adding a Jewish writer to the mix would be toxic to the genteel dinner crowd. Might this be a rather obvious example of life following art? In this sad little drama the role of Robert Cohn was clearly played by Norman Mailer, easily pictured stubbornly sitting by his phone waiting for a call that would never arrive.

So just what was Cohn's big "stubbornness" in *The Sun Also Rises*? Hemingway's narrator explains Cohn's problem this way:

> Then there was another thing. He had been reading W.H. Hudson. That sounds like an innocent occupation, but Cohn had read and reread *The Purple Land. The Purple Land* is a very sinister book if read too late in life. It recounts splendid imaginary amorous adventures of a perfect English gentleman in an intensely romantic land, the scenery of which is very well described. For a man to take it at thirty-four as a guide-book to what life holds is about as safe as it would be for a man of the same age to enter Wall Street direct from a French convent, equipped with a complete set of the more practical Alger books. (17)

Hemingway's narrator Jake Barnes suggests that Cohn's stubbornness had a "romantic streak," but just what did this schoolboy idealism entail? *The Purple Land* might afford us a clue:

> Here the lord of many leagues of land and of herds unnumbered sits down to talk with the hired shepherd, a poor, bare-footed fellow in his smoky rancho, and no class or caste difference divides them, no consciousness of their widely different positions chills the warm current of sympathy between two human hearts. How refreshing it is to meet with this perfect freedom of intercourse, tempered only by that innate courtesy and native grace of manner peculiar to Spanish Americans! What a change to a person coming from lands with higher and lower classes, each with its innumerable hateful subdivisions—to one who aspires

> not to mingle with the class above him, yet who shudders at the slouching carriage and abject demeanour of the class beneath him! If this absolute equality is inconsistent with perfect political order, I for one should grieve to see such order established. (Hudson 335)

So now we can see just what makes *The Purple Land* such a dangerous book for Robert Cohn. At the ripe age of thirty-four, Cohn, much like the narrator of *The Purple Land*, still dreams of being accepted into a classless society by his Anglo-Saxon peers. Surely, Jake suggests, this was an idea that Cohn's years at Princeton should have beaten out of him. As he says of Cohn, "No one had ever made him feel he was a Jew, and hence any different from anyone else, until he went to Princeton" (Hemingway, *Sun* 12). Yet Cohn—even after Princeton should have convinced him of his inherent difference from people like Jake Barnes and Lady Brett Ashley—in his arrogance and stubbornness still believes that he will be accepted by his WASP acquaintances. Hemingway's narrator says rather bitterly of Cohn, that all of his romanticism and his "stubborn" clinging to an idea that life is fair and equal stems from Cohn's immature belief in two books. As Jake says, "So there you were. I was sorry for him, but it is not a thing you could do anything about, because right away you ran up against the two stubbornnesses: South America could fix it and he did not like Paris. He got the first idea out of a book, and I suppose the second came out of a book too" (20). So the first book that leads Cohn to think his life will be more on par with his peers in South America is clearly *The Purple Land* by W.H. Hudson, but what of the second book? What second book lends Cohn both his stubbornness and his air of moral superiority? Perhaps Hemingway is coyly referring to the Hebrew Bible, which he does in several key ciphered passages in *The Sun Also Rises*.[2] The Hebrew Bible speaks of the ancient Hebrews and their legendary stubbornness: "And the Lord said unto Moses: I have seen this people, and, behold, it is a stiffnecked people" (*King James Bible*, Exod. 32. 9). Cohn's restless dissatisfaction with the way things were in the post-World War I period for Jews, stemmed from his reading and his inherent (read: Jewish) stubbornness. Hemingway famously spoke of the need for omniscience in a young writer—to know all that one can before putting pen to paper—but in this passage, Hemingway seems to defer to God himself. It is as if Hemingway says, "See, don't blame me, I didn't invent this Jewish stubbornness, it is as

old as the Hebrew Bible itself and as obvious as the large, hooked, and bent nose on Robert Cohn's face."

These supposed Jewish characteristics are referenced numerous times in *The Sun Also Rises*. For example, in Chapter Fifteen, while the veterans (of both war and bullfighting) are discussing the best way to endure the graphic and violent nature of the bullfighting, Cohn takes on an air of superiority, stating "I'm not worried about how I'll stand it. I'm only afraid I may be bored" (Hemingway, *Sun* 165). As is apparent, Hemingway imbues his Jewish character with an unmitigated superior and condescending attitude, which, not surprisingly, infuriates the rest of the group. As Bill tells Jake, "That Cohn gets me. He's got this Jewish superiority so strong that he thinks the only emotion he'll get out of the fight will be being bored" (166). Cohn's stubborn and whiny attitude is immediately contrasted with both Jake's quiet calm in the face of personal tragedy and with the dignified figure of the physically resplendent bullfighter, Pedro Romero. Of course, Cohn's repeated attempts at being accepted by his gentile peers—in effect, his attempts to change the unfair nature of his social and cultural reality like in the fictional South America of *The Purple Land*—becomes yet one more "Jewish characteristic," to the disdain of the other group members. After all, Jake has been unfairly and mercilessly left impotent[3] from an injury during the war, an inequity and a horror which he does his best to accept and to bear with grace; only occasionally and only in the privacy of his own hotel room does Jake despair of his condition. It is as if Hemingway is saying, here's this true American, Jake Barnes, injured in the most brutal way fighting for other people's freedom and all this rich Jew Cohn can think about is himself and how sad it is for him to have to spend all of his millions in Paris.

v.

Which brings us to Norman Mailer, whose first novel was published to critical and commercial acclaim and he was hailed as the new, great postwar American writer. *The Naked and the Dead* tells the story of one platoon's dangerous reconnaissance mission in the battle for a Japanese-held island in the Pacific, Anopopei, toward the end of World War II. Control of this island might prove of key strategic importance for ultimate victory in the Pacific and an end to the war. Throughout the novel, Mailer introduces us to the varied members of the platoon, all of whom represent different aspects of working-class America. The difficulties encountered by the enlisted men

are contrasted with the often pampered day to day life of the officers. This is especially true of both the calculating General Cummings, a highly successful general with political ambition—at one point Cummings says, "a more effective soldier the poorer his standard of living has been in the past" (Mailer, *Naked* 174)—and Lieutenant Hearn, a Harvard-educated WASP who has more liberal ideas and regard for the lives of the enlisted men. The men of the platoon have for months been led by the tyrannical Sergeant Croft. After the deaths of several members of the platoon, two new Jewish soldiers, Roth and Goldstein, are added to the group. These two Jewish soldiers bear more than a passing resemblance to Hemingway's Robert Cohn.

Despite the familial likeness of Hemingway's and Mailer's Jewish characters, in A. E. Hotchner's 1966 book, *Papa Hemingway*, Hemingway revealed his less than favorable overall opinion of *The Naked and the Dead* and its author: "The guy who wrote *The Naked and the Dead*—what's his name, Mailer—was in bad need of a manager. Can you imagine that a general wouldn't look at the co-ordinates on his map? A made-up half-ass literary general. The whole book's just diarrhea of the typewriter" (113). While Hemingway did not admire Mailer's credentials as a war correspondent, one thing he might have admired was Mailer's creation of two Jewish characters as stereotypically Jewish as Robert Cohn: Privates Roth and Goldstein. So what are we to make of these two Jewish characters in *The Naked and the Dead*?

The novel often switches between the men's present reality in the Pacific and flashback sections called "The Time Machine," which are interspersed throughout the narrative in which the men are seen at earlier moments of their civilian lives. At one point, the men of the platoon are sitting around waiting for the fighting to begin and, somewhat humorously, discuss the best way to give oneself a "million dollar" wound: a non-debilitating injury that will get the soldier sent home and out of the horrors of the war. In the midst of this conversation, Private Gallagher says of the two Jewish soldiers in the platoon: "For that Roth and Goldstein, you could shoot 'em in the nuts and they wouldn't even know the difference" (Mailer, *Naked* 429).

This sense of the emasculated, literally castrated, Jewish soldiers parallels Robert Cohn in Hemingway's novel. At one point during the bullfighting section, the group of friends is talking about the awful way one of the bulls gored a steer. Cohn adds to the discussion: "It's no life being a steer," which leads to the following exchange:

> "Don't you think so? Mike says. "I would have thought you'd loved being a steer, Robert."
>
> "What do you mean, Mike."
>
> "They lead such a quiet life. They never say anything and they're always hanging about so . . . I should think you'd love it. You'd never have to say a word. Come on, Robert. Do say something. Don't just sit there. . . . *Is* Robert Cohn going to follow Brett around like a steer all the time?" (Hemingway, *Sun* 146)

Clearly both Hemingway and Mailer create emasculated Jewish characters. Yet despite the obvious similarities between these three fictional characters, I believe that Mailer is actually attempting something diametrically opposed to Hemingway's Jewish portrayal. Mailer's portrait of emasculated Jewish characters is designed to draw attention to the complex negotiations his Jewish characters must make with an outwardly hostile and clearly anti-Semitic US Army during World War II. As a result of Mailer's multifaceted portrait of the struggle of ethnic others, in this case Jewish Americans,[4] in a pluralistic society, readers are challenged to delve deeper into the racial, religious and social attitudes prevalent in mid-twentieth century America.

VI.

There are numerous parallels between Hemingway's Cohn and Mailer's Roth and Goldstein. Take drinking, for instance. Jake, Bill, Mike and Brett all drink legendary amounts of alcohol to dull their pain of the losses they have suffered in the war. In contrast, Cohn often does not participate in their extended drinking sessions. At the high point of the fiesta, Cohn does get drunk and passes out, leaving the others to continue their drinking for several more hours. When he reappears, Cohn tries to ingratiate himself with the group by saying "What a lot we've drunk" (163). This elicits an angry response from Bill: "You mean what a lot *we've* drunk. You went to sleep" (163).

Similarly, in *The Naked and The Dead*, when we meet Private Roth for the first time we see how Roth's exclusion is a result of both his own defensive actions as well as the inherent and casual anti-Semitism of the Army: "The man with whom he was bunking, a big good-natured farm boy, was still over at another tent with his friends, and Roth didn't want to join them. He had gone along the previous night and, as it usually happened, he had felt left out of things" (Mailer, *Naked* 50). We can easily see from the narrator's

comments how Roth is both excluded by the group and that he excludes himself, almost as a preemptive maneuver designed to gain a sense of agency in an environment in which he has very little standing and even less power. Similarly, in his isolation, Roth, a college-educated man, reflects on the intellect of his fellow soldiers and, with disdain, decides that "they were all stupid" (51). In this same scene, Roth has a lengthy conversation with the other Jewish member of the platoon, Goldstein. In the creation of these two figures, Mailer is attempting to draw out the numerous social and religious differences between these two vastly different Jewish characters.

Despite their obvious differences, both Jewish soldiers are despised by the other members of the platoon. In this portrayal, Mailer is scrupulously careful to honestly portray the Army in all of its inherent bigotry. For example, while speaking with Roth, Goldstein recalls overhearing a conversation earlier that day between a group of soldiers and a truck driver. The driver was warning the soldiers about the good and bad companies. The driver said, "'Just hope you all don't get in F Company, that's where they stick the goddam Jewboys'" (53). After much mirth among the men, one of the soldiers responds. "'If they stick me there, I'm resigning plumb out of the Army'" (53). Thus Mailer offers us a well-rounded conception of these two Jewish soldiers' treatment in the Army and the difficult time they have just trying to survive in a doubly hostile environment. In addition to the constant threat of the Japanese enemy, the Jewish soldiers must always be on guard for the next anti-Semitic outburst from one of their own fellow platoon mates. Although he doesn't respond to the anti-Semitic comments of the truck driver and the other soldiers laughing with him, Goldstein intuits "that kind of face was behind all the pogroms against the Jews" (53).

Or later, when some of the men are sitting around talking, one of the veterans of the platoon, Gallagher, begins to reminisce of his time back home in Boston when he used to run with a gang. He recalls an incident where he and his friends beat-up a local Jewish kid; this memory gives him a good laugh, but the story also gets him thinking about the larger problem of "the goddam Yids" (93). This memory leads him to dwell on his lack of advancement in civilian life, which, he also, conveniently, blames on Jewish nepotism: "if it hadn't been for that Alderman Shapiro and his fuggin nephew Abie or Jakie" (94). This in turn leads him to further reflect on the two new soldiers assigned to his platoon. Gallagher says, "'I see we got a couple of fuggin Yids in the platoon'" (94). Red Valsen, the unsung hero of the

novel, tries to mitigate this harsh anti-Semitic statement of Gallagher's by responding: "'Yeah . . . they're sonsofbitches just like the rest of us'" (94). Gallagher responds furiously, "'They only been in one week and already they're lousin' up the platoon'" (94). This leads to a more subtle formulation by another soldier, Wilson, who draws a distinction between Roth, who is, by even the most objective standard, not a very good soldier, and Goldstein, who has given every indication that he might become a first-rate soldier. However, Gallagher only pushes aside all subtleties and concludes with the thought, "'I wouldn't trust a fuggin one of them'" (94).

Much like *The Sun Also Rises*, Mailer's novel reveals a considerable amount of talk concerning the emasculated Jewish male. In one scene, Goldstein, along with several of the men of the platoon, is complaining about the inefficiency of the Army. Along with all the other men, Goldstein adds his assessment. Yet the sadistic Sergeant Croft immediately seizes on Goldstein's casual remark:

> "You bitching again, Goldstein?" Croft asked.
>
> The anti-Semite, Goldstein thought. "I'm just expressing my opinion," he said.
>
> "Opinion!" Croft spat. "A bunch of goddam women have opinions." (127)

This emasculating comment by Sergeant Croft only goads Gallagher to draw Goldstein's manhood into further question: "What's the matter, you want some gefüllte fish?" (127).

This feminization of Mailer's two Jewish soldiers bears many of the physical stereotypes Modernist American literature often associates with Jewish characters. This is particularly true of the diminutive Roth, who often chews on his bitter thoughts of how much better he is than all of the uneducated men that surround him. Yet despite these many surface similarities with Hemingway's Jewish characterization, ultimately Mailer portrays a complex understanding of America's perception of the Jew both during the war years as well as in the immediate postwar period. Mailer repeatedly counters a scene that emasculates either Goldstein or Roth with a further scene highlighting the rampant anti-Semitism of the US Army.

Concurrently, Mailer also presents a strikingly realistic portrait of the difficult life for the average US soldier during World War II, and his novel is no

idealized "best generation" portrait of the era. The soldiers and the officers are often racist and many of the men believe that their wives are unfaithful to them as they are off far from home fighting the war. In regard to his Jewish portrayal, as opposed to Hemingway, Mailer affords his readers insight into the consciousness of his Jewish characters. Mailer carefully portrays two vastly different Jews in the novel: Roth is a college-educated agnostic prone to fits of fury, pessimism, and general arrogance, while Goldstein is a working-class man from Brooklyn who, despite numerous hostile experiences, generally wants to think well of people and institutions. Ultimately, Roth proves himself an inept soldier, whereas Goldstein redeems himself by displaying fortitude and dedication in attempting to save his wounded platoon-mate Wilson. Nevertheless, Mailer asserts that both soldiers are lumped under a general term of disapprobation, and all they will ever be known as in the army is simply and eloquently—Jews.

Mailer also paints a scary yet realistic portrait of an officer corps rife with bigots and racists. At one point, an officer, Colonel Conn, is ranting in the mess hall voicing a racist tirade on "the treachery and depravity of the Negro, and the terrible fact that Jew York was in the hands of foreigners" (69). Lieutenant Hearn can take no more of this racism and anti-Semitism, and although he is outranked by Conn, he humiliates his superior officer in an exchange that is overheard by all of the other officers (73). Later that evening, General Cummings summons Hearn to his tent to upbraid him for his insubordination, but the conversation quickly turns from Hearn's actions towards other matters: American power, politics and the progress of the war. The General says to Hearn, "I don't disagree with Conn. There's a hard kernel of truth in many of the things he says. As for example, 'All Jews are noisy. . . . They're not all noisy, of course, but there's an undue proportion of coarseness in that race, admit it'" (82). Although it might appear that Mailer is creating a stereotypical portrait of Jewish characters in *The Naked and the Dead*, I believe that he is trying to underscore the widespread anti-Semitism inherent in all aspects of the Army, from the lowest enlisted man on up through the highest levels of command. Against this backdrop, readers of Mailer's fiction must begin to gauge their own ideas about Jewish people in general and Roth and Goldstein in particular. Far from merely parroting Hemingway's anti-Semitic construction of Jewish masculinity in *The Sun Also Rises*, Mailer, a generation later, challenges his readers' notions of

American inclusiveness and concurrently exposes an ugly strain of anti-Semitism and racism in American institutions.

In *The Naked and the Dead*, as in Hemingway's novel, the ideas and feelings of the group come out most expressively and passionately at times of drunkenness. As if acknowledging Hemingway's earlier portrait of emasculated Jewish characters, Mailer dramatizes a similar drinking scene in *The Naked and the Dead* to the one Hemingway wrote in *The Sun Also Rises*. In a poignant scene, Mailer depicts five men of the platoon all pitching in to buy several canteens of homemade liquor from the mess sergeant. As they sit around getting completely hammered, one of the men, Wilson, notices Goldstein sitting off by himself writing a letter. In a moment of inclusiveness, Wilson good-naturedly invites Goldstein to join them for a drink. However, always on the defensive and having heard rumors of poisoned homemade liquor, Goldstein is wary of drinking the brew. Instead of focusing on bonding with his fellow platoon mates, Goldstein remains firmly focused on his wife and child back home in Brooklyn. Goldstein worries about what would happen to them if he were to die of poisoning out in the middle of the Pacific.

In this scene, Mailer starkly contrasts the numerous social and cultural differences and preoccupations that fuel the many conflicts between the men of the platoon. Goldstein asks Wilson, "'Is it real whisky or is it jungle juice?'" This incites Gallagher, who tells Goldstein, "'Take the goddam drink or leave it, Izzy'" (204). Of course, now that he has been insulted, Goldstein abstains, which in turn only isolates him further from the men of his platoon. Beneath the curses of his fellow soldiers, Goldstein walks back towards his tent to continue writing his letter to his wife. The narrator says, "Goldstein turned around abruptly and walked away. The circle of men who were drinking drew closer, and there was an almost tangible bond between them now" (205). In contrast to the solidarity of the drinking men, Goldstein sits alone in his tent feeding on his bitterness: "Once his eyes filled with tears and he shook his head angrily. Why did they hate him so? he asked himself" (205).

VII.

In his recent essay, "The 'Whine' of Jewish Manhood: Re-Reading Hemingway's Anti-Semitism, Re-Imagining Robert Cohn," Jeremy Kaye suggests that while the vast majority of literary critics "have most often explored Cohn

from the site of Hemingway's *production*, they overlook the site of *reception*" (48). Perhaps my similar interrogation of the reception of Mailer's controversial Jewish characters has helped us move beyond an understanding of Roth and Goldstein as simple stereotypes. Far from merely imitating Hemingway, Mailer's Jewish characters in his first novel are as great a challenge to his literary forefather as was his inscription of *The Deer Park*. Yet that did not stop the vast majority of critics from thinking of Mailer as a self-hating Jew. That Mailer was excoriated by many Jewish readers and critics for his depiction of stereotyped Jewish fictional characters in the US Army early in his career was, only a decade later, eerily paralleled in the harsh and unforgiving reaction to one of Philip Roth's earliest stories, "The Defender of the Faith," which was first published in *The New Yorker* in 1959. After the publication of this story, Roth was accused of being a self-hating Jew as well (Remnick 76). The public outcry against Roth was so great that in an incident recounted rather humorously in Roth's 1988 autobiography/novel, *The Facts*, he was forced to meet with leaders of the Anti-Defamation League to talk about the rising storm of Jewish protest his story had let loose across America (Roth, *Facts* 123).

From my perspective of a half century later, I would say that Roth is continuing a tradition begun a decade previous to the publication of "Defender of the Faith," by one of his acknowledged literary forefathers, Norman Mailer. Although Roth was excoriated for creating a negative portrait of a Jewish soldier in the figure of Sheldon Grossbart, much like Mailer before him, Roth establishes the extremely anti-Semitic environment of the US Army during World War II that places Grossbart, along with all the other Jewish soldiers, in a disadvantageous position from the very beginning of Roth's controversial short story. One could argue that for all the Jews behaving badly in "The Defender of the Faith," the most offensive action in the story is perpetrated by the racist and anti-Semitic Captain Barrett. As Roth's Sergeant Marx narrates,

> The next morning, while chatting with Captain Barrett, I recounted the incident of the previous evening. Somehow, in the telling, it must have seemed to the Captain that I was not so much explaining Grossbart's position as defending it. "Marx, I'd fight side by side with a nigger if the fella proved to me he was a man. I pride myself," he said, looking out the window, "that I've

> got an open mind. Consequently, Sergeant, nobody gets special treatment here, for the good or the bad. All a man's got to do is prove himself. A man fires well on the range, I give him a weekend pass. He scores high in P.T., he gets a weekend pass. He earns it." He turned from the window and pointed a finger at me. "You're a Jewish fella, am I right, Marx?" (Roth, "Defender" 166)

Friday nights are for cleaning the barracks, and Grossbart is concerned because he has heard the other men complain that the Jewish soldiers who go to religious services Friday night are really just shirking their work. When Sergeant Marx tries to explain Grossbart's concern to the Captain, he replies,

> "If the Jewish personnel feels the other men are accusing them of goldbricking—well, I just don't know. Seems awful funny that suddenly the Lord is calling so loud in Private Grossman's ear he's just got to run to church."
>
> "Synagogue," I said.
>
> "Synagogue is right, Sergeant. I'll write that down for handy reference. Thank you for stopping by." (166)

Much like Mailer did in his World War II novel, we see Roth in his short story addressing anti-Semitism in the American military and how it has affected several Jewish soldiers within the service. And much like Mailer had encountered a decade earlier, Roth was immediately at the center of a firestorm of Jewish protest. In a profile of Philip Roth (published in 2000), David Remnick describes the controversy "Defender of the Faith" elicited and he quotes directly from some of the letters Roth received in the late 1950s:

> Mr. Roth: With your one story, "Defender of the Faith," you have done as much harm as all the organized anti-Semitic organizations have done to make people believe that all Jews are cheats, liars, connivers. Your one story makes people—the general public—forget all the Jews who have lived, all the Jewish boys who served well in the armed services, all the Jews who live honest hard lives the world over. One letter came to the Anti-

> Defamation League from a prominent rabbi, reading, "What is being done to silence this man? Medieval Jews would have known what to do with him." (76)

In *The Facts*, Roth recounts this early condemnation as being formative in his development as a writer. The outcry against Roth in 1959 continued for several years and built to a crescendo during a visit Roth made to Yeshiva University in 1962. Roth was invited to be part of a symposium on the theme of "The Crisis of Conscience in Minority Writers of Fiction." In addition to Roth, Ralph Ellison was also a panelist, but the entire symposium, it would seem, was staged as a pretext for vilifying Roth and his supposedly anti-Semitic and self-hating work. Roth was attacked again and again by the audience members, who surrounded him to continue the barrage once the official program had come to an end. As Roth recalls in *The Facts*,

> I listened to the final verdict against me, as harsh a judgment as I ever hope to hear in this or any other world. I only began to shout "Clear away, step back—I'm getting out of here" after somebody, shaking a fist in my face, began to holler, "You were brought up on anti-Semitic literature!" "Yes," I hollered back, "and what is that?"—curious really to know what he meant. "English literature!" he cried. "English Literature is anti-Semitic literature." (129)

According to Roth, he initially wanted to forswear any more writing about Jews, and it was only years later that he understood the full import of what he termed "the Yeshiva battle." Roth writes that "instead of putting me off Jewish fictional subjects for good," the event "demonstrated as nothing had before the full force of aggressive rage that made the issue of Jewish self-definition and Jewish allegiance so inflammatory" (129). Roth claims that "After an experience like mine at Yeshiva, a writer would have had to be no writer at all to go looking elsewhere for something to write about . . . the Jewish resistance that I aroused virtually from the start—was the luckiest break I could have had. I was branded" (130).

Roth forcefully maintains that it was this opposition and resistance to the expectations of the Jewish community that would become the subject matter of his work for the rest of his career. Despite all of the anger focused on Roth's

character Grossbart, just as Mailer had done a decade before, in "Defender of the Faith," Roth creates a stereotypical Jewish character as a means of challenging his readers to understand the inherent racism of American institutions during World War II and the effect these prevailing attitudes would have on Jewish security in postwar America. So the question remains: What about Mailer? Was Mailer similarly inspired by the overwhelmingly negative reaction the Jewish community had to his two Jewish characters in his first novel?

IX.

Much like Philip Roth's watershed experience at Yeshiva University, perhaps the initial scorn heaped upon Mailer as a result of his creation of two stereotypical Jewish characters sent the writing career of this good Jewish boy from Brooklyn on a trajectory that would confound his critics for over half a century. In responding to both the Jewish community and the anti-Semitic character of Hemingway's Robert Cohn, Mailer launched his career with Jewish themes at the forefront. It is precisely these major Jewish themes, that in his last books, *The Castle in the Forest*, and *On God: An Uncommon Conversation*, Mailer would continue to explore.

Toward the end of his life Mailer was asked about his feelings for Hemingway. Mailer replied, "I wanted to be a writer since 1941, when I was 18. Hemingway was more important to us than Saint Paul is today to the Catholics" (Weeks C01). Mailer never did get to meet with Hemingway man-to-man as he had dreamed of in his youth. In that same interview—which was occasioned by the production of *Zelda, Scott and Ernest*, the staged, dramatized reading of the letters of F. Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald (Mailer read Hemingway while George Plimpton read Fitzgerald)—Mailer told a *Washington Post* reporter that his reading Hemingway's lines in the performance was "as close as I'll ever get to Hemingway" (C01). Although Mailer might have spent much of his life chasing Hemingway's ghost, ironically, it is his earliest fictional portrait of two unremarkable Jewish soldiers that will ultimately serve as his fiercest and most personal response to his literary forefather.

NOTES

1, Recently (2005), *Modern Fiction Studies* devoted a special issue to this topic. In her introduction to *Modernism's Jews/Jewish Modernisms*, guest editor Maren Linett writes that the issue "considers

some of the processes by which Jewish writers shaped literary modernism and the intricate ways modernism was in turn shaped by its figurings of Jews and Jewishness" (249).

2. An obvious example would be the title of his novel, *The Sun Also Rises*, which Hemingway takes from a famous passage in Ecclesiastes (*King James Bible*, Ecc. 1.5).
3. In an interview with *The Paris Review*, Hemingway takes exception to the wide-spread idea that Jake Barnes has been "emasculated" by his war injury:

> **INTERVIEWER**: Continuing with just one question on this line: One of the advisory staff editors wonders about a parallel he feels he's found in *The Sun Also Rises* between the dramatis personae of the bull ring and the characters of the novel itself. He points out that the first sentence of the book tells us Robert Cohn is a boxer; later, during the *desencajonada*, the bull is described as using his horns like a boxer, hooking and jabbing. And just as the bull is attracted and pacified by the presence of a steer, Robert Cohn defers to Jake who is emasculated precisely as is a steer. He sees Mike as the picador, baiting Cohn repeatedly. The editor's thesis goes on, but he wondered if it was your conscious intention to inform the novel with the tragic structure of the bullfight ritual.
>
> **HEMINGWAY**: It sounds as though the advisory staff editor was a little bit screwy. Whoever said Jake was "emasculated precisely as is a steer"? Actually he had been wounded in quite a different way and his testicles were intact and not damaged. Thus he was capable of all normal feelings as a *man* but incapable of consummating them. The important distinction is that his wound was physical and not psychological and that he was not emasculated. (Bruccoli 120)

4. A similar argument could be made about Martinez being used in *The Naked and the Dead* to challenge prevailing negative stereotypes about Mexican Americans.

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