HARLOT'S GHOST, *BILDUNGSROMAN*, MASCULINITY AND HEMINGWAY

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HARLOT'S GHOST IS THE *BILDUNGSROMAN* OF THE EDUCATION of Harry Hubbard. In calling *Harlot's Ghost* a *Bildungsroman*, I mean a novel of protagonist Harry Hubbard's psychological, moral and social shaping in the course of his journey from youth—adolescence in Harry's case—to a degree of consolidation of adulthood.[1] *Harlot* also is a picaresque of that same education.[2]

Despite a lack of conventional closure, *Harlot*'s Harry moves through enough phases of an education toward full manhood for *Harlot* to constitute a contribution to the literature of the *Bildungsroman.* Although the *Bildungsroman* typically moves toward a final resolution marked by one or another sort of consolidation of adulthood, whether happily triumphant as in *David Copperfield,* or adaptive to a substantial degree of misfortune as in *L'education Sentimental* or *Invisible Man,* or disastrous as in *Illusions Perdue*, such final resolution is not all.[3] Lessons that yield impacts on character development occur throughout the temporal course of *Harlot,* as I will illustrate. Thus, the *prima facie* case for *Harlot* as *Bildungsroman* is not negated by the book's ending with Harry still substantially unformed and the book's Omega tale unresolved.

In short, our actually existing, truncated *Harlot* offers some of the more episodic developmental satisfactions of the *Bildungsroman* (as well as the picaresque). It is more than the incomplete narrative decried by adversarial critics like John Simon. And not only does *Harlot* offer the cornucopia of vibrant characters and tales suggested by such celebrants as Wilfred Sheed

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and William H Pritchard.[4] Its tales enthrall in good part because they cohere around phases of Harry's education and because they gain force as Harry's development cumulates, even if it does not conclude.[5]

Space is not available here for an exhaustive accounting of the developmental episodes in the 1300-page *Harlot*, but discussion of a few examples of such sequences for some of the work's key developmental threads can substantiate my argument. I will focus particularly on episodes in the development of Harry Hubbard's masculine identity—first, his physical courage, second his sexual maturation and, finally, his manliness among men. These are key to the book and to Harry's development as something like the "tough guy" aspect of writings by and about Mailer.

Harry's education in physical courage begins with demands from father Cal Hubbard, during a skiing trip, for a manly Harry. When Harry falls on a ski slope and does not quickly rise, Cal asks, "Will you rise to your feet, you quitter?" When Harry indicates that he has broken something, Cal relents, exclaiming "Your father, Carl Hubbard, is a fathead" and "you're not the worst kid" (Mailer, *Harlot's* 123–124). Harry's struggle to attain the high standard of physical courage set by Father Cal is begun.

A second physical challenge of note confronts Harry while rock climbing "the precipices" with Hugh Tremont "Harlot" Montague. When Hugh leads Harry to a place where "a quick glimpse down . . . proved no easier than standing on the edge of a roof seven stories high that had no railing," Harry's impulse is "to ask Mr. Montague if this was, for certain, the right place." Hugh responds, "This climb will test you" and adds that mastering the test is "[j]ust a matter of learning a new vocabulary" (147–150) and a portion, perhaps, of the larger "language of men" (*Advertisements* 122). Harry meets the test of the precipices, climbing with increased composure and confidence toward effective mastery of the new manly "vocabulary." After the precipices, Harry seldom confronts physical dangers that emanate so much from nature as opposed to other people, but the dangers confronted do often include death. A key encounter with the risk of death involves Harry's participation alongside Dix Butler and Cuban anti-Castro forces in the landing on Playa Girón. In Harry's words, "Adrenaline kept prayer at bay" and "[d]eath was a great temple" before which he "stood at the gate." Yet Harry plays his role well. Indeed he reports, "I remember letting loose a prodigious whoop" (*Harlot's* 1139). Harry has become a happy warrior.

Harry's sexual development starts late and proceeds slowly and haltingly. There is no talk of High School coitus, no College news of more than some "petting" (228). During Company training, the bisexual Rosen and Dix Butler tint the atmosphere around Harry's sexual development; and early during his Berlin mission Harry has an ambiguous encounter with Dix. He rebuffs an aggressive sexual advance from Dix but images of "Butler's "knotted buttocks" (330) come to him as he approaches climax during his first intercourse, this with a German co-worker named Ingrid. Still, the sex is satisfying: Harry can write that afterwards he "was feeling a good bit better" (330). His sex life begins on an essentially heterosexual footing, if not the firmest. Harry's return from Berlin brings a flowering of romantic and friendly feelings toward Kittredge Gardiner. This blooms most fully in Harry's letters to Kittredge from Montevideo station. On a more emphatically sexual note, the Montevideo mission brings an adultery with Sally Porringer, trysts with many of the ladies of Montevideo's brothels and fellatio from the Libertad la Lingual, a brothel hermaphrodite distinguished by strong feminine allure and, as it turns out to Harry's consternation, male genitals (669). The Miami mission brings Harry intense, well-integrated romantic and sexual experience in the person of Modene Murthy, mistress also to JFK and mob leader Sam Giancano. Enraptured by Modene's "sexual lavishness" (796), Harry comes, he writes, "into the place I had been expecting to enter all my life" (818). Beyond the compass of Modene's thrall, Harry's epistolary romance with Kittredge continues. Although sexual fulfillment with her lies beyond the extant Alpha, it can be read back from the pages of the extant Omega on Harry and Kittredge—or Harry and Kittredge and mistress Chloe, a waitress who "could enjoy a lonely customer" and who could laugh at her own sexual escapades "with enough good humor to have been watching her own pornographic romp (18–9). With Kittredge,

> after all our years together, we still flew at each other. Kittredge, indeed, was as fierce as one of those wood-animals with claws and sharp teeth and fine fur that you can never quite tame. At its worst, there were times when I felt like a tomcat in with a raccoon. . . . I'd see God when the lightning flashed and we jolted our souls into one another. Afterward, was tenderness, and the sweetest domestic knowledge of how curious and wonderful we were for one another. (19)

In regard to Harry's education in "manliness among men," his education in physical courage is relevant, for the latter typically involves meeting challenges in the company of mentors like Cal and Hugh. However, I stress aspects of Harry's learning of his trade that entail dealing in a competent and dignified manner with his male co-workers at the Company. Here one key challenge appears to be attaining a degree of respect and support from mentors Cal Hubbard and Hugh Montague. Another appears to be averting both the self-destructive sexual passivity of Reed Arnold Rosen and the psychopathic sexual extroversion of Dix Butler.

The trajectory of social learning and personal development that takes up the most of Mailer's labor and Harry's years in *Harlot's* Alpha section involves Harry's work relations with William King "Wild Bill" Harvey. Early in Alpha, Harvey is Harry's Station chief for Berlin Station Mission, and he is the focus of Harry's activities during the Roman phase of Alpha's final completed section, its "Afterword." These work relations with "Wild Bill" provide virtual dramatic bookends to the Alpha's account of Harry's Company history, such as Mailer completed it. In the Berlin section of Alpha, Harry's drama and development largely consist of battles of wits and will with Harvey over the secret identity of the insubordinate KU/CLOAKROOM who has made light of a request by Harvey and turns out to be none other than Harry himself (271–278). The drama is intensified because Harry is assigned to uncover KU/CLOAKROOM for Harvey, because the cloak room uncovering is tied to the uncovering of the potentially dangerous Soviet agent KU/WILDBOAR and because Harry's mentors Cal Hubbard and High Montague are antagonists of Harvey, both for their resented class pedigrees and their opposition to Harvey in Company battles over the question of Kim Philby—who proves to be the traitor Harvey had intimated (276). In their give and take with Harvey, Harry and his mentors emerge unscathed, but the contest between Harry and Harvey is rejoined a decade later in Rome.

In the Roman episode, Harry is charged by Company head Dick Helms with cleaning up the "mess" that Helms states that "Harvey is making of Station in Rome." Harry must enact Helms' decision to send Harvey "out to pasture" (1268–1269). When Harry confronts Harvey in Rome, where he has been sent to notify him of the termination of his Roman service, he is threatened by a drunk Harvey who says, pointing a gun "thoughtfully" at Harry, that his seeming dangerousness is not "an act." To the contrary, he has been feeling "a real inclination which goes right down into the most honest part

of me to pull that trigger and blow somebody's name right out of their body" (1273). True, Harvey next tells Harry "you are relatively safe." However, he also notes that "[i]f Hugh Montague were present, he "would be a dead man." Moreover, he plants doubt in Harry's head about Harlot's loyalty to the Company and bids Harry good bye with a head butt that, to use Harry's words, provides him with a "last gift, a headache to take home with the hangover" (1277). By Rome, Harry has the toughness to take such "tough guy" behavior in stride.

Although Harlot as *Bildungsroman* is principally comprised of the events of Harry's Alpha manuscript, some parts of Omega are instructively projected back into the year unreached by Alpha. For example, as we have seen, Omega's references to marital relations between Harry and Kittredge speak rather directly to his "sexual development," and Rosen's death and possible suicide may bear a little on the relevance of Rosen's meaning for Harry. Indeed, Omega suggests to us expectations about how Harry's tale may have ended, about how the Harry engendered by Mailer in our imaginations might have come to fare in his years beyond those denoted by the extant Omega, about indeed the pattern into which the accounted events of Harry might ideally fit. At the end of the extant Omega, Harry at his clandestine Moscow halfway house gathers his resolve to unveil and address whatever project Montague might pursue. Montague's project bears on Harry's relation to himself, for Harry's chosen vocation, nurtured both by father Cal and mentor Montague, is one of patriot and Company man; and Omega intimates that Montague's purpose may involve work for and against country or Company, or both. Where circumstance and resolve may lead Harry not only stimulates our imagination about where our imaginatively projected Harry is headed but about what to make of the Harry we already know. Indeed, both the Harry of the extant *Harlot's Ghost* and the Harry of any more extended saga we might have imagined, is one whose identity centers around issues of masculine identity—physical, sexual, and social. This is a Harry whose identity conflicts a future encounter with Harlot—after all, a father figure who has been husband to the Mrs. Kittredge Hubbard's of the final pages of *Ghost*—would very likely bring to a head. And so Omega highlights main themes in the *Bildungsroman* of Harry Hubbard's education, indeed two *Bildungsromans*—one on the page and one for our expectation for Harry.

Although I have geared my examples of developmental episodes in *Harlot*

as *Bildungsroman* to Harry's "manly" development, I stress that Harry hardly becomes a stereotypical Mailerian "tough guy." Any theme of "toughness" in Mailer's depiction of Harry's development is more one of Harry's mastery of behaviors befitting his dignified adaptation to the rough and tumble world of the U.S. intelligence establishment than it is one of a domineering tough guy. Harry's development as a man is marked mainly by his armoring himself *against* dangers, not by Harry initiating or escalating aggression. To draw on Hemingway, Harry's "manly development" brings more of the grace under pressure of early Hemingway characters like Nick Adams and Jake Barnes than of the occasional public belligerence of the late Papa, or of the middle-aged Mailer. Although Mailer seems to have shifted into an undue sympathy for personal violence in his depictions of certain fictional characters—most notably Croft and Rojack—his portrait of Harry Hubbard is mainly one of a youth's adaption to a sometimes dangerous world with equanimity. This is so, even though this adaption does draw on the traditional "manly" virtues. Harry more resembles Nick Adams rising from innocence to a degree of bravery as when in "The Killers," despite the warning of "the cook," Nick warns Ole Andreson that two men are coming to execute him,[6] than he does the coldblooded killers themselves or the resolutely long suffering Jack Brennan of "Fifty Grand."[7] Eventually the warrior, as with Dix at Playa Girón, he is never as heedless of his own mortality as Manuel in "The Undefeated,"[8] nor as coldly self-possessed as the white hunter of "The Short Happy Life."[9]

In relation to both Hemingway and the *Bildungsroman* at once, *Harlot* has an interesting precedent in another novel that concerns manliness in the public service amidst a prolonged geopolitical conflict. I refer to Frederick Marryat's *Mr. Midshipman Easy,* with its protagonist's service in the British navy and the Napoleonic wars. This is not ostensibly as distinguished a precedent as *Great Expectations* or *Lost Illusions.*[10] However *Mr. Midshipman Easy* is a fine example of the explicit integration of "manly development" into the *Bildungsroman.* Indeed, it is also a fine example of the integrations of such development into the picaresque; that is, something of a chronicle of naval and Iberian theaters of the early Napoleonic Wars (Fulford ix–xi).[11] Thus, attention to *Easy* may merit our attention as students of Mailer's relation to Hemingway as well as to Mailer as author of *Harlot* and portrayer of "tough guys."

The retrospective and anticipatory framing of the central, *Bildungsromanische* Alpha portion of Harlot in terms does not much resemble anything in Hemingway. It better resembles the framing of Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*. Ellison's protagonist is also in hiding and also frames his own biographical narrative. Indeed, he is doing so "in covert preparation for a more overt action" (Ellison 13). Although this has no focus as sharp as Hugh "Harlot" Montague, Ellison's unnamed protagonist is like Harry at the close of *Harlot*, one who is in clandestine residence at Moscow's Hotel Metropole, gathering his resolve to head off, as Harry puts it, "on a mission whose purpose I could not name but for the inner knowledge that I knew it" (1279).

Still, Harry, toward the close of the actually existing *Harlot*, resembles Hemingway protagonists at the ends of "The Snows of Kilimanjaro" and *For Whom the Bell Tolls* in looking forward toward momentous resolutions. However, in "The Snows of Kilimanjaro" and *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, these resolutions come in the form of those protagonists' own imminent deaths. Harry's final posture in *Harlot* is more extroverted, as well as more hopeful. Harry looks to a future that may draw the strings of his life together by acting to affect a mentor of his youth and the success of his vocation in ways that will affect public as well as personal fates. Harry's resolve is more clearly focused than the abstract resolve of Ellison's invisible man, who has no precise agenda for action. It differs from the resolve of Hemingway's Robert Jordan at the conclusion of *For Whom the Bell Tolls* because Jordon's dying resolution is confined to a final courageous encounter with death, detached from any larger public purpose than the possible elimination of another Nationalist or two in Jordon's final battle fascist forces. It is, with its relative extroversion and public as well as private purpose, at least as "manly."[12]

NOTES

1. See Moretti.
2. By calling it a picaresque I mean a novel of its protagonists' exploration of various sectors of the social world, like some cliques and stations of the CIA. For further information, see Stone.
3. The relevance of the picaresque is merely touched on here, as the topic, once treated seriously, draws us into the copious details of *Harlot* as social document and history (but see notes 5 and 30). On the varieties of English and French *Bildungsroman*, see Moretti.
4. See John Simon, Wilfrid Sheed, and William F. Pritchard,
5. It also involves, entertains and instructs the reader in some social history as picaresque, a matter to which I'll briefly return.

6. The "cook" cautions Nick, when his employer George suggests warning Andreson, "I don't like it . . . I don't like any of it" (Hemingway, "The Killers" 286).
7. Jack suffers his way through a defeat that can hand him "Fifty Grand" for retirement from bets on his opponent but feels "all busted inside" (Hemingway, "Fifty Grand" 326).
8. In an attempt to compensate for awkwardly tripping over a cushion thrown honorifically from the stands, Manuel indulges in a last aggravation of his dying kill, hoping it will revive his threat and the crowd's appreciation. "He stepped close and jammed the sharp peak of the *muletta* into the bull's damp muzzle" (Hemingway, "The Undefeated" 263).
9. Hemingway, "The Short Happy Life." Neither is Hubbard as misogynistic as the hunter Wilson of "The Short Happy Life" or as the writer-hunter of "The Snows of Kilimanjaro." However, he does seem to share something with Wilson and Macomber, who reports just before his demise when he confides in Wilson about that "feeling of happiness before action is going to come" (Hemingway, "The Short Happy Life" 33).
10. Then again, Joseph Conrad and Virginia Woolf figure with Hemingway among the celebrants of *Mr. Midshipman Easy*.
11. Despite *Harlot*'s rather abrupt end to Harry's social Odyssey, the novel explores sufficient social worlds for *Harlot* to offer many of the satisfactions of the picaresque as well, indeed the satisfaction of an exploration of many agency missions and of a chronicle of the CIA over more than a history-packed dozen-plus years. On the relevance of *Mr. Midshipman Easy,* this is the work of one of Hemingway's favorite authors, one right up there with Turgenev (Plimpton 958).
12. It is also clearer and more public in intent than the resolves that end many an otherwise unresolved Mailerian narrative: O'Shaughnessy on his way to Yucatan at the end of *The Deer Park*, Rojack off to Vegas at the end of *An American Dream,* Menenhetet and little Meni off across the centuries at the conclusion of *Ancient Evenings*. Perhaps it is not clearer or more public minded than Gilmore's embrace of execution as a move toward prisoner autonomy in the face of legal obstacles to a public contrition via public execution (Hicks). However, it is more outwardly oriented, more extroverted. Of course, Harry Hubbard, as a perennially youthful and refreshed American Adam can never be more than a momentary victim of his past or circumstance and must look ever hopefully forward (Whalen-Bridge).

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