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James Jones's Codes of Conduct

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JAMES JONES'S CODES OF CONDUCT

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THE GRADUATE COLLEGE

We recommend the dissertation prepared under our supervision by

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ABSTRACT

JAMES JONES'S CODES OF CONDUCT

Though his work was celebrated by his contemporaries and remains highly lauded by scholars of war fiction, James Jones's novels are already at risk of falling outside the mainstream canon of 20th Century American literature. My dissertation project proposes an intensive examination of James Jones's three volume war trilogy, *From Here to Eternity*, *The Thin Red Line*, and *Whistle*, collectively considered by eminent critic Paul Fussell to be the finest work to emerge from the Second World War. Jones's trilogy is a mainstay within the overall genre of war fiction, yet it has been afforded relatively little critical attention by mainstream critics. Scholarship on Jones's work has heretofore focused on his general body of work with one critical examination of the Eastern philosophical influences on his early work. While critics have examined individual works within the trilogy as stand-alone works, no extensive scholarly study has been done on the trilogy as a whole. Jones initially intended *From Here to Eternity* to cover the entire scope of the trilogy's time period, but later split them into three related works. *From Here to Eternity* covers Army life pre-Pearl Harbor, *The Thin Red Line* follows the same character archetypes into combat, and *Whistle* describes the post-Guadalcanal return of the first war wounded to hospitals in the states. The particular focus of my dissertation will be on deciphering the unwritten codes that govern the behavior of Jones's characters in addition to the written A.R.s (Army Regulations) and how they change through the three phases of combat covered over the course of the trilogy (pre-combat, combat, and post-combat). At each stage of combat, the behavior of Jones's characters is guided by a variety of unofficial codes that govern appropriate and inappropriate behavior with

regards to conduct in the Army and between the sexes. My goal is to prove that examining these unwritten 'codes of conduct' will contribute greatly towards understanding Jones's construction of masculine behavior and determining the makeup of what traits constitute an archetypical Jonesian Protagonist.

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INTRODUCTION

It is a peculiar shame that in the academic community authors whose work deals primarily with war are all-too-often marginalized by critics—or worse, forgotten entirely. Even though he was widely read when he died in 1977, and highly respected by contemporaries like William Styron, Willie Morris, Norman Mailer, and Kurt Vonnegut, James Jones's work received almost no serious critical study during his lifetime and relatively little in the decades since. Writing fifteen years after Jones's death, Michael Lydon described how Jones's work had “drifted into a ‘jury’s out’ limbo, and bringing in a favorable verdict today means bucking current critical trends. Not only is he a traditional realist in the postmodern era, he is also a White Male Author if ever there was one” (“A Voice against Anonymous Death” 120). Jones's work has been criticized as being vulgar, crude and simplistic. His early experiments in creating a literary style that he thought would more naturally mimic vernacular speech through techniques such as the omission of apostrophes from contractions earned a chorus of sneered admonition that he needed to learn the rules of grammar; the general assumption was not that he had made a deliberate choice to break standard punctuation and/or grammatical rules but that he had simply never learned the rules in the first place. The critical attacks grew so savage that Jones, the winner of the 1952 National Book Award, felt compelled to write his third novel *The Pistol* in a way that would prove to critics that he knew how to use conventional grammar and punctuation.

But what Jones's numerous critics failed to appreciate were the many fine qualities Jones brought to his work. As Jones scholar Steven Carter observes, the

contention that Jones's writing style is too vulgar or unsophisticated to deserve serious study:

is itself simplistic [and] downplays the complexity of his philosophy...the accusation glaringly fails to note how often the rough surface of his fiction delineated subtle and original psychological insights; how the 'clumsy' repetitious style was always rhythmically appealing and expressed emotions and ideas with remarkable precision, offering flashes of terror, perception, and unusual, intricate beauty; and how his tough, masculine voice spoke out against the insensitivity and foolhardiness of the Hemingway code of manhood. (1)

In 1981 James R. Giles stated unequivocally that Jones's "three-volume work is our most important fictional treatment of U.S. involvement in World War II" (4), an assertion strongly supported by the frequency with which celebrated war literature critic Paul Fussell cites Jones's work in his own studies. Responding to Giles's praise of Jones's World War II trilogy, George Garrett adds that:

taken together with *The Pistol* and some of the short stories...and especially with the well-received and highly personal text Jones created for *WWII*, his work could legitimately be classified as the foremost American accounting of World War II. Which is no minor place, no small achievement, when you consider the number and variety of novels and of nonfiction works that have been concerned with aspects of the American experience of that conflict and that are still being produced and published [more than a half century] after the events. (4)

Though Jones was never very interested in applying labels to his writing style, it would be fair to call him a literary naturalist in Frank Norris's definition of the word. As Donald Pizer explains, "Norris placed realism, romanticism, and naturalism in a dialectic, in which realism and romanticism were opposing forces, and naturalism was the transcending synthesis" (120). In Norris's view, there is a "distinction" that must be made between "Accuracy and Truth." "Accuracy," which he associated with realism, "is fidelity to particular detail" while "Truth," which he associated with romanticism, "is fidelity to the generalization applicable to a large body of experience," with naturalism "taking the best from each" (121). Though Jones would have likely disagreed with Norris's assertion that Accuracy and Truth are concepts that can conflict with each other, he is a Norrissian naturalist in the sense that he sought to combine the best qualities of realism and romanticism in his work. Above all else, Jones is a realist committed to seeking out the true gritty details of day-to-day life, what Norris referred to as "Accuracy."¹ As George Garrett puts it, "to Jones, representative of an older tradition, fidelity to experience is the primary test of truth, and the telling of truth is the whole point of the art" (21).

Throughout his career Jones fought for the right to record his subject matter as it was, without regard for whether or not his editors, readers, or critics took offense at the details of that subject matter. This would be a particular challenge for Jones during the writing of *From Here to Eternity*, when censorship and social mores meant Jones could not use what Larry Heinemann would later term the "frank barracks language" (44) that existed in the Army without consequence. In terms of official censorship, Jones's editors

¹ Jones would have considered this truth of detail, which he would not have distinguished from Norris's definition of "Truth" as a universally applicable constant.

at Scribner's feared that Jones's liberal use of profanity might lead to the book's becoming a casualty of the Comstock Laws. The Comstock Act of 1873 prohibited the sending of any "obscene, lewd, and/or lascivious" materials through the United States Postal Service, a broad proclamation that could be invoked for anything from pornography to contraceptives/contraceptive literature to any novel unfortunate enough to be deemed "obscene, lewd, or lascivious." Literary publishers dreaded the prospect of the Comstock Laws being applied to their products. If the Comstock Act was invoked to ban a book from being legally sent through the mail, that book could not be offered as a Book-of-the-Month Club selection and its sales would effectively be killed. Only three years before the publication of *From Here to Eternity*, such fears had led Norman Mailer to replace the word "fuck" in *The Naked and the Dead* with the euphemism "fug."² Despite the risks Jones would accept nothing of the sort, and Scribner's concerns over the profanity used in *From Here to Eternity* would lead to a meeting between Jones and Horace Manges, one of Scribner's top lawyers, that could have been written by Joseph Heller as a satiric scene for *Catch-22*. Jones and Manges sat down with the manuscript of *From Here to Eternity* between them and negotiated the precise number of profanities that would be allowed to remain in the novel. Jones described the incident in several letters to his friends, writing one old Army buddy that "the lawyer had a scoresheet. There were 259 fucks, 92 shits, and 5 pricks. He didn't count the pisses for some reason...we finally ended up by whittling the scoresheet down to 106 fucks, probably 35 shits and still 5 pricks" (Garrett 94).³

² And led Tallulah Bankhead's press agent to place a false story that upon being introduced to Mailer Bankhead recognized him as 'the young man that doesn't know how to spell' that Mailer would spend decades refuting.

³ When Jones returned home, he instructed his editor Burroughs Mitchell to "Just tell [Manges] Jones asked to be remembered to that fucking lawyer" (Garrett 94).

Though Jones was forced to relent on the total number, he fought hard for every fuck, shit, and prick that was included in *From Here to Eternity* because those were the words that he needed to use to represent accurately the language used by soldiers. Whether Scribner's, the censors in the Comstock Offices, or the United States Postal Service cared for that language was not his concern. A letter Jones wrote a few years later to Walter J. Minton at Putnam's in support of a young writer sheds a great deal of light on Jones's attitude towards subject matter some might have considered controversial or objectionable. The young writer, Gerald Tesch, had written a first novel called *Never the Same Again* (1956) that included some descriptions of homosexual experiences. In defense of Tesch, Jones wrote "I'm not especially hot for homosexuality. I *am* hot to get the *truth* told; about *anything*; *anywhere* in this country of ours. You and I both know how very little of it *does* get told, especially if it has anything to do with sex, homo or otherwise" (Garrett 21).

Jones wrote about the Army as he saw it, warts and all. This would cause some trouble when it came time to adapt *From Here to Eternity* to film, but if he was willing to tone down some content for film he was unwilling to budge in his fiction. Though the film may have depicted soldiers going to the New Congress Club to dance with 'hostesses,' Jones wrote about the prostitutes, madams, and brothels in Honolulu's Hotel Street as he knew them. Jones's soldiers roll homosexuals for spending cash when they've gambled away all their money within hours of Pay Call and pick up venereal diseases when they enjoy the fleshpots of Hotel Street a little too much. His officers find ways to unofficially break the rules if it will win them an athletic championship (and thereby put them in the good graces of their superiors), and most of them are far more

interested in scheming ways of getting their next promotion than looking after their men. In his combat novel *The Thin Red Line*, Jones shows soldiers who aren't fighting for grand American causes with capital letters like Freedom or Justice, or even Mom and Apple Pie. They fight because global events they have no interest in have taken control of their lives and the all-powerful institution of the Army has deemed they be sent into harm's way at Guadalcanal. Not one of Jones's soldiers dies gladly for his country; those who die and those who live are equally resentful of their lives being used as a commodity to purchase a bit of muddy ground on a malaria-infested island in the middle of nowhere. One character cynically sums up the cause of the war, and along with it his personal suffering, in one word: "property." But Jones goes beyond a breaking-down of simple Hollywood myths. *The Thin Red Line* leaves nothing out in its description of combat. Jones faithfully recreates every detail of the combat on Guadalcanal, no matter how gruesome or distasteful those details might be. He recreates the heat, the mud, the flies, the blood, the taste of "swipe"⁴ choked down by men with no other escape from the stresses of combat, and the reality that men who have been removed too long from the company of women may satiate their libidos through homosexual acts. In his homecoming novel *Whistle*, Jones shows the reality of life as an evacuated combat casualty. The men he depicts as having been wounded in combat don't endure their wounds silently and stoically, solemnly proud to have sacrificed their health or body parts in defense of a great cause. They cry and moan and soil themselves when they've been shot up too badly to control their bodily functions. They curse the loss of their limbs and eyesight and sexual organs that they never wished to relinquish but which bullets or shrapnel or mortar blasts have ripped from them. There are no martyrs in Jones's

⁴ A kind of moonshine made from fermenting ration cans of peaches or pineapples.

hospitals, only victims. Whether they are sullen or stoic about their wounds, Jones's soldiers are not the one-dimensional heroes that populate the war films of the period. Jones never met a John Wayne type in real life on Guadalcanal or in the hospitals, so no John Wayne types appear in his fiction. In his writing, Jones recreated as closely as he could what he saw during his time in the Army, and what he saw were reactions to combat and its aftermath there were as human and as varied as the men who endured it.

Yet despite the often-bleak realities they inhabit, Jones's soldiers are not unthinking brutes, but idealists and romantics. Though they rarely discuss it aloud, his protagonists are highly sensitive, often idealistic, and frequently driven by romantic notions of soldiering being the means by which they will become their best selves. To boil it down to a single word, Jones's soldiers want *more*. They want more out of life than they could achieve outside the Army, more honor and self-respect than they could hope to find as civilian day laborers or while standing in a bread line. They want to understand more about the world around them, more about their own spirituality, more of what their purpose on this earth is, or could be. They want more prestige, more respect, more understanding, and more love...right alongside more beer, more women, and more money in their pocket to pay for more beer and more women. Steven Carter singles out "Warden and Prewitt, as well as many of the other characters in *From Here to Eternity*" as "romanticized, larger-than-life figures" while arguing that "Jones regarded their idealization as a flaw and sought to eliminate it in subsequent novels" (63). In an interview with Maurice Dolbier Jones said "I look back at 'Eternity' and I think it was a very romantic book...the same kind of people...are in the new novel [*The Thin Red Line*], but I try to show them behaving more the way they would, and did, in real life"

(‘Writing’ 5). Though Jones may have toned down his protagonists’ characterizations as part of his never-ending quest to capture more fully ‘the Truth’ of experience, he could never fully eliminate his own innate romantic qualities in his writing. Even though his characters became less idealized and more realistic, the quixotic nature of their dreams, motivations, and internal desires remained the same. The result is that the strain of romanticism that runs through *From Here to Eternity* never disappears entirely in any of Jones’s later writing. Though Jones’s soldiers find it difficult to speak their feelings aloud, inside each of them strives relentlessly for more—more knowledge, more spiritual connection to the world around them, more understanding of what purpose is to be found in their lives, or the Army, or the War.

CHAPTER I

BIOGRAPHY

“There was nothing so Faulknerian about the town, but there was something very Faulknerian about the family” (199). These are the opening lines to Jones’s semi-autobiographical short story “The Ice Cream Headache,” and they say a great deal about the family background Jones was born into. His grandfather, George W. Jones, was a teetotaler and stern disciplinarian who served four years as sheriff of Crawford County, Illinois, before settling into a prosperous career as a lawyer. Having built up a neat little fortune, he “intended his four sons to be worthy of their inheritance” (MacShane 7) and picked out suitably dignified careers paths for them to pursue at Northwestern University: Paul and Charles were to follow in his footsteps and become lawyers, while Hanby and Ramon would study medicine. Ramon sought and received his father’s permission to become a dentist instead of a medical doctor because “he wanted to get out of school quicker so he could get married quicker” (MacShane 7). Ramon had as little interest in becoming a dentist as he did in becoming a medical doctor but was too weak to challenge his father’s demands that he become a professional. Like his brothers, Ramon was never able to escape his father’s domineering presence,⁵ at one point passing up the opportunity to pursue his own fate with an offered job in Australia. Instead of rebelling against George Jones’s control, he settled in to practice dentistry a few doors down from his father in Robinson, Illinois, and indulged his love of literature by writing poetry on the side. He soon followed his brothers’ example and descended into alcoholism. In “The Ice Cream Headache,” Ramon’s son James would thinly fictionalize his “grandfather’s

⁵ His brother Hanby, also ordered into the study of medicine by their father, committed suicide while at Northwestern (MacShane 7).

horrified thinking” that he’d sired “four sons, and four failures...four sons, and four drunken weaklings” (203).

That was the atmosphere James Jones was born into on November 6, 1921. Ramon had married Ada Blessing, “considered a great beauty locally” (MacShane 8), on July 15, 1908. Ramon had initially attempted to escape his father’s unrelenting presence by moving to nearby Flatrock to set up his practice, where his first son George W. Jones (commonly called Jeff, in a small but rare act of defiance) was born in 1910. But financial pressures forced them to move back to Robinson not long after Jeff’s birth, where they lived in a modest house on a lot behind his father’s stately mansion, which faced out towards Main Street. A second pregnancy resulted in a stillborn girl. During her subsequent depression, Ada grew obese and developed diabetes. Frustrated by her illness and the loss of her looks, and feeling that she had ‘married down’ by wedding Ramon, Ada henpecked her meek husband and threw herself into a heavy involvement with the Christian Scientist church. Though she never expected she would bear any more children after the stillbirth, years later she found herself pregnant again. Doctors recommended that she abort the child. But thanks to her newfound religious fervor she chose to have the baby and James Ramon Jones was born without complication.⁶

Jones was much closer to his father than his mother. His father taught him to box at an early age so that he would be tough enough to handle himself. His father’s stifled literary desires also helped inculcate a love of reading in Jones, as there were always plenty of books around the house. These two warring impulses would go a long way towards shaping Jones’s early personality. Too small to play team sports and feeling like his peers in Robinson compared him unfavorably to his popular older brother Jeff, Jones

⁶ She bore a third child, Mary Ann, in 1925.

embraced his outcast role in high school and took delight in boxing and later getting into street fights. But his attempts to project a macho image were merely a cover for his natural sensitivity and gentle nature. As a boy, he would withdraw for hours to the attic to read or play in seclusion with his large collection of toy soldiers. The continuing decline of his family's fortunes in the midst of the Great Depression pushed him to retreat further inward. Though Ramon's dental practice managed to barely stay afloat, the family endured a series of moves to smaller and cheaper houses while Ramon slipped further and further into the depths of alcoholism. Jones still loved his father for his books and essential good nature despite his drinking, but recognized that Ramon was at heart a weak man. His feelings for his mother were more complicated. After her second pregnancy resulted in a stillborn daughter Ada wanted a girl, and resented James for not being one. She had little patience for the rambunctious nature of a little boy and when he was a small child would sometimes keep him attached to a chain in the yard while she was doing housework to make sure she could keep an eye on him. When his younger sister Mary Ann was born her attention shifted and James endured the relative neglect suffered by middle children everywhere. His mother also had a tendency towards manipulation, and once asked James to spy on his father when she suspected him of having an affair.⁷ His tumultuous relationship with his mother left him "cautious and mistrustful" (MacShane 13) with women for a number of years afterward, and only furthered the isolation he felt growing up.

Having embraced the loner role in his adolescence, Jones spent more of his energy in high school trying to convince his classmates that he didn't care about their opinion of him than focusing on his studies. The only classes he perked up in were his

⁷ An incident that would inspire his short story "Just Like the Girl."

English classes. In all other areas, he was a mediocre student at best. Jones knew he didn't have the grades to get accepted by any decent university, but this was likely a moot point; his family didn't have the money to send him to college even if he had the grades he needed. He worked a few odd jobs after high school and talked with his brother about writing a novel together, but he knew that for the immediate future his most likely work prospects were as a day laborer. He was too young to join the Civilian Conservation Corps but desperately wanted to get out of Robinson. So on November 10, 1939 James Ramon Jones enlisted in the Regular Army of the United States. He had turned eighteen only three days earlier (MacShane 20).

Jones had listed no preference for any particular branch of Army service on his enlistment forms and was assigned to the Army Air Corps and sent to Chanute Field, a base only one hundred miles from Robinson. Because he had requested overseas duty, after ten days of indoctrination Jones was sent with the other recruits who'd made the same request to Fort Slocum in New York, an overseas replacement depot. He completed his initial training at Fort Slocum and received orders to sail on the U.S. Army Transport Ship *U.S. Grant* on December 18, 1939. Though Jones expected he would be assigned to duty in Puerto Rico, the *U.S. Grant* traveled through the Panama Canal and deposited him in San Francisco. He received several furloughs while the *Grant* was made ready for the next leg of the trip before setting out for Hawaii on January 10, 1940. When the ship arrived in Honolulu January 20th, Jones was assigned to the 17th Army Air Corps Base, more commonly called Hickam Field.

Jones knew the glasses he wore disqualified him from any sort of flight duty so he enrolled in a technical training course in the hopes of becoming a specialist, which he

saw as more prestigious and thereby preferable to straight duty. The training officer told Jones that he had scored higher on the verbal portion of the aptitude test than any other applicant he'd ever seen. He offered Jones a slot at the well-respected Mechanics School, a relatively plum assignment. But still naïve to the ways of the Army, Jones informed the officer that "he was not mechanically inclined" (MacShane 24). The next day Jones was assigned duty as a Military Policeman guarding the planes on the airstrip. One evening while making his rounds, he disturbed an amorous pilot who was intimately entertaining a lady-friend in the cockpit of his plane. Though the pilot was understandably incensed, Jones insisted that his romantic activities were against regulations and the pilot and his lady-friend eventually left the scene. The next day a sergeant who "looked at him kind of funny" (MacShane 24) suggested that Jones restrict his duties to being the guardhouse typist.

Jones knew he would not be assigned to any school while working at the guardhouse and tried to get himself transferred. Though he had hoped for radio school when he received his orders they were for clerical school, an assignment he "considered one of the most demeaning in the Air Corps" (MacShane 24). Though Jones grumbled "I didn't join the army to be a clerk, sure as hell" (MacShane 24-5) the orders were cut and he was transferred to Wheeler Field, a smaller base situated next to the Infantry's Schofield Barracks. Though Hickam Field had been much closer to the bars and fleshpots of Honolulu, Jones found himself enjoying the more rural atmosphere at Wheeler Field. During his free time he would take treks through the Kolekole Pass and started making trips to Schofield Barracks, "because he believed that was where the real men were" (MacShane 26). After one trip to watch the 'smokers,' company or regimental boxing

matches, Jones and a friend volunteered to fight as representatives of Wheeler Field. Jones lasted only a round and a half before being knocked out, while his friend was knocked to the canvas almost as soon as he stepped in the ring. Rather than discouraging him, the incident only whet Jones's appetite for the Infantry. Even though he was not particularly athletic, the emphasis that the Infantry placed on physicality and toughness appealed to the part of him that wished that he was. The Infantry had a romantic tradition and a sense of vigor that was lacking in the Air Corps, where he felt like "if you couldn't fly, all you could do was mow the lawn" (MacShane 27). In the summer of 1940 Jones made repeated trips to Schofield Barracks hoping to find a Company Commander with an open slot who would admit him. Captain Thomas Griffin, the regimental boxing coach, turned Jones away while encouraging him to reapply in September, when he expected to have an opening on the Company roster sheet. Jones did and in September of 1940 he was accepted as a recruit in Griffin's F Company, 27th Infantry Regiment (informally known as 'the Wolfhounds'), Hawaiian Division.

As a new transfer from the Air Corps, Jones was required to take basic training again and spent several weeks with the other transfers sweating through close-order drill on a parade ground. Afterwards he joined the 146 other men of F Company in Schofield Barracks Quad D. Jones was enthusiastic and looked forward to rifle drills but failed to make much of a mark initially. Though the Infantry's emphasis on athletics had been one of the driving points in his decision to transfer from the Air Corps, he failed to make either the boxing or the football teams. While an ankle injury suffered during football tryouts would eventually lead to his removal from combat on Guadalcanal, Jones was disappointed by his lack of athletic success. As a non-athlete he may as well have been

invisible in the eyes of Captain Griffin, who Jones had thought “one helluva swell guy” (MacShane 27) while he was searching for an Infantry company to transfer into. He also fell back into the familiar role of loner, albeit with good reason. Though his family could not afford to send him to college, Jones’s middle-class background and high school diploma marked him by the standards of the time as well-educated and having come from a relatively well-off family for an enlisted man. The sensitive and intelligent Jones with his Midwestern background had little in common with his fellow enlisted men, who tended to have little or no formal education and were mostly sons of hardscrabble poor mining or farming families from the South. As he had in the Air Corps and in high school, Jones mostly kept to himself.

Jones’s time in F Company quickly provided him with fodder for his novels. Although he had not managed to make the boxing team he still enjoyed sparring for fun, which led him to befriend Robert E. Stewart. Though readers would later assume that the character of Robert E. Lee Prewitt was based on Jones himself, it was Stewart who refused to join the boxing team because he’d once accidentally injured another boxer, and Stewart who endured ‘the Treatment’ of extra duties and hazing from Captain Griffin for that refusal. Jones’s time in F Company also saw a sergeant having an affair with Griffin’s wife, “who was well known for driving into Quad D with her skirts drawn up to reveal her legs to the men who lined up on the balcony to look down at her” (MacShane 30). After a bout of appendicitis in December of 1940, Jones was promoted to private first class and assigned to the guardroom, where the smaller living quarters provided more privacy than the barracks, and drew duty as a waiter at the Officer’s Club. This was considered highly desirable duty, because waiters and bartenders at the Officer’s Club

were excused from much of the more physically strenuous aspects of straight duty Infantry life. His time waiting on officers gave Jones insight into the minds of the officer class, and the regular schedule allowed him time to work on his writing.⁸ Jones was reassigned to serve as the assistant company clerk beginning in January 1941. His new duties assisting with the payroll and the duty roster had him working closely with the first sergeant and Jones learned a great deal about the administrative side of the army. During this time he also came in frequent contact with the company bugler, Frank Marshall, who became a friend of his. As assistant company clerk Jones worked directly under the new company commander, Captain William Blatt, who arrived just around the time Jones was reassigned. Unlike Captain Griffin, Captain Blatt had a more humane style of command and recognized and valued Jones's intelligence. When he learned of Jones's literary aspirations Blatt did his best to help Jones take a summer course at the University of Hawaii. Jones was bitterly disappointed when his request was denied in spite of Blatt's recommendation. Jones continued writing nevertheless, openly using the Company typewriter to work on his fiction after he'd completed his official work. Jones was still serving as assistant company clerk under Captain Blatt when the 27th Infantry regiment was reassigned to the newly-created 25th Infantry Division on October 1st, 1941.⁹

Jones was on guard duty serving as an orderly on the morning of December 7th, 1941. He was in the mess hall enjoying the special Sunday ration of a half-pint of milk

⁸ When he was on straight duty the irregular hours and exhaustion after physically demanding days often interfered with his ability to write.

⁹ When the Hawaiian Division was founded on February 25th, 1921 it was organized as a 'Square Division' comprised of two brigades of two paired regiments, for four regiments total. In the lead-up to World War II the Army decided to re-organize its Table of Organization and Equipment (TO & E) in favor of 'Triangular Divisions' made up of three regiments for greater flexibility. The regiments of the Hawaiian Division were split up and used to form the backbone of two new divisions. The 19th and 21st Regiments were assigned to the 24th Division, while the 35th and 27th Regiments were assigned to the 25th Division. In recognition of their origins, both the 24th and 25th Divisions kept versions of the Hawaiian Division's taro leaf emblem on their divisional patches.

when he heard the explosions taking place at Wheeler Field, only two miles away. Some soldiers debated whether “they [were] doing some blasting” (MacShane 39) and Jones rushed outside with everyone else to see what was going on. He emerged to see a Japanese Zero firing his machine guns on a strafing run. The Japanese plane was low enough for Jones to see that “as he came abreast of us, he gave us a typically toothy grin and waved, and” Jones swore “I shall never forget his face behind the goggles” (MacShane 39). Jones spent the rest of the morning at the orderly desk relaying orders and by afternoon had moved out with the rest of the 27th Regiment to defend Oahu’s beaches from the expected Japanese landing. F Company was assigned to guard a stretch of beach at Oahu’s southern tip from Makapuu Point to Wailupe, where they would stay for roughly ten months.

This period in Jones’s life would be marked by the ever-present wind at Makapuu Point,¹⁰ his father’s suicide in March of 1942, and Captain Blatt’s fatherly influence. Blatt was particularly kind upon hearing of Ramon Jones’s suicide and encouraged Jones to apply to Officer’s Candidate School. Though “Jones believed he was a natural member of the officer class” he declined, “prefer[ing] to stay with the enlisted men, who represented the real army” to him “and had never been written about” (MacShane 41). Despite Jones’ refusal to apply to O.C.S. and frequent tardiness returning from town, Blatt still promoted to him Corporal in May 1942. When it became clear that the Japanese would not be invading Oahu, he also gave Jones permission to enroll in two English courses at the University of Hawaii in time for spring semester. Along with one desultory semester at N.Y.U., it would be the only college education Jones ever received. His time at the University of Hawaii was cut short when the 25th Infantry Division was ordered to return

¹⁰ Jones would later write about that wind in detail in his short story “The Way It Is” and novella *The Pistol*.

to Schofield for further training and organization in September, 1942. Schofield was too far away for Jones to continue college courses, and the training the 25th received “was woefully inadequate and we knew it” (MacShane 48). Then training was abruptly cancelled and on December 6 1942, one day shy of a full year after the attack on Pearl Harbor, the transport ship carrying Jones and the other men of F Company steamed out of the harbor. From the deck they could still see the burned hulks of warships sticking out of the water. Hopeful rumors spread that they were headed for Australia; their actual destination was the island of Guadalcanal.

After a brief stop in Fiji, the troopship *Hunter Liggett* arrived at Guadalcanal’s Lunga Point on December 30, 1942. The 1st Marine Division, under the command of General Alexander Vandegrift, had been on Guadalcanal since August 7th and the casualties it had sustained over a long campaign left it badly under-strength. The Army’s 25th Infantry Division and Americal Division, along with the 8th Marine Regiment of the 2nd Marine Division, had been sent to Guadalcanal under the command of Army General Alexander Patch to relieve the 1st Marine Division and allow them to be sent to Australia for recuperation. Unbeknownst to Patch and Vandegrift, the Japanese had decided in early December that their position on Guadalcanal was untenable and had already begun making plans to withdraw their forces. On December 31st, 1942, Emperor Hirohito authorized Operation Ke, an evacuation plan in which a rearguard action would cover the withdrawal of the remaining Japanese forces. While the rearguard slowed the American offensive, Japanese forces spent most of January, 1943 retreating to the West end of Guadalcanal. American intelligence noted the large Japanese naval presence forming off Cape Esperance and assumed that they were bringing reinforcements, but the expected

counter-offensive never came. Instead the Japanese Army forces were successfully evacuated under the cover of darkness starting February 1, with the last troops exiting by Destroyer on February 7. When General Patch determined there were no more Japanese troops on the island, he declared Guadalcanal secure on February 9, 1943. Though history would eventually show the 25th Division arriving just in time for the end of the Guadalcanal campaign, Jones and the other men of F Company had no way of knowing that when they set foot on Lunga Point on December 30 (Miller 210-31).

Jones's introduction to combat came on that first day. The Japanese decided to welcome the new American Divisions by attempting to bomb the troopships as they landed replacements on the beach. Jones and F Company landed without incident, and proceeded to "stand in perfect safety...and watch as if watching a football game or a movie." The men "would cheer whenever a Jap plane went smoke-trailing down the sky, or groan when one got through and water spouts geysered up around the transports." At first they witnessed only near-misses, but the merry mood disappeared when "a loaded barge coming in took a hit and seemed simply to disappear...it seemed strange and curiously callous, then, to be watching and cheering this game in which men were dying" (MacShane 53). Shortly afterward F Company was ordered to Henderson Field, and the march quickly introduced them to all the joys of Guadalcanal's climate: sweltering heat, humidity, razor-sharp kunai grass, malaria-carrying mosquitoes, and thick, ever-present mud. On January 10, 1943, the 25th Division was dispatched to take a trio of hills near the Matanikau River called Mount Austen, the Galloping Horse, and the Sea Horse.¹¹ Major General 'Lightning Joe' Collins, commander of the 25th, sent Jones and the 27th Regiment

¹¹ The Galloping Horse and the Sea Horse were nicknames based on what the hills supposedly resembled on relief maps.

to capture the Galloping Horse while their sister regiment, the 35th, took Mount Austen and the Sea Horse. The two regiments would then link up at Hill 53, the 'head' of the Galloping Horse. Jones, however, would not last long enough to see the top of Hill 53.

By the third day of the battle Jones and F Company had taken Hill 52 and were preparing to push up a rising piece of ground that would later be named Sims Ridge in the hopes of reaching Hill 53. Jones had been serving a dual role as both infantryman and assistant company clerk to Captain Blatt, running messages and taking care of the paperwork that still cropped up even in the midst of combat. Blatt "soon became notorious for exposing himself to danger," (MacShane 54) which meant that as his assistant clerk, Jones ironically found himself in one of the more perilous jobs in the company. On the morning of the third day Jones joined the assault up Sims Ridge. After some early progress, the attack bogged down when F Company came under heavy machine gun fire from well-fortified Japanese positions. Even worse, the terrain F Company stalled at was dominated by a steep cliff they would have struggled to climb even if it wasn't being raked by machine guns. Roughly four hours into the attack, Jones was hit by a mortar shell. He "blacked out for several seconds...then came to...several yards down the slope, bleeding like a stuck pig." After determining that he "wasn't dead or dying, [he] was pleased to get out of there as fast as [he] could" (MacShane 54). The route down the hill towards the safety of the rear lines was under constant sniper fire. Though Jones made it down the hill and back to the aid station without further injury, he witnessed a sight that would affect him deeply in the years to come: that of a nineteen year old soldier who had been sniped while being evacuated and "wounded so badly" that even hours later "blood filled the depression made by his hips in the stretcher"

(MacShane 54-55). Luckily for himself though, Jones's wound looked worse than it was, as even minor head wounds have a tendency to bleed profusely. The shrapnel from the mortar round that wounded Jones left him with a cut at his hairline but no further damage. He was treated with morphine and sulfa powder at the Divisional hospital and later awarded the Purple Heart for his wounds.

Ten days after being wounded, Jones returned to his unit sporting a bandage around his head that covered one eye. He was assigned to new duties as a clerk at the company command post assisting the first sergeant and supervising the distribution of supplies throughout the company. Though he had been gone only ten days, Jones returned to a very changed F Company. The American lines had moved forward rapidly as the Japanese executed their withdrawal, though the Americans were still under the impression that the Japanese were merely massing for a counter-offensive. Jones's wound had come at a relatively opportune moment as the 27th Regiment took a number of casualties in their reduction of the Galloping Horse¹² and the subsequent attacks on the next series of objectives, Hills 88 and 89. By the time Jones returned, Captain Blatt was no longer with the company. He had been ordered to take an objective by a route that he knew would lead to unnecessary casualties among his men. Blatt took the objective by using a different route that achieved the same results with fewer losses, but the Army is unforgiving of subordinate officers who refuse to follow their orders. Despite his successes, Blatt was relieved of his command.

Though Jones did not return to frontline combat after being wounded, his remaining time on Guadalcanal was far from safe or pleasant. One day, he narrowly

¹² The day after Jones was wounded, Hill 53 was taken in large part due to a patrol led by the battalion's Executive Officer Captain Charles W. Davis. Captain Davis was awarded the Medal of Honor for his actions and became Jones's inspiration for the character Captain John Gaff in *The Thin Red Line*.

averted death when nature's call led him to leave the command post in search of a quiet spot to defecate. He ventured into the nearby jungle for a little privacy and had just gotten his pants around his ankles when he heard an alarming sound. Jones looked up to see a Japanese soldier charging him with a fixed bayonet. He narrowly won the ensuing hand-to-hand struggle, but the Japanese soldier did not die quietly. Even after Jones wounded him seriously, the man clung stubbornly to life until Jones was finally able to kill him. Afterwards, Jones discovered pictures of the man's wife and child in his wallet. When he finally made it back to the command post, covered in blood and filth and utterly exhausted, he swore that he would never fight again.¹³ At other times, he was sent on unpleasant details to dig up the corpses of American soldiers laid in temporary graves so that they could be moved to their permanent resting spot. On one of these details he witnessed a man dig up the body of his own brother.¹⁴ Even daily life in a relatively safe position like a command post was a terrible strain. Like many of the men around him, Jones suffered bouts of malaria, dengue fever, and jaundice. Nightly bombing raids made a good night's sleep a rare occurrence, and frequent tropical downpours ensured that the men were perpetually drenched. The poor conditions and the strains of combat kept morale low, and many soldiers developed an aversion to being around their own dead or wounded for fear that bad luck might be contagious. Men sought any escape they could. Scotch whiskey from Australia smuggled in by SeaBees¹⁵ commanded high prices. When there was no real alcohol available, the men would drink aftershave or a concoction called swipe, a drink fermented crudely from ration cans of pineapple or peaches.

¹³ At least one critic, Robert Blaskiewicz, disputes that this incident took place. See "James Jones On Guadalcanal" for Blaskiewicz's reasoning.

¹⁴ Jones recreates this incident in his story "No Greater Love."

¹⁵ Naval Construction Brigade sailors.

After working at the command post for two months, Jones fell down one day in front of the first sergeant. The ankle injury that he had suffered at football tryouts just after transferring into Captain Griffin's F Company had worsened over time. His ankle had a tendency to painfully dislocate before popping back into its proper position, but Jones had never bothered reporting an injury that he considered relatively minor compared to a combat wound. When he happened to dislocate his ankle in front of the first sergeant, the sergeant said "if it's as bad as what I saw, you got no business being in the infantry" and told him to report to a doctor. Jones agonized over whether or not he should go, worried that the other men would think of him as a coward or a goldbrick. His buddies encouraged him to see the doctor, with one telling him that if he had a similar injury, "I'd be out of here like a shot" (MacShane 58). Having received the approval of his peers, Jones decided to seize his chance to get out. Major combat on Guadalcanal had concluded and he figured the presence or absence of a single company clerk couldn't have much effect either way at that point. On March 15, 1943, Jones reported to the division hospital for treatment of both his ankle and a nasty skin infection he'd developed. He knew the doctor's decision could determine his ultimate survival in the war, but the news was good. The doctor confirmed his first sergeant's opinion that Jones had no business being in the infantry with his bad ankle, and tagged him for removal to the large naval hospital on Efate Island in the New Hebrides as soon as his skin infection subsided. At Efate Jones underwent a major operation on his ankle. He was in surgery for three hours and the anesthetic wore off during the last twenty minutes, but he was safe. His days in the infantry were over.

Jones's operation required a lengthy recovery, and he was soon shipped from Efate to New Zealand. He was checked into the Auckland Hospital on April 27, where he encountered a number of men from the 27th Infantry Regiment. Seeing so many fellow Wolfhounds went a long way towards assuaging the guilt he felt over leaving the men in his company behind. He wrote in his diary that "everybody that can is getting out" (MacShane 59). Jones was only in Auckland ten days, but that was long enough to get caught up in 'the Battle of Queen Street' while on pass. Many Guadalcanal veterans recuperating in Auckland had nothing to wear but the drab clothes given to them at the hospital. When an un-blooded regiment of cocky Marines arrived and began strutting around Auckland in sharply-tailored uniforms sometimes augmented with combat decorations they weren't entitled to wear, the weary veterans fresh from the hell of Guadalcanal were less than pleased, to put it mildly. After it became clear that the local Auckland girls preferred the well-dressed Marine rookies to the bedraggled Army veterans, a massive brawl broke out amongst the drinking establishments of Queen Street and Jones was caught in the middle of it. His involvement was limited by the cast on his leg and the crutches he needed to get around, but he still managed to get into the action. He stood behind a doorway, and "when anybody wearing ribbons or a well-cut uniform stuck his head in, I would use one of my crutches like a bayoneted rifle, and jab him with the rubber foot or buttstroke him with the handle" (MacShane 59). The melee ended up being too much for the local M.P.s to handle. In the end it took a battalion of Maori troops carrying rifles with fixed bayonets to restore order and bring 'the Battle of Queen Street' to a close.

After less than three weeks in New Zealand, Jones was shipped back to America on the hospital ship *Matsonia*, arriving in San Francisco on May 19, 1943. It had been three and a half years since he'd last set foot in the continental United States. He was sent to Letterman General Hospital in San Francisco's Presidio where, along with the rest of the newly arrived wounded, he was denied passes into town and confined to his ward. Jones was incensed that the Army would unilaterally deny the walking wounded the chance to enjoy San Francisco, and "felt more like a prisoner than a returning hero" (MacShane 60). The ambulatory patients were eventually allowed passes after a confrontation with hospital staff, but the incident fueled Jones's growing bitterness with the Army and he did not enjoy himself on his pass. The Army policy at the time was to try to place wounded soldiers in hospitals near their closest relatives, and after a few days in San Francisco Jones was sent to Kennedy General Hospital in Memphis, Tennessee to continue his rehabilitation.

When Jones arrived at Kennedy Hospital he was amongst one of the earliest groups of wounded veterans to return to the States. In the European Theater, Allied Forces had sparred with Rommel in North Africa but were still a month away from kicking off the Operation Husky landings on Sicily. In the Pacific, the campaigns in Guadalcanal and the Aleutian Islands had been completed and Jones's 25th Division was embroiled in the next island hop up the Solomon Island chain to New Georgia. As part of the first wave of returning veterans Jones expected that he would receive exceptional treatment, but the reality was not exceptional in a positive way. The hospital system was still undergoing a trial-and-error process of figuring out how best to care for recuperating veterans, so Jones was forced to endure a series of ill-conceived hospital policies as the

medical establishment adjusted to caring for such a large number of wounded. Though he expected to be given a hero's pampering once he'd returned stateside, he was actually treated more like an institutional guinea pig. When he arrived at Kennedy, standard policy was to house the veterans in wards organized by the type of wound they had. The theory was that men with similar wounds would cope better by being around others that they could relate to. In reality the practice would have fit in nicely as a scene in *Catch-22*. "Some forgetful planner" (MacShane 61) had issued leather boots to a large number of troops assigned to invade frigid Attu Island in Alaska's Aleutian chain; the men who lost their feet to frostbite amputations as a result of that carelessness filled two entire wards at Kennedy. Another ward was dedicated solely to men who'd been blinded in combat, and Jones got to watch as "they would line up in the hall and, taking hold of the shirttail of the man in front of them, would be led in a group along the corridors to their meals" (MacShane 61).

Jones's injury was relatively light, and he quickly came to look upon it with a mixture of relief that he had escaped worse injury and guilt that he had escaped combat with a fairly insignificant ailment. His cast was removed on June 3 and after a few weeks of physical therapy he was allowed to trade in his crutches and walk with the aid of a cane. After three more weeks of therapy he was capable of walking without the cane, but still complained of pain in his ankle and spent an additional month in a convalescent ward. Despite his slowly healing ankle, Jones was mobile enough to go into Memphis on pass. Like many other wounded veterans, Jones indulged primarily in three pastimes while in Memphis: drinking, fighting, and engaging in short-term sexual liaisons. Jones pursued all three with abandon. Memphis was flush with young women working jobs that

aided wartime production, and with their men overseas, many were lonely. It was common for the wounded to have accrued months upon months of back pay during their time overseas, and Jones was no exception. With little else to spend it on, many wounded soldiers would rent lavish hotel rooms for as long as their back pay held out and democratically share access with others who'd seen combat. Jones recalled how he "had a two-room suite at the Peabody [Hotel] six weeks straight and loaned the key to anybody who wanted it when [he] couldn't get into town" (MacShane 62). After the initial rush of enjoying female company again had faded, Jones soured on the debauchery of the Memphis party scene. Underneath the frenetic pace of the partying Jones detected an underlying current of desperation to the merriment. He later wrote that "inside I was bored with the whole mess: people trying to have a good time and failing. I've found the fun comes from inside" (MacShane 63). He eventually took to picking bar fights as his preferred means of working through his Post-Traumatic Stress rather than chasing new sexual conquests.

Jones's disillusionment with the Army grew greater during his time at Kennedy Hospital. Despite the distractions that the Memphis bar scene offered, Jones could not avoid seeing the results of combat daily on the faces of his fellow veterans. Almost as bad as having to see the horrific physical wounds suffered by men too debilitated to leave the hospital was seeing the clear psychological trauma endured by nearly every veteran he encountered at the wards or out at the Memphis hotels. Coming face to face with such horrors every day, Jones was tormented by questions like 'Why did that man get hit so terribly while I escaped? How easily could that have been me?' When he read the accounts of the terrible fighting his old outfit was facing on New Georgia he felt guilty to

have left his friends behind with a mere trick ankle. On a furlough to see his brother Jeff in Florida, he began telling people that he'd been wounded in his ankle to cover up a growing feeling of inadequacy. He also demonstrated how much Guadalcanal was on his mind one day when he was walking along the street and suddenly dropped to the ground to take cover at the sound of a Venetian blind being raised. When he stood up he cursed his brother for "gawking" at him, and explained after he'd cooled off that "that damned thing sounded more like a Nambu-[Machine] gun than a Nambu-gun" (MacShane 64).

In late August 1943 Jones's ankle was reexamined and he was released from Kennedy Hospital as fit for duty. Jones was disheartened; his ankle was still weak and he'd been hoping to be discharged, not returned to duty. He successfully appealed for another examination which resulted in him being recommended for non-combat duty. But when his orders came through in November 1943 they were for assignment to a company in the 26th Infantry Division's 101st Regiment at Fort Campbell, Kentucky, another Infantry posting. Jones responded by going A.W.O.L.¹⁶ and taking a trip back to Robinson, but with both his parents deceased and no real home to return to he spent most of his visit drowning his sorrows in massive quantities of alcohol. The trip was successful in another sense however. While A.W.O.L. in Robinson his Aunt Sadie introduced him to Lowney Handy, who would later become his long-time lover and greatly influence the writing of *From Here to Eternity*. When Jones finally showed up at Fort Campbell he narrowly averted a court-martial with the help of "a sympathetic warrant officer" (MacShane 67) but was too embittered to avoid further trouble. His assignment to the 26th Division meant a return to straight duty, with month-long maneuvers and extended marches, and his ankle could barely hold up. He was frustrated that the Army refused to

¹⁶ Absent Without Leave.

recognize what he considered a service-ending disability, pessimistic about his odds of surviving a return to combat when the 26th shipped out to Europe, and depressed about having to leave the civilian world he'd briefly tasted while A.W.O.L. in Robinson. During this time he also wrote in a notebook entry "I am afraid the Army is killing what artist there is in me" (MacShane 67). He went A.W.O.L. again over Thanksgiving and when he returned from a three-day bender was busted down to private. After an inquiry into his actions he was finally released from the Infantry and transferred at Christmastime into the 842nd Quarter Master Gas and Supply Company, another unit stationed at Fort Campbell.

When Jones joined the 842nd QMGS Company it was made up of a cadre of only seven men designated to get the company up and running. Its purpose was to handle gasoline for aircraft to be used in the impending D-Day Invasion and its duties mostly consisted of handling and hauling fifty-five-gallon drums of gasoline. As an outfit it was considered a dumping ground for misfits, undesirables, and draftees. Jones was one of the few combat veterans in the 842nd and went out of his way to always show off the Purple Heart and Combat Infantrymen's Badge on his uniform. It didn't take long for Jones to be appointed to the familiar position of Company Clerk and on March 1, 1944, he was promoted to Sergeant. It also didn't take long for Jones to get into trouble again. Jones took offense to what he perceived as the Army treating his C.O. (a competent officer who happened to be Jewish) shabbily. When the man was replaced with a new officer who seemed to delight in humiliating him, Jones went A.W.O.L. again, though luckily without major consequence. In May, however, after a long night spent drinking beer at the PX Jones "decided he had had enough" (MacShane 68) and packed up his things. He later

wrote that “I was leaving for good though I didn’t know where or how or what would come of it, and I didn’t much care...at the risk of sounding sentimental I will say I loved the post I was leaving, all of it. I also hated it” (MacShane 68). Jones took the bus to Indianapolis where he stayed with a friend and spent most of his time working on his novel, which he intended to call *They Shall Inherit the Laughter*. He had worked on it throughout his time at Kennedy hospital as well as during his stay at Fort Campbell. While on duty as company clerk with the 842nd Jones’s mind would often be focused on his writing, thinking up “ideas, sentences, whole paragraphs” (MacShane 68) for his novel. He couldn’t write these thoughts down while on duty so he would attempt to work on his novel at night. However, a darkened barracks proved to be a poor work environment for a burgeoning author and Jones found his writing suffering. His decision to go A.W.O.L. appears at least partially motivated by a desire to work on his novel in peace, as he produced about twenty thousand words during that period (MacShane 68). Jones became nervous about getting his friends in trouble for harboring an A.W.O.L. soldier, and when Lowney Handy figured out the situation she drove to Indianapolis and convinced Jones to go back to Fort Campbell.

Upon his return Jones was thrown in the stockade and charged with being A.W.O.L. for two weeks. He was soon transferred to the prison ward of Camp Campbell’s hospital and given a psychiatric interview. Jones wrote to his brother to say that he “told them everything I could...that I am genius (altho [*sic*] they probably won’t believe that); that if they attempt to send me overseas again, I’ll commit suicide; that if I don’t get out of the army I’ll either go mad or turn into a criminal...that all I want to do is write, and that nobody and no thing means anything to me except writing” (MacShane

68). Jones felt that after his service on Guadalcanal he “had done all a man could be expected to do” and deserved a discharge, writing that if his “ankle were a wound instead of an operation as it is, I would have requested a discharge.” He also told his brother that he had “seriously considered” having a train run over his leg because “it’d be worth the loss of a foot to get out so I could have some peace and write. I just can’t take it anymore” (MacShane 69).

On June 1st Jones was given a complete physical and sent for observation to the psychiatric ward. His psychiatrist, Captain Howard E. Roberts, wrote of his conversations with Jones:

Feels he has done his share and wants out to write because of intense desire to express himself. Says if he gets ordered overseas again he will commit suicide but the world will be the loser by missing his writing. Patient feels depressed mostly but has brief spells of elation...he has disturbed dreams and is bothered by memories of combat, blood, stench of dead and hardships. Feels it was valuable to him tho as background for his writing. (MacShane 69)

Roberts initially diagnosed Jones as suffering from “acute depression,” but after further observation upgraded his assessment to “psychoneurosis, mixed anxiety and compulsive types with schizoid trends.” During his time in the psychiatric ward Jones was reserved at first but grew more comfortable and outgoing after the first week. He also spent a great deal of time reading. His ankle was reexamined by an orthopedist who felt he “seemed to be exaggerating his complaint” (MacShane 69), but after three weeks Jones was deemed mentally stable enough to merit a transfer to an open hospital ward. While his case for

absenteeism was being processed his brother and Lowney Handy both lobbied on his behalf. Jeff testified to a social worker about his brother James's high character while Handy worked the phones with political connections she had to the Illinois Democratic Party. Jones's superior officers were interviewed and asked "their opinion of his future prospects as a soldier, and they reported they were not good."¹⁷ Two days before he was released from the psychiatric ward the provost marshal dropped the charge of absenteeism. Orders were cut that he be issued a certificate of disability for discharge that "stated that because his psychoneurosis did not exist before his enlistment and was no fault of his own, he should be discharged 'for disability in line of duty and not due to his own misconduct'" (MacShane 70). On July 6, 1944, his honorable discharge was formally processed. Jones had finally gotten his wish: he was out of the Army for good.

Upon receiving his discharge Jones decided to take a trip to Asheville, North Carolina, to see the place of Thomas Wolfe's birth. *Look Homeward Angel* had been an important influence on Jones and his experiences with his family left him feeling a strong kinship with Wolfe. Jones felt he needed the trip to give him strength for his return to Robinson. Once back in Robinson, he stayed with Harry and Lowney Handy full time while he settled back into civilian life. Jones's disability pension did not provide enough for him to live on, but he was eligible for a Vocational Rehabilitation Award so long as he was enrolled as a student. He decided to apply to New York University because New

¹⁷ While one must tread carefully when looking to fiction to investigate historical fact, I feel it worth mentioning that Jones describes a fictional version of this incident in *Whistle*. In the fictional scene, a representative from the company's officers approaches Marion Landers (the closest analogue to Jones himself) while he is in the psychiatric ward and tell him they will slant their testimony based on whether he wishes to return to active duty or not; Landers asks them to testify so that he will be discharged and they do exactly that. Whether the officers that testified against reinstating Jones to active duty made him a similar offer or not is a matter only they and Jones could have known. It is highly doubtful we will ever know if Jones's fictional depiction was a complete invention of his imagination, an exaggeration of actual fact, or a thinly-veiled roman á clef of his own experiences, but I find the possibility that the officers testified based on his wishes worth noting.

York was the center of the literary world and because Thomas Wolfe had once taught at N.Y.U. He was admitted for the spring term of 1945. Jones arrived in New York in February carrying a letter of introduction to Maxwell and Ruth Aley that he had received from a friend in Robinson. The Aleys were both prominent literary agents and Jones went straight to their house upon arriving in the city. Maxwell Aley was thoroughly intrigued by the novel Jones had worked on during his time in the Army, still titled *They Shall Inherit the Laughter*. It concerned the homecoming of four veterans following their service in combat,¹⁸ but despite the literary promise it showed it was too raw to be considered publishable. Aley suggested Jones undertake a massive series of revisions but Jones was both incensed and insulted by the suggestion; Lowney Handy had heaped such praise upon it that he considered the novel publishable as it was.

In response to Aley's suggestion, Jones decided to take his manuscript to Maxwell Perkins at Charles Scribner's and Sons. Jones wanted to work with the editor of Hemingway, Fitzgerald, and Wolfe, and arrogantly assumed that Perkins would be more amenable to *They Shall Inherit the Laughter* than Aley. Without any letter of introduction he took it upon himself to visit Scribner's office with his manuscript in hand. He asked to see Perkins and was told that Perkins was out and he was free to leave his manuscript with the receptionist. Jones replied "No...if I can't see Perkins then I won't leave it." As Frank MacShane describes,"The receptionist left the room and came back to say that Perkins had just returned to his office through the back door and would see Jones. They talked together for about an hour, and Jones told him of his war experiences and hopes as

¹⁸ Jones would revisit this same topic as a mature author in his final novel *Whistle*. *They Shall Inherit The Laughter* was never published in Jones's lifetime, but thanks to the efforts of his daughter Kaylie much of its content was released in October 2011 under the title *To The End Of The War*. Jones scholar George Hendrick edited the manuscript of *They Shall Inherit the Laughter* into *To The End Of The War*, which he presents as a series of interrelated short stories rather than as a novel.

a writer. He left the manuscript. Only years later did he learn that there was no back door to Perkins' office" (78). Maxwell Perkins did read Jones's manuscript and returned it shortly thereafter echoing Maxwell Aley's suggestion that it would only be publishable with significant revisions. Jones acceded and left N.Y.U. after the fall term to begin revising *They Shall Inherit the Laughter*, but the work went slowly. Maxwell Aley tried to help, identifying pieces of "careless writing" and "places that are sloppy and inept," telling Jones it was "like a good pianist playing Beethoven badly" (MacShane 82).

Jones returned his revised version of *They Shall Inherit the Laughter* to Perkins in January 1946, but wrote again to Perkins before receiving a reply. His letter mentioned a few other potential ideas for novels that he'd had, and included the fateful admission "I have always wanted to do a novel on the peacetime army...something I don't remember having seen." He sketched out a few potential characters, and described the character who would evolve into Prewitt in terms of his "his intense personal pride, his six months on stockade rockpile rather than admit he was wrong and accept company punishment when he felt he was right in his actions. The small man standing on the edge of the ocean shaking his fist, the magnificent gesture" (MacShane 82). Not long after sending this letter Jones received Perkins's reply. In it, Perkins simultaneously asked for even further revisions to *They Shall Inherit the Laughter* while also offering a \$500 option on the "peacetime army" novel. Jones's response was mixed. While he was disappointed that *They Shall Inherit the Laughter* had been rejected yet again, he was encouraged that Perkins thought enough of him to option the "peacetime army" novel. He quickly sent Perkins a telegram affirming his acceptance of the \$500 option and shifted his attention

away from *They Shall Inherit the Laughter*¹⁹ to his new novel. He wrote a thirty-six page outline for a novel initially conceived in three parts: the first two would take place at Schofield barracks and the third would end with Prewitt's death in the Solomon Islands at New Georgia. After producing roughly eighty pages divided into fourteen chapters, Maxwell Perkins sent him \$500 more to show he remained "deeply interested" (MacShane 83) in the book. Jones was no longer an ex-soldier with literary ambitions but a legitimate author at work, producing the first of four novels (*From Here to Eternity*, *The Pistol*, *The Thin Red Line*, *Whistle*) that would transform the grist of his Army experiences into arguably the foremost literary account of the Second World War.

A NOTE ON CHARACTER NAMES

In his preface to *Whistle*, Jones discusses the difficulties he ran into while writing *From Here to Eternity* with regards to the scope of the novel as he'd originally intended it. He recalls that initially he had "meant for that book to carry its people from the peacetime Army on through Guadalcanal and New Georgia, to the return of the wounded to the United States. A time span corresponding to [his] own experience." However, midway through the writing of *From Here to Eternity* Jones "realized such an ambitious scope of such dimension wasn't practicable" and began plans to split the three time periods (Pre-War to Pearl Harbor, Guadalcanal, Post-Guadalcanal return of wounded veterans to the U.S.) into a trilogy of novels. Jones directly cites John Dos Passos's *USA* trilogy as one influence, although he considered *USA* to be "one large novel, not a trilogy" and hoped that "with [his] trilogy each novel should stand by itself as a work alone" (xvii). However, Jones ran into a very large problem near the end of writing *From*

¹⁹ During the writing of *From Here to Eternity* Jones would ultimately cull material from *They Shall Inherit the Laughter* to rework into the short stories "The Way It Is," "Two Legs for the Two of Us," and "The Temper of Steel" (MacShane 86-7).

Here to Eternity. In his “original conception...the major characters...were meant to continue throughout the entire work,” yet Jones felt that “the dramatic structure—I might even say the spiritual content—of the first book demanded that Prewitt be killed in the end of it.” Jones wrote Prewitt’s death as “the only end [that *From Here to Eternity*] seemed to [him that] it could have,” even though “Prewitt was meant from the beginning to carry an important role in the second book, and in the third.” Jones felt he could not “just resurrect him [and] have him there again, in the flesh, wearing the same name” and eventually decided that the problem could best be solved “by changing the names. All the names” (xviii) for *The Thin Red Line*. They would still be the same essential characters as before, but using new names would allow Jones to “resurrect” Prewitt, along with Warden and Stark, without sacrificing believability. In keeping with his goal of crafting a trilogy that would not end up as “one big novel,” Jones decided to change the names again for *Whistle*, keeping a “marked similarity” to the names as a “reference point [with] the old set of names” (xviii).

While the three sets of names Jones employs do serve to emphasize the stand-alone aspects of each novel, they also make it difficult to keep track of the characters. In my discussion of the trilogy, I have chosen to honor Jones’s conception of the same essential characters returning in each work clothed in new names. Because the main characters function almost as archetypes (The First Sergeant, The Rebellious Private, The Mess Sergeant, and The Clerk Struggling With His Identity) I will consider each new version as a continuance of the same basic character. In other words, I will treat Prewitt, Witt, and Prell as intentionally linked representations of the same character type even though they have different names, as variations (and meditations) on a theme rather than

three entirely different characters that have no relation to each other. For clarity’s sake, Jones’s “cryptic key” for identifying the characters throughout their various iterations is illustrated in Table 1 as follows:

Table 1

<i>From Here to Eternity</i>	<i>The Thin Red Line</i>	<i>Whistle</i>
Pvt. Robert E. Lee Prewitt	Pvt. Bob Witt	Pvt. Bobby Prell
1 st Sgt. Milton Warden	1 st Sgt. Edward Welsh	1 st Sgt. Mart Winch
Mess Sgt. Maylon Stark	Mess Sgt. Storm	Mess Sgt. Johnny Strange
N/A	Cpl. Geoffrey Fife	Cpl. Marion Landers

I will also note that when directly quoting Jones’s work or referring to Jones’s terminology, I have chosen not to edit Jones’s phrasing to standardize spelling or punctuation but to present his words as he wrote them. This means I may run the risk of creating minor inconsistencies in spelling and punctuation between standard military terminology and Jones’s idiosyncratic take on that terminology. I will also run the risk of taking the blame for Jones’s own inconsistencies and vernacular misspellings,²⁰ but I consider it the necessary price to pay in order to stick as closely to Jones’s original language and meaning as possible.

²⁰ For example: in *The Thin Red Line*, C-For-Charlie Company is always capitalized, while in *Whistle* when the same basic characters refer to their old unit, “the old company” is never capitalized. Jones sometimes spells out military ranks in full and sometimes abbreviates them, and his abbreviations are sometimes punctuated with a period and other times left unpunctuated. I have done my best to stay faithful to Jones’s language even when his own inconsistencies make such efforts challenging, at best.

CHAPTER II
FROM HERE TO ETERNITY

From Here to Eternity is in many ways a book centered on the conflict between written rules of behavior and the unwritten rules that so often supersede them. Officially, the men of G Company, –th Infantry²¹ are governed by the ARs, the written Army Regulations that lay out the rules of Army life. Unofficially, the ARs are both easily and frequently circumvented when they interfere with the unwritten rules of the professional pre-war Army, which I will hereby distinguish from the ‘unprofessional’ post-Pearl Harbor Army of draftees and for-the-duration volunteers by use of the term ‘Old Army.’ Much of the main conflict in *From Here to Eternity* comes from the clash of the ARs and the Army’s many unwritten rules. Prewitt’s regular refrain upon entering Dynamite Holmes’s G Company is that “there’s nothin in the ARs says a man has got to jockstrap when he doesn’t want to” (Jones 11). The written rules are on his side, at least in theory. In practice, however, every man in the company, Prewitt included, know that the ARs have all the power of a paper tiger. Red responds to Prewitt’s insistence that “there’s nothin in the ARs says a man has got to jockstrap when he doesn’t want to” by “taunt[ing]” Prewitt with a few rhetorical questions: “Come on...you think the ARs bother him? When [Colonel Delbert] wants to keep that championship?” (Jones 11)

Jones, who had been a non-athlete, seems to take delight in pointing out the numerous ways in which the ARs are flaunted. In one scene, Leva complains to Warden about the situation in the Supply Room. Leva effectively does all the administrative work of the Supply Sergeant without the accompanying rank, pay, or privileges while the

²¹ Though *From Here To Eternity*’s G Company is clearly based on Jones’s experiences with F Company, 27th Infantry Regiment of the 25th Infantry Division, Jones never gives the fictional unit a name. It is always referred to as being a part of the –th Infantry

actual Supply Sergeant Jim O'Hayer, one of Holmes's boxing team favorites, runs the company gambling shed. When Leva wonders aloud how much gambling money O'Hayer kicks back to Regiment (and Holmes) for the privilege, Warden "chortle[s]" in amusement. "Why, Niccolo...you know such a thing is illegal. It says so in the ARs" (Jones 27). Later, when Maggio is scheming ways to get money out of Hal, he tells Stark that he concocted a lie about being thrown in the Stockade if he doesn't get the money to repay the "20 percent m[e]n" who serve as the company's unofficial loan sharks. Stark "giggle[s]" at the thought. "Don't this Hal know that loanin money is against the ARs? And that any man who does it can't collect it legal?" (Jones 235) When Prewitt visits Holmes upon his transfer to G Company, Holmes pays little attention to Prewitt upon learning he has no intention of boxing. "Well,' he said with very little interest, 'there's nothing in the ARs that says a man must be a boxer if he doesn't want to. You'll find that we won't put any pressure on you here, like they did in the 27th" (Jones 46). He quickly changes his tune after mentioning this same fact to Colonel Delbert. When Colonel Delbert hears that Prewitt has refused to go out for boxing, "he turn[s]" his head on "stiff shoulders" and snaps "He can't refuse to go out...you just think he did. It's your job to see th't he does go out" (Jones 58). While there may be "nothin in the ARs" that require Prewitt to box for Captain Holmes, Colonel Delbert sees no reason why that should make any difference when he wants his regiment to bring home a boxing championship. Even though it's explicitly forbidden by the written regulations, Delbert makes it clear to Holmes that getting Prewitt to toe the line is the kind of leadership test that might determine Holmes's prospects for promotion.

Even Prewitt's repeated mantra that "there's nothing in the ARs says a man has got to jockstrap when he doesn't want to" hews closer to wishful thinking than genuine belief. The more Prewitt insists that the regulations will protect him, the more doubt he appears to have that his prediction will come to pass. As his confidence in the ARs erodes, he tests an increasing variety of arguments to try to convince himself of the ARs' apotropaic power. When Prewitt turns down Stark's offer of a safe job in the kitchen and tries to explain his refusal, the conversation turns to "inalienable rights" (Jones 207).²² Prewitt argues that "[n]obody believes that anymore" while Stark tries to persuade him that "[they] all believe it. They just don't do it." In this iteration of his argument, Prewitt insists that "every man has certain rights...in life, I mean, not in ideals. And if he don't stand up for his own rights nobody else is going to stand up for them. There's nothing in the Law, or in the ARs, that says I have to go out for fighting in this outfit, see? So its my right not to go out if I don't want...that's my right as a man. To not be kicked around" (Jones 207-8). Despite his bluster, the fact that Prewitt feels the need to cite the Declaration of Independence as 'evidence' that he cannot be forced to box against his wishes demonstrates a clear weakening of his earlier confidence that the ARs were enough protection for his rights in and of themselves.

His confidence in the written regulations slips even further in a later conversation with Chief Choate. After an incidental compliment from the Chief about his toughness, Prewitt launches into a hopeful discourse that he'll be ok "as long as I keep within the ARs, within the Law." Chief Choate is more skeptical, and responds to Prewitt's repeated assertion "I don't see what [Holmes] can do, long as I break no laws" with the cynical reply "don't kid me...you no re-croot" (Jones 262). Prewitt's contention that "I aint never

²² Which Prewitt mistakenly attributes to "the Constitution."

refused a order yet, when its official duty. But I don't think they got the right to order me what to do outside of duty hours" draws a scornful but incisive observation from the Chief about life in G Company: "It aint a question of right or wrong, it's a question of fack" (Jones 263). Prewitt may not believe that Dynamite Holmes has "the right" to dictate what he does outside of duty hours, but the "fack" of the matter is that in the Pineapple Army the unofficial rules trump the official Army Regulations whenever those regulations happen to prove inconvenient.

Jones uses the long conversation between Holmes and Brigadier General Sam Slater as an opportunity to examine the unofficial ways of the Army from an officer's perspective, and a cynical officer at that. On the surface the scene might seem a simple piece of exposition that serves to flesh out Dynamite's character a bit, but it reveals a great deal more than that. Eager to earn his majority through brownnosing, political maneuvering, or both, Dynamite plays the role of attentive protégé as General Slater waxes philosophically to his captive audience of junior officers. Dynamite appears to pay no real attention to Slater's ideas, only feigning interest because he suspects the up-and-coming Slater will prove a better ally in his career advancement than the waning Colonel Delbert. But the astute reader will pay more attention to Slater's speech than Dynamite does, as it addresses the now-familiar subject of codes from a far different perspective than Prewitt's or Warden's. Speaking of the tendency of enlisted men and junior officers to both fear their superiors, Slater begins by saying that "in the past...this fear of authority was only the negative side of a positive moral code of 'Honor, Patriotism, and Service.' In the past, men sought to achieve the positives of the code, rather than simply to avoid its negatives." After "choosing his words gingerly, as if worried that they would

not be understood,” Slater puts forth his theory that “the advent of materialism and the machine age changed all that...the machine has destroyed the meaning of the old positive code.” He reasons that “you cannot make a man voluntarily chain himself to a machine because its ‘Honorable.’ The man knows better...all that is left, then...is the standardized negative side of the code as expressed in Law.” In Slater’s view, “you cant make a man believe it is ‘Honorable,’ so you have no choice but to make him afraid of *not* chaining himself to his machine. You can do it by making him afraid of his friends’ disapproval. You can shame him because he is a social drone...but you cant tell him it is ‘Honorable’ any more. You have to make him afraid” (Jones 337-8).

In only a few paragraphs, Slater’s speech shows why enlisted men (like Jones) had good reason to hate and fear the majority of their officers. But while Slater’s cynicism achieves its goal of shocking and dismaying the reader at his callousness, it also provides the backdrop against which Jones’s best characters will negatively define themselves. Slater contends that the positive code of “Honor, Patriotism, and Service” has become outdated, and only the negative side, fear of authority, remains to compel soldiers to do their duty. But Slater is wrong on both counts. Not only do Jones’s most heroic characters, like Prewitt, Warden, and Stark, still adhere to the positive code in highly individualized ways, they are also marked by their defiance of the negative side of Slater’s code. Prewitt and Warden in particular show an utter fearlessness in the face of authority. Each is defined to a great degree by a willingness to buck authority if it conflicts with his personal code of honor, regardless of the consequences. Prewitt first refuses to be Second Bugler to an inferior man even if it costs him his billet in the Bugle Corps and his shackjob with Violet Ogure, then refuses to box even if it means he must

endure the Treatment, all because his personal code of honor will not allow him to go along with something he believes to be unfair. Warden's defiance is more successful. He runs G Company his own way while flattering, cajoling, or otherwise manipulating Captain Holmes (and later Lieutenant Ross) into doing whatever he wants while privately viewing them with contempt. Warden even commits the ultimate act of disobedience, cuckolding Captain Holmes with little to no concern that the penalty if his affair is discovered will almost certainly be a long stay in Fort Leavenworth. But even if Warden defies authority more successfully than Prewitt, he is similarly unwilling to bend to authority when it conflicts with his own personal code of honor. For Warden this means tearing up his commission as it would be intolerable to his personal sense of honor to become everything he's ever hated (i.e., an officer), even if doing so will draw the ire of every officer in the battalion and destroy any chance he might have had to marry Karen. Ironically enough, in *The Thin Red Line* Slater will be proven right on one point, the power of public shame to keep men going in combat. Even then, Slater still misses the point as shame can only motivate combat soldiers so long as they retain a sense of honor. Steven Carter says of the protagonist of Jones's later novel *The Merry Month of May* that his "role as an honorable man in a society—indeed, in a world—where honor seemingly has no place or value may not be readily apparent...however, [he] gradually gains readers' respect by the contrast between his behavior and that of almost everyone else" (136). Though he was speaking about one character in particular, Carter's point applies to all of Jones's male protagonists. The highly individual codes of honor that Prewitt, Warden, and Stark follow are noteworthy not only because they serve as a testament to

each man's high character, but also since the fact that they follow a code of honor at all contrasts sharply with the behavior of so many men around them.²³

Jones devotes so much attention to Army Regulations for two reasons. In terms of the plot, the battle of wills between Prewitt and Dynamite Holmes is the central focus of the first three quarters of the novel, and the conflict between the official regulations and the unofficial Treatment is a key dramatic issue in that battle. However, in a larger sense Jones spends so much time developing the notion that the ARs are the rule in name only because of the importance that unofficial codes play in guiding his characters' behavior. Prewitt keeps referring to the ARs as "law," and doggedly repeats his assertion "I don't see what [Holmes] can do, long as I break no laws" (Jones 262) in the hope that repeating it enough will make it true. General Slater refers to "law" as the weight of authority, "the negative side of the code" (Jones 337) that he believes exists only to keep enlisted men in line. Both place their faith in the wrong word because in the vocabulary that Jones develops, "law" in the Army means nothing; Jones's Army is run not by laws but by codes, which are not as easy to appeal to because they are not written down in a manual like the ineffectual laws contained in the ARs. Prewitt's conflict with Dynamite over whether or not he will join the boxing team is literally a clash between written and unwritten rules that serves to underscore the importance of the unwritten rules that permeate Army life. The unofficial policy of treating "jockstraps" preferentially as a carrot to encourage the willing participation of the top athletic talent, along with the accompanying stick of The Treatment to discourage dissenters like Prewitt, are certainly examples of what Sam Slater describes as the negative side of the Code. But Jones also

²³ This is especially true of officers, who with one exception (Lt. Ross) tend to be generally unscrupulous in *From Here to Eternity*.

sees a number of unofficial codes that are positive, and he portrays these positive codes as the blueprints for achieving self-actualized success in the Army. *From Here to Eternity* makes two things clear. The first is that a soldier cannot place his faith in the written laws contained in the Army Regulations or look to them for justice, so the only way he can succeed in the Army is by learning to navigate its many codes, its ‘unwritten laws’ that actually govern proper and improper behavior. The second is that rank comes and goes, and both promotions and demotions are rarely an accurate indicator of a soldier’s worth. What Jones portrays as true success for a soldier is for him to achieve a self-actualized knowledge of himself that cannot be learned through the ARs, but only through following the unwritten rules of Army life.

JONES'S HIERARCHY OF EXCELLENCE

One of the most important of these unwritten codes is the idea of finding a place, or a niche, that a soldier can call his own. This is an idea Jones returns to again and again throughout *From Here to Eternity*, and the numerous examples found in the novel combine to form a kind of Jonesian variation of Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs that is directly applicable to the Army. The lowest position on Maslow's hierarchy is the physiological level. Maslow writes:

for [the] chronically and extremely hungry man, Utopia can be defined very simply as a place where there is plenty of food. He tends to think that, if only he is guaranteed food for the rest of his life, he will be perfectly happy and will never want anything more...freedom, love, community feeling, respect, philosophy, may all be waved aside as fripperies which are useless since they fail to fill the stomach. (4).

Jones portrays the average private who has enlisted "because [he] could live better on the Inside than [he] could on the Outside" (9) as finding a niche at the lowest level of the Army's Hierarchy of Needs. Perhaps it would be better to distinguish Jones's Hierarchy from Maslow's by calling it a Hierarchy of Wants, since Jones depicts many soldiers (and not just privates, but enlisted men of other ranks) as content to remain at this bottom rung of the ladder. Maslow's hierarchy is based on the idea that "Man is a perpetually wanting animal," thus "the appearance of one need usually rests on the prior satisfaction of another, more" pressing "need" (1). Once man satisfies his most recent need, he cannot help but find something new to desire. According to Maslow, once man's most basic physical requirements are met, "when there is plenty of bread and when his belly is

chronically filled...at once other (and 'higher') needs emerge and these, rather than physiological hungers, dominate the organism. And when these in turn are satisfied, again new (and still 'higher') needs emerge and so on" (4). Jones's hierarchy does not work in quite the same way. In Jones's hierarchy, the majority of soldiers ascend to a level at which they are satisfied and no new "needs" emerge to drive them forward. Maslow contends that "when there is plenty of bread and when [a man's] belly is chronically filled" new needs will inevitably come forth to dominate his mind. Jones disagrees. The only alternative that many of Jones's privates have to enlisting in the Army is to live life "on the bum," never knowing where their next meal might come from. For soldiers like these, men who enlisted in the Army so they would never have to worry about going hungry, so long as their "bell[ies are] chronically filled" no "other and higher needs emerge" to "dominate" their thoughts. The traditional '3 Hots And A Cot' are enough to keep them happy.

For example, in the opening pages of the novel Jones uses Prewitt's Bugle Corps friend Red as a representative of a number of the enlisted men Jones knew in the pre-Pearl Harbor Army. Red cannot comprehend Prewitt's prideful decision to transfer to straight duty because for him joining the Army was a decision motivated by economics first and pride second. When Prewitt mentions that people "on the Outside...been lucky if they had jobs at all" Red "disgustedly" replies "That's the Depression—why you think I'm in the goddamn army?...Same reason as you are: Because I could live better on the Inside than I could on the Outside. I wasn't ready to starve yet" (Jones 9). In the grander scheme of things, Jones sees this reason for enlistment, common in the pre-Pearl Harbor days, as a noble one. He may not have personally had much in common with the men

around him, but he respected their desire to try to better their circumstances by choosing a soldier's life over one spent "on the bum" or toiling away as a low-level civilian laborer. Compared to a man who made his living riding the rails or performing backbreaking physical labor for low pay, the buck private who had joined "the Profession" so he could ensure his physical needs would be met and put a little money in his pocket earned Jones's respect. But within the narrower scheme of his Hierarchy of Wants, however, Jones considers the kind of men content with room, board, and the \$21 a month Private's salary as fulfilling the lowest niche in the Army, a niche that satisfies a soldier's basic physiological needs without giving him the drive to ascend any higher.

The next two levels up in Maslow's hierarchy are security and belonging, which correspond to the niche that the mid-level career enlisted men find in Jones's hierarchy. These are "Thirty Year Men" mostly, who have found a place in the Army and committed to it as a career, but are content with settling into a kind of Army middle class status. Chief Choate serves as a prime example of this level. Unlike most of the Non-Commissioned Officers under Dynamite Holmes's command, Choate is both competent and sympathetic. He is also an excellent athlete who "jockstrapped the whole year round," excelling at football and basketball while "playing, some said, the best first base in the Army" (Jones 72). The only sport Choate chooses not to participate in is boxing, "and if he had consented to fight for Holmes he would have been a Staff Sergeant in two weeks." The other men are mystified as to why Choate does not choose to either go out for boxing or "transfer to some other company where he could better himself," but "instead of bettering himself, he stayed in G Company, a perennial Corporal, and drank himself into a stupor every night in Choy's on beer" (Jones 72-3). With only the tiniest

bit of effort he could easily secure a higher position for himself, but Choate is comfortable in the niche he has managed to carve out for himself in Dynamite's G Company. Though he may be a Corporal instead of a Staff Sergeant, Choate is content with his position. He has all the beer he can drink and "had never pulled a single day's fatigue in his four years in the Company" (Jones 72) and that's good enough for him. Jones portrays Choate positively, especially in comparison with most of G Company's NCOs, but does not include him among the ranks of the exceptional soldiers like Prewitt, Warden, or Stark. Although Lt. Ross recognizes Choate's competence and promotes him following Dynamite's departure, Choate's complacency keeps him from reaching the highest rung of Jones's hierarchy. The highest level of Jones's hierarchy corresponds to Maslow's level of esteem, and requires a characteristic that a "perennial Corporal" like Choate simply does not possess: an innate drive to excel.

At the highest level of Jones's hierarchy are the soldiers who are driven to excel in one particular area, what Jones refers to as a "calling" (23) and Maslow as "the need for self-actualization" (8). Maslow defines self-actualization as "the individual doing... what he is fitted for...it refers to the desire for self-fulfillment, namely, to the tendency for him to become actualized in what he is potentially. This tendency might be phrased as the desire to become more and more what one is, to become everything that one is capable of becoming." He explains further that "a musician must make music, an artist must paint, a poet must write, if he is to be ultimately happy. What a man *can* be, he *must* be. This need we may call self-actualization" (8). While Jones does place a high premium on self-actualization, his conception of the term differs somewhat from Maslow's. In Jones's conception, a calling is an end in and of itself. There is both a spiritual

component to a soldier's calling and a sense of self-definition that goes beyond the mere realization of his potential. A soldier who has a calling does not pursue it for the many benefits (more money, more power, excusal from unpleasant fatigue duties, etc.) that come with increased rank. He pursues it because he has no other choice but to pursue it, because once he has found his calling he recognizes that it is his destiny and that succeeding in it is the only thing that will make him happy. When a soldier hears his calling it becomes synonymous with his identity, it becomes the way he defines himself. From the moment he hears it he is no longer just a soldier but a bugler, or a mess sergeant, or a boxer. The soldier with a calling is the only soldier who has a chance to achieve self-actualization in the Maslovian sense of "becom[ing] everything that one is capable of becoming."²⁴ But it is also more than that. If Maslow says "what a man *can* be, he *must* be" then in Jones's conception of self-actualization, what a man *must* be, he *must* be. Maslow admits that

the clear emergence of [the need for self-actualization] rests upon prior satisfaction of the physiological, safety, love, and esteem needs. We shall call people who are satisfied in these needs, basically satisfied people, and it is from these that we may expect the fullest (and healthiest) creativeness. Since, in our society, basically satisfied people are the exception, we do not know much about self-actualization, either experimentally or clinically. (8)

Jones's schema aligns with Maslow's in the sense that Jones depicts only a small percentage of soldiers who reach (or even pursue) the self-actualization stage of

²⁴ While I won't speculate on the advertising company's familiarity with Maslow, I will point out that the Army's longtime "Be All That You Can Be" recruiting campaign aligns very closely with this concept.

development, but it departs from Maslow's terminology, particularly in how each treats the concept of satisfaction. Maslow identifies "basically satisfied people" as those most likely to achieve self-actualization, while arguing that they are a societal "exception" because the majority of people are not able to satisfy their "physiological, safety, love, and esteem needs." Put more simply, since Maslow sees man as a "perpetually wanting animal" he considers the bulk of humanity to be 'basically unsatisfied people.' In his conception of the term, the number of needs that would have to be fulfilled to "basically satisf[y]" the average human is so great as to make true satisfaction a rarely found quality. Jones, on the other hand, portrays the majority of soldiers as being "basically satisfied people," because in his view their physiological and safety needs are met by the Army. Where Maslow sees satisfaction as a rare quality, Jones sees it as a common one. Under Maslow's conception, once a person's physiological and safety needs are met he cannot help but develop new needs based on love and esteem. Jones does not devote enough attention to the average enlistee to provide much evidence regarding his love and esteem needs. It would not be too great a leap of faith to suggest that simply being a part of the Army and being a soldier is enough to satisfy these soldiers' love and esteem needs. It is also possible that he does not think every soldier has needs for love and esteem, or is simply uninterested in exploring those needs in secondary characters. Though Jones does not make it clear whether most enlisted men satisfy their esteem needs through membership in the Army²⁵ or do not rise above the level of physiological security, he does depict the vast majority of soldiers as choosing not to pursue higher needs or focus on any kind of spiritual development. The majority of Jones's soldiers are "basically satisfied" in a different way than Maslow uses the term. They are satisfied with

²⁵ Either through the pride they feel as soldiers or the camaraderie they find with their peers.

their lives as privates and have no desire to change those lives in any way, which includes spiritually. It is only the small minority of Jones's soldiers who feel compelled to follow a course towards self-actualization. Though Maslow sees satisfaction as a necessary component in the self-actualization process, in Jones's conception a soldier would only be motivated enough to pursue self-actualization if he was 'basically unsatisfied' with his station in life. Where Jones and Maslow agree is in their characterization of self-actualization as a relative rarity; Jones chooses to focus on self-actualized soldiers precisely because they are an "exception" to the general rule, but his terminology and reasoning differs from Maslow's. What Maslow calls "basically satisfied people," we might choose to call 'exceptional soldiers,' and these are the soldiers that Jones is most interested in.

In *From Here to Eternity* we can find four such soldiers, as well as a few others who had the potential to become exceptional soldiers but happen to fall short. They are the two protagonists, Prewitt and Warden, and Stark and Malloy (who really exists in a category of his own). In many ways Jones sets Stark forward as the textbook example of the exceptional soldier, because of the four he is the most comfortable in his niche and as a result struggles less with his calling than the other three. It is probably worth noting that when examining Stark from a writer's technical perspective, it is understandable why Jones would see the need to include a success model for Prewitt that was on par with yet different from Warden, because the early plot demands that Prewitt and Warden stay in conflict. Just when Prewitt is assigned more undesirable duty as a K.P., in steps the self-assured and sympathetic Mess Sergeant Stark to provide Prewitt with the model of a successful career N.C.O. who earned his stripes not by being excellent in a boxing ring,

but by being excellent at his job. In a private moment with Prewitt, Stark provides an effective definition for the highest niche sought by all soldiers who hear a calling and found by the most exceptional ones: “we livin in a world thats blowin itself to hell, as fast as five hundred million people can arrange it. In a world like that, theres ony one thing a man can do; and that’s to find something that’s his...really his and will never let him down, and then work hard at it and for it and it will pay him back” (Jones 209). As a self-aware man, Stark knows “with me its my kitchen” (Jones 209), but he sees no limit to the possibilities that a calling can take. For Prewitt, it’s bugling, for Warden, it’s running a company as a First Sergeant. For Malloy, it’s advancing the knowledge of the other misfits in the stockade. But Stark’s running of the kitchen provides perhaps the most straight-forward example in the novel of a soldier who has found a successful niche in the Army by following his calling.

When he transfers into G Company, Stark makes it clear to Warden that “there’s just one thing” (Jones 170) he requires in order to accept the takeover of the Mess Hall as its new sergeant. “If I take your kitchen, I run it my way...there’ll be no back-seat drivin from the Orderly Room if I take your kitchen. Otherwise no soup.” He finds Warden’s counter-offer that if “you run it right...its your baby” unacceptable, and reiterates that “that aint what I said...I said its all my baby. Right *or* wrong. And the Office keeps its nose out. Or else I don’t want any part of it” (Jones 170-1). Stark later explains to Prewitt that the Mess Hall must be “really his” or else it isn’t a true niche, and this notion of control cuts to the heart of why Jones places the soldiers driven to excel at the top of his hierarchy. Control is a commodity that exists at a high premium in the Army; every soldier under the rank of five-star general possesses less of it than he would like. Control

is especially rare for enlisted men, who are toward the bottom of a very tall hierarchical totem pole. The Command Sergeant Major of the Army, the highest-ranking enlisted man in the service, must still salute the most wet-behind-the-ears Second Lieutenant fresh from R.O.T.C. training and follow that shavetail's orders as if they were the word of God.²⁶ Any control an enlisted man can exert is a precious thing, and in Jones's conception of the Army, excellence is the only sure path towards control. To be excellent at something, to be the best at one thing, allows a soldier to carve out an area in his life in which he has total control. That fiefdom might be as small as a Company Mess Hall, or a Company Orderly Room, or the general acknowledgement that one is the best bugler in the battalion, but its worth is not measured in size. When Stark seizes control of the kitchen, it does not take long before he pursues its improvement with a zeal that could be found only in a soldier who has found his truest calling. Jones describes the change from Preem's mediocre stewardship to Stark's way of doing things as follows:

Stark loved his kitchen, it was already 'his,' with the single-mindedness women have been taught to dream of and expect, demand, and decry when attached to anything but love. Stark drove himself as hard or harder than he drove the cooks and the KPs. The dormant Company Fund was brought into the light, and Stark bought new silverware, he recommended the purchase of newer better equipment. There were even fresh flowers on the tables now and then, a unique experience in G Company. Sloppiness in eating was no longer allowed, and Stark enforced this new rule like a tyrant. A man who slopped catsup over his plate onto the oilcloth would

²⁶ In theory, at least. In practice, the Command Sergeant Major of the Army may not follow a shavetail's orders with that degree of enthusiasm, though he is required to follow them.

suddenly find himself outside the door in the middle of a meal. The KPs lived a life of hell on earth, yet the reflective eyes in Stark's sad sneering laughing face were always soft and no KP could force himself to hate him. They saw him working just as hard as they did, and they chortled at the way he rode the cooks. (Jones 177)

Unlike Preem, who had no true calling to work in the kitchen, Stark makes the most of his newfound power. The kitchen is a niche that Stark can control, a place in which he can pursue excellence, and knowing the precious value of such a place Stark does exactly that. Besides control, one of the other benefits reaped by exceptional soldiers is a sense of pride in their accomplishments that Jones's lesser soldiers often lack. Stark takes pride in the running of every aspect of his domain, and consistently refuses to allow anything that does not measure up to his standards. When the lazy cook Willard tries to slip through improperly scrambled eggs, Stark orders him to throw the batch out and is irritated when Willard suggests that there won't be time to cook up another. Stark's reply to such indifference is firm. "I said throw it out. If we have to hold chow, we'll hold it. But we won't feed these men slop. Will We" (Jones 186). Later, when G Company goes on maneuvers, Stark leaves a standing order that there always be hot coffee and a cook to make hot sandwiches for men going on guard because he knows that they are "as different to the belly from the cold Spam and cheese on untoasted bread of normal mess sergeants, as hot coffee was from cold." He had even "insisted" that the cooks provide waxed paper to wrap the sandwiches in, "which normal mess sergeants never furnished" (Jones 436). The regular cooks resent Stark's orders because they are inconvenient and require more work, but their complacency serves as a strong indicator

of why they will never be as good as Stark. When one complains a little too loudly about Prewitt asking for sandwiches for himself and Slade,²⁷ an Air Corps man that he had met while on post, he draws the ire of a drunken Stark. Stark “thickly” yells at the now-obsequious cook that “as long as I run this goddam Mess...there will be sandwiches and coffee for night guards, any time they want it.” When the cook tries to argue that Prewitt wasn’t on guard but “just wanderin around, when [he] ought to be asleep” and Slade “ain’t even from the Company” (Jones 447) Stark drives him off and fixes the sandwiches himself, muttering “you men want sandwiches, you get sandwiches. Men got to eat” as a drunken refrain. Stark’s behavior unnerves the inexperienced Slade, whose conversation with Prewitt following the sandwich incident reveals a great deal about the source of Prewitt’s admiration for Stark. While eating his sandwich, Prewitt asks Slade “What you think of our mess sergeant?...I told you he was a good man.” Slade “cautiously” replies that “[Stark] wasn’t quite what I expected.” Prewitt then admiringly observes that Stark “runs that kitchen like a dictator” and Slade notes that “he didn’t seem very happy.” Prewitt’s seemingly-curious response is “Happy?...he’s the happiest man I know” (Jones 449). What Slade is too green to understand is that to an exceptional soldier like Prewitt, saying that Stark runs the Mess “like a dictator” is not a critique but a compliment. As his chosen niche, the Mess is a reflection of Stark himself. If it provides cold sandwiches to hungry soldiers who are awake late at night it would mean Stark was a less-than-excellent Mess Sergeant. But it is precisely because he is an excellent Mess Sergeant that Stark must “run his kitchen like a dictator,” micromanaging seemingly

²⁷ The Air Corps man that Prewitt and Maggio meet is a rare bit of autobiography that Jones slips into *From Here to Eternity*. Most of the characters in *From Here to Eternity* are based on other soldiers Jones knew or met during his time in the Army. The Air Corps man envious of the Infantry’s romantic air and curious about transferring is the one character who bears a strong resemblance to Jones. In what is undoubtedly a tip of the hat to this fact, “Slade” is a name that Jones uses for the protagonist in several autobiographical short stories included in *The Ice Cream Headache*.

insignificant details so that no soldier will ever have reason to say that Maylon Stark's Mess Hall wasn't the best Mess Hall he ever ate at. To Slade, Stark drunkenly berating his cooks may seem excessive. But to Prewitt, it is a sign of Stark's excellence that even in the middle of a late night drinking binge, Stark cares enough about his Mess Hall to brook no chickenshit²⁸ from cooks and to prepare some sandwiches himself if that's what is needed to ensure the quality of his Mess Hall's product.

Stark's willingness to roll up his sleeves and get his hands dirty is also seen earlier, in Prewitt's KP scene. That incident fails the same formula as the sandwich incident. When Fatstuff Willard deliberately uses more pans to cook than he needed so that Prewitt would have more to wash, Stark reprimands him and calls him "a fat cook... who cant cook. Because he's too busy makin sure the KPs respect his rank...[so] get your ass back there and cook, and quit using so goddam many pans." He then offers to help Prewitt wash the pans, and comments with a "lopsided" smile that "this'll kill Willard... the Mess Sergeant helping a KP do pots and pans. Back home, when we use to divide our kitchen work up into White and Colored work[,] pots and pans was Colored work" (Jones 190-1). Stark's racist language aside,²⁹ his willingness to take on any kind of work in his kitchen, even "Colored work" like cleaning pots and pans is a sign of his outstanding personal character. Like all of Jones's exceptional soldiers, Stark is not driven to excel by the prospect of rank and he does not use it as an excuse to avoid unpleasant duties. By

²⁸ In his book *Wartime*, Paul Fussell provides the most comprehensive definition of *chickenshit* on record. According to Fussell, "Chickenshit refers rather to behavior that makes military life worse than it need be: petty harassment of the weak by the strong; open scrimmage for power and authority and prestige; sadism thinly disguised as necessary discipline; a constant 'paying off of old scores'; and insistence on the letter rather than the spirit of the ordinances. Chickenshit is so called—instead of horse or bull- or elephant shit—because it is small- minded and ignoble and takes the trivial seriously. Chickenshit can be recognized instantly because it never has anything to do with winning the war" (80).

²⁹ When considering Stark's character it is worth keeping in mind that for all his admirable qualities, Jones deliberately characterizes Stark as a cheerfully unabashed racist to emphasize Stark's Southern roots and perhaps to make an otherwise-likeable character a bit less idealized. Jones would later do the same thing with Witt, the second incarnation of the Prewitt character type, in *The Thin Red Line*.

contrast, cooks like Willard seek to acquire a small amount of rank for the express purpose of hiding behind it. When Willard sneers “I’m sure glad I don’t have to pull KP no more” at Prewitt, he has no idea how accurate Prewitt’s that “you pull KP ever day, Fatstuff. Only you’re too goddam dumb to know it” really is. Fatstuff even thinks he wins the exchange with his final rejoinder “at least I get paid extra for it” (Jones 185). Men like Willard may earn a little extra pay in their billets, but they earn Jones’s contempt along with it for their lack of ambition. For Willard, the kitchen is not a niche, but a rut he has semi-happily settled into. For Stark, who has had a calling, it is that one place that is “really his and will never let him down.” Because it is his place, he puts his work into it and is paid back in respect, which comes from others, and, more important, pride, which comes from within himself. Stark’s success in finding his “place” is what makes him the role model for Prewitt and others who have heard a calling, but have yet to find their own “place” they can truly call their own.

Not all soldiers who have heard a calling are able to follow it successfully. Jones sets forth Maggio and Bloom as examples of men who have the potential to be exceptional soldiers, but end up falling short for one reason or another. Of the two, Maggio is the less complex example by far. When Prewitt first meets him, it seems Maggio has all the necessary traits to end up as exceptional a soldier as Prewitt. Having been out of recruit training for only a few months, Maggio is certainly green and still adapting to the ways of the Army, but the potential is there. He has the same kind of spark, of enthusiasm, as Prewitt does, the same energy that drives the exceptional soldier to surpass expectations. It is hard to imagine Maggio’s ever being content as a perennial private or corporal like Chief Choate, plodding away towards retirement in a comfortably

lower or mid-level position. It is also equally hard to imagine Maggio's ever becoming a social climber like O'Hayer or Leva and aggressively pursuing higher rank for the sinecure it can provide. Like Prewitt, Stark, Warden, Malloy, and the other exceptional soldiers, Maggio is at heart an idealist. He is a dreamer who, having once escaped a lifetime of drudgery as a clerk in Gimbel's basement, will never be content with anything short of self-actualization. What keeps Maggio from achieving it and becoming like the other four is that unlike them, he never finds a specific calling to pursue. He never finds that niche, that place that can be truly his and allow him to channel his energies constructively like the other four do. Maggio has no interest in being the best bugle player, administering the best Wardroom, or running the best Mess Hall. While he is in the Army, he never finds a specific calling to aim towards and his high-spiritedness is given no other release than unfocused rebellion. The closest thing Maggio finds to a niche in the Army is in being Prewitt's friend and sidekick, which is not a legitimate long-term profession toward which to devote his spirit. Maggio has the potential to be an exceptional soldier, but without a calling to direct his energy towards he self-destructs. His aimless rebelliousness lands him in the stockade, where, like 'Blues' Berry, he is too strong to break. Once inside, he is finally able to channel his energy towards escape, and this allows him to narrowly escape Berry's fate. It is a testament to Maggio's boundless energy and potential to excel that his plan to earn a Section 8 discharge by outlasting 'The Hole' succeeds.³⁰ If he had ever managed to find a calling within the Army to aim for the odds are he would have made an excellent soldier. But without a niche, Maggio is too spirited to ever succeed in the Army. If Stark is the successful model for how a man

³⁰ Presumably. The reader is not given a definitive account of Maggio's fate, but since he never returns to G Company or the Stockade, the implication is that his scheme is successful.

can actualize himself and thrive in the Army once he finds his calling, then Maggio is the cautionary model of the pitfalls that await the high-spirited soldier who, for whatever reason, has no such calling. A man of Maggio's caliber and temperament needed more time or more direction to have the slightest chance of succeeding in Jones's Army; unfortunately, he received neither.

It is also worth pointing out that Maggio serves a dual role in the novel as both protégé and behavioral role model in his relationship with Prewitt. Though early in the book Maggio mostly functions as a sidekick to Prewitt and plot device for Jones to develop his particular notion of the Army's unwritten codes (as the seasoned Prewitt explains them to fresh-out-of-recruit-training Maggio), by the time Prewitt arrives in the Stockade their roles have reversed. There, we see a Maggio who has developed into a more seasoned and confident personality in Number Two Barracks. It is Maggio who directs Prewitt in the ways of the Stockade, tells him he belongs in Number Two Barracks with Jack Malloy, and instructs him how to get there and how to ride out his time in The Hole. But more importantly, the Maggio who has been hardened by his time in the Stockade serves as a kind of role model for Prewitt who is diametrically opposed to Warden and Stark. It is as if Stark and Warden are the 'angels' on one of Prewitt's shoulders, providing positive examples of how to succeed within the Army, and Maggio, 'Blues' Berry (and to a certain extent Malloy) are the 'devils' on his other shoulder providing examples of rebelliousness and defiance towards the Army's ways. It might be said that Prewitt's two greatest misfortunes are rejecting Stark and Warden as models of behavior in favor of Maggio and 'Blues' Berry, and letting his desire to avenge Berry's death lead him to embrace Maggio's brand of emotionally-driven active resistance over

Malloy's philosophy of passive resistance. In a sense, Maggio and Malloy are both more successful than Prewitt in their rebellions because each ultimately finds a way to escape the Army where he does not. Maggio's plan to secure a Section 8 discharge and become a cowboy in Mexico presumably succeeds, while Malloy sneaks out of the motor pool to pursue further exotic adventures and reenlist under a new name when the war begins. Prewitt follows their example instead of Warden and Stark's, and in doing so secures a temporary escape from the Army while losing his calling in the process. Though Malloy tries to caution Prewitt against taking revenge on Fatso and admonishes him that "when a man has found something he really loves, he must always hang onto it, no matter what happens" (Jones 658), Prewitt follows his (and Maggio's) actions rather than his words, with much less enviable results. Maggio can get away with his escape and run off to Mexico to be a cowboy because he has no calling in the Army. But when Prewitt attempts to do something similar, it only starts him on the path to his own destruction. Their comparative fates represent a kind of Jonesian cautionary tale regarding the equally hazardous dangers of a high-spirited man attempting to find a place in the Army without a calling to direct him, and of a soldier who has had a calling losing track of it and thinking he could ever escape being what he is meant to be.

Like Maggio, Bloom fails to find a successful niche in the Army, but does so for almost entirely opposite reasons. Maggio has the potential to be an exceptional soldier, but not the desire; he lacks a focused ambition that might propel him to greater heights in the Army. Bloom has both the desire and the ambition to be exceptional, but not the true potential to excel. Dynamite Holmes singles him out for advancement because of his boxing ability, but Bloom has no real command potential. He proves it by quickly and

embarrassingly flunking out of Non-Commissioned Officers School, a course intended more as a formality in the promotion process than as a legitimate test of leadership ability. Bloom's failure to excel stems in part from his motivation. In Jones's schema, the exceptional soldier is forced to excel by an inward drive to be the best at something. It is a motivation based purely on seeking excellence for its own sake, not excellence for the sake of an attached benefit. Jones portrays most soldiers who achieve nominal success in the Army, but not in his personal schema, as being motivated by the desire to gain rank for its accompanying power. Bloom is unique in that he wants to become a corporal not for reasons of power, but for respect. It is the same reasoning that leads him to join the boxing team. Bloom does not box because he wants to be the best boxer in the Regiment, or because it will get him out of Straight Duty, or because boxers are Dynamite's pet favorites and enjoy the quickest path to promotion. He boxes in the hopes that it will make the other men in the Company (or at least in the jockstrap faction) accept him; Bloom fights for acceptance and respect, both literally and figuratively. He has no innate need to excel for its own sake, and no particular calling whose pursuit would be enough to ensure his happiness in and of itself. He pursues boxing and a corporalcy only as means to an end. If Bloom thought he could get respect by being the best bugler or best mess sergeant or best clerk, he would give up boxing in a second. While he certainly has a talent for boxing, his motivations for pursuing it are not 'pure' in Jones's sense of the word because it is not his calling, only a stepping-stone to acceptance.

One of the great ironies of Bloom's failure to fit into the Army is that despite his desperate desire to find acceptance amongst his peers, Jones consistently portrays him as being almost completely oblivious to the unwritten codes of behavior that are so crucial

to earning that acceptance. If the end results of his social blunderings were not so tragic one could almost categorize as comical Bloom's perpetual blindness to the unofficial ways of the Army. Again and again Bloom attempts to mask his insecurities about fitting in with ill-advised acts of swagger, and every time such bluster results in his "trampling callously over...the few respected tabus" (Jones 201) of the Army and furthering his own isolation. Bloom's inability to deal with his insecurities leads to an ever-worsening cycle of social mishap, which can mostly be attributed to his mistaking bluster for masculinity. Jones scholar Steven Carter praises how Jones's "tough, masculine voice spoke out against the insensitivity and foolhardiness of the Hemingway code of manhood" (1) as one of his greatest virtues as an author, and Jones's treatment of Bloom presents a fine example of this. Many critics, Carter included, have picked up on certain parallels between Bloom and Hemingway's Robert Cohn.³¹ Carter writes, quite uncharitably, that "Bloom's personality reflects that of one of the most obnoxious Jews in literature: the whiny, cry-baby, blindly self-centered and uncomprehending Romantic Robert Cohn in Ernest Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises*. Cohn, like Bloom, learns pugilism to defend himself against racial prejudice only to discover that his knowledge makes no difference" (77). While it is certainly fair to label Bloom, as Carter puts it, as "blindly self-centered and uncomprehending," Jones does not dismiss Bloom as a "whiny, cry-baby" in the same way as Hemingway does Cohn. Scott Donaldson notes that of all the "ethnic humor in" *The Sun Also Rises* that is not "good-natured...Robert Cohn is the butt of most of it"

³¹ At least one critic, Josephine Z. Knopf, believes that Hemingway intended to characterize Cohn as a "schlemiel...[a] stock figure and object of humor in Jewish folk tales." In Jewish folk tradition, the schlemiel figure is "clumsy, unfortunate, and ineffectual...perhaps...an outright cuckold or a duped and henpecked husband." Knopf also notes that "there is a sense of the tragic about the schlemiel, for he is usually the cause of his own misfortune. He is at the same time guilty of some nebulous and tragic flaw and doomed to live under an unlucky star" (67). Knopf adamantly asserts that if Hemingway intended Cohn to represent a schlemiel figure, it is an "inauthentic and unrealistic failure" (61).

(30). By contrast, in Bloom's final interior monologue Jones depicts Bloom with a great deal of sympathy, taking great care to show that no matter the cause of Bloom's alienation, his pain and suffering are legitimate and deeply felt. The contrast between Bloom's outer bluster and the sensitivity revealed in his interior monologue does, however, also serve to highlight how poorly Bloom chose when he selected a kind of false Hemingwayesque bravado as his behavioral role model.

Bloom's mistake, at its heart, is in mistaking false arrogance for true confidence. Jones's soldiers may not openly boast of their emotional sensitivity, but in private they are deeply concerned with their emotional well-being and spiritual development. The stoicism of the Hemingway code hero does not appeal to them because they are emotionally-driven romantics at heart; the romantic idealism that Prewitt clings to, the mature romanticism Warden displays and the Buddhist-influenced spiritual mysticism that Malloy preaches all fly in the face of Hemingway's depiction of masculinity.³² Bloom lacks the inner confidence not only of these men, but of Hemingway's heroes as well. He tries to mask this with displays of boisterousness and hope his exaggerated arrogance will pass for confidence, but his false bravado never rings true to the other men and keeps Bloom too busy trying to act confident to notice the social blunders he's committing. In a novel which places such an emphasis on the importance of following unwritten codes of behavior, Bloom's inability to even identify those codes leaves him, just like Cohn, a marked man, and dooms him to eventual failure in the Army no matter

³² While the characterization of Bloom has too many parallels to Robert Cohn to ignore entirely, pinning down Jones's attitude towards Hemingway's work is complicated by the complex nature of Jones's feelings. Irwin Shaw believed that Jones "grappled with the ghost of Hemingway all his life, excoriating him, mocking him, worried about what Hemingway meant to him. He knew from the beginning that he wanted to go beyond Hemingway, but I think he felt that to get there he had to retrace Hemingway's steps, at least part of the way" (MacShane 192-3). If the characterizations in *From Here to Eternity* are meant in part as a renunciation of Hemingway's heroes, then it is a renunciation of their perceived image as purely stoic figures.

how hard he struggles to fit in. In Jones's Army, it is a sad yet deterministic truth that the sum of all Bloom's frantic efforts will never be enough to overcome his inability to navigate those unwritten codes of behavior.

THE PERSONAL CODE

Along with the need to excel, Jones emphasizes another trait of the exceptional soldier: the personal code. Jones does not distinguish whether a soldier's personal code is part of the impetus that drives him to excel or a natural trait for an already-driven soldier to develop, so the exact origination of such a code is unlikely to have been of much concern to Jones. But considering the amount of attention he lavishes on the importance of having a personal code, it must be a matter of some significance to him. As the two main characters, it should not surprise us that Prewitt and Warden possess the most fully developed personal codes in the book. What is a little more shocking is that while outward appearances imply that Prewitt and Warden's codes are distinct and unrelated, they actually share the identical code; they seem to have separate codes only because they are so often at odds.

Part of the confusion likely stems from the fact that both Prewitt and Warden profess to follow different codes when in fact they do not. When they articulate their alleged codes, they are in effect functioning as unreliable narrators. The most accurate definition of Prewitt's and Warden's individual code occurs in narration, filtered through the lens of Prewitt's consciousness, and is significant enough for Jones to repeat for emphasis the same phrase in two incidents. In the early stages of *The Treatment*, when Prewitt is subjected to a number of unpleasant duty assignments in the hopes he will drop his resistance to joining the boxing team, the narrator describes Prewitt's observation that "Warden was scrupulously fair, in his own eccentric way, he never overstepped his own private, self-constructed line of equity" (Jones 82). In a similar situation two hundred pages later, Jones returns to the same idea while repeating the phrase "private line of

equity.” In this passage, Prewitt’s inner monologue again ponders how he has “learned that Warden would not [unduly rig the duty sheet against him], that that old private line of equity, drawn with such sharpness with such close secrecy that it was wholly invisible to everyone but Warden, would not let the big man take advantage of the situation in that way.” After mulling this over, Prewitt concludes that

the Warden had applied to his whole life the principle which applied to all other games of sport—that laying down of certain arbitrary rules to make success that much harder for the player to attain, like clipping in football or traveling in basketball...thereby imposing upon [himself] voluntarily the harder conditions that make the reward worth more to them...the Warden applied it to his whole life and stuck by it. (Jones 276)

Both Prewitt and Warden would dispute it, but they each live by a code governed by “a private, self-constructed line of equity.” For any situation, each will draw a line that he finds fair and refuse to cross it, but each provides a different outward description of his code, a kind of ‘false code,’ that serves to keep his “private line of equity” private.

Warden’s false code is easier to see through, because he provides only one and it can be quickly disproved. In an early conversation with Karen, Warden professes to hold honesty as his code after she compliments his confidence. He had previously told her his brother was a priest, and corrects her compliment as follows:

in the first place it isn’t confidence, its honesty. Being a priest, [his brother] believes in celibacy...after watching him a while, I decided to believe in honesty, which means the opposite of celibacy. Because I did not want to hate himself and everybody else, like him...since I cannot

forget what the truth is, I gravitated, naturally, along with the rest of the social misfits who are honest into the Army. (Jones 117-8)

Now, considering the frequency with which Warden lies in the performance of his duties, it would be very problematic for his character if he truly held honesty to be his sacred code. Warden has no problem lying to his subordinates if it will keep them doing their jobs.³³ He has no problem lying to officers if it will help G Company run smoothly, like continuing to carry the absent Prewitt present on the Company Rolls for a few days after returning from his furlough with Karen. And he certainly has no problem secretly romancing Captain Holmes's wife. Warden's commitment is not to honesty, but to fairness. One could say, if feeling charitable, that by staying true to fairness Warden is committing to follow a kind of internal honesty in the fashion of Polonius's famous fatherly advice "To thine own self be true" (*Hamlet* Act 1.3.84). But to say that he is devoted to honesty is either the closest way Warden can express his concept of a "private line of equity" aloud or a willful misdirection on his part. It is worth remembering that his speech on honesty takes place while he is trying to seduce Karen Holmes for the first time, and features Warden putting forth "honesty" as the opposite of "celibacy," so perhaps it is best to take his definition with a fair amount of salt.

Prewitt offers up a slightly longer series of 'false codes' than Warden, but his true code always boils down to this same notion of possessing a "private, self-constructed line" of fairness he will refuse to cross no matter what. The first false code Prewitt puts forth is the deathbed promise he makes to his mother that he "wont never hurt nobody unless its absolute a must, unless [he] jist ha[s] to do it" (Jones 18). Jones includes this deathbed promise, which Prewitt's mother reminds him "is the most sacred one there is"

³³ His constant manipulation of Leva serves as a good example of this.

(18), so early in the book as a way of quickly establishing Prewitt's character. But over the course of the novel it rings much more true as a general example of Prewitt's stubborn adherence to his private codes than it does as a genuine motivating factor for him. It is likely Jones hopes his readers will have the deathbed promise to his mother at the forefront of their minds when Prewitt tells Holmes he'd prefer not to fight. But any assumption that Prewitt's accidental blinding of Dixie Wells is the leading cause of his refusal to fight might be derived more from the condensed storyline depicted in the film adaptation than the evidence provided in the novel itself. Prewitt's familiar refrain that "there's nothin in the ARs says a man has got to jockstrap when he doesn't want to" (Jones 11) is a strong indicator that it is not just the boxing that he sees conflicting with his ideals, but the forced "jockstrap[ping]." By his very nature, Prewitt is the furthest thing from a pacifist. Even after extended tutelage Malloy comments that Prewitt "didn't understand" the concept of "passive resistance...any more than Berry or [Maggio] did." According to Malloy, their "resistance was always active, not passive" because "in their minds they fought back. They just didn't have access to clubs, that was all" (Jones 654). Going by Malloy's definition, Prewitt's defining characteristic is fighting back. He certainly had no problem boxing before the accident with Dixie Wells. When looking back on the incident, he even admits to himself that "it would probably...have been the same whether or not he had been haunted by his promise to his mother." Jones implies that Prewitt had already been on his way towards giving up boxing because it was around the same time that he had realized that "fighting had never been his calling, bugling was his calling. For what reason then was he here, posing as a fighter?" (23) The diction in Prewitt's refrain that "there's nothin in the ARs says a man has got to jockstrap when he

doesn't want to" (Jones 11) is telling. It is not specifically the boxing that he objects to, but any "jockstrap[ping]" that he's coerced into. Prewitt gave up boxing because it wasn't his calling, just like football and baseball and basketball were also not his callings. His deathbed promise to his mother provides perhaps just enough added guilt to make boxing a particular sore spot, but his real contention is the fairness of being forced to "jockstrap...*when he don't want to,*" [emphasis mine]. When Prewitt does want to fight, whether against Bloom on the green with his fists or Fatso Judson in a back alley with a knife, his promise to his mother doesn't cross his mind. In neither instance does he equivocate over whether he "jist has to" hurt Bloom or Judson. Jones also never mentions his deathbed promise after Holmes's promotion out of G Company renders the issue of the boxing team moot. Even the figure of Dixie Wells fades from Prewitt's mind in the latter half of the book, with Prewitt musing that "he had not thought about Dixie Wells for a long time now. He had almost forgotten Dixie Wells. Who would ever have thought he could have ever forgotten Dixie Wells" (Jones 495) after his fight with Bloom. The placement of the deathbed promise early in the text, its selective application and ultimate disappearance by the second half of the text combine to make it unlikely that it is anything other than a 'false code.' While it is useful in establishing Prewitt's character, it fails to stand up to scrutiny as his true code of conduct.

Another 'false code' that Prewitt offers up is his commitment to "fighting for the underdog...against the top dog," which the narrator tells us he has "even made...a philosophy of life out of it" (Jones 273). James R. Giles notes that this "nonideological" philosophy is "illustrated by its primary inspiration...American Depression Films" (39) and evolves when the twenty-one year old Prewitt begins expanding his literary

knowledge through Georgette's Book-of-the-Month Club selections. Even Prewitt acknowledges to himself the contradictory nature of a philosophy that could have him "fighting for the Jews in Germany, and against the Jews in Wall Street and Hollywood" and being "a Communist one day and the next day...an anti-Communist." He admits to himself that "it was...a very flighty philosophy, a chameleon philosophy always changing its color" but weakly tries to convince himself that if "it is a very irrational and emotional philosophy...well, this is a very irrational and emotional age" (Jones 273). Prewitt's philosophy of always siding with the underdog against the top dog holds up about as well in practice as it does in theory. He successfully identifies the most obvious underdogs and top dogs. He naturally sides with Maggio, Anderson, Clark, and the hard cases of the stockade's Number Two Barracks, and against Captain Holmes, the Jockstrap NCOs, Fatso Judson, and the Officer caste as a whole. But his top dog and underdog philosophy falls apart when it becomes more difficult to distinguish the top dogs from the underdogs. He has a natural antipathy for Bloom based on personality differences and his perception that Bloom is one of Dynamite's fair-haired favorites. Bloom's fast-track elevation to Corporal might seem to place him among the top dogs, but a stronger case could be made for Bloom as an underdog. His difficult personality makes him an obvious outcast in G Company, accepted by neither the buck privates nor the NCOs. Jones practically bends over backwards to make clear that Bloom's Jewishness is not the real cause of his ostracism, yet Prewitt remains very aware that Bloom perceives it to be so. After they fight, Prewitt thinks "hollowly" of how "he could not explain" himself to Bloom "because Bloom himself would always firmly believe it was because he was a Jew. And nothing he could ever say or do would ever convince

Bloom it was not because he was a Jew, and because Prewitt hated Jews.” It seems so natural that underdog-loving Prewitt should feel a kinship for the outcast Bloom that even Prewitt recognizes that “him and Bloom...probably had more in common than any other two men in the Company, except maybe Angelo Maggio” (Jones 495). But rather than act on that kinship, Prewitt finds it easier to make excuses to himself that he and Bloom both “had to fight somebody, or else...go mad...[so] they got in a fight for the amusement of all concerned, except themselves...because it was so much easier than trying to find the real enemy to fight” (Jones 495).

Prewitt’s conflict with Fatso Judson also calls into question his ability to distinguish between the top dog and the underdog. In keeping with his underdog code, after ‘Blues’ Berry is killed in the stockade Prewitt immediately dedicates himself to fulfilling Berry’s vow to kill Fatso. However, Jack Malloy points out a fairly large inconsistency in Prewitt’s plan. After reminding Prewitt multiple times that even if Fatso “needs to be killed...[and] ought to be killed...it won’t do a damned bit of good to kill him” Malloy asks Prewitt the most obvious question. “If it would do any good to kill him, I’d say go ahead, kill him. But all that will happen will be they will get somebody else just like him to take his place. Why don’t you kill Major Thompson?” When Prewitt replies that “they’d just get somebody else to take his place, too” Malloy follows with the critical observation “of course...but he gave Fatso the orders.” In this scene Malloy, whose wisdom has already been portrayed as bordering on the all-knowing, essentially forces Prewitt to confront his own flawed logic. Malloy lays out the case that ultimately, to kill either Fatso or Major Thompson would be a futile act since either death would simply result in the replacement of one bad man with another equally bad man. But if

Prewitt insists on killing one of them, why not kill the man who gave the orders instead of the man who followed them? Prewitt's response, like his top dog/underdog philosophy as a whole, is "irrational and emotional" (Jones 273). "I don't know," Prew said. "I've never felt about him like I've felt about Fatso. Major Thompson's an officer; you expect that from officers; they're on the other side of the fence. But Fatso, Fatso's an enlisted man. And that makes him a traitor against his own kind" (Jones 653).

As with his deathbed promise to his mother, Prewitt holds to his top dog/underdog philosophy much more in theory than in practice. Both 'false codes,' at their most basic level, always come down to Prewitt's "having suffered...from an overdeveloped sense of justice all [his] life." While he has also been "a hotly fervent espouser of the cause of all underdogs all [his] life...probably because [he has] always been one" (Jones 272) the true motivator is that "overdeveloped sense of justice," which might better be termed fairness. Prewitt has no problem respecting a "top dog" like Warden, Stark, or Malloy, because all three share his "overdeveloped sense of justice" and follow scrupulous moral codes as he does. He is "a hotly fervent espouser of...all underdogs" in the most clear-cut cases, like Maggio's or 'Blues' Berry's, precisely because their obvious subjugation easily triggers his sense of justness. I say justness rather than justice because Prewitt does not always feel compelled to take the actions that justice requires; he does not exert his own justice on Ike Galovitch, or Liddell Henderson and Champ Wilson, who Warden notes would "both make good Fatso Judsons with a very slight proper training" (Jones 694). But even when he does not act on it his sense of justness, of what is just or unjust, remains always at the forefront of his mind. Even though Major Thompson is the top dog who gave the order for Berry's death, Prewitt's sense of justness considers Fatso the greater offender

precisely because he is “a traitor to his own kind.” His “overdeveloped sense of justice” will settle for vengeance against Fatso and let Major Thompson get away because that is in keeping with his true code, not his deathbed promise or his vague attempts to define it through “top dogs and underdogs.”

Many Jones scholars regard Prewitt’s inflexible moral code as a character flaw, seizing on his rigid adherence to a “flighty philosophy” of his own making as an indicator of immaturity and excessive pride. Steven Carter bluntly asserts that “Prewitt’s worst fault, like Witt’s in *The Thin Red Line* and Prell’s in *Whistle*, is being so proud that he is willing to make a multitude of sacrifices rather than surrender the minutest particle of his pride” (73). Prewitt’s inflexibility is often contrasted with Warden’s adaptability in the course of an argument that Prewitt essentially fails to learn the lesson that pride goeth before a fall. Carter writes that Jones

carefully structur[es] his work around two protagonists subjected to a lengthy series of unexpected events[. He] has Warden repeatedly bend without betraying his integrity, regarding each setback as a goad to a newer, more devious pursuit of his goals, and Prewitt refuse to compromise, preferring death to dishonor although he begins to learn to be less rigid and judgmental near the end of the book. (63)

He concludes that while both men “gain considerable insight into themselves and life, Warden manages to combine material survival with spiritual advancement” while Prewitt “will likely take another lifetime or more³⁴ to attain Warden’s endurance and adaptability” (63). Carter’s implication is that Prewitt’s spiritual growth is tied to the

³⁴ Carter’s book *James Jones: An American Literary Orientalist Master* analyzes the Buddhist and Theosophic influences on Jones’s work. His reference here to further lifetimes should be taken in the context of Buddhist philosophy.

degree to which he can swallow his pride and become ‘adaptable’ and more willing to compromise.

While Carter’s analysis makes good sense from a Buddhist perspective, any critique of Prewitt or his philosophy that focuses on excessive pride fails to take into account a couple of important factors. Though Jones later regretted over-romanticizing Prewitt and Warden and reportedly “regarded their idealization as a flaw and sought to eliminate it in subsequent novels” (Carter 63), that was the opinion of a mature writer looking back upon the work of his younger, less seasoned self. The Jones who wrote *From Here to Eternity* did not see pride as a bad thing in and of itself; he only criticizes excessive pride. Excessive pride is what keeps Prewitt from staying in the bugle corps, going out for the boxing team, or generally performing actions which would require him to compromise his ideals in exchange for material comfort or gain. But pride is also what drives him to become the best bugler and one of the best soldiers in the Regiment, what drives Warden to be one of the best First Sergeants in the Regiment, and what drives Stark to turn out one of the best kitchens in the Regiment. Though Jones portrays excessive pride as a legitimate character flaw, at no point does he depict pride as a negative trait in and of itself, which is a point that I’ll return to shortly.

Another factor to keep in mind is that any contrast made between Prewitt and Warden’s respective levels of pride must account for two facts. The first is that despite what each character claims, the personal code each follows is in effect one and the same. Prewitt expresses his version in terms of an “overdeveloped sense of justice,” Warden expresses his as a “private line of equity,” but they boil down to each following the same essential code of self-governed fairness. Though the terminology they use may differ, the

central idea does not; for all practical purposes, the codes they follow are identical. The second is that Warden is nearly as prideful of Prewitt, he simply shows it in different ways. A few lines before praising Warden's ability to "repeatedly bend without betraying his integrity," Carter writes that "Milt Warden and Karen Holmes, reflecting Jones's stress on reducing the ego and developing compassion, come to recognize the role that pride has played in their love. Both learn how to express their feelings without being possessive or making personal demands" and "when Warden and Karen have reached a high level of self-acceptance and un pitying concern for others, they find the strength to separate and face the prospect of aloneness" (62-3). The one pesky detail that Carter fails to mention is that Warden ultimately refuses to humble himself and follow through on Karen's desire that he become an officer, and their separation is largely spurred by that decision. Even as he goes through the process of completing the Officer's Extension Course, Warden is sickened and embarrassed at the thought of becoming an officer because doing so directly violates the pride he takes in being a senior first sergeant. As many enlisted men do, he hates officers, and as a senior enlisted man he has spent so much time riding herd over incompetent officers that the thought of becoming one himself is doubly repellant. When word leaks out (as it always must) that he was taking the Extension Course and "the whole Company had heard about it," they react by "need[ing] him about it to relieve their own baffled surprised disappointment." Warden himself is disturbed when he "suddenly [wonders] what Prewitt had thought. When Prewitt found out that Milt Warden was going to become an officer" (693).

Later on, while watching a group of officers, "Warden thought again how much it was all like some kind of club, a young gentlemen's club, warm, friendly, completely

secure, with its own comforting set of rules for parliamentary procedure” (Jones 792). While the comparison of a group of officers to “a young gentleman’s club” might be complimentary coming from another man, coming from Warden it is a mark of scorn. If officers are “a young gentleman’s club” who enjoy their “own comforting set of rules,” it is not a club Warden respects or rules he would wish to follow. The very softness suggested by the “warm, friendly...comforting” club stands in direct contrast to the virtues Warden esteems as an enlisted man. As a first sergeant his identity is wrapped up in his carefully cultivated image as a type of (sometimes) benevolent Company-level dictator pushing his men to ensure their readiness and hardiness as soldiers. Because he takes great pride in living the Spartan life of a first sergeant, to forsake it for a cushier position as a member in a “young gentleman’s club” could not be mistaken as anything other than a step backwards in his eyes, and an especially humiliating one at that. When Warden finally rips up his commission, Jones’s description leaves no doubt that for Warden, the act is a highly charged emotional event driven first and foremost by his sense of pride:

Warden’s confirmation of appointment as Second Lieutenant (Infantry) in the Army of the United States. Warden stood a moment in the doorway and surveyed the wreckage. Then he threw his rifle viciously into the corner and the little wagon rocked on its wheels as the stock of the Star Gauge ’03 burst across the grip. Andy, who had been raised in the Regular Army where to drop your rifle on the ground at drill was a major sin punishable with no less than two weeks’ extra-duty, gasped audibly and looked at him with open horror...He laid the two pieces down tenderly by

the door, feeling a little better. Then he picked up the offensively unharmed, still virgin, War Department letter with its endorsements and tore it across, then across again, then across a third time, and scattered it over the floor. With the rest of the wreckage. (Jones 809)

As Warden is above all else a man of action, it is appropriate that Jones chooses to relay the significance of this deed solely through his actions. Warden knows that ripping up his commission will cost him any chance at a future with Karen, just as he knows that accepting it will cost him his self-respect for betraying his deeply-held ideals for a woman. While he loves Karen, he has built a successful career over the years as an enlisted man. To become an officer would mean not only throwing away that hard-won career, but doing so in order to join the group of men that he hates most in the world. Even worse, Warden's hatred of officers is matched only by his lack of respect for them, and to become one would mean to quite literally become a person he cannot respect.

Rather than describing these thoughts, Jones instead describes Warden's turmoil as if it were a scene in a movie where emotional events must be relayed visually. He places a special emphasis on the word "wreckage," which describes both the physical state of the barracks and the imminent state of Warden's life no matter what decision he makes. He presents Warden's rage through the deliberate and highly symbolic breaking of his rifle, which, as the horrified Andy points out, is a "major sin" in the Infantry. As a career N.C.O. and long-time initiate into the ways of the Old Army, there is no chance that Warden could be unaware of the taboo against dropping rifles, let alone throwing them deliberately. The breaking of the rifle can only be a conscious choice that symbolically expresses the extremity of Warden's frustration with his dilemma. The rifle-

throw must be cathartic because in its aftermath, Warden “feel[s] a little better” and has made his decision. He decisively rips his commission not once, but three times, to ensure that he can never reverse course back over the personal Rubicon he has just crossed, and then “scatter[s]” the pieces “with the rest of the wreckage.” Warden does this knowing exactly what it will cost him, but having wrestled with the decision he conclusively chooses pride over love and doesn’t look back.

In his way, Warden is just as prideful as Prewitt. While we as readers may not believe other non-coms who suggest they wouldn’t mind returning to the ranks and taking orders as buck privates, Warden’s threat that he would prefer a bust to the rear ranks rather than lose his control as a first sergeant does not sound like mere idle bluster. Carter is more on point in his statement that “Warden manages to combine material survival with spiritual advancement,” the key phrase being “material survival.” Prewitt bears most of the critical heat for being overly driven by pride, but all of Jones’s exceptional soldiers are prideful. Jones does not depict pride as a bad trait for a soldier to have in and of itself, far to the contrary. The distinction he draws between the ‘good’ or ‘successful’ pride of Warden and Stark with the ‘bad’ or ‘damaging’ pride of Prewitt and Maggio rests on that idea of “material survival.” Warden and Stark possessed enough politically savvy to maneuver into positions where their pride is unlikely to hurt them, but each makes it clear that anything less than full control over his domain is unacceptable. Stark even says so explicitly as a condition of his agreeing to head up G Company’s kitchen. Prewitt and Maggio have the same kind of pride as Warden and Stark, but end up in the stockade in part because they lack the rank to get away with things Stark and Warden would. For all the critics that pick at Prewitt’s stubborn pride as a sign of his

immaturity, not one has allowed that Prewitt simply followed through on the same threats that both Warden and Stark had made; Prewitt's allegedly 'immature' response to transfer from the bugle corps to the infantry when his rating as first bugler is taken away is exactly what Warden and Stark would do if their ratings as 1/st Sergeant and Mess Sergeant were taken away.

While it may be fair to characterize Prewitt as exhibiting an excessive amount of pride, to say that Prewitt suffers destruction because he is too prideful while Warden "repeatedly bend[s] without betraying his integrity" is both unfair and inaccurate. Warden might "bend" on small matters, but when faced with the prospect of sacrificing his integrity as an enlisted man he ultimately proves as prideful as Prewitt. Where Carter is more on point is in his notion of using pride as a catalyst to "combine material success with spiritual advancement." Jones does not depict pride as a bad quality, in his conception it is a good quality that is absolutely necessary to the success of the exceptional soldier. Pride is what spurs the exceptional soldier to excel, to seek material advancement within the Army and spiritual advancement in his understanding of the world. It is only when pride is not channeled properly that Jones shows it backfiring. Prewitt's excessive pride is not a sign of immaturity because he is too prideful; it is a sign of immaturity in that he doesn't know how to channel it to a useful end. Warden's pride leads him to become a first sergeant, Stark's to gain control of his beloved kitchen. Prewitt's pride leads him astray because he is not "smart" enough (by Warden's definition which equates "smartness" with a kind of political savvy) to temper it long enough to succeed materially. However, it is also pride that leads him (and Warden) to excel at what they do, and to create their personal "lines of equity." In an Army in which

fairness is not guaranteed by either the written or unwritten rules, both are proud enough to seek to create their own oasis of fairness where none else exists. It would perhaps be most accurate to say that Jones depicts pride as any other particularly combustible type of rocket fuel: when handled properly, it is a useful tool without which a plane (or a man) could never be propelled to great heights, but which can explode catastrophically if not channeled properly or shielded from dangerous sparks.

THE EXCEPTION

Now, there is one character in *From Here to Eternity* who truly defies Jones's schema. For lack of a better category I have listed him amongst the 'exceptional soldiers,' although it would probably be more accurate to label him an exceptional man who has temporarily enlisted in the Army. That character is Jack Malloy, the stockade philosopher who greatly influences Prewitt and Maggio, and he cannot be examined in the same way as Jones's other characters. Malloy, or The Malloy, as his disciples are apt to call him, is an exception to Jones's rules on several levels. From a literary standpoint, the most pressing is that as a character he is a stark departure from Jones's standard use of realistic techniques that strive to create psychologically accurate characters. Unlike the other major players in *From Here to Eternity*, Jack Malloy is not a realistic character, nor does he possess anything resembling a plausible psychological background. He may well be the least realistic character in Jones's entire canon, and his glaring unreality causes him to stand out even more in comparison to the psychologically complex characters who surround him. James R. Giles identifies three key flaws that *From Here to Eternity* must work to "transcend... a little loose organization and awkward writing, as well as the obtrusiveness of the Jack Malloy characterization" (67). More specifically, Giles writes that "artistically... the Malloy characterization with its attendant philosophizing does damage to Jones's novel, because Malloy's theory of reincarnation is not intellectually profound, even though Jones devotes much space to it." He further argues that "Malloy's mysticism comes to dominate far too strongly and implausibly the characterization of Prewitt after his release from the stockade" (65). Steven Carter takes issue with Giles's statement that the mystical views Jones expresses through Malloy are "not intellectually

profound” and devotes much of his book *James Jones: An American Literary Orientalist Master* to correcting what he sees as a tendency to “misjudge” (5) the vein of mysticism that runs throughout Jones’s work. Carter contends that “Jones’s artistry cannot be appraised and appreciated without understanding the religious system that shaped his organization, characterization, symbolism, setting, and thematic developments” (5). However, despite their disagreement regarding the intellectual worth of the mystical elements in Jones’s writing, both critics gloss quickly over Malloy’s character in their analyses. Where Giles dismisses Malloy’s characterization out of hand for its “obtrusiveness,” Carter similarly minimizes Malloy’s importance, downplaying him as Jones’s “spokesman” (62) and concentrating his attention on the mystical concepts being voiced rather than the character voicing them. Whether the mysticism in Jones’s writing should be considered “intellectually profound” or not is not my concern in this writing. Since Carter has already examined that issue in far more depth than I could hope to, I will leave that question to him. What does concern me is how Malloy as a character fits into Jones’s uniquely hierarchical view of what constitutes success in the Army, and why he has heretofore escaped significant critical attention from the leading Jones scholars.

While the worth (or lack thereof) of Jones’s philosophical writing is not my concern, the role that Malloy and his philosophical teachings plays in *From Here to Eternity* is. Malloy espouses a philosophy based on a mixture of Buddhist and Theosophic ideas, which Jones was heavily influenced by during the writing of *From Here to Eternity*.³⁵ Although many authors might be tempted to use a character like Malloy as an authorial stand-in, he is not a strict mouthpiece for Jones, nor does he bear any biographical resemblance to Jones beyond possessing a mother that “was too

³⁵ Thanks to his association with Lowney Handy.

religious” and who taught him “how much everybody hated...religious ladies” (Jones 635-6). Though Jones does provide a fairly detailed biography for Malloy, for a man who “had been almost everywhere and done almost everything in his 36 years” (634) his background seems curiously flat. Jones dutifully details the growth of young Jack Malloy’s spiritual and philosophical knowledge, beginning with his inculcation in passive resistance through the Wobblies he met in his sheriff father’s Montana jail cell. He then traces Malloy’s conversion to Socialism and membership in the IWW, his decision to go to sea six years later, and finally his enlisting “as a green hand into the Regular Army” following “eleven years experience as a deepsea man...at the age of 32” (Jones 639). But the lengthy biography, meant to establish Malloy’s credentials as “a man who had been almost everywhere and done almost everything,” never really rings true to his characterization.

After going to such lengths to describe the foundation of Malloy’s socialist views as a teenaged Wobbly, Jones fails to provide much reasoning for why Malloy goes to sea or joins the Army. He tells us that during the three-year decline of the Wobblies, “Jack Malloy went on reading, wondering what he was training for, and finally decided to take to the sea. He was nineteen. An era had ended” (637). Yet he provides no further description of why Malloy chose to go to sea as opposed to any other course he might have taken. One might be tempted to link Malloy’s decision to go to sea to his admiration for Jack London, who he had “studied and come to love” (637) in the period just before he abandoned his socialist work for the life of a sailor. I would argue, however, that Jones leaves sufficient evidence to suggest that Malloy is drawn to Jack London’s political and spiritual writings far more than he is London’s adventure writing. Though we are not told

this explicitly by Malloy himself, it is reasonable to conclude that the reading list Prewitt compiles while staying at Alma and Georgette's apartment provides a fair glimpse into the types of books Malloy had told him about in the Stockade. After reading a number of pulp-style mystery stories and tiring of them,³⁶ Prewitt "remembered one day for no good reason how Jack Malloy had always talked about Jack London all the time, and how he had worshipped him almost as much as Joe Hill. The only book of Jack London's he had ever read was *The Call of the Wild*. So he started Alma to bringing home London and went into him really in earnest." The last two words, "in earnest," coming as they do from Jones the narrator and not from Prewitt's consciousness, strongly suggest that it is not works like *The Call of the Wild* that Jones is interested in, making the subsequent titles that he names in contrast to *The Call of the Wild* all the more significant. Jones implies that Prewitt reads nearly all of London's canon, noting that "one day, when he was along toward the *last of them*, like *John Barleycorn* and *The Cruise of the Elsinore*,³⁷ he read five in one day," emphasis mine on "last of them." Jones then lists *Before Adam* and *The Star Rover* as the titles that Prewitt "liked...the best because for the first time they gave him a clear picture of what Malloy had meant by reincarnation of souls" (Jones 716). Jones then names one more London book, noting that "it was while [Prewitt] was reading *Martin Eden* that he got the idea to start writing down titles of other books to read, like Martin had done." It is significant that Prewitt comments to himself that "there were lots of them in London. Most of them he had never heard of. A few he had heard Malloy mention" (Jones 717).

³⁶ Jones notes that of these Prewitt "liked [Raymond Chandler] best of all."

³⁷ Jones (or Prewitt) mistakes the correct title of the book, which is *The Mutiny of the Elsinore*, possibly conflating it with another London work, *The Cruise of the Dazzler*

James R. Giles picks up on the significance of Prewitt's reading list, writing that "literary influences on the novel are many, and Jones overtly states several of them in his description of Prewitt's obsessive reading while AWOL." Giles argues that "Prewitt responds to Jack London for two reasons: London's own concern with the 'lower classes' and his interest in reincarnation as expressed in novels like *The Star Rover* and *Before Adam*," not-so-coincidentally the two London books Prewitt lists as his favorite. Giles goes on to note that "London echoes are strong throughout the novel."³⁸ However, his suggestion that "one would expect Jones to respond to a writer like London who stressed so often the theme of physical survival in an almost exclusively male world" (67) fails to take into account how much "London's own concern with the 'lower classes' and his interest in reincarnation" lines up with Jones's own theosophically-influenced interests of the time. More important for our purposes, if we view Prewitt's interest in London as a reflection of Malloy's interest in London, it becomes difficult to accept that Malloy went to sea because of his love for London's maritime fiction. Not impossible, but difficult. Prewitt likes *The Star Rover* and *Before Adam* "best" out of London's work "because for the first time they gave him a clear picture of what Malloy had meant by reincarnation of souls" (716). Presumably, this is because Malloy developed his notions of reincarnation in part by reading those same two books. By that same token, it would also be logical to assume that *Martin Eden* is also a favorite of Malloy's. Although Prewitt does not specifically list *Martin Eden* as a favorite it does give him the idea to copy down a list of books to read, "a few [of which] he had heard Malloy mention" (717). Considering Malloy's love of London's work, it would not be too much of a stretch to presume that

³⁸ One of the more obvious instances occurs when Warden playfully refers to himself as Wolf Larsen of *The Sea Wolf* on page 106.

Malloy was also introduced to those unnamed books by *Martin Eden*. Even though Prewitt/Jones does not name the books listed in *Martin Eden* that he had heard Malloy mention before, it would probably be a fairly safe assumption that they included the works that Martin Eden checks out of the library in Chapter 7: “Madam Blavatsky’s ‘Secret Doctrine,’ ‘Progress and Poverty,’ ‘The Quintessence of Socialism,’ and ‘Warfare of Religion and Science’” (London 56). It should be obvious why a labor activist like Malloy might be interested in titles like “Progress and Poverty” and “The Quintessence of Socialism.” The first book Martin checks out, “Secret Doctrine,” outlines Blavatsky’s views on karma and reincarnation, which just happen to be Malloy’s other two favorite topics.³⁹ If Prewitt’s reading list is primarily a reflection of Jack Malloy’s tastes in London, then Malloy’s tastes skew heavily towards London’s writings on socialism and reincarnation. Jones provides no evidence to suggest that Malloy’s interest in London had anything to do with his adventure writing, his tales of “physical survival in an almost exclusively male world” (Giles 67) that might better explain why an impressionable young London fanatic would choose to go to sea.

It is also worth noting the parallels between Prewitt’s death *Martin Eden* and *John Barleycorn*, the last two books that Prewitt reads before he dies. Steven Carter, who had previously written that “Prewitt’s worst fault...is being so proud that he is willing to make a multitude of sacrifices rather than surrender the minutest particle of his pride,” suggests that Prewitt’s death marks his growth “in this incarnation...growth that has resulted from his experience, especially from his contact with the teachings of Jack

³⁹ “The Secret Doctrine” (London drops the “The” in *Martin Eden*) and “Progress and Poverty” are real works written by Madam Blavatsky, but the other two texts are not. “The Secret Doctrine” is sometimes subtitled “The Synthesis of Science, Religion, and Philosophy” but no texts titled “Warfare of Religion and Science” or “The Quintessence of Socialism” exist outside of *Martin Eden*. London is either mistakenly recalling other works by Blavatsky or working off of editions of her books that were published under alternate titles.

Malloy.” Carter argues that when he is stopped by the M.P.’s Prewitt is “confronted with the choice between killing once more or letting himself be killed without fighting back” (73). By choosing the latter, he shows that he has begun to absorb Malloy’s lessons on nonviolence and passive resistance. Of Prewitt’s death, James R. Giles writes that “one is aware immediately...that Prewitt personifies an idealism carried to such an extreme that it must be modified or it will play a part in his destruction” (38-9). Though he does not phrase it in such terms directly, Carter essentially suggests that Prewitt’s refusal to fire on the M.P.s who stop him constitutes a form of admirable suicide; from this view, though it is regrettable that Prewitt dies, the manner of his death is admirable because it demonstrates the growth he has made in learning to temper his previously unbending individualism. Meanwhile, Giles’s reading of the same event suggests that Prewitt’s unceasing rebelliousness marks an immature form of excessive individualism. Coincidentally enough, Jack London wrote to Upton Sinclair that one of *Martin Eden*’s key themes is “an attack on individualism,” and its title character ultimately achieves a form of redemption through suicide after finding his rejection of socialism for a radical Nietzschean individualism less fulfilling than he thought. Meanwhile, the book that Prewitt is reading when Pearl Harbor is attacked (which would turn out to be the last book he ever read) is *John Barleycorn*. This is a small bit of irony on Jones’s part, since Prewitt reads most of a novel that famously focuses on the dangers of excessive alcohol consumption while sitting on Alma’s couch in a drunken haze.

There are two points to this lengthy and roundabout examination of Jack Malloy’s likely reading list. The first is to disavow the notion that Malloy’s already out of character decision to take to sea was likely to have been motivated by a love of Jack

London's adventure fiction. Tenuous as that reasoning might have been, Malloy's going to sea because he was influenced by Jack London's adventure writing would have been the only reasoning Jones gives the reader more compelling than the suggestion that Malloy chose to go to sea entirely at random, based on no logical reason whatsoever. As Sherlock Holmes famously advised, "when you have eliminated the impossible, whatever remains, *however improbable*, must be the truth" (Conan Doyle 111), and Jack Malloy's going to sea because of Jack London (or loving Jack London because of the sea) is impossible. The second is to underscore how unlikely it is that a man of Malloy's learning and temperament, as sophisticated as he is, would continually act in an unreasonable way if he were meant to be treated as a realistic and psychologically accurate character. Malloy's decision to end his days as a sailor and enlist in the Army is similarly underdeveloped. Jones devotes only four sentences to fleshing out Malloy's reasoning to join the Army, and I use the term 'fleshing out' loosely. Jones tells us: "Jack Malloy, with eleven years experience as a deepsea man behind him, at the age of 32, came back home. He enlisted as a green hand into the Regular Army. He wanted to be there for the war. He still kept on reading" (639)

If Malloy's decision to go to sea seems a random response to the disintegration of the IWW, at least in that instance Jones takes the time to show the effect that disintegration had on Malloy. If his particular decision to go to sea does not make much sense, we can at least accept by its timing that Malloy was ready to try his hand at something new. By contrast, his decision to join the Army makes no sense whatsoever. Jones does not tell the reader what spurred Malloy to return home "with eleven years experience as a deepsea man behind him," nor what spurred him to make a career change

at that particular moment. The only reasoning that Jones gives—that Malloy “wanted to be there for the war” —leaves the superficial impression that Malloy was extraordinarily prescient and saw the shape of things to come before most could. However, with a little scrutiny that idea quickly becomes laughable. Jones places Malloy’s transition from sailor to soldier in 1937, the year when Malloy “pushed...clear off the sea for good” (638), and the timing matches up with Malloy’s given age, 32, and birthdate, 1905 (634). Malloy’s choosing to enlist in the Army in 1937 fails to make sense for two very important reasons. The first is that in 1937, Germany was still a year away from annexing Austria and strong-arming control of the Sudetenland, and two years away from invading Poland and drawing England into the fight. Relations between China and Japan had stayed tense after the Japanese invasion of Manchuria in 1931, but Japan did not invade China itself until July 7 of 1937; Nanking would not fall until December 13. If Malloy joined the Army in 1937 because he “wanted to be there for the war” that was still two years away in Europe, he would have had to foresee an American showdown with the Empire of Japan almost as soon as their armies crossed the Chinese border. This would seem even less likely in 1937 since the United States remained strongly isolationist even after hostilities in Europe began on a large scale in Europe; President Roosevelt would not institute even a peacetime draft until September 16, 1940. Even more perplexing is why Malloy would join the peacetime U.S. Army in 1937, in order to “be there for the war,” when the Spanish Civil War was in full swing. When taking Malloy’s strongly leftist political leanings into consideration, it makes no sense whatsoever that a former Wobbly like Malloy would pass up the chance to fight for the Republicans in Spain, especially since the I.W.W. was well-represented within the ranks of the Abraham

Lincoln Brigade. If Malloy really spurned the International Brigades to enlist in the isolationist Regular Army of 1937, in peacetime, with no knowledge that the invasion of Poland, the Battle of Britain, or the attack on Pearl Harbor would one day come to pass, so that he could “be there for the war” he saw coming within the first few months of the Japanese invasion of China, then his extraordinary clairvoyant powers could have surely been put to far more profitable use at the roulette wheel.⁴⁰

There is one final aspect of Malloy’s background that Jones fails to provide, and that is the reason why he is locked up in the Stockade at all. We are told that Malloy is on his “second stretch” in the Stockade, information that is only provided because Jones notes that Malloy originally invented “The Game...during his first stretch and since then it had become an institution in Number Two.” Malloy then went “back to duty” for an indeterminate amount of time and had “forgotten it, and come back for his second stretch to find it still being played in its original form without embellishments,” a nugget of background information designed to show what a “compliment” (Jones 627) this is to Malloy’s original conception. What Jones does not say is why Malloy was sent to the Stockade (the first time or the second time), and how long the period in between his two sentences in the Stockade lasted. Considering how influential Malloy is on Prewitt during Prewitt’s time in the Stockade, the lack of any information that explains why Malloy is there seems a glaring absence. The newspaper article that Prewitt reads suggesting that Fatso Judson’s murderer might “possibly [be] a recently escaped convict whose apprehension was expected any moment named Pvt John J Malloy” (681) also declines to

⁴⁰ For further information on American involvement in the Spanish Civil War, see Peter N. Carroll’s *The Odyssey of the Abraham Lincoln Brigade*. For further information on events leading up to World War II, see Jonathan G. Utley’s *Going to War with Japan: 1937-1941* or Donald Cameron Watt’s *How War Came*. And for general information on the early stages of World War II, see John Keegan’s *The Second World War* or J.F.C. Fuller’s *The Second World War, 1939-45*.

mention what Malloy had been incarcerated for, information one would normally expect to see in a news article before bland reassurances that his “apprehension was expected any moment.” As he did with Malloy’s previous decisions to become a sailor and enlist in the Army, Jones’s decision to withhold the details of Malloy’s imprisonment appears deliberate. For an author whose calling cards are gritty realism and devotion to character above all else, Jones’s characterization of Malloy is shockingly slipshod. Either, as too many critics would charge throughout his career, he simply succumbed to a spate of sloppy writing in his rendering of Malloy, or, as I argue is more likely, Jones chose to craft his portrayal of Jack Malloy as an exception to his usual mode of writing.

I believe Malloy is not treated as a psychologically accurate character, or given much of a biography, because he is meant to function within *From Here to Eternity* more as a model of ideal spiritual achievement for Prewitt to follow than a flesh and blood person. Malloy should be seen as a kind of cousin/predecessor to the figure frequently seen in the works of Saul Bellow, the “reality instructor.” Critic Adam Kirsch writes that:

Saul Bellow came up with the term "reality instructor" for the kind of self-important, tough-talking, wised-up guy who devotes his life to wising up other people. The ineffectual intellectual heroes of Bellow's fiction are constantly having their lapels grabbed, figuratively and literally, by such tutors in toughness — gangsters, operators, money men — who can't stand the sight of a dreamer, an idealist, someone who just doesn't get it. (New York Sun)

If Bellow has “reality instructors,” Jones introduces Malloy as a ‘spirituality instructor,’ a figure that he would also use in his next novel *Some Came Running*.⁴¹ Malloy’s purpose as spirituality instructor to Prewitt is similar to that of a Bellovian reality instructor, only with the goals reversed. As a Jonesian spirituality instructor, Malloy does indeed devote himself to “wising up” people who need it. Only instead of toughening up ineffectual intellectuals, Malloy is an effectual intellectual providing spiritual guidance to ‘soften up’ tough-talking, wised-up guys who inwardly are seeking more out of life. Malloy’s background does not hold together under closer scrutiny because it does not need to. His background is meant only to superficially establish his credibility as a philosopher/spiritual advisor/natural leader to the men in Number Two Barracks, not to provide the canvas on which a psychologically believable character might be created. The implied logic is that to men like Prewitt, Maggio, and ‘Blues’ Berry, “a man who had been almost everywhere and done almost everything” would be more admired and looked up to, as both a man and a philosopher, because his real-world experience eclipsed theirs. Similarly, Jones does not provide the reason for either of Malloy’s incarcerations in the Stockade because they are not necessary. If Malloy was meant as a realistic character, it would be crucial to know why a spiritually advanced adherent to the principles of passive resistance kept ending up in the Stockade, and in the recalcitrant Number Two Barracks of at that.⁴² But because he is not meant to be a realistic character, it does not matter *why* Malloy ends up in the Stockade, only *that* he ends up in the Stockade so he can serve his

⁴¹ In *Some Came Running* Bob French, the father of Dave Hirsch’s love interest Gwen, serves much the same role for Dave as Malloy serves for Prewitt. However Bob French plays a much larger role in *Some Came Running* than Malloy does in *From Here to Eternity*, is portrayed with much more depth, and comes much closer to functioning as a mouthpiece for Jones than Malloy does.

⁴² If Jones had felt it necessary to explain the reasons for Malloy’s repeated imprisonment in the Stockade it would have been a natural place to create parallels between Prewitt’s active resistance to the Army’s injustice and Malloy’s passive resistance. That Jones chose not to pursue a fairly obvious opportunity to link Prewitt and Malloy even more closely is a point that ought to raise questions in and of itself.

function as Prewitt's spirituality instructor. In effect, Malloy is already in Number Two Barracks when Prewitt and Maggio arrive there because the dictates of the plot demand it; it is precisely because that kind of logic flies so drastically in the face of Jones's usual writing style that we can tell Malloy must be treated differently than Jones's usual characters.

Malloy cannot be an exceptional soldier in the Jonesian conception because he has no niche and no calling within the Army. The closest he comes to finding an occupational niche is in providing help to those who need it. Prewitt eventually recognizes that "the sole reason The Malloy let him get behind the curtain shrouding his past was not because Malloy saw him as an equal who would understand, but because to Malloy he was an inferior who openly needed help. The need for help seemed to be the only key that could unlock Jack Malloy" (Jones 628). Later, Malloy counsels Prewitt not to ever leave the Army because "you love the Army. Really love it. Are a part of it, and belong in it...when a man has found something he really loves, he must always hang onto it, no matter what happens, whether it loves him or not" (Jones 658). Afterwards he admits that "I've never loved anything enough to belong in it. The things I've loved have always been too phantasmal, too immaterial, too idealistic. I suffer from the same disease I try to diagnose, the same disease I destroying the world" (Jones 658). As a spirituality instructor for Prewitt, Malloy confirms Jones's schema that finding a niche to excel in will provide the opportunity for self-actualization while standing outside that system himself. Stark counsels Prewitt to "find something that's...really his and will never let him down, and then work hard at it and for it and it will pay him back" (209). Malloy confirms the first part of Stark's statement while modifying the second, agreeing that

“when a man has found something he really loves, he must always hang onto it, no matter what happens” while advising Prewitt to do so “whether it loves him or not” (658).⁴³ But while Malloy (with his own slight modification) corroborates Stark’s thesis to Prewitt,⁴⁴ he admits even to himself that he is an exception.

Whether one chooses to credit Malloy as a character existing on a higher plane than the regular mortals in *From Here to Eternity* or dismiss him as a character written too unrealistically to be counted with them, one cannot say that he operates under the same set of rules that apply to the other characters in the book. However much credit one is willing to extend to Jones with regards to the quality of Malloy’s characterization, Jones clearly portrays Jack Malloy as a soldier who will never find his niche in the Army because he pursues a higher calling. Nothing as terrestrial as a kitchen or a ward room or a bugler’s rating could capture the full devotion of a man committed to the “phantasmal” and “immaterial” matters of life. As Maggio fills an unofficial niche as Prewitt’s sidekick, Malloy fills the unofficial niche of mentor to the incorrigibles of Number Two Barracks (who wouldn’t have ended up in Number Two Barracks if they hadn’t been men who found difficulty playing by the rules⁴⁵) and spiritual tutor to the occasional prisoner capable of truly understanding his lessons. Neither Maggio nor Malloy fit Jones’s definition of the exceptional soldier because neither finds a niche within the Army from which they can excel. Carter writes Jones’s heroes seeking to “combine material” success “with spiritual advancement.” Both Maggio and Malloy fail to find material success in the Army, but in Malloy’s case it is because he is only interested in the latter pursuit.

Even if Malloy does not find something within the Army that he can love whole-

⁴³ This is a callback to an earlier discussion Malloy had with Prewitt about Spinoza on pgs 640-1.

⁴⁴ Who “still did not believe him” but didn’t see “how [he could] argue against a brain like Malloy” (658).

⁴⁵ A minimum of 2 offences, once by breaking a general Army Regulation to be thrown in the stockade, and a second time by breaking a stockade rule to be sent to Number 2 Barracks.

heartedly, he recognizes that Prewitt does, and tries to get Prewitt to see why nothing good can ever come of leaving the niche that he has found in the Army. Malloy himself has no need of a niche because he has no interest in becoming an exceptional soldier. As Prewitt's spirituality instructor, his only purpose is to validate Jones's schema and direct the course of Prewitt's spiritual advancement, even if he himself operates under a different set of rules.

THE INSIDER'S VIEW

Late in his life, in commentary he wrote for *WWII*, a book of art from the Second World War, Jones discussed in depth a concept he referred to as the “Evolution of a Soldier,” with the suggestion that representing that evolution had been one of the chief aims of his own fictional trilogy. While it would be fair to let Jones get away with this statement in reference in *The Thin Red Line* and *Whistle*, it is more difficult to defend its application to *From Here to Eternity*. In *WWII*, Jones sets forth his view of the “Evolution of a Soldier” as the process by which a civilian becomes indoctrinated into Army life through recruit training, then becomes indoctrinated into the ways of combat through assignment to a frontline Infantry outfit, and if he survives to become a combat veteran or a wounded casualty, reverses the process to become reintegrated into civilian life once again, having been forever changed by his experiences. The Evolution that Jones describes can be broken down into three stages, or transitions: the transition from civilian to unblooded garrison soldier, from green soldier to combat soldier, and from combat soldier⁴⁶ back to civilian. Jones implies that the three books of the trilogy correspond to these three stages, and while *The Thin Red Line* and *Whistle* respectively track the evolution of the garrison soldier into the combat soldier and the combat soldier’s reintroduction and (failed) reintegration into civilian life, *From Here to Eternity* does not depict a single soldier transitioning from civilian to garrison soldier. The one character who comes remotely close to fitting that description would be Maggio. But even though Maggio’s frequent references to his recent civilian past working in Gimbel’s basement are designed to show his ‘greenness’ as a soldier, the text clearly

⁴⁶ Jones sees only three possibilities for any soldier sent into combat: he will either be killed, be wounded enough to be removed from combat, or be ‘fortunate’ enough to survive an extended tour of frontline duty without suffering a wound serious enough to necessitate his removal from the lines. In Jones’s view, the last category is not always the most desirable of the three.

states that by the time Prewitt transfers into G Company Maggio has been “out of recruit drill a month” (Jones 75). While this is not long enough for Maggio to have transformed into much of a soldier,⁴⁷ it is still worth noting that the greenest soldier in the book has still completed recruit training and spent a month in the Army beyond that; the schema that Jones would later put forth in *WWII* begins explicitly with the first shock of a civilian entering recruit training having no experience with the Army at all. Even if one were feeling generous and willing to consider Maggio a general representative of the recent civilian’s growing acquaintance with the ways of the Army, it would still be difficult to ignore the fact that he is only one supporting character. All three protagonists (Prewitt, Warden, and Stark), along with every other soldier depicted, are seasoned garrison soldiers comfortably devoted to the Army as a career. Taking this into consideration, I think it is clear that Jones applied his comprehensive schema after-the-fact, or at least after the writing of *From Here to Eternity*. However, that is not to say it is without merit. As I’ve already stated, the “Evolution of a Soldier” that Jones puts forth aligns strongly with the second two books in the trilogy, and will still align well with *From Here to Eternity* if taken more figuratively than literally. The purpose of *From Here to Eternity* is not to show the literal transition of a civilian into a soldier as he acclimates to the idiosyncratic world of the Army, but to introduce the (presumably) civilian reader to that world and acclimatize him to a soldier’s mindset. *From Here to Eternity* began with the off-handed remark to Maxwell Perkins that Jones had “always wanted to do a novel on the peacetime army...something I don’t remember having seen” (MacShane 82). Its conception is based on the idea of exploring the previously under-examined world of “the

⁴⁷ The reference to Maggio being out of recruit drill only a month is followed by Chief Choate’s comment that “he messes up and catches all the extra details, but he’s a good boy” (75).

peacetime army,” not showing the introduction and initiation of a civilian into that world. The notion of tracing the civilian’s gradual transformation into a soldier came much, much later and is not, strictly speaking, a theme that must relate to an exploration of the peacetime Army.

If anything, the completed work justifies Jones’s decision not to include any soldier characters that begin the novel as civilians. Jones’s aim was to introduce a reading public who thought of the Army as a group primarily comprised of what Stephen Ambrose would later term “Citizen Soldiers,” draftees and For-The-Duration volunteers, to the professional Old Army that he had known, and that had already slipped out of the public’s memory. His decision to focus on soldiers who have, for the most part, been in the Army for years establishes the atmosphere and tone of the insular world of the Old Army from page one. Instead of trying to gradually introduce the reader to the world of the Old Army through a newly-enlisted civilian character that necessity would demand be treated as an outsider by the more seasoned troops, Jones introduces the reader to that world by throwing him in the metaphorical deep end. By making all of the soldier characters insiders, men who have been in the Army a while and are intimately familiar with its idiosyncratic ways, Jones allows the reader to see the Army from an insider’s perspective from the moment they join Prewitt packing his bags in the Bugle Corps’ Barracks. Jones even proves that it is not necessary to include an outsider civilian character to help explain the more esoteric nuances of Army life by using the newly-minted soldier Maggio to introduce any exposition that is needed. Maggio’s greenness as a soldier is more than sufficient to contrast him with the more experienced men around him and let them teach him (and by proxy, the reader) the ways of the Old Army, while

still letting him serve as an insider in a way that a freshly-enlisted civilian character could not. Maggio might be green, but he is unquestionably a soldier, and there is an important difference between showing a recently-ex-civilian becoming an inexperienced soldier and showing an inexperienced soldier being put through a seasoning process by his veteran platoon-mates.

In a book that is dominated by the importance of codes, those unwritten and unofficial conventions that can only be understood by those experienced enough to be in the know, it should be apparent how significant Jones's decision to give his readers a complete insider's view of the Old Army really is. *The Thin Red Line* and *Whistle* place more attention on showing how combat and its aftermath turn the usual rules of the Army topsy-turvy, but *From Here to Eternity* establishes what those standard rules are. It is important to remember that the Old Army that Jones recreates in such detail in *From Here to Eternity* is a separate entity from the Post-Pearl Harbor Army that is now thought of as fighting the Second World War. The Post-Pearl Harbor Army derived the majority of its strength from draftees and enlistees who knew they would be soldiers only "for the duration...plus six months,"⁴⁸ men who had every intention of returning to civilian life once the war was won and their term of service honorably completed. The Old Army that Jones was a part of, the 'Pineapple Army' that is his subject in *From Here to Eternity*, was an Army of professionals. Prior to Pearl Harbor, many would have called them men culled from the dregs of society. They were men who had lived "on the bum" or drifted around as laborers, scrabbling to sustain a subsistence-level existence in the Great Depression by the sweat of their brows. They were the tired, the poor, the huddled

⁴⁸ Enlistment Category 5 on the Army Enlistment Records, "Enlistment for the duration of the War or other emergency, plus six months, subject to the discretion of the President or otherwise according to law."

masses, who joined the Army because “they could live better on the Inside than they could on the Outside” and stayed in it, no matter how much they bitched, because it provided them two commodities they could not find on the “outside” in civilian life: security and self-worth. The men of the Old Army, with few exceptions, had nothing to look forward to in civilian life and no intentions of returning to it until the Army retired them with a modest pension after thirty years of service. Though the men of the Old Army would serve honorably in the Post-Pearl Harbor Army, the influx of draftees and other non-professional soldiers would essentially destroy the Old Army as it had once existed. The Post-Pearl Harbor Army brought many improvements, perhaps most notably an expanded and more socially diverse officer corps that was less of an aristocracy and more of a meritocracy. But it also brought an end to the world that the professional soldiers of the Old Army thought they would inhabit securely until they were forced to retire.

From Here to Eternity preserves the memory of that world, but more important establishes the rules that Jones’s protagonists, who had been brought up in that world, would struggle to follow in the subsequent two books of the trilogy. The rules of the Old Army that are codified in *From Here to Eternity* also allow us to construct a basic outline of what we might term the Jones Code Hero. Jones’s Code Heroes are men of lower (and very occasionally middle) class backgrounds who have found a home within the Army that their socioeconomic situation would preclude them from ever equaling outside it. They are men driven by an innate drive for more who, unlike many other soldiers of their background, are not tempted to fall into a comfortable mediocrity so long as the Army continues to provide them with food, clothing, and shelter. Though they may not be able

to articulate it, they are men who seek to improve themselves spiritually and become self-actualized, “to become more and more what [he] is, to become everything that [he] is capable of becoming” (Maslow 8). Jones’s Code Heroes have learned to expect neither justice nor consistency from the official rules written down in the ARs and have been taught by experience to be wary of authority in general and officers in particular. They have seen that the majority of their officers are at heart aristocrats more comfortable maneuvering around the Machiavellian subterfuge of the Colonel’s Officer’s Club happy hour than maneuvering platoons around a battlefield, and they know that the non-commissioned officers are the ones who truly run each company. Knowing that the ARs are an open joke, they learn to navigate the complex web of unwritten rules and codes governing an enlisted man’s behavior that sprung up over time as a self-policing measure. The Jones Code Hero’s innate need to find order and justice in a chaotic universe inevitably leads him to take the notion of unwritten rules a step further and adopt a personal code predicated on the idea of fairness. If he can not expect to find justice through official channels he will be drawn to the idea of providing his own unofficial form of justice, and Jones will portray his rejection of the arbitrary ARs in favor of a self-imposed form of order as a sign of his high character. Not only will this personal code help protect the Jones Code Hero from the persecution of his officers, but also from the chickenshit persecutions of disgruntled cooks, jockstrap N.C.O.s, and the other petty tyrants who inevitably acquire a small amount of power to abuse in every bureaucracy (the Army being a particularly large one). Paul Fussell considers it “notable how much of the writing of the Second World War tends not so much to convey news from the battlefield as to expose the chickenshit lurking behind it,” (*Wartime* 83) and *From Here*

to Eternity certainly fits into that category. If Jones does devote a significant amount of attention to “expos[ing] the chickenshit” of the Old Army,⁴⁹ he also shows how his heroes adopt very personal codes of fairness in an effort to counteract the inherent unfairness of the chickenshit endemic to any Army.

Still, despite his lingering resentment of its many flaws, Jones writes of the Old Army with the mixture of undying love and hate that only an inside member could feel. In all three of his Army novels Jones quietly looks down his nose at “handcuffed volunteers.” He is always careful to differentiate between draftees and Regular Army enlistees and imply that it is the latter who are true soldiers. Only a Regular Army enlistee like Jones could nostalgically refer to the Army as “the Profession,” or devote such time and detail to chronicling its idiosyncrasies. However, the reason for such detailed attention becomes clearer when one remembers that each of Jones’s war books contains an undercurrent of dramatic irony, *From Here to Eternity* most of all. While reading it, in the back of the reader’s mind lays the knowledge that the idyllic nature of G Company’s life at Schofield Barracks will eventually be shattered by the attack on Pearl Harbor. Similarly, when writing *From Here to Eternity* and spending so much loving time capturing the world of the Old Army—its codes, its rituals, its jargon, and all the thousand details that made up its daily life—in the back of Jones’s mind lay the knowledge that when the 27th ‘Wolfhound’ Regiment of the 25th Infantry Division moved on from Hawaii to Guadalcanal, that world of the Old Army would be shattered forever, never to return, and that a book like *From Here to Eternity* would be needed to preserve it before the last memories of the Old Army joined it in oblivion.

CHAPTER II

⁴⁹ A temptation few former-privates-turned-authors are able to resist.

THE THIN RED LINE

If *From Here to Eternity* centers on establishing the ways of the Old Army, then *The Thin Red Line* centers on the destruction of those ways in the face of modern combat. Though Jones does not describe them in these terms, it should be evident that the idiosyncratic nature of the Old Army's codes are based on a very human system. The arbitrary nature of the Old Army is grounded in the idea that an Army is a human institution. Advancement in the Old Army is not achieved by merit, but by being able to recognize (and brown-nose) the person who can secure your promotion. Officers are chosen not by merit, but because they fit naturally into the aristocracy of the officers' world.⁵⁰ As Warden puts it, it is a "young gentleman's club... completely secure, with its own comforting set of rules for parliamentary procedure" (Jones 792). In the Pineapple Army, the Non-Commissioned Officers corps is composed primarily of enlisted men who have advanced not because they are great leaders, but because they are great athletes. It is a corrupt system where the single greatest factor in determining material success is political acumen, but it is also a system inhabited almost entirely by volunteers.⁵¹ If it is a corrupt system, it is one which professional soldiers have chosen to join because it still affords them more chances for advancement and prestige than they would have had in the civilian world. It is also a system that, by its very design, cannot survive long past its first encounter with a modern enemy on a modern battlefield. As Jones shows in *The Thin Red Line*, it doesn't. By the end of *The Thin Red Line*, the pre-war Old Army of *From Here to Eternity* will have been replaced by a 'New Army' blooded in combat. Its professional corps of enlisted men will have been diluted by large quantities of draftees,

⁵⁰ Which oftentimes meant that their fathers and grandfathers before them had also been officers, like *From Here To Eternity's* Lt. Culpepper.

⁵¹ Before draftees snared by the pre-war peacetime draft begin showing up in the latter stages of *From Here to Eternity*, it is made up exclusively of volunteers.

and many of its unstated codes will be discarded in favor of a new set of unofficial rules written and tested on the jungle battlefields of the South Pacific. The destruction of the Old Army and subsequent transition to a 'New,' combat-ready Army does not come easy or cheap. As always, the new codes that arise to govern behavior in combat will be paid for in the blood of soldiers as the Army learns by trial and error what practices are combat-efficient and what practices are not. For better or worse, by the end of *The Thin Red Line* the Old Army will no longer exist. The soldiers who enlisted expecting to retire from the Old Army as professional "Thirty Year Men" will be forced, whether they like it or not, to adapt to the New Army they find themselves in.

One of *The Thin Red Line's* main themes is that the flawed, human ways of the Old Army, developed to fight wars in the 19th Century, cannot survive the impersonal, mechanical combat of the Second World War. The metaphor that Jones develops to capture this idea compares the nature of modern warfare to a business, with profit measured in ground gained and loss determined by the expense of lives and equipment (and not necessarily in that order). On his barge ride from the transport ship to the beach on Guadalcanal, "the main thought uppermost in [Corporal] Fife's mind was that everything was so organized, and handled with such matter-of-fact dispatch. Like a business. Like a regular business. And yet at the bottom of it was blood: blood, mutilation, death. It seemed weird, wacky to Fife" (Jones 37-8). Fife makes it safely ashore, and watches as a flight of Japanese bombers makes a run at a subsequent group of troop landings. The men on the beach cheer when they see the first bomber knocked down by defending fighters, but quickly lose interest and stop cheering after the first few

Japanese aircraft are shot down. The scene spurs Fife, the closest character biographically to Jones, to meditate further on the nature of warfare:

the lack of cheering only heightened his previous impression of its all being like a business. A regular business venture, not war at all. The idea was horrifying to Fife. It was weird and wacky and somehow insane. It was even immoral. It was as though a clerical, mathematical equation had been worked out, as a calculated risk: Here were two large, expensive ships and say, twenty-five large aircraft had been sent out after them. These had been given protection as long as possible by smaller aircraft, which were less expensive than they, and then sent on alone on the theory that all or part of twenty-five large aircraft was worth all or part of two large ships. The defending fighters, working on the same principle, strove to keep the price as high as possible...that there were men in these expensive machines which were contending with each other, was unimportant—except for the fact that they were needed to manipulate the machines. The very idea itself, and what it implied, struck a cold blade of terror into Fife's essentially defenseless vitals, a terror both of unimportance, his unimportance, and of powerlessness: his powerlessness. He had no control or sayso in any of it. Not even where it concerned himself, who was also a part of it. It was terrifying. He did not mind dying in a war, a real war—at least he didn't think he did—but he did not want to die in a regulated business venture. (Jones 41)

The businesslike nature of war becomes a motif that Jones develops throughout the novel partly to emphasize its horror and partly because the impersonal nature of modern warfare contrasts so drastically with the personal tradition of warfare embraced by the Old Army. Though the Old Army may have learned the lessons of World War I in the abstract,⁵² its preparedness for World War II's island combat (or lack thereof) proves that it never truly took those lessons to heart. The flawed and human Old Army traced its traditions back to the wars of the ancient Greeks, when war was fought by individuals as a contest of skill. In *The Thin Red Line*, Jones adopts the popular conception of a Viking as the idealized image of the individual warrior and makes clear that the day of such warriors has passed. With mortar rounds dropping from the sky at random to blast the ground around him, Fife thinks to himself "This was war? This was no superior test of strength here, no superb swordsmanship, no bellowing Viking heroism, no expert marksmanship. This was only numbers. He was being killed for numbers" (Jones 260-1). Jones also describes in Nordic terms the apathy men still in combat displayed to the wounded who had been evacuated from the front lines. He notes that the dead are quickly forgotten and that the wounded "would live or die someplace else. So they too ceased to exist to the men they left behind, and could be forgotten also. Without a strong belief in a Valhalla, it was as good a way to handle the problem as any, and made everybody feel better" (Jones 232). The point is macabre, but clear: the days when a soldier could believe in Valhalla are gone, never to return again. Modern war might be fought by individuals, but they are no more valued than a number on a profit-and-loss ledger...and they know it.

⁵² It is worth remembering that a certain percentage of officers and senior enlisted men who fought in World War II had also fought in World War I. Jones provides one such example in *From Here to Eternity* with the old-time Weapons sergeant Pete Karelsen.

Even more frightening to the men of C-for-Charlie Company is the idea that they may be killed for no particular reason whatsoever. “The worst thing” according to Jones, “was the element of chance which came into it. The most perfect, perfectly trained soldier could do nothing to protect himself against, or save himself from, the element of chance” (403). Most men can understand, if not exactly relish, the prospect of dying in a war. But if the thought of dying in a “regulated business venture” is loathsome to the men of C-for-Charlie, worse still is the prospect of dying due to sheer probability. While firing at a machine-gun position he cannot even see, Bell ponders the absurdity of being hit by a bullet that had not even been aimed directly at him. “He could not believe that any of them might actually hit somebody. If one did, what a nowhere way to go: killed by accident; slain not as an individual but by sheer statistical probability, by the calculated chance of searching fire, even as he himself might be at any moment. Mathematics! Mathematics! Algebra! Geometry!” (Jones 196). Later on, Private John Jacques is hit by shrapnel from a mortar and subsequently dies of his wounds. While being taken away on a stretcher his platoonmates collectively imagine that Jacques:

appeared to be asking them, or somebody, why?—why he, John Jacques, ASN so-and-so, had been chosen for this particular fate? Somewhere a stranger had dropped a metal case down a tube, not knowing exactly where it would land, not even sure where he wanted it to land. It had gone up and come down. And where did it land? On John Jacques, ASN so-and-so. When it had burst, thousands of chunks and pieces of knife-edged metal had gone chirring in all directions. And who was the only one touched by one of them? John Jacques, ASN so-and-so. Why? Why him?

No enemy had aimed anything at John Jacques, ASN so-and-so. No enemy knew that John Jacques, ASN so-and-so, existed. Any more than *he* knew the name, character, and personality of the Japanese who dropped the metal case down the tube. So why? Why him? Why John Jacques, ASN so-and-so? Why not somebody else? Why not one of his friends? And now it was done. Soon he would be dead. (Jones 218)

The notion is terrifying to a group of soldiers who still want to think of war as a Viking battle of individual skill against individual skill. Jones's soldiers could understand, if not exactly welcome, the idea of dying because an individual Japanese soldier aiming a rifle placed them in his crosshairs and pulled the trigger. While they wouldn't welcome the thought, they could at least accept that they had been personally targeted and killed by another soldier like themselves. But to be killed by searching fire, or by a mortar aimed at no one in particular, is another matter entirely. Strength, skill, and cunning can be used as weapons, offensive or defensive, when the enemy is another man like yourself, testing his strength, skill, or cunning against your own. But when the enemy is probability, there is no defense but luck, and that concept is antithetical to the core values emphasized by the pre-war Army. In the pre-war days, a soldier's worth was in large part derived from his physical strength or toughness; this is the reason why Dynamite Holmes's promotion could become tied to the outcome of boxing matches and football games, because athletic contests developed the same qualities that made for good soldiers. But if those were the rules for G Company in *From Here to Eternity*, the men of C-for-Charlie in *The Thin Red Line* quickly learn that "being, strong, and tough could not help you with enemy mortars" (Jones 329). For professional soldiers, the lesson is a bitter one.

First Sergeant Welsh's theory of warfare bluntly encapsulates this idea of war as a business venture. The phrase that Welsh perpetually "kept muttering softly to himself over and over while grinning slyly" is "Property. Property. All for property." He goes on at further length in an inner monologue on the subject:

Because that was what it was; what it was all about. One man's property, or another man's. One nation's, or another nation's. It had all been done, and was being done, for property. One nation wanted, felt it needed, probably did need, more property; and the only way to get it was to take it away from those other nations who had already laid claim to it. There just wasn't any more unclaimed property on this planet, that was all. And that was all it was. He found it immensely amusing. Property...all for property.

(Jones 50)

Although his idiosyncratic way of muttering his theory earns him the nickname of 'Mad' Welsh from his men, Jones does little to suggest that the First Sergeant's view is inaccurate. Welsh's statement serves as a less eloquent, World War II-specific addendum to Carl von Clausewitz's famous assertion that war is merely politics by other means.⁵³ The 'Mad' Welsh Corollary to this rule could be expressed as follows: 'War is merely business by other means.'

One point worth noting is that while Jones chooses to focus on the business-like nature of war as a symbolic representation of its impersonal nature, he still avails himself of some of the more conventional imagery depicting war as a mechanistic endeavor.

⁵³ J.J. Graham, who wrote the first English translation of Von Clausewitz's *On War*, renders the phrase as "war is not merely a political act, but also a real political instrument, a continuation of political commerce, a carrying out of the same by other means," but today Von Clausewitz's dictum is more often paraphrased than quoted directly. It can be found in subsection 24 of *On War*'s Book 1, Chapter 1, "What is War" (The Clausewitz Homepage).

Jones makes liberal use of mechanical imagery in *The Thin Red Line*, which has been a trope of war literature since Stephen Crane first described Henry Fleming as just a small cog in the “mighty blue machine” (255) of the Federal Army.⁵⁴ J. Glenn Gray writes that one of the possible benefits to being one of those cogs is that soldiers can “forget about death by losing their individuality, or they can function like cells in a military organism, doing what is expected of them because it has become automatic.” Gray finds it “astonishing how much of the business of warfare can still be carried on by men who act as automatons, behaving almost as mechanically as the machines they operate” (102). Even if this might make them militarily effective, Jones is adamant in his opinion that not all soldiers are happy functioning like “cells in a military organism.” If war is a business venture, Jones makes it clear that the men whose death or maiming will be counted as a necessary expenditure for the acquisition of Guadalcanal (“Property, all for property...”) are nowhere near as willing in their participation as the cogs in a “mighty [green] machine” would be. Many members of C-for-Charlie independently come to conclude that even if their original decision to enlist in the Army was voluntary, after war was declared any power they might have had over their own destiny disappeared. If they had once been legitimate volunteers, on Guadalcanal they have been transformed into “handcuffed volunteers” without any input into the matter. War has changed the spirit of their enlistment. Whereas before it had been their decision to join the Army, they know now that even if they had not chosen to enlist through the exercise of their own free will, they would have been drafted and ended up in the same position whether they wanted to

⁵⁴ *The Red Badge of Courage* is a particularly important example as it is widely considered the first modern war novel. Norman Mailer’s *The Naked and the Dead*, which narrowly preceded *From Here to Eternity*, is another noteworthy example of a war novel that extensively uses machine imagery to represent the impersonal nature of modern warfare.

or not. Robert Leckie ties this feeling to the “corrosive...feeling of expendability.”

Speaking of his own experiences, Leckie writes:

this was no feeling of dedication because it was absolutely involuntary. I do not doubt that if the Marines had asked for volunteers for an impossible campaign such as Guadalcanal, almost everyone [then] fighting would have stepped forward. But that is sacrifice; that is voluntary. Being expended robs you of the exultation, the self-abnegation, the absolute freedom of self-sacrifice. Being expended puts one in the role of victim rather than sacrificer, and there is always something begrudging in this.

(99)

As it did to Robert Leckie and his friends in the 1st Marine Regiment’s H Company, war has turned the expendable men of C-for-Charlie from true volunteers into “begrudging” spiritual draftees who happened to sign the enlistment papers before a draft notice could snatch them up.

Pre-combat, Mess Sergeant Storm believes that “if a man’s government told him he had to go and fight a war, he had to go, that was all. The government was bigger than him and it could make him. It wasn’t even a matter of duty; he *had* to go.” Storm, a long-time member of the Old Army, does his best to rationalize this to himself. He thinks that “if he was the right kind of man he would want to go, no matter how much he didn’t really want to.” However his follow-up thought, “it didn’t have anything to do with freedom, for Christ’s sake. Did it?” (Jones 82) shows a decided ambivalence towards the issue. Later in the campaign, after experiencing combat and suffering a wound to his hand, Storm changes his attitude 180 degrees. Having seen what battle is like firsthand,

he decides that “they” can take “the pageant, the spectacle, the challenge, the adventure of war” and use it to “wipe their ass on. It might be all right for field officers and up, who got to run it and decide what to do or not do. But everybody else was a tool—a tool with its serial number of manufacture stamped right on it. And Storm didn’t like being no tool. Not, especially, when it could get you killed” (Jones 368).

Corporal Fife, who had been ensnared by the peacetime draft, is much blunter in his initial assessment of the situation. Under mortar fire Fife is shaken by “a spasm of hopelessness” followed by “helplessness...complete helplessness. He was as helpless as if agents of his government had bound him hand and foot and delivered him [t]here and then gone back to wherever it was good agents went. Maybe a Washington cocktail bar, with lots of cunts around” (Jones 198). Towards the tail end of the campaign Fife’s feelings of helplessness result in nightmares

of fear and panic the essential essence of which was a feeling of complete entrapment. Trapped in every direction no matter where he turned, trapped by patriotic doctors, trapped by longfaced crewcut infantry Colonels who demanded their willingness to die, trapped by Japanese colonial ambitions, trapped by chic grinning S-1 officers secure in their right to ask only after other officers, trapped by his own government and its faceless nameless administrators, trapped by Stein and his increasingly sad face, trapped by 1st/Sgt Mad Welsh who wanted only to laugh at him. (Jones 403)⁵⁵

⁵⁵Fife mentally lists every major authority figure that has vexed him, beginning with “patriotic doctors” like the one who refuses to evacuate him after receiving a minor head wound from a mortar shell fragment. The “longfaced crewcut...Colonel” refers to Lt. Col. Tall, commander of the 1st Battalion. The mention of a S-1 officer refers to an incident that disturbs Fife while he is recuperating from his mortar wound. A Battalion officer had recognized him and asked Fife about the status of C-for-Charlie’s officers (nearly all of whom had been killed in action), but not about any enlisted men. The last two names listed, Stein and Welsh, are the two leading men in C-for-Charlie Company and therefore the two most immediate symbols of authority to Fife.

The more sophisticated Captain Stein is able to expand these notions and see them through a larger viewpoint. While watching another Company execute an assault from a reserve position, he is struck with the thought that “the same massed mob of pawns and minor pieces...[was] going through the identical gyrations their identical counterparts had gone through two days ago.” The similarity of the other Company’s assault to his own assault (C-for-Charlie being the “identical counterparts” and its assault on Hill 207 being the “identical gyrations”) frightens Stein when he thinks of how they go through the same “exaggerated pretenses of invoking the cool calm logic of the science of tactics” to assuage their fears. When Stein then broadens his perspective to think of all the companies making assaults on all the battlefields in early 1943,

it was a horrifying vision: all of them doing the same identical thing, all of them powerless to stop it, all of them devoutly and proudly believing themselves to be free individuals. It expanded to include the scores of nations, the millions of men, doing the same on thousands of hilltops across the world. And it didn’t stop there. It went on. It was the concept—concept? The fact; the reality—of the modern State in action. It was so horrible a picture that Stein could not support or accept it. (Jones 222-3)

By the end of C-for-Charlie’s stint on Guadalcanal there are few true volunteers left. ‘Mad’ Welsh, who considers himself “the only sane men left in the outfit” (Jones 388), is one of those few who ends the campaign still considering himself a volunteer. In Welsh’s eyes:

of them all he was, he was convinced, the only one left who really understood it. Home, family, country, flag, freedom, democracy, the honor

of the President. Piss on all that! He didn't have one of them, yet he was here, wasn't he? And from choice, not necessity, because he could easily have gotten himself out of it. At least, *he understood* himself. The truth was, he liked all this shit. He liked being shot at, being frightened, liked lying in holes scared to death and digging his fingernails into the ground... Part of him did. (Jones 423)

Welsh, however, is squarely in the minority. By the latter stages of the campaign, the majority of C-for-Charlie has taken up a quote from Sergeant Skinny Culn as their rallying cry:

Whatever They say, I'm not a cog in a machine. It had been a thought, not a statement aloud to The Pain, but it said for everybody what they all felt fiercely and needed to believe. They took it to themselves, and applied it to their own particular situations, and they believed it. They were not cogs in a machine, whatever *anybody* said. Only one man looked into it deeper than that. (Jones 408)

Characteristically enough, that one man is John Bell. Bell reacts to C-for-Charlie's new mantra with a thought too disturbing for anyone else in the Company to face head-on. "Not cogs in a machine? What did they think they were then?" (Jones 412) It is fitting that Jones chooses Bell, the former engineering officer, to summarize the "discrepancy" between the mechanical nature of modern warfare and the very human, reluctant soldiers who must fight begrudgingly in it:

"Some men would survive, but no one individual man could survive. It was a discrepancy in methods of counting. The whole thing was too vast,

too complicated, too technological for any one individual man to count in it. Only collections of men counted, only communities of men, only *numbers* of men...the emotion which this revelation caused in Bell was not one of sacrifice, resignation, acceptance, and peace. Instead, it was an irritating, chaffing emotion of helpless frustration which made him want to crawl around rubbing his flanks and back against rocks to ease the itch. (Jones 238)

Hand in hand with this concept, Jones emphasizes absurdity as one of the key traits of modern combat (as do many other war novelists, perhaps most notably Joseph Heller and Kurt Vonnegut). Steven Carter writes that:

the classical epic-tragic view of warfare asserts that each man's death in combat (or at least each hero's death) is meaningful and noble, thus enshrining the ego of the individual dead man and of humanity. The Jonesian comic view, however, generally depicts men's deaths as pointless, stupid, absurd, and laughable to shatter their illusions about the world and their own importance to it. (100)

Carter singles out 'Four-Eyes' Kral, a draftee who volunteers for the position of first scout despite having "the thickest glasses in C-for-Charlie" (Jones 193), as one of the prime examples of the "Jonesian comic view" of modern warfare. Kral volunteers to be first scout because "he had...believed the four-color propaganda leaflets" and "had not known that the profession of first scout of a rifle platoon was a thing of the past and belonged to the Indian Wars, not to the massed divisions, superior firepower, and tighter social control of today. First target, the term should be, not first scout." Sent forward on

his first real scouting mission, Kral makes it only a few feet before being cut down by machine-gun fire and finding out the hard way that his chosen “profession” is obsolete. Bell, who has been forced to take cover in a position overlooking Kral’s corpse, underscores the absurd futility of Kral’s death by mentally composing what he considers the most appropriate epitaph for poor Kral: “HERE LIES FOUR-EYES KRAL, DIED FOR SOMETHING” (Jones 194).

Examples of similar absurdity abound in *The Thin Red Line*. One of the recurring plot points in the first two-thirds of the novel is the low supply of water available to the men of C-for-Charlie. They are constantly low on water because their commanding officer, Lieutenant Colonel Tall, is more concerned with impressing his superiors with his regiment’s rapid progress (thereby earning a promotion from Lieutenant Colonel Tall to full Colonel Tall) than ensuring his men are properly supplied. The situation gets so bad that Captain Gaff,⁵⁶ Tall’s Executive Officer and fair-haired favorite, brings the matter to his attention and is quickly rebuffed. “Hesitantly” Gaff asks “I don’t like to sound depressing or be a wet blanket or anything like that, but what about water? If we don’t—” and is cut off by Tall’s “sharply” given retort “Don’t worry about water.” Tall then softens his stance and assures that he has “arranged” for some water to arrive “in a couple of hours...but we can’t stop now to wait for it...if some of the men pass out, they’ll just have to pass out.” When Gaff protests that “they could die from it, you know. From heat prostration” Tall callously responds “they could die from enemy fire, too” (Jones 313). Though no members of C-for-Charlie actually die from heat prostration, it is absurd that they must risk death from heatstroke or dehydration after surviving an exposed hillside

⁵⁶ Gaff is based on Captain Charles W. Davis, the Executive Officer of the 27th Infantry Regiment during Jones’s time on Guadalcanal. Davis was awarded the Medal of Honor for a patrol he led on January 12, 1943, while Jones was still recovering from his mortar wound in the field hospital.

assault. This absurdity is worsened by the fact that such a pointless death would be directly caused by (and acceptable to) their own regimental commander, and could achieve no discernible military objective other than Colonel Tall's personal advancement.

A similarly absurd situation crops up towards the end of the novel. When Sergeant Milly Beck, whose platoon has "had it tougher than any of the other platoons" and "had more casualties, and are more under strength" than anyone else in C-for-Charlie tries to argue that "they deserve a break" from being on point, his request is flatly denied. In the eyes of the new Company Commander Lieutenant Band, Beck's "platoon is the best I've got. They've got more experience, they're tougher, they know how to handle themselves better. They belong out in front." Beck sums up the Catch-22 his platoon has found itself in by bitterly stating that "in other words, the more of us get killed gettin experience, the more of us got to get killed usin it" (Jones 437). For the average foot soldier in C-for-Charlie, there is little time to appreciate the absurdities of war, as all too often they're too busy suffering from them.

UTILITARIANISM AND COMBAT

No character better exemplifies the breakdown of the Old Army than Engineering Lieutenant-turned-Infantry Private John Bell. Like any other draftee Bell is a man held hostage to forces beyond his control. But his unique case dramatizes the move away from the political cronyism of the Old Army and towards the meritocracy combat demands. Bell's disgrace and fall from young officer to infantry private is a cautionary tale that highlights nearly every way an officer could offend the sensibilities of the other members of the "young gentleman's club." While completing an engineering degree at Ohio State with his bride-to-be Marty, Bell had "naturally...taken ROTC,"⁵⁷ which was a common degree requirement at many universities in the pre-war period. Most men completed their ROTC requirements with no intention of ever serving on active duty, but Bell is unlucky enough to be "called up in 1940 and sent out to the Philippines." Bell notes that "of course his wife had gone with him" (Jones 27). On arrival in the Philippines, he is promptly dispatched "into the jungle on another island to work on a dam being built that the army had its fingers in for defensive reasons" where "wives were not allowed." The reason that Bell draws such an undesirable assignment has nothing to do with his capabilities or lack thereof. "He had got the dirtiest job simply by being the newest man." When telling his story Bell clarifies this detail with a kind of So-It-Goes fatalism, adding "you know what those pre-war officers' clubs were like" (Jones 27-8) as if no further explanation was needed.

While Bell is sent off to toil in the jungle, his wife Marty is left to wait in Manila where "she didn't know anybody." Bell and Marty's relationship is defined by their explosive sexual chemistry. Though he struggles to express how important this aspect is

⁵⁷ Acronym for Reserve Officer Training Corps.

to both of them, it seems clear that their relationship hinges on the necessity of remaining physically close to each other. Bell stammers while explaining that “we’d never been separated before, you see. Not overnight...we were always very sexual together...we both are the kind of people who need lots of physical aff-...it’s undignified. It’s undignified for a married man my age to be separated from his wife.” He can only stand the strain a little while before he “quits” and resigns his commission. After reuniting with Marty, he is forced to “wor[k] in Manila until [they] had enough money to come back to the States” and return to his old job. His first stint in the Army ends with the powers-that-be promising Bell that his resignation would not be without consequences. As he puts it, “they told me I’d never got another commission, they said they’d see to it that I got drafted, and what was more that I’d for damn sure be in the Infantry, and here I am.” It “took eight months to get drafted,” giving Bell and his wife only eight months together for his troubles (Jones 28).

Though Bell’s story will surely draw sympathy from all but the most hard-hearted reader, if he had hoped to avoid the Army’s ire his reaction to the untenable situation the Army had placed him in could not have been worse. In the hierarchy of the aristocratic pre-war Old Army dominated by members of the ‘West Point Protective Association,’⁵⁸ Bell’s ROTC commission automatically places him near the bottom of the officer’s totem pole. His (entirely unofficial) low status as a ROTC officer likely contributes to his drawing a less-than-desirable posting to the Philippines, and ensures he will draw “the dirtiest job” once there; between his ROTC commission and his status as a recently-arrived ‘new guy,’ Bell would have little hope of drawing a decent assignment. Now,

⁵⁸ Graduates of the United States Military Academy at West Point have historically been considered notoriously protective of any fellow officer who wears an Academy class ring.

despite the fact that he has been recalled to the colors against his will and given the worst assignment at an undesirable posting, the other members of the “pre-war officers club” are naturally conditioned to view Bell’s dissatisfaction as unseemly temerity. Junior officers are expected to work their way up the ladder without complaint because the pre-war “young gentleman’s clubs” system presumes that any man who has received a commission plans on becoming a career member of that “club.” The pre-war officer class never expected to have their numbers swelled by an influx of ROTC officers about as eager to serve in the Army as the average enlisted draftee. The fact that Bell had as much input in his recall to active duty as an 18 year old private drafted straight out of high school is irrelevant to the other engineering officers in Bell’s Philippine Division. They don’t look at Bell and see a civilian engineer reluctantly wearing an officer’s uniform who wants nothing more from life than to be close to his beloved Marty. They see a contemptible ingrate who has the bad taste to hold a ROTC commission and the worse judgment to refuse to play the game as it has always been played.

Even worse in the eyes of his superiors in the “young gentleman’s club,” Bell compounds his already grievous errors by committing the worst sin an Army man can commit: throwing away his career for the sake of a woman. Bell essentially makes the exact opposite of the decision that Warden made in *From Here to Eternity*. Both men rip up their commissions, but where Warden does so because he finds it intolerable to sacrifice his career as an enlisted man for love, Bell instead finds it intolerable to sacrifice his love for a career (albeit a career he had never wanted in the first place). Bell’s predicament also has certain parallels to Prewitt’s situation in *From Here to Eternity*.

Both are metaphorical ‘little men’⁵⁹ set upon by all-powerful outside forces who refuse to give into them or acquiesce and play the game in the commonly accepted manner. Both willingly make great sacrifices for the sake of their ideals, but as Bell serves as a kind of doppelganger or Anti-Prewitt, he also functions as an ironic opposite to Warden. Like Warden, Prewitt reluctantly yet decisively sacrifices his romantic interests because of his love for the Army. He even does it twice, giving up on any hope of a future with Alma to make a suicidally foolish attempt to return to the Company after Pearl Harbor, and giving up his shack-job Violet Ogure as part of his initial transfer into G Company. As in his comparison with Warden, Bell follows Prewitt’s course in reverse by giving up the Army to preserve his relationship with Marty. The key difference between Bell, and Warden and Prewitt, is that the latter two are professional soldiers while Bell is not, so each makes the decision that is most beneficial to his own long-term happiness. Though Bell’s decision to resign his commission in favor of his marriage is the direct opposite of the course that Prewitt takes, it displays the same brand of reckless, willfully self-destructive romanticism for which Prewitt is alternately celebrated and derided. Bell’s decision to resign his commission knowing that the powers-that-be would “see to it that [he] got drafted, and...[would] for damn sure be in the Infantry (Jones 28) is as brash and foolhardy as Prewitt’s decision to give up his cushy bugle corps appointment and transfer to the Infantry. But just like Prewitt, he goes ahead and does it anyway. In effect, Bell puts into practice the “no matter what happens” portion of Malloy’s dictate that “when a man has found something he really loves, he must always hang onto it, no matter what

⁵⁹ In Prewitt/Witt/Prell’s case, Jones consistently describes each incarnation as physically short and wiry to symbolically underscore the man’s underdog status.

happens” (Jones 658). Like all Jonesian heroes, he is punished thoroughly for his integrity.

While Prewitt’s fellow soldiers can still respect his acts of self-destructive pride even when they do not understand them, Bell’s superiors can do neither. Though Jones examines the issue most thoroughly in *Whistle*, gender relations remain an important theme in both *From Here to Eternity* and *The Thin Red Line*, which both embrace three clear notions: the Army is a masculine world that women can never fully understand and as such a natural competitor for their attentions, women therefore treat it as competition and are perpetually jealous and/or suspicious of its hold on male affections, and woe betide the soldier who places a mere flesh-and-blood woman over the institution of the Army. In *From Here to Eternity*, the implication is that Warden and Prewitt would ultimately suffer more if they gave up the Army for Karen and Alma, because they are natural-born “thirty-year men” who have become so entwined with the Army that to lose their lives as enlisted soldiers would be tantamount to losing their core identity. John Bell is certainly no “thirty-year man.” His identity is not even remotely tied to the idea of being a soldier, and he does not love or even mildly like the Army (nor does it give him any reason to). Despite these facts, he is punished perhaps even harsher than a career officer would be for resigning his commission because his resignation breaks one of the most significant of the Old Army codes.⁶⁰ And as *From Here to Eternity* already established, the Old Army is governed first and foremost by its unwritten codes.

The institutional reprisals taken against John Bell for the great sin of daring to resign his commission are so spiteful, petty and frivolous, that they could have been only

⁶⁰ See “woe betide the soldier who places a mere flesh-and-blood woman over the institution of the Army” (Ross 120).

perpetrated by the very human system that was the Old Army. Only an institution as human as the Old Army could be bothered to take the time and trouble to retaliate against a former officer for the grand crime of exercising one of his guaranteed rights for reasoning that offends the sensibilities of others in his class. The sheer amount of networking required for Bell's superiors in the Philippines to pull strings with colleagues stateside who could pull strings with Bell's draft board ought to have been enough in itself to discourage such a small act of vengeance against a former Second Lieutenant. A more automated war-time Army would have neither the time nor the interest to invest in the persecution of one ill-fated man, but the administrators of the pre-War Army would have no qualms about going out of their way on such an issue if called upon by fellow members of the "West Point Protective Association." It is no doubt a bit of well-intended irony on Jones's part that the less efficient but more human Old Army fast-tracks Bell's draft notice in record time despite the fact that such a feat would be impossible to accomplish without the aid of numerous people who had no personal stake in Bell's punishment. The nature of the Old Army's retribution against Bell is so spiteful that he is not even given money or transportation home once he resigns, but forced to take on civilian work in the Philippines just to purchase his own ticket home. The Old Army attitude is analogous to a child who hasn't gotten its way: 'if you want to leave fine, go ahead and leave. Just don't expect any help from us getting out of here.' Similarly, the directive that Bell be guaranteed a future as an Infantry private is wasteful in a way that only a human institution could be; no Army geared for war could afford to fritter away a valuable resource like a qualified engineer as cannon fodder simply because his former superiors didn't care for him. In the Old Army, however, there is nothing particularly

unusual about former Lieutenant John Bell being given what could potentially turn out to be a death sentence for no greater transgression than having the political ignorance to step on the wrong person's toes.

If Bell's fall is a quintessential tragedy of the Old Army, then his subsequent re-ascension up the ranks is the quintessential success story of the new wartime Army. The wartime Army might be able to accommodate the grudges of one officer or senior enlisted man within his command sphere, but it has no patience for such pettiness at the institutional level. The efficient, impersonal wartime Army is the opposite of the inefficient but personal pre-war Old Army. Only one thing matters in this New Army, and that is the ability to get the job done. Professionally speaking, Bell is defined by two key traits: his competence and his indifference to political games. As the latter trait ensures his downfall in the Old Army, where politics was everything, the former trait ensures his re-ascension in the wartime Army (so long as he can survive the random elements of combat). Whether his old superiors liked him or not, Bell is a natural leader of men. Their enmity is enough to scuttle his career and destroy his life in the pre-war days, but not in the wartime Army. Over the course of the novel it becomes clear that the values of the Old Army are reversed in combat, where settling old grudges is far less important than taking advantage of a man with obvious leadership qualities. Not surprisingly, the enlisted men are the first to accept Bell because they are the ones most directly affected by his competence (or lack thereof) in combat. After seeing Bell in action during the initial movement up the ridge Sergeant Keck tells Stein "Listen, Cap'n...there's somethin I wanted to tell you. That guy Bell is a good man. He's pretty

steady. He helped me get going and get the platoon out of the hole we were in after that charge...I just wanted you to know” (Jones 229).

However it is Colonel Tall who raises Bell back over the first significant hurdle in his institutional reacceptance by praising him publicly. After observing Bell’s performance on the first volunteer patrol up the Elephant’s Head, he comments: “That Bell...he’s a good man.” Though seemingly innocuous to anyone not versed in the politics of the situation, “the unspoken meaning was clear to every officer present, since they knew, and knew Tall knew, about Bell’s past as an officer.” In keeping with the unspoken but deeply ingrained rule that junior officers fall in line with their promotion-dispensing superiors, Tall’s subordinates immediately begin tripping over themselves to agree with him. “He sure is!” young Captain Gaff put in with boyish enthusiasm, and without reservation. ‘In my company I have always found him an excellent soldier,’ Stein said when Tall glanced at him” (Jones 287-8). Though it is a small moment, it is indicative of the shift in attitude towards Bell that takes place when combat losses begin thinning out the ranks of C-for-Charlie’s junior officers and N.C.O.s and Bell’s combat competency becomes evident on the two volunteer patrols. Once the number of lieutenants and sergeants starts dwindling in the field, Bell’s disgraceful past as a former officer begins to look less and less disgraceful to Col. Tall (and, by association, every other officer carefully modulating his own opinions to perpetually match Col. Tall’s). After the Elephant’s Head is taken and Captain Stein is removed from command, Private Bell’s unlikely advancement to squad sergeant is included amongst the “wholesale number of promotions” (Jones 384) made to replace combat losses.

After Sergeant Bell survives the assault on Boola Boola Village and final mopping up operations, his story comes full circle when he receives a field commission and a Dear John letter on the same day. Bell had spent much of the novel waiting for a letter, any letter, from his wife, and when his mail finally catches up to him the news is not good. Bell, whose first name is actually John, knows “when he opened it and saw how it began (*Dear John*, it said)...that it is in fact a Dear John letter” because “the others all began with *Darling* or *Dearest* or *Beloved*” (Jones 504). His wife, who always “needs lots of physical aff[ection]” (Jones 28), has found it with an Air Force Captain and “wanted a divorce to marry him” (Jones 504). After spending the afternoon in thought, Bell goes to the new Company Commander’s tent to ask for an official letter granting the divorce, where he is presented with “an order for a field commission appointing [him] a First Lieutenant of Infantry.” Though the new Captain “said it all flatly...even then the slight emphasis on *First* Lieutenant could not be missed” (Jones 506). In the pre-war Army, ex-Second Lieutenant of Engineers John Bell is assured that he will soon be drafted as an Infantry private for having the temerity to resign and told explicitly that he would “never get another commission” (Jones 28) so long as he lives. In the war-time Army, Private Bell advances to Sergeant Bell and is then commissioned First Lieutenant Bell when continuing to punish his pre-war indiscretions proves less important than ensuring that combat losses are replaced with capable N.C.O.s and junior officers. Not only does Bell receive the second commission that his pre-war superiors swore he would never get, he receives it at a higher grade than his original commission.

Sadly, the separation from his wife required by his service as a Private-turned-Sergeant-turned-Lieutenant ends his marriage, but the second time around the decision is

made for him. John Bell, Second Lieutenant of Engineers chose not to risk losing his wife for an Army career he never wanted. John Bell, First Lieutenant of Infantry has no choice in the matter and ends up losing his wife anyway. But he is also rewarded with a promotion and the renewed possibility for an Army career he had never wanted before. Like far too many other soldiers to serve in the Second World War, fate, and the Army, do not care what John Bell wants. If his pre-war fate was sealed by the petty despots of the “young gentleman’s club,” his wartime fate is sealed by his own competence, leadership skills, and good luck in surviving the Guadalcanal campaign unwounded. The rallying cry of the wartime Army is “in a war everything useful has to be used” (Jones 438), and Bell’s skill set makes him one more useful “thing” for the Army to deploy as it sees fit. Despite his previous failures in the Old Army, as a solid combat leader John Bell is assured a future in the Infantry of the New Army whether he wants it or not.

Jones contrasts Bell’s fate with that of 1st Lieutenant George ‘Brass’ Band, Bugger Stein’s former executive officer who gains command of C-for-Charlie upon Stein’s removal. Band had been a member of the unofficial fraternity of pre-war officers, but upon taking command of the Company he quickly proves himself an ineffective combat commander. His men deride him as a “Glory Hunter,” convinced that he volunteers the Company for dangerous assignments that serve no other purpose than aiding in the advancement of his own career.⁶¹ One such assignment ends up killing every man sent to patrol a roadblock except Bell and Witt. Band is so an ineffectual a leader that upon pullback to a rear area a drunken Private Mazzi stumbles over to Band’s tent to shout:

⁶¹ Perhaps. Jones does not explicitly portray Band voicing (or thinking) such sentiments, though it is certainly the general assessment shared by the enlisted men who serve under him.

Come out and find out what the men in your outfit think of you, Band!
You want to know what we think of you? They call you Glory Hunter
Band! Come on out and volunteer us for something else! C'mon out and
get some more of us killed! You gonna make Captain for takin us into
Boola Boola, Glory Hunter? How many medals you gonna ged for that
roadblock, Glory Hunter?...Everybody in this outfit hates your guts! Did
you know that? How does it feel, Band, how does it feel? (Jones 469)

Band can only respond by drunkenly holding out the helmet that had been shot off his head early in the assault up The Dancing Elephant. The helmet is Band's proudest possession, which he "personally had shown to almost every man in the outfit" as proof of his combat experience. Mazzi screams at him that nobody "cares about that fucking goddam helmet" and as "Band continued to say nothing...the men began to drift away awkwardly" (Jones 470). Shortly thereafter, Band is removed from command and ignominiously transferred. Jones writes that:

The verdict was that he should be taken hence, delivered to another company in another regiment, and remain there till dead. He would *not* go as a Company Commander...he would remain as Company Exec. But he must not, the old man said, uhh, expect any promotion through attrition—or for any other reason. There would be an eye on him there certainly, watching him. There would be no official disgrace. (482)

Other than the fact that he is transferred where Bell had resigned, Band's wartime punishment for incompetence in combat is nearly identical to Bell's pre-war punishment for political incompetence. The punishment and the machinery remain unofficial, since

any “official disgrace” for Band would reflect as official disgrace for the Regiment. But as in the pre-war days, unofficial disgrace is more than sufficient to ensure that Band will never see another command assignment so long as he remains in the Army. In some ways, the unofficial disgrace is more damaging to Band’s self-image than official disgrace would have been. What is most significant about Band’s fate, however, is how it contrasts with Bell’s. Though the unofficial machinery uses the same tactics to punish those officers who fail to follow the unwritten codes, the codes themselves have changed completely.

Jones provides a similar, if comic, example of the breakdown of the pre-war codes of behavior through Prewitt’s spiritual successor, Private Bob Witt. James R. Giles describes Witt as “Prewitt reduced to an almost animal level,” proposing that “the condensation of the name may have been intended to indicate” (142) that fact. Giles finds the characterization of Witt “consistent” if somewhat lacking, writing that he “feels that Jones had poured so much emotional intensity into the initial creation of Prewitt that he had little to add to the characterization in this novel and in *Whistle*.” Giles also suggests that “it is possible that, as Jones grew older, he became more comfortable with the Warden-Welsh figure than with his ‘romantic bolshevik’” (144). While Giles may have a point with regards to *Whistle*, it is my contention that he underrates Jones’s interest in the Prewitt/Witt archetype in *The Thin Red Line*. I agree with Giles’s assessment that Prewitt’s “idealistic commitment to all underdogs...and his artistic ego had no place in combat” (144), which is precisely why I argue that Jones chose to take the character in a new direction. The seeds of *The Thin Red Line* can be traced to Jones’s earlier novel *Some Came Running*, in which the protagonist Dave Hirsch (like Jones, a returning Army

veteran and author) plans on one day writing a great “comic combat novel” that would tweak the unspoken “literary tradition” that combat novels must only be “written about the horrible horrible horrors of war” (145). *The Thin Red Line* is better classified as a tragicomic novel rather than a strict comedy, but elements of the “comic combat novel” that Jones wrote of in *Some Came Running* can certainly be seen in its portrayal of some of the more absurd aspects of the battlefield. If Jones uses other characters in his tragicomic war novel, like Lieutenant-turned-Private-turned-Lieutenant John Bell, as more conventionally tragic examples illustrating the disintegration of the Old Army’s codes, then Bob Witt is the accompanying comic example illustrating that same disintegration from a more light-hearted perspective. It is my suggestion that Witt is not merely a stripped-down, “animal” version of Prewitt devoid of all the qualities that gave Prewitt such complexity, but Jones’s gentle parody of Prewitt the purpose of which is to affectionately satirize some of his predecessor’s more over-romanticized elements.

When Jones sat down to write *The Thin Red Line*, he was no longer the brashly idealistic young writer he was when he began *From Here to Eternity*. He’d published two novels in the interim and had begun to move away from “romanticized, larger-than-life figures” like Prewitt and Warden. According to Steven Carter, “Jones regarded their idealization as a flaw and sought to eliminate it in subsequent novels” (63). Jones confirmed this shift in an interview with Maurice Dolbier, saying “I look back at ‘Eternity’ and I think it was a very romantic book...the same kind of people...are in the new novel [*The Thin Red Line*], but I try to show them behaving more the way they would, and did, in real life” (‘Writing’ 5). While Jones does exactly that with the bulk of the novel’s characters, he takes a different tactic in his treatment of the Prewitt character,

Bob Witt. If Jones's two potential options were either to tone down the romantic characterization of Prewitt's next incarnation or to magnify it to comically acknowledge the original's flaws, it seems clear he chose to pursue the latter course. Witt does not make his entrance until one hundred pages into the novel, but when Jones finally chooses to introduce him it is with tongue stuck firmly in cheek. Witt, having been forcibly "transferred out of the company two months before the outfit sailed" for being a drunkard and exiled among the misfits of Cannon Company, appears on Guadalcanal to check in on his old friends. The connections made back to Prewitt in his initial description should be immediately apparent. Witt is described as "a small, thin, Breatthitt County Kentucky⁶² boy, an old Regular, a former Regimental boxer" who "could perhaps, by a loose application, be classed as a troublemaker...since he had been busted several times and twice had gone to the stockade on a Summary Court Martial." Jones notes that "all of this made him something of a romantic hero to Fife," the younger and more impressionable Company clerk. Two further significant details emerge in Witt's first appearance. The first is Jones's outright description of him as "something of a romantic hero," (104-5) which introduces the motif of the adjective "romantic" continually being used to describe Witt. The second is the introduction of Witt's increasingly convoluted "goddamned, stupid Kentucky code" (Jones 110).

Witt's "stupid Kentucky code," like Prewitt's underdog philosophy, is "a very flighty philosophy, a chameleon philosophy always changing its color...a very irrational and emotional philosophy" for "a very irrational and emotional age" (*From Here to Eternity* 273). It is also Prewitt's philosophy expanded to comical proportions. In *From*

⁶² Prewitt is famously associated with Harlan County, Kentucky. Breatthitt County is two counties north of Harlan.

Here to Eternity, Jones portrays Prewitt's ever-shifting underdog philosophy sympathetically, painting it as the sincere idealism of an earnest and "emotional" young man. His portrayal of Witt's bastardized version of this same philosophy focuses on the "irrational" side of the equation, removing Prewitt's earnestness and condensing his code "to an almost animal level" (Giles 142). Witt's "stupid Kentucky code" takes Prewitt's "overdeveloped sense of justice" (*From Here to Eternity* 272) and balloons it to ridiculous proportions. Witt's first appearance in the novel provides the first glimpse of his "stupid Kentucky code." Jones informs the reader that "Witt would not hit a friend without giving him one free warning," because that would have been "against his goddamned, stupid Kentucky code." When Fife unwisely mocks Witt's mispronunciation of a word⁶³ a "calm murderousness flamed in [Witt's] face" and he announces that he "never hit a friend before in my life. Not without givin them fair warnin they aint friends no more." He then warns Fife that "if you don't take off right now and go, I'll beat the livin hell out of you...Don't talk. You and me aint friends any more...if you even try to talk to me after this, I'll knock you down. Without a word" (Jones 110). The ties back to Prewitt's "irrational and emotional" code are fairly evident, only now the qualities that seemed noble in Prewitt have been exaggerated to seem comically overblown in Witt.

Jones skewers Prewitt's romanticized idealism most thoroughly through Witt's perpetual quitting and rejoining of C-for-Charlie Company, dictated each time by the oversensitive nature of his code. When Witt is first introduced, he has been transferred to Cannon Company against his will and waxes freely of how his heart remains with C-for-Charlie, his home for four years. He fervently believes that he "belong[s] with the

⁶³ Mocking Witt's pronunciation is unwise because "Witt was very self-conscious about his vocabulary, having taught it to himself by working crosswords" (Jones 109).

compny” and curses the helplessness of his fate, saying “I don’t know what I can do about it” before quickly revising his assessment to “in fact, there aint a fucking damn thing I can do.” Fife “cautiously” points out that if Witt “went around to Stein and told him how you feel, he’d arrange a transfer back for you. Old Bugger knows how good a soldier you are. It never was a question of that. And right now he’s feeling pretty warm and sentimental about the compny, you know, leading them into combat and all.” Witt immediately responds “I cain’t do that...Because I cain’t, and you know it.” Fife’s continued insistence that Stein will surely take him back leads Witt to rant “Take me back! Take me back! They never should of made me go! It’s their fault, it aint mine!...I cain’t do that. I won’t go to them and beg them.” Fife’s last-ditch plea that “that’s the only way you’ll ever get back in! And you might as well face it!” earns one last outburst from Witt, who morosely concludes “I guess I will [just have to stay out]...it aint fair, and it aint square. Any way you look at it. It aint justice. It’s a traversty of justice” (Jones 108-9).

This scene, and the many that follow it, essentially satirizes Prewitt’s decision to transfer from the Bugle Corps to the Infantry. In Prewitt’s case, having his rightful rating given to the Chief Bugler’s catamite is an intolerable affront to his pride and “overdeveloped sense of justice,” and the only way he can rectify it is by leaving. Witt’s “overdeveloped sense of justice” has overdeveloped to the point that he is hypersensitive to any matter that he considers unfair, no matter how minute. While nearly all members of C-for-Charlie Company would agree that Witt’s cashiering to Cannon Company was unjust, he reacts childishly by pouting about the “traversty of justice” perpetrated upon him. No one would dispute his claim that the treatment he received “aint fair and...aint

square,” but his persistence in seeking further insults where none exist is so ludicrous it can only be seen as comic. Critics often accuse Prewitt of suffering from self-created catastrophes, but all the grievances filed on Witt’s extraordinarily long list that follow his initial transfer are truly self-induced. Fife makes it perfectly clear that all Witt needs to do to return to C-for-Charlie company, back where he “belongs,” is ask to return. No pride-swallowing apology or groveling would be required, but Witt is so convinced of the righteousness of his conviction that “they never should of made me go” that an act as small as asking to return becomes “beg[ging]” in his mind.

The words Witt keeps returning to in his rants, like “fault,” “fair,” and “justice,” are quintessentially ‘Prewittian,’ just inflated to comic proportions. The concept of “fault” in his exclamation “It’s their fault, it aint mine!” apparently absolves Witt of any wrongdoing, at least in his own mind. Because “it’s their fault,” merely asking for what he wants (i.e., to return) would be an intolerable blow to what he would term his honor, but most critics would rightfully classify as his ego. Jones expands upon this comic conception of Kentucky “honor” in a later section involving ‘Big Un’ Cash, who views his relationship with Witt through the lens of his experience with Kentuckians back home in Toledo. Cash “admired [the] many Kentuckians who had come up north to work in the factories, and had liked their strong, hardheaded sense of honor which showed itself in drunken brawls over women or fistfights over particular prize seats at some bar” (295). Jones plays Prewitt’s sense of honor completely straight in *From Here to Eternity*, but Kentucky honor as it appears in *The Thin Red Line* concerns itself mostly with matters of petty pride and wounded egos. Even though all he needs to do to return is ask, Witt’s

“goddamned Kentucky code” requires that he suffer away from his beloved C-for-Charlie until (presumably) receiving a personal invitation to return from ‘Bugger’ Stein.

Witt soon enters a pattern of joining, leaving, and rejoining C-for-Charlie Company based on the various ways its commanders offend his “goddamned Kentucky code.” Stein draws his ire by forcibly transferring Witt amidst the pre-combat shuffling of the Regiment’s ‘undesirables’ to Cannon Company, causing Witt to swear up and down that he will never return to C-for-Charlie so long as Stein is its Commanding Officer. Witt’s softhearted nostalgia for his old buddies draws him back when the bullets start flying, where Stein earns Witt’s respect for his combat leadership. After Stein is relieved of duty and quietly sent home, Witt’s “goddamned Kentucky code” leaves him appalled at Colonel Tall’s treatment of Stein, and he departs C-for-Charlie swearing he will never return so long as Tall is its battalion commander. As soon as Tall is promoted Witt promptly returns, only to have its new C.O. Lt. ‘Brass’ Band earn his ire for Band’s perceived glory-hunting. The last straw this time around occurs when Band sends out an ill-conceived patrol over Witt’s objections (which Witt naturally volunteers for anyway) and only Witt and Bell return alive. Witt curses Band to his face and stomps off yet again with the vow that he shall never return so long as Band commands the Company, of course returning as soon as Band is relieved. The repetition of Witt’s perpetual joining and quitting of C-for-Charlie makes it difficult for the reader to take Witt’s histrionics seriously. By the third time the reader sees Witt self-righteously stomp away from C-for-Charlie because an incompetent officer has offended his sensibilities, it should be impossible for anyone to think he won’t return once again. However, the fact that Witt’s

judgment of the various officers who draw his ire is invariably proven right⁶⁴ makes it difficult to judge Witt too harshly for his actions.

If Witt's unending cycle of leaving and rejoining C-for-Charlie reaches the level of parody it is through the repetition of his many 'Achilles in his tent' moments. Yet the parody involved in Witt's recidivism is balanced by the serious reasoning Witt uses every time he returns. While Jones plays the numerous incidents in which Witt responds to having his "implacable Kentuckyness" offended by storming off in a huff humorously, he is careful to show that Witt keeps returning to C-for-Charlie for noble reasons. Witt holds one belief nearly as sacred as his hardheaded Kentucky code, "[w]hich was why he had volunteered just now to go back to them: perhaps his experience and knowledge could help, and he could save somebody" (Jones 319). This belief that his own skills and experience qualify him as a special battlefield asset who might "save somebody" who otherwise would be killed or wounded if he wasn't around is not *as* sacred to Witt as his Kentucky code; if it was, it would trump it and keep him from leaving C-for-Charlie every time an incompetent officer gets on his bad side. But it does explain why Witt is always *willing* to return to C-for-Charlie the second his Kentucky code is satisfied by the ouster of whoever had offended it. Part of Witt's growth comes from the realization that "after all his big talk to himself...he couldn't be everywhere at once," and cannot "save" everyone. The thought fills Witt with "a deep, angry bitterness...at the thought of even his experience and knowledge being able to handle such a snafu⁶⁵ operation" (Jones 321) but also provides a check to balance out his "hardheaded Kentuckyness." If his Kentucky

⁶⁴ Whether this can best be attributed to the high quality of Witt's judgment or the low quality of C-for-Charlie's officer corps (Captain Stein excluded) is up for debate.

⁶⁵ Acronym for "Situation Normal-All Fouled Up." Depending on the soldier, "Fouled" might be replaced by stronger language.

code requires him to leave whenever it is offended, his desire to “save somebody” requires him to return as soon as the grievance towards his Kentucky code is redressed.

Witt’s attitude towards the first victim of his ire, Captain Stein, changes in a subtle but significant way in keeping with the utilitarian nature of war on Guadalcanal. Witt begins the novel hating Captain Stein for having transferring him from C-for-Charlie, but he gains a grudging respect for Stein after seeing his performance in combat. In fact, the seeds of Witt’s hatred for Colonel Tall, the second object of his enmity, begin to grow after Witt starts mentally comparing the two officers. Having determined that the flanking action suggested by Stein and shot down by Tall would have been effective, Witt comes to the same conclusion as most of the members of C-for-Charlie: “if Bugger had of brought them down here yesterday, they’d of saved themselves a lot of good men.” It is while remembering the “good men” lost in the frontal assault Tall ordered instead that “a deep, angry bitterness filled Witt at the impossibility of even his experience and knowledge being able to handle such a snafu operation. It was a bitterness so deep and angry that it was totally inarticulate even inside his own head in his thoughts. And its object was Colonel Tall.” As his brooding intensifies, Witt decides that “if it wasn’t for Bugger Stein, whom he had once disliked but had changed his mind about, he would for two cents after delivering his message turn right around and walk back to Hill 209 and report back to Cannon Company” (Jones 321-2). Shortly thereafter, upon delivering his message to the C.P. Stein promotes him to Acting Sergeant and Witt happily turns down an opportunity to rest a few moments because he’d “rather be with the Company” (Jones 324).

As soon as Stein is removed from command, Witt's "hardheaded" Kentucky honor forces him to leave the Company again, only this time for legitimate reasons. Witt's first exit is spurred by the same petty pride that drove the Kentuckians Cash knew in Toledo to drunkenly battle over women and barstools; his ego is bruised because the transfer is not "fair," and Witt responds childishly by metaphorically resolving to take his toys and go home after he doesn't get his way. Witt's second exit comes about because he recognizes a serious dysfunction in the immediate command structure around him. The thought of Stein's replacement, 'Brass' Band, becoming Company Commander causes Witt to channel his inner Lloyd Bentsen:

"Witt believed he knew how to recognize a Company Commander, and Brass Band was no Company Commander. For that matter, neither had Stein been one. He had only just become in the last two days, and look what happened! Now they were kicking him out...Witt gradually realized what he was going to do. He just didn't want to be in this shitty battalion any more. Not without Stein. A cold, implacable Kentuckyness came over him, pulling his sharp chin down into his thin neck and setting his narrow shoulders stolidly" (Jones 341-2).

He soon reports to Band to formally "tell the Company Commander that I am returning to my old outfit, Cannon Company...so that if the Company Commander noticed I wasn't around, he would know why." Witt's justification? "I don't want to serve in a battalion"—he deliberately did not mention Colonel Tall—"that does to guys what this battalion did to Captain Stein" (Jones 343). Later, he rebuffs Bell's attempts to get him to transfer back to the Company by "whoop[ing] 'I won't never come back in this Battalion

long as Shorty Tall commands it. No, sir. Much's I might like to. If Tall ever gits promoted, or shipped out...But not now" (Jones 393).

Not much time passes before his pronouncement proves prophetic. When Witt belatedly learns of Tall's promotion by "overhear[ing] some Regimental HQ clerks talking about Tall's raise in salary...he immediately got his rifle and bandoliers and sneaked off" (Jones 439) to rejoin C-for-Charlie yet again. True to form, it doesn't take long before yet another officer offends Witt's hardheaded Kentuckyness. Lt. Band asks for volunteers for an ill-thought out patrol in the course of his hunt for glory that might lead to a promotion. Witt volunteers while pointedly telling Band "I think the whole thing is a pretty bad idea," predicting that if the Japanese "come through there like in any strength at all, Lootenant, they going to knock that roadblock to hell and flinders even if it's a whole platoon. We couldn't hold them. But I want to go." Band's only response is to give Witt the opportunity to back out of the patrol, since "others will volunteer" if he doesn't. But of course this only increases Witt's resolve "to go" because "if somethin bad happens, [he wants] to be there so maybe [he] can help" (Jones 456). Sure enough, Witt's prediction that the patrol will be blown "to hell and flinders" if the Japanese come through comes true and only Witt and Bell return from the fourteen-man patrol. Witt finds Band just long enough to curse him out and announce his withdrawal from C-for-Charlie yet again. "You're a lowlife, nogood, worthless, ignorant, stupid, legbreaking, shiteating bastard!" he shouts at Band. "You just got twelve men shot to hell and killed for nothin. Abso-lootly *nothin!* I hope you're happy! I love this compny better'n anything, but I wouldn't serve in no outfit commanded by a son of a bitch like you! If they ever kill you or get rid of you, I might come back" (Jones 460).

Witt's final⁶⁶ return to C-for-Charlie illustrates the same new emphasis on utility in the combat Army as Bell's rise to officer rank. Having "just learned that Brass Band no longer commanded" C-for-Charlie, "Acting-P.F.C. Witt of Cannon Company showed up again...to ask for transfer back into his old outfit." Unlike before, he is not welcomed back by an officer eager to take advantage of his combat experience. 1st Lt. Johnny Creo, temporarily commanding C-for-Charlie until Band's permanent replacement⁶⁷ arrives, wants nothing to do with Witt in the wake of his fiery exit speech to Band. Fullback Culp, the commander of Weapons Platoon, "accosted" Creo in his tent to beg him to allow Witt's return. "Creo compressed his lips" and sneers "I stood by and heard him *threaten* his own Company Commander" but Culp responds by "snar[ling]":

Balls to that!...Sure. And I for one dont blame him. You dont understand these guys. Remember I been through more combat with them than you have, too. I was around there on The Elephant's Head when Witt went in with that assault force. I tell you you're makin a serious mistake if you dont take him back. You're denyin yourself one of the best potential platoon leaders you'll ever get a chance at.

Creo's response, "I dont want that kind of man in my outfit" earns a derisive "hoo[t]" from Culp. "Next thing you'll be tellin me you're a liberal and you dont want him in your outfit because he hates Negroes! This is war, man! War! I know you outrank me and can put me down for what I'm sayin. But I don't care. You got to listen" (Jones 485-6). Three weeks later, Witt's transfer comes through and "the tiny Kentuckian showed up toting his 'A' and 'B' bags and everything else he owned, grinning from ear to ear. He was

⁶⁶ For the Guadalcanal campaign, at least. Who knows how many times Witt might have repeated the pattern when C-for-Charlie moved on to the next campaign on New Georgia.

⁶⁷ Captain Bosche.

immediately promoted to sergeant by the new Company Commander, Captain Bosche, who had saved a spot for him” (Jones 487). With another campaign on New Georgia looming on the horizon, Witt’s personal idiosyncrasies are discounted and the new law of utility wins out once again.

One of the more darkly comic episodes in the novel to illustrate the wartime Army’s new code emphasizing utility centers on the rivalry between Charlie Dale and Don Doll to see who can get promoted the quickest. Doll and Dale⁶⁸ both set foot on Guadalcanal as Privates First Class, Doll as a rifleman, Dale as a 2nd Cook in Storm’s Mess Tent. Over the course of the novel, both find rapid advancement in combat and enter an unstated contest to see who can achieve the greatest rank through their battlefield accomplishments. While each discovers a comfort level under fire that allows them to develop into qualified combat N.C.O.s, their combined lack of perspective serves as yet another example of war’s tragicomic absurdities. Dale and Doll reduce the battle of Guadalcanal and its greater strategic importance in the grand scheme of the Second World War to the scale of a personal pissing contest over who can make sergeant the quickest; each blocks out the carnage around them to focus on a bloodless issue of petty pride, and neither dwells on the fact that his rapid advancement up the promotion scale would not be possible without the death or serious wounding of his own comrades.

Dale kicks off the de facto contest because, of the two, he has the most to gain materially. Doll is already a rifleman, so for him a promotion to non-commissioned officer brings the associated benefits of rank (more pay, more prestige, more responsibility) but no large change in duty assignment. Promotion for Doll merely advances him from rifleman in an infantry squad to leader of an infantry squad. A

⁶⁸ It is worth pointing out the similarity in their surnames as one more way that Jones links the two together.

promotion for Dale, however, would bring all the same benefits with the added bonus of getting him out from under Storm's thumb in the kitchen, which is why he concocts a "secret plan" (Jones 225) to ensure his own promotion in combat. After landing on Guadalcanal Dale begins performing the one act no seasoned soldier would ever be caught dead doing: volunteering. He volunteers to serve as a runner bringing messages under fire to Captain Stein, he volunteers for both patrols up the Elephant's Head, and he volunteers for any assignment that might gain the attention of an officer capable of promoting him. In that topsy-turvy way that combat has of skewing everyday norms, Dale finds his voluntarily dangerous assignments liberating. After all, they provide:

the first chance that he had had in a long time for talking to the Company Cmander personally like this, for being free of that goddam order-giving Storm and his cheating cooks, first chance to not be tied to that goddam greasy sweating kitchen...and Dale was enjoying it. He was getting more personal attention than he ever had from this outfit...and all he had to do for it was carry a few messages through some light MG fire that couldn't hit him anyway. (Jones 216)

Ordinarily carrying messages through "light" machine gun fire would be considered a ridiculously steep price to pay to earn a little face time with one's Company Commander. But for a lifer like Dale, who has spent his whole career as a 2nd Cook in the kitchen, combat is an opportunity to secure promotion, respect, and perhaps most important to Dale, escape to a new career path. Early on in C-for-Charlie's campaign Dale happily assumes new duties running messages under fire, sure that "after he had completed one or two more of these things, he ought to be able to move into a rifle platoon as at least a

corporal or perhaps even a sergeant, and in this way get out of the kitchen without having to become a private.⁶⁹ This had been his secret plan from the beginning. And he had noted that casualties among the noncoms were already pretty heavy” (Jones 225).

Meanwhile, once Doll gets over his initial fears about his courage and discovers that he can function in combat, he finds himself locked in an unofficial competition with Dale. On the second patrol up the Elephant’s Head Doll inadvertently performs an act of heroism. Under fire from a Japanese machine gun emplacement, “sweating, lying pressed flat in an ecstasy of panic, terror, fear, and cowardice, Doll simply could not stand it any longer. He had had too much this day.” In an action born of pure adrenaline-fueled instinct, he single-handedly charges the Japanese emplacement “wailing over and over in a high falsetto the one word ‘Mother! Mother!’, which fortunately nobody at all could hear, least of all himself.” After emptying his rifle, he fires the pistol he stole on the troopship in the book’s opening passages and throws a grenade that explodes harmlessly. Then, “coming to his senses and realizing where he was,” Doll “simply ran blindly off to the right—though he would deny this later.” As he runs back to the patrol a grenade drops at his feet and he “automatically...kicked at it with his foot as if placekicking a football and ran on” (Jones 281), promptly falling to safety off a short ledge he had forgotten was there. When he makes his way back to the patrol, Captain Gaff begins congratulating him “before Doll could apologize, make excuses, or explain away what he had done.” Gaff swears he’s going to put Doll in for a Distinguished Service Cross, raving “you saved all our lives, and I never saw such bravery.” Despite the fact that none of Doll’s actions had been made consciously, he quickly embraces the role of modest

⁶⁹ Ratings were typically non-transferrable between units with different specialties. For Dale to transfer from the kitchen to the infantry in peacetime, he would be required to give up his 2nd Cook’s rating and enter the infantry as a private. For comparison’s sake, *From Here to Eternity* begins with Prewitt giving up his bugler’s rating to enter G Company as a buck private.

hero, saying “Well, Sir, it wasn’t nothin...I was scared.” He then looks over to see “Charlie Dale looking at him with a kind of hate-filled envy from where he leaned gasping against the ledge. Ha, you fucker! Doll thought with a sudden explosion of pleasure” (Jones 282).

At the end of the novel, as C-for-Charlie prepares to continue on to their next campaign on the island of New Georgia, Dale is Platoon Sergeant for 1st Platoon, while “Doll was by common consent considered the best Platoon Guide in the company...and was clearly the next in line for a platoon.” Both men had been part of “Captain Gaff’s little assault force on The Dancing Elephant,” along with Witt and Bell, from which “each member...received a Bronze Star or better.” Doll and Dale had each been recommended for a Distinguished Service Cross⁷⁰ for their actions during the assault. But while Doll “received a Silver Star instead”⁷¹ Dale does indeed receive a Distinguished Service Cross, “the only one in the battalion. There was some bitching about this, but—as some wit immediately said—it would look good with his collection of gold teeth.”⁷² Perhaps reflecting his own experiences as a combat veteran, Jones is quick to add that “everyone pretended medals didn’t mean anything, but everyone who got one was secretly proud” (508). Dale might technically be classified the winner of this unstated

⁷⁰ The second-highest decoration for bravery in combat, trailing only the Medal of Honor, the decoration awarded to Captain Gaff for his role in the same assault. Jones strongly implies that Gaff’s higher award is politically motivated and more attributable to his officer status than his personal bravery in comparison to the other men on the patrol.

⁷¹ The third-highest decoration for bravery in combat, one step down from a Distinguished Service Cross in Order of Precedence.

⁷² Dale’s collection of gold teeth has been taken from the mouths of Japanese corpses, which was not an uncommon practice for troops serving in the Pacific theater. Paul Fussell writes: “of course the brutality was not just on one side. There was much sadism and cruelty, undeniably racist, on ours...Marines and soldiers could augment their view of their own invincibility by possessing a well-washed Japanese skull, and very soon after Guadalcanal it was common to treat surrendering Japanese as handy rifle targets. Plenty of Japanese gold teeth were extracted – some from still living mouths – with Marine Corps Ka-Bar knives” (“Thank God for the Atom Bomb” 6). See also Robert Leckie’s *Helmet for my Pillow* and Eugene Sledge’s *With the Old Breed at Peleliu and Okinawa*.

game of one-upmanship with Doll, having reached the rank of Platoon Sergeant first and receiving a more prestigious medal than Doll. But his victory is won by only a slim margin, and Jones is always quick to discount the significance of medals.

Jones's daughter Kaylie, an acclaimed author in her own right, writes:

“Bell and his buddies throw themselves in front of bullets to protect one another, and to prove to themselves that they are not cowards. And the truly best fighting machines, the fearless ones, are the sociopaths, the ones who see the whole thing as a child's game of cowboys and Indians, who've never had so much fun or been given so much power in their lives. They try to one-up one another, for a stripe, for a promotion, for a medal—some of them even collecting enemy trophies, like ears—and their commanding officers stare at them with distaste, and a certain begrudging admiration. (61)

Doll and Dale can be counted among the few capable of “see[ing] the whole thing as a child's game of cowboys and Indians.” For them, if it is nothing but a “child's game,” it is a game that provides tangible rewards for prowess like power, prestige in the form of promotions and medals, and spoils like the gold teeth that Dale collects from Japanese corpses. But they are firmly in the minority. Men like Doll and Dale, who can function well in combat because they see it as a great game, are few and far between. Jones depicts the vast majority of C-for-Charlie that is able to function in combat doing so only because they are motivated by a fear of something even more terrible than death or dismemberment: a fear of being embarrassed.

FEAR AND EMBARRASSMENT IN COMBAT

If the nature of modern combat essentially destroys or renders irrelevant most of the unwritten codes found in the Old Army, it also reveals new codes that by necessity pertain only to combat. Of these, one of the most prominent is the unspoken realization that men in combat are driven more by fear of embarrassment than they are by fear of death or the physical pain that comes from being wounded. As Paul Fussell explains in *Wartime*, “the way ground combat works” is that “men will attack only if young, athletic, credulous, and sustained by some equivalent of the buddy system—that is, fear of shame” (4). It is a truth that nearly every member of C-for-Charlie becomes aware of, but discovering this is so discomfiting that not one is willing to discuss it aloud with his fellow soldiers. Almost every man in C-for-Charlie suffers this realization in silence, worried that his comrades will think him a coward if he voices his thoughts aloud while the man next to him silently struggles with the same fears.

Jones uses the first bombing raids undergone by C-for-Charlie to illustrate the three most typical reactions a combat soldier might have when faced with the prospect of death or injury. Fife is scared witless, and convinced that he is “actually less” brave than everyone else. “When he laughed and joked after a raid, it was plain to him that his laughter was more shaky and less sincere than the others’ laughter,” and he wrestles with his new conviction that “they did not shiver and shake in their holes as he did, did not cringe without dignity in the mud.” It becomes “obvious[s]” in his own mind that “they were only scared; whereas he was terrified” (Jones 92). Welsh feels the exact same terror as Fife, but comes to the opposite conclusion on the nature of his own courage. Under shelling, “what Welsh discovered, after all these years of wondering, was that he was a

brave man. He reasoned this way: any man who could be as terrified during these raids as he was and not either roll over and die or else just get up and walk away forever—that man had to be brave; and that was him.” Doll, meanwhile, had always “suspected” that he was “invulnerable...but had not been willing to trust his intuition until he had proved it beyond shadow of doubt.” He takes the fact that he has survived without a scratch two bombing raids in which other men had been wounded as definitive proof that he is “invulnerable,” illustrating a phenomenon that J. Glenn Gray addresses in his war memoir/philosophical meditation *The Warriors*. Doll is representative of a type of soldier that Gray classifies as “naïve egoists,” soldiers who “consider death very real for others but without power over [themselves]. These soldiers cherish the conviction that they are mysteriously impervious to spattering bullets and exploding shells.” They believe that “the little spot of ground on which they stand is rendered secure by their standing on it.” Gray dubs these soldiers “naïve egoists” because in his estimation, “they have simply preserved their childish illusion that they are the center of the world and are therefore immortal. Their ego is incredibly naïve and their sense of confidence absurd to anyone who is capable of regarding them coldly.” They are men who have never “learn[ed]...to accept the sad truth that the world does not revolve around us,” and cling to these false feelings of immortality as a result. Gray sees this as “a conviction that is responsible for much rashness in battle, misnamed courage,” yet still admits that despite these criticisms, “fortunate is the unit that can count one or more of these soldiers in its ranks” (106-7). Doll is just such a “naïve egoist,” and C-for-Charlie is indeed fortunate to count him amongst its ranks. In the aftermath of these raids Doll also discovers that “he could

convince everybody he had not been afraid” (Jones 93) by taking to heart a lesson he had learned when fighting a much bigger soldier:

It was as if when you were honest and admitted you didn’t know what you really were, or even if you were anything at all, then nobody liked you and you made everybody uncomfortable and they didn’t want to be around you. But when you made up your fiction story about yourself and what a great guy you were, and then pretended that that was really you, everybody accepted it and believed you. (Jones 14-5)

Doll realizes that if “[he] act[s] out [his] fiction story...everyone [would] accep[t] it.

Thus he could laugh and josh about the raids, pretending he had been scared, yes, but not really terrified. And whether it was true or not didn’t matter.” Jones notes that “Doll was almost as glad to learn this as he was to prove he was invulnerable” (Jones 93)

Fife is the only character who takes the risk of publicly broaching the subject, and even then he does so only as a deflection of his true feelings. On the night that C-for-Charlie moves into position for their first real assault on the Elephant’s Head, they look back on their experiences that day with a mixture of trepidation and bravado. They had watched their sister Company G-for-George make a failed attempt to take the ridge they know they will go after in the morning, during which they had taken some artillery and stray machine-gun fire. Tills, in one of his never-ending squabbles with Mazzi, accusingly says “I guess you wasn’t never scared even once” and receives an unexpected answer from Fife.

“Well I was,’ Fife said clearly. ‘I was scared shitless. All the time. From the moment I stepped onto the slope till I got here...I never been so scared in my life.’” If Fife

had intended his public confession to truly convey his feelings and perhaps open a genuine dialogue on the subject, he realizes as soon as the words leave his mouth that “it did not help him to tell it. He found that no matter how he overstated it he could not convey the true extent of his fear. It became only funny, when you said it. It wasn’t the same thing at all.” Fife is saved from embarrassment by Bead, who, characteristically enough, pipes up to agree with him. Bead’s admission that he had also been scared emboldens Fife, who begins exaggerating his original story. “He had not meant to tell anyone...but now he did, making himself the buffoon. Before very long he had all of them laughing hard, even the three officers and Mazzi the New York hep guy.” Fife adjusts the purpose of his admission on the fly, finding a new role as “the ‘honest coward.’ If you wanted to make people like you, play the buffoon whom they could laugh at without having to admit anything about themselves. It still did not make him feel any better: did not alleviate his shame, did not cause to cease the misery of fear he felt right now” (Jones 148-9). But the role at least allows him to avoid feeling embarrassed for having publicly aired his fears. Embracing an identity as “the honest coward” allows him to control it and turn his fears of cowardice into a comic role to play-act. When he does not receive the response he was looking for to his public admission of fear, he changes an honest admission into a comic one in order to deflect attention away from the underlying seriousness of his feelings. Fife chooses to have his friends laugh at him because he is “play[ing] the buffoon” instead of laughing at him because he has genuine reservations about his courage. Though this does “not alleviate his shame” for having those reservations, at least the role of “the honest coward” allows him to control the kind of attention he receives.

In a narrow sense General Slater's cynical theory from *From Here to Eternity* that soldiers must be negatively motivated by fear is vindicated in *The Thin Red Line*, because Slater is technically correct when he says "You can do it by making him afraid of his friends' disapproval. You can shame him because he is a social drone...but you cant tell him it is 'Honorable' any more. You have to make him afraid" (Jones 337-8). However, if Slater's prediction describes 'the letter of the law,' it certainly fails to capture its spirit. Every member of C-for-Charlie is terrified of earning the disapproval of his friends, and every member can be shamed into action because they are "social drones." But Slater's assertion that the concept of honor is outdated and irrelevant misses the point of *why* fear is a motivator for the men in C-for-Charlie. They are social creatures, yes, but more important than that they are composed primarily of volunteers who didn't join an Army, but a "Profession." Slater may no longer believe in honor, but the enlisted soldiers do; the reason they suffer so much anxiety however how they are perceived by their comrades is precisely because they fear their actions will not live up to the Professional soldiers' code that can be condensed into that one word. They believe soldiers are not supposed to feel fear in combat, or doubt themselves, or wish they could be anywhere on but on the front lines of a hill on Guadalcanal, because they have been brought up to think that such thoughts are not 'honorable.' The fact that their fear of public embarrassment is greater than their fear of death is a testament to the continued relevance of a soldier's code of combat behavior, but Slater is too removed from the feelings of enlisted men to recognize that. Whether one chooses to call it honor or by another name, that code remains such a powerful motivator to the men of C-for-Charlie that they would literally rather die than have their friends believe they have failed to live up to it.

Sometimes the worst of these fears take place outside of combat situations. Jones provides one of the more absurd examples of this in the seriocomic episode of Private Bead's first kill. After a long day of combat, Bead "decided to have himself a pleasant, quiet, private crap" in keeping with the "evening peace after the terror, noise, and danger of the afternoon" (Jones 169).⁷³ Bead retreats to a secluded area away from the lines and begins his business, but is caught by a lone Japanese soldier with his pants literally around his ankles. The Japanese soldier does not fire his rifle, perhaps for fear of being heard by the nearby American soldiers, and instead rushes Bead "obviously meaning to bayonet Bead where he sat" (Jones 171). The two engage in a horrific life-and-death struggle which the short and physically delicate Bead, an unlikely hero, wins at a terrible cost. After gaining control of the Japanese soldier's rifle and bayoneting him, Bead is forced to smash the soldier's face to pulp with the butt of that rifle to in order to finally kill the man. At that point, even though he has narrowly escaped with his life, Bead's mind only concerns itself with one issue: "his pants and his dirty behind," which he has had no opportunity to wipe. Jones notes that the "horror of that was inbred in him; but also he was terrified someone might think he had crapped his pants from fear" (173). Considering his close scrape with death, Bead's terror of having his friends misinterpret the reason for his pants being soiled is ludicrously absurd. Yet at the same time it serves as the perfect illustration for the motivating power of shame. His own near-death

⁷³ This is not as ridiculous as it sounds when placed in proper context. A paragraph earlier Jones describes how "because every available bit of level space was occupied, jammed with men and equipment, crapping was relegated to the steeper slopes" and involved digging a hole with an entrenching tool before "turn[ing] your backside to the winds of the open air and squat[ting], balancing yourself precariously on your toes." This process was performed in full view of men further down the basin, who were "not above taking advantage of [the opportunity] with catcalls, whistles, or loud soulful sighs." Jones sums up the procedure as "rather like hanging your ass out of a tenth floor window above a crowded street," explaining why a "quite, private crap" would be a luxury that appealed to the "shy" Bead (169).

experience is of less immediate concern to Bead than his soiled pants and his anxiety that others will mistakenly attribute their soiling to his own fear.

Bead quickly comes up with another shame-based issue to fret over: whether the other men of C-for-Charlie will think that he'd done a "shamefully botched-up job" (Jones 177) of killing the Japanese soldier. Bead worries that "if he'd had to kill him, and apparently he had, at least he could have done it more efficiently and gracefully" (Jones 174) than he had. The relatively-young (even by Army standards) Bead is so insecure about his status among the other men that he cannot see how absurd this fear is. Bead, unarmed and in the middle of defecating, manages to disarm an enemy wielding a bayoneted rifle, knock him nearly unconscious in hand-to-hand combat, retrieve the man's rifle, and kill him with it. Yet he is so worried that he will be made fun of for not killing the man "more efficiently and gracefully" that upon his return to the lines he lies about the source of his cuts and bruises. Doll "immediately notice[s] his damaged hands and the blood spatters" all over them but Bead tries to insist that he simply "slipped and fell and skinned myself" (Jones 175). He eventually admits the incident when Welsh follows up on Doll's suspicions about his injuries, but the only reason he returns to the site is because Welsh clearly thinks he made the whole thing up. Welsh responds to Bead's story by shouting "Goddam it kid!...I told you I wanted the goddam fucking *truth!* And not no kid games!" Bead's wounded pride at this disbelief overrides his shame for having "botched" the job, because in all his worried anticipation over how his friends would react, "it had never occurred to Bead that he would not be believed." Still, when Bead decides to lead a few men to the site of the Japanese soldier's body, his primary motivation remains shame-based. Bead considers it "a choice of shutting up and being

taken for a liar, or telling them where [the Japanese soldier's body was] and having them see what a shameful botched-up job he'd done." Jones notes that "even in his upset and distress it did not take him long to choose" (177); apparently Bead is more worried about being thought a liar than a 'botcher' of hand-to-hand combat. Bead only begins to reevaluate his actions after Doll, upon viewing the Japanese soldier's remains, "admiringly" remarks "when you set out to kill him, you really killed him." When several other soldiers comment positively about his kill Bead decides that "if they did not find it such a disgraceful, botched-up job, then at least he need not feel so bad about that." He "tentatively" starts to "gri[n] a little wider, a little more expansively" (Jones 180) when he is sure that his peers have approved of his actions. Bead is so consumed by the desire to guard himself from mockery that it never occurs to him that his actions might have been perfectly adequate, even commendable, until he receives outside praise.

Another common non-combat fear also centers on embarrassment and misunderstanding. As in *From Here to Eternity*, the men in *The Thin Red Line* feel deeply and passionately, yet project an air of cool indifference to cover up their fear that those feelings will be neither understood nor accepted by their peers. In *The Thin Red Line*, the stress of combat frequently intensifies a soldier's feelings of camaraderie for the men around him while simultaneously intensifying his fear that those feelings will be misinterpreted as sexual. This fear is understandable for two reasons, and Witt illustrates the first. During one of his return hikes to C-for-Charlie, "he kept thinking with fierce sentiment about what great, wonderful guys they all were...the truth was, Witt loved them all, passionately, with an almost sexual ecstasy of comradeship" (Jones 319). The key word in that passage, "almost," makes it clear that in Witt's case the feelings are not

actually sexual, but he phrases the closest analogy that captures their intensity in sexual terms. Several pages later, when he catches up to C-for-Charlie “Witt could have thrown his arms around his commander and kissed him on his dirt-crusted, stubbled cheek in an ecstasy of loving comradeship. Except that it might have looked faggoty, or get taken the wrong way. Emotions were coursing through Witt today that he had never known existed in him in his life. He was, he found strangely enough, really very happy” (Jones 324). If Witt had hugged Stein “in an ecstasy of loving comradeship,” it would not have been an indicator that Witt held any genuine sexual feelings for Stein, or any of the other men in C-for-Charlie. Still, the fear that others might interpret it that way is enough to make him refrain. Witt’s “ecstasy of loving comradeship” is ecstasy in the classical definition of ekstasis, a removal from the self; his feelings of comradeship are so powerful that they raise Witt to a kind of out-of-body experience that he can only define through comparison to the ecstasy of sexual contact. Like most of Jones’s soldiers, Witt remains silent and does not attempt to communicate the depth of his “loving comradeship” for C-for-Charlie out of the general worry that no one else would understand his (actually commonplace) feeling, and the specific worry that any sign of such affection would be misinterpreted as an indicator of homosexuality.

During Bead’s death scene, Fife demonstrates the second reason why this fear that any physical affection “might have looked faggoty, or get taken the wrong way” is a reasonable one. Bead is fatally wounded by a mortar shell and calls for Fife to stay with him in his dying moments. “Hold my hand, Fife,” Bead croaked then. ‘I’m scared.’ For a moment, a second, Fife hesitated. Homosexuality. Fagotism. Fairies. He didn’t even think them. The act of hesitation was far below the level of conscious thought. Then, realizing

with horror what he had done, was doing, he gripped Bead's hand" (Jones 259). Fife has a legitimate reason to worry that holding Bead's hand will be looked upon as a sign of homosexuality, because the two had in fact engaged in homosexual acts. Jones does not describe the acts directly, nor does he make it clear exactly what they consist of, but most likely they engage in either mutual masturbation or oral sex. In the immediate aftermath of their encounter, Fife contrasts his and Bead's relationship with "buggering" and tries to justify the act as "doing the same things now that you did as a kid, and doing them when you were a freshman or sophomore." The only details which Jones depicts clearly are that the act is mutual and initiated by Bead, who suggests that the two "help each other out" and offers "to do it to you if you'll do it to me." Afterwards, while Bead falls asleep immediately, Fife ponders the odd tacit acceptance of homosexuality in the Army. He reflects on the long-accepted practice of "oldtimers in the army who had their young boyfriends whom they slept with as a wife" in exchange for money and protection. In the pre-war Army, "none of this bugging was considered homosexual by anyone and authority turned a blind eye to it." Yet "overt homosexuals, much increased since the drafting of civilians," are universally disliked, even as "many might avail themselves of their services" (Jones 127-8). Fife briefly wrestles with the thought of how he might be classified, since "these two types constituted the extent of Fife's knowledge" and "he could not honestly place himself among them, but was terrified that someone else might." The fear is significant enough that "on [that] night before his outfit went into its first combat he lay awake a long time, wondering whether he was a homosexual." But his mind soon drifts to other thoughts and just before he falls asleep, he dismisses the whole issue with the thought "Anyway, he knew he liked girls" (Jones 128).

The incident perfectly illustrates the focus of such fears. Fife is anxious enough about being thought a homosexual that instead of pondering his mortality or his courage or the prospect of being crippled on the battlefield, he spends the night before his entry into combat fretting over the nature of his sexual orientation. Even then, his concern lies more with the fear that other people might think he is homosexual than it does determining whether or not the label would be applied accurately. The sexual acts he engages in lead him to briefly examine his own sexuality, but because he does not fit into the “two types” of homosexuals he has seen in the Army and “kn[ows] he liked girls,” he dismisses the question of how he should define his sexuality as irrelevant. How others in the Company might define his sexuality, however, is a question that terrifies him. The acts themselves are unimportant. What matters to Fife is how he is perceived.

Jones provides a comic parallel in the misunderstanding between Don Doll and Carrie Arbre. After falling atop Arbre in “the classic position of buggery” when both leap for the same spot of cover in combat, Doll focuses his attention on Arbre as a likely outlet for his pent-up libido. “Throughout his Army career...people could not believe, given his girlish build, that [Arbre] was not homosexually inclined” (Jones 414), and after landing on top of him, Doll’s mind begins working through the same calculations as Fife’s had. He momentarily worries what will happen “if anybody noticed the two of them together” but quickly decides “well, what if they did? Everybody knew Doll liked broads” (Jones 429). He then reasons that “he knew lots of oldtimer regulars who had their punks, their ‘boys,’ back in peacetime...if he wanted to poge⁷⁴ Arbre and look after and adopt him,

⁷⁴ Like many military slang terms disagreements rage over the origins of the phrase. By the Vietnam era, “pogue” had come to mean any soldier stationed behind the front lines of combat. Jones uses “pogey” to describe a homosexual relationship between a higher-ranking soldier and a lower-ranking soldier. When Doll thinks of potentially “pogey[ing]” Arbre and making him his “punk,” he is referring to a relationship wherein he would offer to protect Arbre from dangerous or unpleasant duties in exchange for sexual favors.

that didn't make *him* homosexual. It only made Arbre homosexual" (Jones 477). Doll's awkward attempt at seduction goes awry when it eventually dawns on him that Arbre thinks Doll wants to play the passive role in the relationship. After figuring this out both men, who would have been fine playing the active sexual role, become upset and afterwards "spoke to each other with a carefully guarded stiffness" (Jones 508). Their mutual secret is safe because both stand to lose too much face if they outed the other, but the implications are the same as in Fife's case. Doll, Arbre, and Fife all see a clear distinction between buggery, which was tacitly accepted under the unofficial code of the Old Army, and homosexuality, which both the official and unofficial codes stringently condemn. For all three men, the difference between the two definitions lies not in the sexual acts committed but in the perception of those acts. In their minds, buggery can be rationalized but homosexuality would be an embarrassment beyond words, even if the physical acts committed were the same.

One soldier who serves as an exception to this code of embarrassment is Sico, a draftee with five months of experience in the Army. On the way up the Elephant's Head Sico "suddenly sat down in his tracks and began to hold his stomach and groan." His Sergeant, the martinet Milly Beck, kicks and curses at him to move but Sico can only repeat "I can't Sergeant...I would if I could. You know I would. I'm sick." When pressed to describe his symptoms, Sico insists that he's suffering from crippling cramps and stomach pains and then "as if to prove it suddenly vomited. He did not even try to bend over and the vomit burped up out of him and ran down his fatigue shirt onto his hands which held his belly. He looked at [Sergeant] Keck hopefully, but appeared ready to do it again if necessary." Keck orders Sico be left behind for the medics to deal with, and one

by one his platoon-mates pass him by as they continue up the hill. Sico continues to “groa[n] audibly from time to time and now and then he gagged, but apparently did not feel it necessary to vomit more. His face was haunted-looking and his eyes tormented. But clearly nobody would ever convince him he had not been sick.”

Sico, whose name may well be a phonetic pun on Jones’s part considering his psychosomatic bout of stomach pain, finds a loophole that will allow him to escape possible death or dismemberment in combat. All he has to do to ensure that he will survive the Guadalcanal campaign is possess the willingness to embarrass himself to whatever degree proves necessary, risking the utter scorn and derision of his friends in the process. Somewhat surprisingly, Sico is not excoriated in the least for breaking the code of embarrassment, at least not by the other men in his platoon. As each man passes by Sico stares at him “appealingly, a certain unspoken request for understanding, for belief. As for the others, they looked back noncommittally. None of their faces held contempt. Instead, under the white-eyed sweating pucker of fear, there was a hint of sheepish envy, as if they would have liked to do the same but were afraid they could not bring it off.” Rather than scorn Sico for committing “the first overt case of cowardice” in the Company, the rest of C-for-Charlie envies him; in a Company filled with soldiers trying to decide what scares them more, the myriad horrors of combat or the opinions of their peers, he is the only man among them with enough courage to become a public coward. This does not mean, however, that Sico’s escape from combat comes cheap. Jones provides a degree of poetic justice by suggesting that Sico will be haunted by his action. He ends the scene by noting that “Sico, who could undoubtedly read this look” of envy on the others, “apparently got no comfort from it. He tottered on, helped by the

junior medic,” never to be seen by C-for-Charlie Company again (Jones 230-1). The strong implication that Jones ends with is that by breaking the code about cowardice Sico may escape with his life, but not his self-respect or peace of mind.

By the novel’s end, each member of C-for-Charlie has asked himself one question at one point or another during his combat experience: “is it really worth it to die, to be dead, just to prove to everybody that you’re not a coward?” (Jones 70) Invariably, the answer they all come up with is ‘apparently, it is.’ Other than Sico, all come to the same ironic realization that Fife does while pushing up the Elephant’s Head: “It was almost funny, how even lying [t]here terrified and half-expecting to be dead at any moment, his bureaucratic fear of reprimand, of public embarrassment, was stronger than his physical fear of dying. Well, at least as strong” (Jones 258).

ATTITUDES TOWARDS WOUNDS AND 'DOING ENOUGH'

Another new code that arises hand in hand with the issues relating to fear addresses attitudes towards being wounded. Early in the novel *Fife* (as he usually does) breaks down for the reader the hierarchy of desirable wounds, according to the men of C-for-Charlie:

the best way to be wounded, if one must be wounded at all, was to have a wound so bad that you would almost die, one that would leave you sick long enough for the war to get over, but which when you recovered from it would not leave you crippled or an invalid. Either that, or receive a minor wound which would incapacitate or cripple you slightly without crippling fully. (Jones 48)

This is a departure from the current conception of a 'Million Dollar Wound' as a wound just incapacitating enough to remove a soldier from combat, yet light enough to cause no long-term damage. That view is more consistent with the service requirements of the Vietnam War, in which the rotation system ensured that a soldier would spend a maximum of 12 months⁷⁵ in country before being returned stateside. In the Second World War, enlistments lasted "for the duration" plus six months and every frontline soldier knew that, barring an incapacitating wound, he would continue to see combat in campaign after campaign until hostilities ceased. Guadalcanal is only the first campaign in a long series for the men of C-for-Charlie, and they know this all too well. For them, a wound that would be considered a 'Million Dollar Wound' in Vietnam would merely mean a break from one campaign and an imminent return to combat.⁷⁶ The certainty of

⁷⁵ 13 months for Marines.

⁷⁶ Jones devotes much of the third novel in the trilogy, *Whistle*, to exploring the effects of this knowledge on the wounded recuperating back stateside.

returning to combat after a light wound has healed is why “if one must be wounded at all,” C-for-Charlie places the most value on a wound that will be extremely serious in the short term but allow full recovery in the long term; such a wound would allow the best overall odds of survival. A wound that “would cripple you slightly,” like the shrapnel wound to the hand that eventually gets Storm evacuated, is not quite as valued because it still entails long-term medical complications. But for an infantryman, it is still considered the second-best type of wound to receive since a permanent but ‘slight’ disability is a far preferable fate than dying in the mud on an island with an unpronounceable name.

Despite being preferable to dying in combat, Jones recognizes that wounded men “crossed a strange line” which left them inherently “different” from the non-wounded. Referring to men who had been wounded in a Japanese bombing attack while being ferried to shore, Jones writes that:

the physical experience of the explosion, which had damaged them and killed those others, had been almost identically the same for them as for those other ones who had gone with it and died. The only difference was that now these, unexpectedly and illogically, found themselves alive again. They had not asked for the explosion, and they had not asked to be brought back. In fact, they had done nothing. All they had done was climb into a barge and sit there as they had been told. And then this had been done to them, without warning, without explanation, perhaps damaging them irreparably; and now they were wounded men; and now explanation as impossible. They had been initiated into a strange, insane twilight fraternity where explanation would be forever impossible. (45)

While the wounded men of C-for-Charlie respond to their wounds in individual ways, the most common reaction is joy that they have received an express ticket away from the dangers of the combat zone. The first combat casualty C-for-Charlie takes, “an older man” and draftee named Peale, is wounded by a bullet to the leg. Jones notes that “whether [it was done] deliberately or by accident no one could tell, because no one could tell whether the desultory fire they were getting was aimed or was simply stray bullets from the ridge” (145). Peale responds to his wound by “grin[ning] stiffly. His face still white, his lips still trembling, his mouth nevertheless stretched into a stiff but happily cynical grin.” When asked if he can walk, Peale triumphantly responds “I dont think so... I think my leg hurts pretty bad. You better help me. I think it’s goin to be a long time before I can walk good again.” As a medic begins to help him down the hill toward the Regimental Hospital and safety, he happily tells the medic “I got me a Purple Heart...and I been in combat. I never even seen a Jap; but I dont care. No doctor’s gonna tell me I can walk on this leg for a long time. Come on, let’s get out of this. Before I get hit again and get killed. That’d be hell, wouldn’t it?” (Jones 146-7).

Though Peale’s response is the most common, not all of C-for-Charlie’s wounded react with the same equanimity. The first overall casualty taken by the Company, “Pfc Marl, a Nebraska cornball and dry-dirty farmer” drafted away from his family’s farm, reacts with horror when “a piece of a daisycutter whistled into his hole as he lay in it during a raid and cut off his right hand as neatly as a surgeon could have done with a knife.” Rather than exult in his impending removal from combat, and “never very bright” to begin with, “he could not get it through his head that he would still be able to work.” He “became hysterical and began to blubber” at the thought that he would never be able

to work his farm again, refusing all attempts to comfort him. “What’m I gonna do now, hey...How’m I gonna work, hey? How’m I gonna plow, hey?” he shouts as the medics work on him. Some other men try to comfort him but “he refused to be placated by descriptions of what marvelous artificial hands they made nowadays” and fails to understand his friends’ meaning when they point out that he can still walk. “Sure I can walk goddam it” he tells them “Fuck yes I can walk. But how’m I gonna work, hey? That’s the point” (Jones 91-2). Though most other members of C-for-Charlie would consider Peale fortunate to have received a “slightly” crippling yet life-saving wound, the consensus on the desirability of wounds is by no means unanimous.

As usual, Jones explores the issue most thoroughly through the Fife character, whose attitudes towards being slightly wounded by mortar fire bring him closer with Storm and provide Jones the means to examine the psychological responses to being wounded from a number of different angles. During the assault up the Elephant’s Head Fife is struck in the head by a small piece of shrapnel from a mortar round and evacuated back of the lines. Upon being hit and seeing his own blood, Fife’s first reaction is to wonder whether he will die and fearfully try to assess the severity of his wound. When he concludes that he will probably live and begins getting over the initial shock, his second reaction is to “suddenly realiz[e] that he was free. He did not have to stay here any more. He was released. He could simply get up and walk away—provided he was able—with honor, without anyone being able to say he was a coward or courtmartialing him or putting him to jail. His relief was so great he suddenly felt joyous despite the wound” (Jones 262). Sitting “with a line of grimy, bleeding, groaning men on the hillside, mopping the blood from his forehead whenever it began to drip[, a]ll Fife wanted most in

the world was simply not to go back down below” where the fighting was still taking place. While appraising his actions after the fact, he decides that “he had done nothing heroic, nor even anything normally brave, but these men here thought him heroic. In fact, he had not even done what he considered to be his normal duty. But he was not going to tell anybody that” (Jones 358).

Fife soon finds someone to commiserate with in Storm, who had been wounded in the same action. Unlike Fife, Storm’s wound embarrasses him, because he believes that “in his case that was such a little thing and counted for so very little that it hardly mattered.” A fragment from a Japanese knee mortar⁷⁷ strikes Storm in the hand, “and the entry of the fragment had not hurt the slightest bit.” Storm “had some traumas and rude awakenings” in the wake of the incident, “but being wounded was not one of them... Storm’s traumas came from other things. Chief among them was the feeling that he was letting the company down by coming down [to the field hospital] with this hand” (Jones 367). Storm’s reaction is a common one, and illustrates the only reason that would give a soldier in an Infantry unit pause if offered a ticket away from the front lines: the worry that he will be letting his friends down by leaving. Though Storm does not know it at the time, the seemingly-harmless sliver of shrapnel in his hand will have greater consequences down the road. In the moment, however, he feels embarrassed to be removed from the front lines with such an apparently insignificant wound. And as I have already discussed, fear of embarrassment can be a very powerful motivator for a combat soldier. While back at the field hospital Storm broods over the morality of his decision to

⁷⁷ Officially called a Nambu Type 89 Grenade Discharger, it was a light mortar that fired 50mm rounds. It was nicknamed a “knee mortar” out of the mistaken belief that the mortar tube was rested against the operator’s leg while being fired. According to rumor, several Marines firing captured Type 89’s on Guadalcanal learned the proper way to operate it after they suffered broken thigh bones attempting to fire it while propped against their legs. However, I was unable to confirm or dismiss the authenticity of such claims.

allow his own removal from the front lines and his attempts to secure a permanent evacuation order with a relatively minor wound. It quickly becomes apparent that an act as small as agreeing to be temporarily evacuated for medical attention (and hoping it might allow him to escape combat permanently) has led Storm to question his own decency as a man:

Storm had always thought of himself as a decent man. Sure, he had been rough on KPs and cooks in his time, to make them work...but he did not believe in kicking a man when he was down, taking advantage of a weak person, or stealing from the poor. That was his code and he had always tried to live by it. Now he had to face the possibility that maybe he wasn't so decent after all. And not only that, he who had always believed in never letting a friend down, was here preparing to try and use his hand to get him out of the company, out of the Battalion, out of the whole fucking combat zone. And what was more, he knew it was the only sane thing to do. (Jones 374)

Like many wounded, Storm and Fife are caught between their guilt over getting to leave the combat zone and their intense fear of possibly returning to it. Such guilt is unreasonable, and Storm acknowledges it is "only sane" to wish to escape combat. But even if those feelings of guilt are unreasonable, they are still very much present in the minds of lightly-wounded men like Storm and Fife, who fear that even taking time to recuperate from a wound somehow constitutes taking advantage of the men unlucky enough to remain in combat. Storm attempts to balance his guilt and fear by rededicating himself to the performance of his job, but strictly to the letter of his obligatory duties. He

vows “I dont have to go back up there to the front with the compny, and I’m not going to. I’m a Messsergeant. I aint even supposed to be up there. Me and my cooks’ll get the kitchen as close as we can, and I’ll get them guys up hot meals every time I can...but that’s all. No more volunteer fightin. I aint required to, I ain’t supposed to be, and I aint” (Jones 374). Fife responds to Storm’s speech by deciding to “say what he had been trying to say [but] had not come anywhere near” expressing, and tells Storm “I’m a coward.” Storm “immediately” replies “so am I...and so is everybody who aint a fucking goddam fool.” Fife, his inferiority complex still firmly intact, suggests that “some of the guys aint” cowards, and names Witt, Doll, Bell, and Dale as his examples. “Then they’re fools,’ Storm said without hesitation.” Storm and Fife agree that neither one “want[s] to be a coward” and Storm closes the subject by returning the conversation to the practical matter at hand: “Thank God I dont have to go back up there, that’s all.” Fife lets the subject drop but “felt better” since “Storm took being a coward so much more in his stride somehow, and it made Fife feel less unmanly” (Jones 374-5). Their conversation is significant for two reasons. The first is that it represents the only serious discussion anyone in C-for-Charlie has aloud about his fears of cowardice. Earlier Fife plays the role of “the honest coward” but it is exactly that: a role. His admission to Storm that he is a coward, and Storm’s “immediate” reply that he is also a coward is the only point in the novel where a character voices his inner doubts aloud, and it should be noted that their admissions are voiced only in a private conversation well behind the lines where neither man risks having his admission overheard by another member of the Company. The second reason Fife and Storm’s conversation is significant is because it illustrates the internal tug-of-war between guilt and fear that so many wounded soldiers suffer from,

and sets up the exodus of sick and wounded soldiers that soon follows. If the two dominant emotions felt by wounded soldiers are guilt over leaving their comrades and fear of returning to them, Jones ends *The Thin Red Line* with the clear suggestion that fear will ultimately win out, and deservedly so. After all, every blooded veteran who survives combat is well aware that leaving “it was the only sane thing to do.”

Knowing this, and knowing what they will face on the upcoming campaign to take New Georgia, the surviving veterans of C-for-Charlie universally look “to take advantage of the loophole,” the inexplicable relaxation of standards for evacuation that comes after the campaign. It begins when Carni gets evacuated for malaria, an ailment so common that during the campaign itself it would merely be treated with atabrine and a return ticket back to the front lines. After Carni’s evacuation,

“immediately almost everybody who had any malaria at all went on sick call...slowly, over the weeks, first one then another of the honestly serious cases began to disappear and not come back from sick call. They were being sent, for the present moment anyway, —or so rumor had it—to either Naval Base Hospital No. 3 on Ephate in the New Hebrides, or to New Zealand. (Jones 496)

“The lid was off” when Storm becomes “the first man any of them knew who got evacuated for a plain physical disability rather than for his wounded hand.” The same doctor who had previously turned down Storm’s evacuation (having not even remembered examining him) pronounces that “someone had been seriously wrong” in not evacuating him earlier and tags him for removal to New Zealand. This opens the floodgates as following “Storm’s success, just about everybody tried to get into the act. In

one month and two weeks after Carni was evacuated for malaria, over 35% of the old C-for-Charlie—the men who had ridden back in the trucks from Boola Boola⁷⁸—had managed to get themselves evacuated for one thing or another.” Jones notes that for every veteran evacuated, “many many more had tried and failed, and a few who knew they had no chance had not tried at all” (497).

The attitude Jones depicts C-for-Charlie holding towards evacuation is atypical of most World War II veterans and relatively controversial. Many World War II veterans heaped scorn on any soldier who escaped prolonged frontline duty with relatively minor injuries. In a personal letter to Eugene Sledge, author of the celebrated memoir *With the Old Breed*, distinguished war literature critic Paul Fussell, who frequently cites *The Thin Red Line* as one of the finest novels to come out of the war, derisively writes “I’m reviewing a new bio. of James Jones⁷⁹— that guy was in combat one week, and on the line two days before he retired with a painful ankle. He was discharged medically before I was even overseas!”⁸⁰ Don Malarkey, a Non-Commissioned Officer with Easy Company of the 506th P.I.R.⁸¹ and one of the central figures in Stephen Ambrose’s *Band of Brothers*, voiced a similar complaint aimed at David Kenyon Webster, also a member of Easy Company and author of the well-regarded memoir *Parachute Infantry*. In his own memoir, Malarkey writes that “occasionally, in war, there’d be the guy who was happy to get hit” and cites Webster as his prime example. Malarkey disdainfully notes that

⁷⁸ C-for-Charlie’s last active combat engagement.

⁷⁹ Based on the letter’s date, September 4, 1985, this is almost certainly Frank Macshane’s *Into Eternity: The Life of James Jones, American Writer*.

⁸⁰ It is only fair here to mark a clear distinction between Paul Fussell, veteran, and Paul Fussell, literary critic. As a literary critic, Fussell felt that quality first-hand written descriptions of combat were rare because the majority of front-line soldiers were “relatively inarticulate.” It is a sign of his high regard for Jones’s writing that Fussell the literary critic describes Jones as one of the few “rough diamonds” who could provide a literate “testimony of experience” (“Thank God For the Atom Bomb” 1) about combat. However, as shown in his letter to Sledge, that respect does not preclude Fussell the veteran from criticizing Jones’s combat experience in relation to his own.

⁸¹ Parachute Infantry Regiment

Webster, who was wounded in the leg by machine-gun fire in Holland, “had gotten his wish: a million-dollar wound that would force him out of action,” finding it “funny... [that] while Webster was back getting pampered by some sweetie-pie nurse in England, [another soldier] was dug in...at Bastogne...after nearly having had his ear ripped off by a mortar in Normandy. Different soldiers, you quickly learned, had different pain thresholds.” Malarkey concedes “that Webster, the Harvard grad, could spin a sentence like nobody’s business” before concluding with the insinuation that “a guy like Webster” could not “thin[k] beyond himself” (171-2).

Malarkey’s (and to a lesser degree Fussell’s) comments may come off harsh, but they would find no shortage of combat veterans who agreed with their viewpoints.

Perhaps it can be simply attributed to human nature that veterans will hold differing opinions regarding the type and severity of wound that will honorably excuse a soldier from returning to the front lines. But while a universal consensus on the subject is not likely to be achieved in this (or any) lifetime, such arguments inevitably center on the idea of ‘doing one’s part.’ Webster was a veteran infantryman with two combat parachute jumps to his credit who had participated in the liberation of Normandy and Operation Market Garden. He’d turned down the chance to receive an officer’s commission in a safe stateside billet to enlist as a private, eventually leaving a relatively safe position in Headquarters Company to volunteer as an Infantry scout. He’d been evacuated from Normandy for a wound he considered so minor that he declined to even mention it in his own memoir⁸² and evacuated from Holland for a machine-gun wound to the leg suffered during a combat assault. But because other soldiers he knew⁸³ had refused evacuation for

⁸² Webster does not write about the wound or his own evacuation. A brief editor’s note informs the reader that Webster was removed for what he described in a letter home as having been “nicked by a tiny piece of shrapnel” (56).

⁸³ And presumably liked better. Much of Malarkey’s attack on Webster seems based on personal animosity.

other wounds, Malarkey still felt half a century later that Webster had not done ‘enough’ to merit leaving the combat zone. Fussell’s critique of Jones is based on the similar idea that Jones had not been at the front lines ‘long enough,’ especially by comparison to Fussell’s own service. The details regarding time spent on the front lines and severity of the wound necessitating removal may change with each case, but many veterans who would critique the nature of other soldiers’ wounds would share the same basic complaints as Fussell and Malarkey, complaints based on the legitimacy of a man’s removal from combat. If a soldier has ‘done enough,’ spent enough of what soldiers of the Vietnam War would call ‘time-in’ on the front lines, his removal can be excused, perhaps even applauded. If he has not ‘done enough’ to satisfy his critics, even removal for a machine-gun wound to the leg will draw criticism, as Malarkey’s attack on Webster proves.

Jones’s stance on the issue, as seen in *The Thin Red Line*, is that any soldier who has gone into combat and survived to the end of a full campaign has ‘done enough’ to warrant his removal from further combat without fear of reprisal. Jones’s depiction of C-for-Charlie embracing this viewpoint and encouraging veterans who had done their part to seek escape by any means stands in stark contrast to Fussell and Malarkey’s views. It would be both improper and irrelevant for me suggest that either party holds any kind of moral high ground over the other on this issue. My only interest lies in explaining the relatively bold and controversial nature of Jones’s stance. What is relevant is the significance of this attitude among the members of C-for-Charlie in representing the shift towards a new code of behavior brought on by combat. The sudden and unexpected lenience of the doctors in approving evacuations contrasts sharply with their earlier

attitudes when “they had been so tough while the campaign was going on.” After major combat has ended, men who go to see the doctors are greeted with smiles, “and even helped [to] describe and elaborate their symptoms if they had trouble talking.” Jones states that “none of this was Division policy, which was as tough as ever. Apparently the doctors themselves had decided the veterans of the campaign had suffered enough, and had taken it upon themselves to help oldtimers get evacuated if it was at all medically possible. Almost without exception no green replacements were evacuated; only oldtimers” (Jones 499). The new unwritten rule that springs up in the wake of combat to foil the ‘official’ Division policy is that every veteran who has been under fire has done his part and deserves a chance to escape if it can be even remotely justified. Whichever green replacements survive their time in combat will presumably be awarded the same courtesy, but not until they become veterans. In Jones’s world, one campaign is all a veteran needs to survive to earn an honorable exit from the combat zone, provided his experience has physically damaged him in even the smallest way. But this is a courtesy extended only to veterans; green soldiers must first ‘do their part’ before earning the right to an honorable exit from combat.

THE END OF THE OLD ARMY

Though the nature of modern combat effectively destroys most of the unwritten codes of the pre-war Old Army and replaces them with new, combat-specific codes, in *The Thin Red Line* Jones suggests that combat cannot change the basic nature of soldiers even if it does change the nature of the codes they follow. The men of C-for-Charlie are basically the same men from Prewitt's G Company with new names, on both a literal level and, more important, on a metaphorical level. The 'exceptional soldiers' that Jones develops over the course of *From Here to Eternity* are marked by a sharp contrast between their internal and external personas. Internally the soldiers in *From Here to Eternity* are driven by powerful, sometimes overwhelming emotions which they try not to let show on the surface (unless it is a suitably 'manly' emotion, like anger) and which they rarely feel comfortable expressing aloud to other soldiers. Each is like the metaphorical duck on the pond, placid and serene on the surface but churning away furiously beneath the waterline. For the soldiers in C-for-Charlie, nothing has changed but the names and the particular irony Jones chooses to focus on.

The irony in *From Here to Eternity* is that the 'exceptional soldiers' that Jones centers the book on share the same hopes, dreams, desires, and loves as the others, but feels that they cannot communicate their feelings for fear they will not be understood. Meanwhile, the same men that they believe will not understand their emotions secretly feel exactly the same. In *The Thin Red Line*, every soldier in C-for-Charlie expends tremendous mental energy worrying that he will be seen as a coward by the men around him, or otherwise embarrassed in some public way, and is convinced that he is the only one who feels so. The irony is that for all the hand-wringing, all the time spent worrying

that the displeasure of the group will fall down upon the one unfortunate soldier who turns out to be a coward, not one member of C-for-Charlie is ever shamed publicly for cowardice and not one ever publicly accuses another of cowardice. Each soldier is so wrapped up in the tortuous examination of his own courage that he never notices any lack of it on the part of his comrades—and how could he, when his attention is entirely turned inwards? Mazzi drunkenly shouts at ‘Brass’ Band, but because of his perceived glory-hunting, not cowardice, and Jones goes out of his way to note that the only “public” example of cowardice, Sico, is looked upon not with disdain but with envy that he had the courage to act so shamefully.

The Thin Red Line ends with the Old Army and its ways almost completely dismantled. The state of the New Army that has replaced it is a shocking departure to those raised in the ways of the Old Army, and Big Sergeant (formerly Corporal) Queen exemplifies this nicely after going AWOL from a New Zealand hospital to return to the unit. The new C-for-Charlie that he comes back to, in his own words, “was not his old outfit: Culin gone, and an *Officer*? Charlie Dale, an *ex-cook*! The Platoon Sgt of 1st Platoon? Jimmy Fox gone? Jenks dead? Stein relieved? Pvt John Bell a Platoon Sgt, too!⁸⁴ Fife the clerk a combat squad leader? Pfc Don Doll a Platoon Guide?” The shock is too much for Queen, who had risen to Corporal under the traditional rules of the Old Army. Queen “could not accept” what had become of his old unit under the ways of the new utilitarian Army. “It was too much for him. After two days of drinking swipe and reminiscing, he reported back to the hospital complaining about his crippled arm and was at once shipped out to New Zealand” (Jones 499).

⁸⁴ Queen returns just before Bell’s second commission comes through.

Queen's response to the 'New' C-for-Charlie of the Combat Army may be comic, but it is also representative of the very serious dilemma faced by the combat veterans who voluntarily enlisted in the professional Army of the pre-war years. Though the unofficial codes of the Old Army that are not combat-effective are quickly discarded in favor of more combat-effective codes, the men who were raised under its idiosyncratic ways are not so easily changed. The Old Army of *From Here to Eternity* may be gone by the close of the Guadalcanal campaign, its codes updated and its roster depleted by combat casualties, but many of the men who managed to get evacuated from C-for-Charlie were still raised in its systems. In the final novel of Jones's trilogy, *Whistle*, their new challenge will be trying to readjust to a New Army and a New United States of America once they return stateside to begin their convalescence. In the wake of Guadalcanal, men like Prewitt/Witt, Warden/Welsh, and Stark/Storm are relics of a by-gone era, products of an outdated system who need to find their places in the new system that has come in to replace it. Chronologically not much time has passed between Prewitt's transfer from the Bugle Corps into G Company and the return of C-for-Charlie's evacuated veterans to the United States. But the country—and the Army—they return to is wildly different from the one they left only two years (or so) earlier. If *From Here to Eternity* chronicles the codes of the Old Army and *The Thin Red Line* chronicles their breakdown in the face of modern warfare, then *Whistle* focuses on the struggles of those soldiers brought up to follow the long-established codes of the Old Army as they try to fit back into a New Army completely alien to the one that they had joined.

CHAPTER IV

WHISTLE

The Thin Red Line ends with Storm concluding that the “only sane” response a soldier can have to combat is to do everything in his power to escape it. But if combat is an experience marked by dangers to one’s physical health, then *Whistle* shows how a combat soldier’s reintegration into broader society after leaving the battlefield can be marked by equally perilous dangers to one’s psychological health. It is very much a homecoming novel,⁸⁵ and its protagonists learn the same lesson that Paul Baumer learned on his leave home in *All Quiet On the Western Front*: though a soldier might spend all his time in combat wishing he were anywhere else, the reality of his homecoming often leaves him feeling that the battlefield he has left might have become the one place he felt a true sense of belonging. The protagonists of *Whistle* have gotten their wish; they’ve been evacuated from combat and returned home to all the pleasures of civilization. But after the initial elation wears off, they find themselves caught up in one dilemma after another, all centered on the question of belonging. In combat they had only had one main concern, survival, and all they needed to do to address it was to find a way to leave the combat zone. What they find when they return is that their homecoming has multiplied their problems in both number and complexity. Though they had thought that leaving combat would mark the end of their real troubles, it actually marked their beginning.

⁸⁵ Homecoming stories are a common trope in war literature, especially in literature of the Vietnam War. For other examples, see Ernest Hemingway’s “Soldier’s Home,” Hamlin Garland’s “The Return of a Private,” Tim O’Brien’s “Speaking of Courage,” Gustav Hasford’s *The Phantom Bloop*, Larry Heinemann’s *Paco’s Story*, Charles Frazier’s *Cold Mountain*, Stephen Wright’s *Meditations in Green*, and Kent Anderson’s *Night Dogs*.

Whistle begins with a generalized first person plural narration, a communal ‘we’ that serves as Jones’s tip of the cap to the dramatic tradition of the Greek chorus⁸⁶ but also quickly concentrates the action on the four main characters. The chorus narrators are the wounded survivors of “the company”⁸⁷ who survived evacuation from combat and are recuperating in the fictional Luxor Hospital in Tennessee.⁸⁸ The book opens with the chorus’s description of the arrival of the four main characters, who the chorus feels “could legitimately be said to be the heart of the old company” (Jones 8). Though Jones has changed their names once again, these characters will be easily recognizable to readers of *From Here to Eternity* and *The Thin Red Line*. They are Mart Winch, the ‘mad’ First Sergeant, Johnny Strange, the Mess Sergeant, Marion Landers, the Company Clerk, and Bobby Prell, “the company’s toughest and foolhardiest sparkplug” (Jones 4). The short opening chapter prepares the men’s arrival by introducing the reader to the world they’ll be walking into. The opening page describes the buzz among the chorus narrators upon their discovery that “the four most important men the company had had” were all evacuated together and would be arriving on the same day. For the chorus narrators, “news of the company still out there in those jungles was the most important thing to us. It was more important, more real than anything we saw, or anything that

⁸⁶ The chorus narrators mention there are “twelve of us” (Jones 3), the same number specified by Sophocles for his Theban tragedies.

⁸⁷ Jones tends to capitalize the word Company in *The Thin Red Line* when referring to C-for-Charlie. In *Whistle*, the former unit being referred to is never named or capitalized.

⁸⁸ Willie Morris’s preface explains that Jones conceived of Luxor as an amalgamation of elements of Memphis and Nashville. Upon his evacuation to the U.S. Jones spent eight months in Kennedy General Hospital in Memphis and upon discharge was assigned to duty at Camp Campbell, near Nashville. As seen through his use of new character names in each novel for similar character types, Jones was particular about names and continuity. Because he wished to place his fictional version of Camp Campbell (which in *Whistle* he calls Camp O’Bruyere) geographically close to his fictional version of Kennedy Hospital, Jones chose to place them in the fictional city of Luxor to avoid mangling the real life geography. In his notes he wrote “Luxor is really Memphis...but Luxor is also Nashville...[people] should not think of it as Memphis, but as Luxor” (xiv). Jones may have had two reasons for choosing to name his stand-in Luxor. The first would be as a nod to Memphis, since the city in Tennessee shares a name with a city in ancient Egypt. The second would be another oblique reference to Sophocles, since the Greek name for Luxor was Thebes.

happened to ourselves” (Jones 3). They describe themselves as being “like a family of orphaned children, split by an epidemic and sent to different care centers” and believe that this explains “how closely we returnees clung together.” The chorus recognizes that “for our own kind, an insane loyalty flamed in us” because of the first great dilemma faced by the returnees: “The company had been our family, our only home. Real parents, wives, fiancées did not really exist for us. Not before the fanatical devotion of that loyalty” (Jones 4). Chris Hedges sheds a little light on the nature of the returnees’⁸⁹ “fanatical devotion” to the old company. Hedges writes that “combatants live only for their herd, those hapless soldiers who are bound into their unit to ward off death. There is no world outside the unit. It alone endows worth and meaning. Soldiers will rather die than betray this bond” (40). Escaping combat leads to the evacuated returnees’ first dilemma, that they have no real family or home, “no world outside” the company that they’ve been physically separated from. If they had once been able to look to the old company to “endo[w] worth and meaning” in their lives, they can no longer do so. Being removed from combat means they will now have to find “worth and meaning” on their own, without the support the old company had provided. This problem is exacerbated by their second great dilemma: “We all knew none of us would ever go back to the old company. Not now, not once we had been sent back to the United States, we wouldn’t. Once you came back to the States, you were reassigned. But all of us needed to believe

⁸⁹ Though Jones refers to the old company remnants as “returnees” in *Whistle*, in his commentary for *WWII* he offers up an equally applicable term: “retreads.” He explains that “retread was one of those words and phrases like Kilroy which swept like wildfire across the globe into every theater. It was a term originally coined by some soldier in World War II, when retread auto tires came into usage, to designate the used-up combat soldier who was sent back through the mill again...at home, the retread was like a man who has survived some epidemic, and been shipped out of the disaster area to a care center. People treated him nicely, and cared for him tenderly, and then hurried to wash their hands after touching him. They did not want what he had caught to rub off, and they did not like it that he had made them think of disaster” (150).

the company would continue on as we knew it, go right on through and come out the other end intact” (Jones 7)

The old company men who have been lucky enough to be evacuated to the states have escaped the physical dangers of combat, but their escape comes at the cost of an emotional Catch-22. In *Wartime*, Paul Fussell describes the significance of unit loyalty as follows:

The military has long known that a soldier’s morale is sustained not just by plenty of badges and medals and by ample access to alcohol and, when possible, non-infectious sexual intercourse but by the irrational conviction on the part of each soldier that he has the honor of serving in the best squad in the best platoon in the best company in the best battalion in the best regiment, etc., in the army. Modify each of these units with *damned* or *goddamned* and you would come close to what an American soldier with high morale might be led to say. (150)

Much of *Whistle* is devoted to proving that the reverse of this is also true. Separate a soldier who has had the honor of serving in the best squad in the best platoon in the best company, etc., from that unit and sustaining his morale becomes a task that can range from difficult to impossible. In effect, the greatest price the returnees must pay for leaving the old company is having to leave the old company forever. Even more troubling for the choral narrators is a realization that “was difficult to accept, without fear. That the old company would change so completely. Become the home, the family, the company, of some other group. It was about the last thing we had left” (Jones 7). In other words, even if they could return to their old company (which Army policy would never allow), it

would no longer be the company that they had known. Most of the men they had known would have already been killed or wounded or transferred elsewhere. The company might retain the same name as ‘their’ company, but it would ‘belong’ to a new group of men; even if they *could* return to a company bearing its name, ‘their’ company no longer exists. To return to my earlier parlance, by agreeing to be evacuated from combat, the returnees in *Whistle* have bought physical safety⁹⁰ in exchange for giving up the only niche they had in the Army knowing full well that they would never be able to return.

Unlike *From Here to Eternity*’s G Company and *The Thin Red Line*’s C-for-Charlie Company, the company in *Whistle* is never given a name any more specific than “the company,” and for good reason. Beginning with Norman Mailer,⁹¹ multiple critics⁹² have written that “the ‘main’ character of *The Thin Red Line* is really Charlie Company” (Giles 123) as a collective whole, and it is difficult to disagree with that assessment. On this subject Giles notes a number of similarities between *The Thin Red Line* and *The Red Badge of Courage* (123), especially in terms of the nature of Jones’s depictions of individual soldiers. Though a younger Jones had written a “book report” criticizing Stephen Crane’s understanding of a combat soldier’s psychology,⁹³ the older Jones who

⁹⁰ Which may only be temporary. The returnees know that they can expect to return to combat if their wounds heal sufficiently.

⁹¹ Though Mailer did not phrase it in precisely those terms, his remark in the essay “Some Children of the Goddess” that Jones’s intent in *The Thin Red Line* “is not to create character but the feel of combat, the psychology of men” (112) was influential in steering critical thought towards the notion of C-for-Charlie collectively acting as the novel’s protagonist.

⁹² Including Giles, Carter, Maxwell Geismar, Edmond L. Volpe, and Lewis Gannett, to name a few.

⁹³ The timing of this critique is particularly fascinating. Jones wrote it in the period when Captain Blatt allowed him to take a few English courses at the University of Hawaii after the Pearl Harbor attack but before the 27th deployed to Guadalcanal. He admits in his essay that at that point he “[had] been under fire only once—December 7th” but in “comparing [his] experience with that of Henry Fleming [he] found they were very similar” (391). Though the younger Jones felt at the time that his experience was comparable to Henry Fleming’s, this was still the opinion of an essentially un-blooded soldier since he had yet to gain any combat experience as an Infantryman—his experience “under fire” had not come in an Infantry battle, but on the receiving end of strafing runs from Japanese aircraft. Based on his incorporation and modification of Stephen Crane’s impressionistic techniques in *The Thin Red Line*, it is probably safe to say that after having experienced Infantry combat firsthand Jones’s opinion of Crane’s writing improved.

wrote *The Thin Red Line* incorporated some of Crane's impressionistic writing techniques in his characterizations of the men of C-for-Charlie Company. In *The Red Badge of Courage*, Crane often prefers the use of brief, descriptive epithets like "the youth," "the tattered soldier," "the tall soldier," etc to given names as a way of emphasizing the relative anonymity of the individual soldier once he has become absorbed into the larger group entity of the platoon, or company, or regiment, etc. C-for-Charlie as a whole functions as the de facto protagonist of *The Thin Red Line* in large part because Jones modifies Crane's technique to make it similarly difficult to tell individual members of C-for-Charlie apart. Like Crane, Jones avoids extensive physical descriptions of his characters, giving only brief generalizations (when he bothers to provide descriptions at all). For example, the only physical details given about Stein are that he has "large, mild, brown eyes" and glasses (9), Doll is "a quiet, freshfaced youth with considerable naivete" (6), Witt is "small" and "thin" (104), and so on. Rather than downplaying individuality by avoiding the use of given names as Crane did, Jones achieves the same result by making the given names of the men in C-for-Charlie as indistinguishable from each other as possible. Jones lists eighty-four named characters in the "Company Roster" that opens the book. Of those, only ten have last names that extend beyond a single syllable, and none boasts a name that extends as long as three syllables. Further blurring the mass of single-syllable names among C-for-Charlie is Jones's frequent use of commonplace objects as last names. Just among its more prominent characters, *The Thin Red Line* features Doll, Dale, Bead, Bell, Band, Cash, Queen, Storm, Stein, and Fife. That's not even counting other names listed on the roster like Fox, Field, Grove, Thorne, Wick, Land, Park, Ash, Catch, Catt, Crown, Spine, and

Train. Without extensive physical descriptions to aid recognition, Jones's readers can be forgiven if they struggle to remember what distinguishes Doll from Dale, or Bell from Bead and Band, and this is almost certainly Jones's point. Though it is not impossible to tell the men of C-for-Charlie apart,⁹⁴ it can be difficult for a first (or second or third)-time reader to keep track of so many characters with similar-sounding names. This results in the Company as a group becoming the novel's protagonist much more than any individual character.⁹⁵

In *Whistle*, however, Jones transitions from the whole company acting as the main character to having the action center on four men, "the four most important men the company had had." In practical terms, Jones boils the totality of C-for-Charlie down to just Winch, Strange, Prell, and Landers, and opens the novel with a disembodied choric narration precisely to emphasize that point. "The company" is not given a specific name because Guadalcanal and New Georgia have destroyed the company that used to exist. The chorus narrators are the remnants of a company that has been erased by war, and they know it. It is why they remain "fanatically devoted" to the few old company men who are left. Their comparison of themselves to orphaned children is apt.⁹⁶ Their family, their "home," the old company, is gone and its members scattered. Some are dead, their

⁹⁴ In fact, Carter praises Jones's ability to "achiev[e] this sense of the collective character of the company" while "never forg[etting] that it was composed of individuals" (98).

⁹⁵ In a letter to his Scribner's editor Burroughs Mitchell from December 2, 1959, Jones details his decision to shift the incident in which a defecating soldier defeats and kills a Japanese soldier in hand to hand combat from Fife to Bead after a "friend...who read the manuscript made the complimentary comment that Fife is emerging as a fine major character," which was exactly what Jones did not "want" (Hendrick 288). Carter cites this as evidence of how "Jones permitted no star performers in *The Thin Red Line*" (99) that might distract from the ensemble.

⁹⁶ Robert Leckie, who coincidentally enough was also a Guadalcanal veteran, uses the same metaphor in his book *Helmet for My Pillow*. Leckie writes that while on Guadalcanal he and his Marine buddies "in an almost mawkish sense...had gotten hold of the notion that we were orphans. No one cared, we thought. All of America's millions doing the same things every day: going to movies, getting married, attending college commencements...all the same, all, all, all, the changeless, daily America—all of this going on without a single thought for us. This was how we thought." Leckie adds "it seems silly now. But it was real enough then" (101).

bodies buried in Army cemeteries on Guadalcanal or New Georgia, lying undiscovered in the jungles, or destroyed beyond recovery. Some are still with the old company. And the wounded who have been returned to the States have been divided among a number of hospitals across the country, all waiting now to see if they'll be discharged or recover enough to be reassigned to a new unit based on the needs of the Army's Replacement Depots. If C-for-Charlie was the main character of *The Thin Red Line*, then similarly to Prewitt in *From Here to Eternity* the "dramatic structure" and "spiritual content" of the novel demanded that C-for-Charlie be killed by the end of the book. Winch, Strange, Prell, and Landers are the specific representatives of the nameless old company men who make up the chorus narrators and all the other returning veterans those narrators represent. They are individuals, of course, and the novel will focus on their individual experiences. But those experiences will be representative of the difficulties facing all the company's remnants, in effect continuing *The Thin Red Line's* tradition of having a Company-as-protagonist. If those four are all that's left of the unnamed old company's "heart,"⁹⁷ then they'll symbolically represent what happens to the remains of the old company as individuals standing in for the whole. The first person plural opening serves as the transition from the company's functioning as a single main character to the four men who made up the "heart of the old company" functioning as a kind of single protagonist. The number of individuals Jones focuses his attention on is far fewer than in *The Thin Red Line*, but they can still be considered a kind of group entity representing a collective experience. This also helps explain why Jones includes so much overlap in their individual experiences. They are individuals, to be sure, but the difficulties they face

⁹⁷ Jones symbolically links this with Winch's heart trouble, which was exacerbated by the jungle diseases he contracted in the South Pacific.

and the ways in which they face them can also be seen as Jones's commentary on a few selected 'typical' homecoming experiences faced by veterans of his generation.

DISPLACED PERSONS

In the wake of V.E. Day, many American troops in the European Combat Theater would become familiar with Displaced Persons Camps. The term was used in reference to civilian refugees from throughout Eastern Europe who had been ‘displaced’ from their homes and thrust into a diaspora generated by Hitler’s political and war machines. Though the returnees in *Whistle* are not refugees in a literal sense, metaphorically speaking their return leaves them just as ‘homeless’ as any refugee. One of the baseline concepts in *From Here to Eternity* is the idea that the first step towards self-actualization is to discover a niche, a “place” that a soldier can call his own. *Whistle*’s returnees all had that in the old company, but their evacuation has left them ‘displaced persons,’ and by implication if they cannot ‘re-place’ themselves somewhere else, the chances of their successful reintegration into society (which, for professional soldiers means the Regular Army) will be dire. Jones explores this notion of the old company men becoming, upon their return, ‘homeless,’ at two levels: the disintegration of the old company, and the disintegration of the homes the men left before combat and now physically return to in America. In both cases these “places” still technically exist, but no longer possess the qualities that had made them ‘homes.’

As the hospital ship steams towards San Diego, Jones notes that “most of the cases on board had been serving overseas for at least a year. Home. The way they said it to each other, it was more a word of anxiety and deep unexorcised fear, of despair even, than of relief, love, or anticipation. What would it be like now? What would they themselves be like?” (21-2) Landers effectively answers this rhetorical question when he stares out at the California coastline and recognizes that “there was certainly no *place* for

a twenty-one-year-old Landers there, in it,” (Jones 26) emphasis mine on “place.”

Coming to that realization consciously is a task that consumes all four main characters for the bulk of the novel. It is surely no coincidence that Jones returns to the diction of *From Here to Eternity* in this passage. *From Here to Eternity* is dominated by the search for “place,” that special niche that a soldier can fit into and use as the means to define himself. If *From Here to Eternity* defines the need for an Old Army soldier to find a “place” and *The Thin Red Line* shows the replacement of that system with a new, combat-oriented system, than *Whistle* is the cautionary tale that shows what happens when such men lose that “place” permanently.

Jones foreshadows difficulties the returnees will find in their literal homes before the four main characters even appear in the novel. The opening choric narrators note that one of their members, Corello, “had been home once since his arrival in Luxor, and had stayed less than a day. Couldn’t stand it, he said” (Jones 6). The brief description of Corello’s experience foreshadows the similar reactions Strange, Landers, and Winch have upon their trips home, all of which follow the same basic pattern. Strange is the first of the three⁹⁸ to return home on leave, and even then it is not his ‘home,’ since his wife Linda is living with a collection of her family in Covington, Kentucky. Strange’s reunion with his wife is stilted and uncomfortable. She greets him with little enthusiasm and when Storm awkwardly loses his erection the first time the two attempt sex, she “roll[s] over with her back to him and swiftly [goes] to sleep.” Storm is “deeply troubled and humiliated” by the incident, since “he had dreamed of [that] moment for so long, and so many times, it seemed absolutely unbelievable that he would not be able to perform.”

⁹⁸ Prell is too badly wounded to make a trip home to West Virginia. He would have little reason to return even if he could as he is referred to in passing as a “West Virginia orphan boy” (Jones 421).

Only after he pictures the many times in the Pacific “that he had tossed himself off and dreamed of this moment” does his erection return, and he is left to sneak off to the bathroom in order to gratify himself while “fantasizing himself out there in the terrible night jungle” (Jones 111-2). His second night home “was a great deal better” because “he had spent most of the day over in Cincinnati drinking beer...there was very little else for him to do, with [Linda] at work all day.” Storm ultimately cuts his visit short by four days and spends the remainder of his leave playing poker and carousing back in Luxor. When he reports back to Kilrainey General Hospital, “he did not feel he had been home at all” (Jones 112-3).

Landers’s first leave home is similarly disastrous. Almost as soon as he walks into his hometown of Imperium, Indiana⁹⁹ he is recognized by a cab dispatcher as “Jeremy Landers’ boy” and given a hearty “Welcome home, son, welcome home.” Landers thanks the man even though he “wanted to say *Go to hell*” and glumly thinks to himself:

That was the way it was going to be. Everybody was going to be treating him as the returning war hero. And suddenly he saw a vivid mental picture of the company’s waterless platoons, with their fear-haunted eyes under their helmets and dirt on their faces and the stubbles of beard. It blanked out everything, the station, the dispatcher, the cab. (Jones 169)

The survivor’s guilt that Landers feels over being safely evacuated to a booming America while “the company’s waterless platoons” remain in combat increases throughout his brief stay in Imperium. “Almost immediately” he has a “run-in” with his father over his refusal to wear any medals or decorations other than his Combat Infantryman’s Badge.

⁹⁹ Imperium is based on Jones’s hometown of Robinson, Illinois. Landers’s experiences during this section are heavily based on Jones’s own experiences during his first leave home from the hospital.

His father cannot understand his reluctance so “once, just once, Landers tried to explain it to him, that it was obscene, immoral,¹⁰⁰ with the rest of them still out there, still dying, but his father wouldn’t agree.” The argument reminds Landers that at some level “he had brought [the medals] deliberately to bug his father, and silently wished that his father might try to understand him.” His attempt to explain that in the hospital none of the men wear any medals besides the C.I.B. leads his father to begin “expostulat[ing] in his lawyer’s courtroom voice” before “Landers silenced him with an authoritative wave of his hand,” which he never would have dared to do before joining the Army. Then “Landers began to drink” (Jones 170).

Landers’s second run-in with his father comes over his refusal “to come down to the American Legion and tell the boys from World War I about his experiences” in the South Pacific. Jones notes that “by then, Landers was drinking almost nonstop,” which was no problem because “everybody he met everywhere in town wanted to buy him a drink.” Landers spends the bulk of his leave at the local Elks Club in an alcoholic haze, but “dimly, he slowly became aware that everyone was afraid of him, for some reason” (170). One evening at an Elks Club send-off dinner for a group of draftees, Landers is asked to give a speech about what they will face in combat. The local minister, high school principal, and high school football coach had already spoken about religious, social, and patriotic “responsibilities” and the Chamber of Commerce secretary spontaneously asks Landers to speak to the draftees “about a soldier’s responsibilities.” Landers responds by getting up and, with a drunken grin, systematically contradicting everything the three previous speakers had just said. He begins by telling the draftees that

¹⁰⁰ It is likely no coincidence that Landers’s predecessor in *The Thin Red Line*, Fife, uses strikingly similar language when he describes the state of modern warfare as “horrifying...weird and wacky and somehow insane. It was even immoral” (Jones 41).

“you don’t think much about God, or the Four Freedoms, or loving your country when you’re in a fight...Mostly you think about getting your ass out of there, and about killing those other people so they won’t kill you.” He sardonically argues “that the soldier’s first responsibility is to stay alive” because “a dead soldier is no good to anybody” and “a wounded soldier takes two or three other men away from fighting to take care of him.” He says that he “can’t honestly tell [the draftees] that [they] will be fighting for freedom, and God, and [their] country” as the other speakers have, and assures them that “in combat you don’t think about any of that.” He concludes with the advice that “if you have the choice...always try to wound a man badly instead of killing him” (Jones 171-2) and happily leaves to continue drinking.

Landers’s leave worsens the longer he stays, just as Strange’s had. He fails to find any female companionship because all the girls in town are either involved with other draftees or “scared” of him. He goes on one aborted date with “an old girlfriend who wrote she had read of his return in the paper and wanted him to know that she would be glad to see him if he got home, that all the men like him coming back should be treated with admiration and understanding and if there was anything she could do for him she would.” When Landers calls her up for a date the puzzled girl accepts, but he does not know that she “had been writing in only a purely social way, when she wrote she would do anything for him that she could.” The two go to a high school basketball game and after dropping her off “Landers stood looking after [her] in the rain, feeling bemused and left out of everything.” He gets drunker than usual and ends up at the Civil War cannon in front of the local courthouse. He boozily embraces the cannon and “shed[s] a few drunken tears...for this other old soldier, whose reward for faithful service...was to be

left to stand and molder in the rain.” He angrily recalls how every Memorial Day poppies¹⁰¹ and crosses are placed on soldiers’ graves “and somebody read ‘In Flanders Field.’ Every fucking year,” then wonders “Who would write the poem for them? What would they call it? Who would read it?” (Jones 173-4)

Later, he wakes up in the local police station, where the chief tells him that he had passed out after ordering a late-night meal at the local diner. The chief sheepishly explains that the officer who found him tried to bring Landers home, but his father had refused to accept him and insisted that he brought in to sleep off his bender in the drunk tank. Landers takes his incarceration well, shaking the hands of all the officers and thanking them “for a pleasant stay,” then drives home to pack. He attempts to phone his father at his office to harangue him for his actions but his father promptly hangs up on him. “Don’t you hang up on me, you son of a bitch!” he raged at the phone. Then he slammed it down and turned on his mother. ‘All right then, you tell him. You tell him I said to forget he ever had a son named Marion. Jeremy Landers has no son named Marion. You tell him that. And I’ll forget I ever had him for a father.’”¹⁰² While waiting for the train to come and take him back to Luxor, “Landers could hardly wait to get back to Prell and Winch and Strange and the others,” and he ends his leave “wonder[ing] how Prell’s legs were doing” and whether the doctors were going “to do something about Strange’s hand some time soon” (Jones 175-6).

¹⁰¹ Paul Fussell considers the red poppies that irritate Landers “inseparable from writings about the Great War” (246) because of their symbolic association with the spilled blood of soldiers (among other things). For further information on the significance of poppies in World War I see *The Great War and Modern Memory* 246-254.

¹⁰² This particular incident is based on a fight Jones had with his Uncle Charles in which Jones made a similar proclamation that as far he was concerned, he had no uncle and Charles had no nephew. Jones’s father was dead by the time Jones returned to Robinson, having committed suicide shortly after Pearl Harbor.

Winch also returns home to find his family is not exactly as he remembered them, but unlike Strange and Landers he never even speaks to them. Winch takes a bus from Luxor to St. Louis, and after getting a room and resting for most of a day goes to look up his wife and children.¹⁰³ “Winch had never seen the house, or the street,” (Jones 200) because his wife had moved to St. Louis long after Winch had deployed to Hawaii. Like Strange, Winch literally returns to a ‘home’ he has never been to before. Rather than going inside to see his family, he settles in across the street to spy on the house. “After an hour and a half, when he had begun to think she must already be at home and in bed, a taxi drove up and Winch watched her get out with a serviceman.” Winch identifies the man by his insignia as “an officer and a flyer” and sees “the round white insignia of a Lt/col glinted from his shoulders.” He watches the Air Corps Lieutenant Colonel kiss his wife “deeply” before she gets out her key and goes inside with him. Winch allows himself a half hour to see if anything changes, but the lights in the house stay on and the Air Corps Colonel doesn’t come out so Winch leaves for the night and wanders around a few bars before going to sleep without a drink. He spends the next three days repeating the process, making “his small pilgrimage out to his wife’s” house “the main anchor of his daily routine.” He sees her with the Lieutenant Colonel for two more nights, but then on the next night he sees her come home with a different man, “also an officer,” only “shorter and fatter, pudgy, and [with] the gold oak leaves of a major on his shoulders.” He watches the two of them walk to the door where

they kissed the same way. Again the lights went on. Again nobody left. As if released from some devil’s bargain he had made, Winch turned on his

¹⁰³ Winch’s previously-unmentioned family is not consistent with the earlier characterizations of Warden and Welsh. Giles offers up one possible explanation for this inconsistency in his observation that “one of the shocks of reading *Whistle* is to discover that ‘the First’ is married” (192).

heel...caught a cab back to his hotel, packed his satchel, paid, and left...
the next bus south to Luxor did not leave for an hour. Winch spent it in a
nearby bar, celebrating over a second bottle of wine for the day. (Jones
201-2)

The only one of the four main characters to risk a second leave to see their family is Strange, who returns to Covington only to be told over a fancy dinner with his wife that she has taken a lover. Like Winch's wife, Linda Strange has chosen an Air Corps Lieutenant Colonel, a "Princeton graduate" who "comes from someplace on Long Island called Southampton." Linda's Lieutenant Colonel has provided her with two things Strange never did: an entry into a world of "new sophistication" and her first orgasms through cunnilingus (Jones 219). The Lieutenant Colonel is himself married with children and cannot marry Linda, but she is adamant that she is "not going to give him up... because he makes [her] feel things...[she] never felt before...sex things" (Jones 220). Even though it wouldn't change the nature of her relationship with the Air Corps Lieutenant Colonel, she offers to divorce Strange anyway, reasoning "I guess you won't want to stay married to me. Under the circumstances" (Jones 221). The dinner ends with Linda awkwardly trying to convince Strange to dance with her "one more time" for old times' sake and failing to comprehend his refusal. The two then return to Linda's house to work out the details of their divorce. "There was no fight. Back at the house in Covington...they more or less amicably went through the various details that had to be arranged, a great deal like two old friendly business partners who for various reasons are splitting up their firm." Linda gives Strange all the money he had saved for the two of them to open up a restaurant together after the war, and offers to sleep with him a final

time “anyway...if you like.” Again, she fails to comprehend Strange’s refusal and cries as he leaves for the bus station to get back to Luxor (Jones 222). As he climbs onto the Greyhound bus, Strange sardonically notes that “he sure didn’t have much of a batting average for completing his leaves and passes” (Jones 223).

To adopt Strange’s metaphor, none of the old company men “have much of a batting average” on leaves home, which forms the crux of the novel’s first great dilemma. *Whistle* opens with the idea that for these returnees, “the company had been our family, our only home” (Jones 4), but it is a home that no longer exists and a family quickly disintegrating as some of its members die and the rest become separated by discharge or reassignment. “The company,” had become their truest “home,” but the returnees can accept the fact that it is a home they can never return to; they understood such was the price they would pay in being evacuated from Guadalcanal or New Georgia. What they find harder to accept is the disintegration of the “homes” they had as civilians because those changes take them unawares. The returnees know that by returning to the States they have forfeited the “only home” they had found within the Army, but they expect the civilian “homes” they had left behind to still be waiting there when they return.¹⁰⁴ The discovery that their assumptions could not have been more wrong comes as a painful shock, leaving them ‘homeless’ in a double-sense. The returnees have lost their “homes” both inside and outside the Army, and these losses are made bitterer by the knowledge that both were engineered by forces entirely out of their control. The returnees have been playthings of fate, placed in combat by all the swirling factors that combined to form World War II, then plucked from the family they found there by the battlefield

¹⁰⁴ Perhaps Winch had his suspicions, but Strange and Landers are certainly taken by surprise.

probabilities that Fife found so distasteful, only to be deposited back with their original families, families which have also changed into an unrecognizable state.

The result is that as a group, the returnees' "batting average" for successful leaves and passes is a disappointing zero. Of the three homecomings, both of the married men return 'home'¹⁰⁵ to find their wives cheating on them with Air Corps officers. It is worth noting that their wives' choices of lovers could be considered triply insulting to a pair of Old Army infantry sergeants, as their Air Corps Lieutenant Colonels were officers (strike one) serving in a less dangerous branch of service (strike two) who had secured stateside positions that allowed them to sit out the war in safety and comfort without the slightest possibility of seeing combat (strike three). Meanwhile Landers, the only unmarried man of the three, returns to the house he grew up in only to feel like an outcast in his own hometown. All three end their leaves home by breaking from their civilian lives: Landers disowns his biological family, Strange and his wife divorce, and Winch never even speaks with his wife before heading back to Luxor for good. Upon leaving his soon-to-be ex-wife for the last time, Strange looks at the money he had spent years saving and thinks to himself that he "knew just what he was going to do with the money" (Jones 223) he had thought would go towards opening a restaurant with his wife. Without a family to spend it on anymore, Strange's new plan is to blow every last cent of his savings partying at the Peabody, and he is soon joined by Landers in what James Giles calls "a desperate gamble...to hold off a chaos [they feel] growing all around [them]" (184). It is here, after having established the complete destruction of every home the returnees had ever known,

¹⁰⁵ I use single quotation marks here to call attention to the fact that neither Strange nor Winch visited a physical location he had ever personally called a home. Strange returns to his wife's home in Covington Kentucky, and though Jones does not specifically note where Strange had been born in *Whistle*, as an incarnation of Maylon Stark the most logical guess would be somewhere in Texas. Meanwhile, the 'home' that Winch returns to in St. Louis is also a house he has never been to before.

that Jones transitions his focus to the last stage of what he called the “Evolution of a Soldier,” the combat soldier’s reintegration into society. It is the stage at which all four of the returnees will try even harder than they had already been trying to party their hurts away—Landers and Strange at the Peabody, Winch with Carol Firebaugh, and Prell with Della Mae Kinkaid. But as Jones himself found out during his convalescence, success will be more elusive than they think.

Jones’s commentary in his book *WWII* focuses heavily on this process he calls the “Evolution of a Soldier” (54), the progression from civilian to raw recruit, raw recruit to garrison soldier, garrison soldier into combat, and his transformation into a blooded veteran (should he manage to live that long). Towards the close of *WWII*, Jones introduces an accompanying process that he calls “De-Evolution of a Soldier” (256), the process by which a soldier returned home from combat becomes a civilian once more. Much of *Whistle* can be considered the answer to the question Jones poses at the beginning of his chapter on the “De-Evolution of a Soldier,” which is “how did you come back from counting yourself dead?” (255) Earlier, in trying to pin down a definition of what he has meant by the term “Evolution of a Soldier,” he writes “I think that when all the nationalistic or ideological propaganda and patriotic slogans are put aside, all the straining to convince a soldier that he is dying *for* something, it is the individual soldier’s final full acceptance of the fact that his name is written down in the rolls of the already dead.” Jones views this fatalistic mindset as a necessary evil required for any rational man to be able to function in combat. He goes on to say that

Every combat soldier, if he follows far enough along the path that began with his induction, must, I think, be led inexorably to that awareness. He

must make a compact with himself or with Fate that he is lost. Only then can he function as he ought to function, under fire. He knows and accepts beforehand that he's dead, although he may still be walking around for a while. That soldier you have walking around there with this awareness in him is the final end product of the Evolution of a Soldier. (54)

Jones devotes much of *The Thin Red Line* to capturing the process by which the men of C-for-Charlie make their “compact with Fate” and develop into that “final end product” of the soldier’s evolution. *Whistle* examines the other side of the equation, investigating how a soldier who has learned to function in combat yet lived to return to civilian life “comes back” from thinking of himself as a dead man who has still been “walking around for a while.” The process is neither pretty nor easy; James Giles describes it “as a nearly impossible stage of the military evolutionary process” (176). One of the greatest challenges facing such men is the fact that they cannot expect to receive any guidance from the Army as they try to figure out how to ‘revivify’ themselves after having already accepted the inevitability of their own deaths.¹⁰⁶ Jones laments the fact that “the government had never set up any De-Evolution of a Soldier center, to match its induction centers. When you went in, they had the techniques and would ride you all the way to becoming a soldier. They had no comparable system when you came out. That you had to do on your own” (256). Chris Hedges adds that the process is made even more difficult by the fact that “soldiers only have time to reflect [upon such things] later [, after combat]. By then these soldiers often have been discarded, left as broken men in a civilian society that does not understand them and does not want to understand them”

¹⁰⁶ The institutional support (or lack thereof) that the military provides for former servicemen reintegrating into civilian life remains an on-going issue. Karl Marlantes has been particularly vocal on the issue, and his book *What It Is Like To Go To War* includes several proposals for how he feels it should be addressed.

(86). In this sense, nothing much has changed since the baseline set in *From Here to Eternity*. Just as Prewitt and Maggio know they cannot look for help within the official system set forth in the AR's, Prell, Landers, Strange, and Winch know not to expect support from the Army as they readjust to life outside combat. Like Prewitt and Maggio, they know the only help they will get will come unofficially, from each other. Even with the Old Army transforming into a New Army before their eyes, the unofficial codes still maintain far more relevance than the official ones.

Jones sees the "De-Evolution" process occurring in three identifiable stages. He argues that "with the de-evolving, as with the evolving, the first sign of change was the coming of the pain. As the old combat numbness disappeared, and the frozen feet of the soul began to thaw, the pain of the cure became evident. The sick-making thoughts of all the buddies who had died. The awful bad luck of the maimed" (256). The solution to that pain is the same solution as it had been in combat: distraction. On Guadalcanal it came in the form of swipe, and if one is lucky enough, overpriced black-market whiskey. Back home in the continental U.S., the returnees' options are considerably more diverse, yet always center on the soldiers' traditional vices of sex and alcohol. Strange and Landers, who in some ways have the most emotionally traumatic homecoming experiences of the four main characters, try the hardest to drown their sorrows in a sea of debauchery. The fact that their suite at the Peabody is financed primarily by the savings Strange had intended to put towards a post-Army life with his ex-wife is appropriate as the disintegration of his post-war plans is what cuts Strange the deepest. Landers had never had such specific plans to be shattered, but his self-imposed decision to disown his family causes him arguably the most mental trauma of the four; it comes as little surprise that he

pledges his (considerably less impressive) savings to the maintenance of the Peabody Suite.

Winch and Prell, despite being in worse condition physically, are more mentally stable than Strange and Landers at the midpoint of the novel. Though this will later change, Winch and Prell partake in their hedonistic pursuits with less wild abandon than Strange and Landers. This can be partially attributed to physical constraints. Neither has the same opportunity as Strange and Landers to take to drink. Prell's recovery keeps him mostly confined to the hospital and Winch's ill health leaves him unable to tolerate any alcohol stronger than a few glasses of white wine. But both are also much less strained by the issue of poor homecomings. Winch is not hit as hard by his wife's affairs as Strange is, apparently having mentally divorced himself from his marriage long before.

Meanwhile Prell is more concerned with making sure that he is not forcibly discharged due to injury than he is with catching up with the remains of a family he had also left long before. Outside of a single trip by Prell to the Peabody Suite, both are content to settle quietly into the sexual relationships that their physical conditions will allow and avoid the more desperate merry-making of Strange and Prell. In *What It Is Like To Go To War*, Karl Marlantes warns that while "the homecoming soldier may want to make love to any woman who moves," such desires are "egg[ed] on...[by] the misplaced that idea that being masturbated by a paid pair of labia [will] somehow" (181-2) cure the soldier of his loneliness or erase the memories of combat. While Marlantes acknowledges how unlikely it is that a hormone-ridden young soldier will put off sexual encounters until he has reached a more stable state emotionally, the combined experiences of Jones's

protagonists support Marlantes's views that seeking refuge in sex is a "misplaced...idea" for a recuperating soldier to follow.

Though the four indulge their instincts to distract themselves with as much debauchery as they can physically handle, whatever pleasure they find at first is not sustainable in the longer term. Try as they might, they cannot suppress their feelings for long. Jones uses dreams, specifically nightmares, to indicate that the spiritual "thawing" felt by the four returnees (along with the survivor's guilt they feel for having escaped combat) cannot be ignored forever. Even if their conscious minds no longer wish to dwell on what happened to them in combat, their unconscious will force them to confront their feelings. It was called combat fatigue or battle exhaustion in World War II and shell shock or neurasthenia in World War I. But today the term that would be used to describe these feelings is Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. All four of the protagonists suffer from nightmares of one kind or another. Winch continually dreams of his platoon being bracketed by artillery fire while he can do nothing but helplessly shout "Get them out of there! Get them out of there!" (Jones 305) Landers dreams of his waterless platoon suffering on Guadalcanal (Jones 323) and Prell of the soldiers who were killed on the Medal of Honor patrol (Jones 425). Strange, who had been more removed from combat than the others, has strange dreams of being judged by "Roman justice or injustice" (Morris¹⁰⁷ 473). What connects all four nightmares are the feelings of helplessness and

¹⁰⁷ Jones died in the middle of writing Chapter 31 of *Whistle*. While on his deathbed he dictated into a tape recorder detailed notes on his plans for the final few chapters that were used by his close friend Willie Morris to 'finish' the novel. Morris chose to write these final chapters, with the exception of Strange's death, as synopses of how Jones intended the plot to go. In order to keep as close to Jones's vision as possible, he did not flesh them out with dialogue or further description. Though these final chapters represent Jones's vision, I have decided to cite material from these chapters under Morris's name in order to draw a clear distinction between information taken from passages completed by Jones and information taken from the unfinished material completed by Morris after Jones's death.

guilt each man feels over those “sick-making thoughts of all the buddies who had died” and “the awful bad luck of the maimed.”

As the “thawing” period continues, the nightmares grow worse and the returnees find more self-destructive ways to vent their guilt. Landers, who has perhaps the most difficulty readjusting to life after combat, begins picking fights with anyone he can. This is a callback on Jones’s part to an incident near the end of *The Thin Red Line*, when Landers’s predecessor Fife begins acting the same way after C-for-Charlie ends the combat phase of its operations on Guadalcanal. “The old Fife had abhorred fistfights, largely because he was afraid of losing. The new Fife adored them, and” after picking a fight with Corporal Weld, who he blamed for stealing his rightful position as Company Clerk, Fife “had six or eight more fights since his beating up of Corporal Weld. He no longer cared deeply whether he won or lost, as he used to. Every bump he gave, and every bump he took, caused in him an immense sense of release from something or other” (Jones 500). Landers mimics this same self-destructive behavior. In one instance, he picks a fight over a barstool with a Navy Chief Petty Officer and beats the man to a pulp. “And as he landed each punch Landers shouted insanely. ‘Pay!’ he yelled. ‘Pay! Pay, goddam you! Pay, pay, pay!’” (Jones 253). Later, he tells himself that he

did not like to fight and did not want to, but that he was constantly becoming enraged...now, the slightest thing, and Landers was not only ready to fight. A fight was just about guaranteed...a kind of intense, awful rage that tinged everything in sight with red would leap out from some unknown place in Landers and demand retribution. Landers did not know where it came from, or what was causing it. (Jones 276-7)

The reader will recognize this as denial on Landers's part, as the "spiritual thaw" forces him to confront a multitude of feelings he would just as well avoid, or bury under a directionless rage. In the latter half of the novel it seems clear that the four returnees are headed towards the next stage of "De-Evolution of a Soldier." According to Jones, after the thaw "the next thing to go was the professionalism. How could you be a professional when there was no more profession? The only way was to stay in The Profession" (Jones 256). The problem here is twofold, at least for Jones's fictional protagonists. Over the course of their enlistments, their entire identities have become wrapped up in the Army (more specifically, the Old Army), so becoming 'professionals without a profession' automatically throws each of the four into a serious crisis of identity. Even more problematic, Jones's belief that "the only way" to combat this is by "stay[ing] in The Profession" will prove easier said than done for the four remaining old company men, and may turn out to be a case of 'the cure being worse than the disease.' Reconciling these two problems—or attempting to, at least—becomes the major focus of the *Whistle's* final act.

“AN UNTENABLE POSITION”

General Douglas MacArthur is famous for having proclaimed upon his retirement that “old soldiers never die, they just fade away.” But MacArthur’s sentiment bears little relation to reality, at least as Jones saw things.¹⁰⁸ Jones’s old soldiers do not fade quietly away after they are no longer capable of serving in combat. They die. They die hard, alone, and of their own volition, preferring to throw their lives away rather than continue to subsist in a world that no longer bears any relation to the one they joined as raw recruits. To return to the parlance of *From Here to Eternity*, the Army had provided each with a niche, “a place to call their own” through which they could become what they most wanted to be. But with the destruction of the Old Army in the early campaigns of World War II and the development of the New Army to replace it, Old Army survivors like Landers, Prell, Winch, and Strange no longer have that place to call their own. Deprived of the “places” they once had, they fare no better in their adjustments to life as niche-less men than Bloom or Maggio did before them.

Landers is the first of the four to go, which is probably why his death scene is the only one that Jones lived long enough to complete himself. This is fortunate in a sense because even in death, Landers plays his (and Fife’s) usual role as the most introspective spokesman for the group. Landers’s fate illustrates perhaps the greatest dilemma facing all the retreads who have survived combat and the spiritual destruction of their original unit: how does a soldier reconcile his intense desire to leave the institution that sent him into combat (thus destroying the only family he had left) with the knowledge that he will never belong anywhere else? Landers is caught between his intense hatred for the Army,

¹⁰⁸ This did not keep Jones from having a little fun with MacArthur’s statement. The front page of the James Jones society website contains a picture of Jones’s autograph underneath his hand-written inscription “Old Soldiers Never Die. They Write Novels.”

the love that lies underneath that hatred, and his scorn for the kind of civilian life he sees represented in small town Imperium, Indiana, and later Barleyville, Tennessee. Landers's conundrum is complicated by the certain knowledge that if he does not find a way to secure a medical discharge he will be shipped overseas once again to take part in the inevitable invasion of France. He knows he faces a high probability of being wounded again or killed even in a Limited Duty assignment like the 3516th QM Gasoline Supply Company, and that finding the right answer to his 'to be or not be a soldier' question may well prove to be a matter of life or death. But after having lost his "place" in the old company and the accompanying sense of purpose that it provided, against all odds Landers finds another one with the 3516th—at least for a little while.

It is an unlikely unit to restore Landers's sense of *esprit de corps*, being a dumping ground for green men, unwanted officers, and other retreads wounded too badly to be returned to infantry assignments and bitter they have not been discharged. Yet somehow, Landers "beg[an] to have a tenuous, sneaking affection for [the] befuddled fucked-up outfit...partly...because he had begun to take a serious liking to the new company commander of the 3516th, [Lieutenant Prevor]" (Jones 340). Under the command of the sympathetic Lt. Prevor, Landers miraculously returns to his former niche as Company Clerk and begins to self-actualize through his work. Since the previous clerks had been incompetent, the company's sick book and morning reports had already been rejected once for being improperly compiled. Prevor knows his company is at risk of not being paid if Landers cannot untangle the Pay Records in time for the deadline. Landers, who had lost his stripes (narrowly avoiding a term in the stockade, thanks to Winch) when one of the victims of his many off-duty fistfights turned out to be an

officer, is not tempted by Prevor's offer of a promotion to return to his old duties as Company Clerk. At first he turns down Prevor's request, telling him "frankly, I don't want any goddamned rating, Lieutenant...I've made up my mind that I don't ever want another rating in this shitty miserable Army...you had better understand that I don't believe in this Army any more, and I don't believe in this country any more, either, and I don't believe in this race that you and I happen to have been born members of" (Jones 346). Prevor's persistence gets Landers to acquiesce, but not without making clear that the only reason he'll accept the job is because he "just [doesn't] want to go through basic training, and...[doesn't] want to be cold." Landers's bitterness is quickly dissolved in the face of two quintessentially Jonesian factors: the pride he takes in his work and the pricking of an "overdeveloped sense of justice" upon learning that the books are in such poor shape in part because "somebody up at Second Army is trying especially hard to do [Prevor] in...because [he's] a Jew" (Jones 347). After two days and three nights of constant work, beginning from scratch and working off of service records because there is no previous payroll to build from, Landers completes a perfect payroll that results in not a single "Redline."¹⁰⁹ Afterward, he proudly reflects how

you could walk out anywhere on any parade-ground street and stop a soldier and tell him you had just completed a forty-page first payroll directly off the service records without getting a man redlined, and the soldier would nod without comprehension and give you a nervous, puzzled smile. The only words he would really hear would be the words *no redlines*. Very few people knew the amount of work that went into

¹⁰⁹ "Redline. A red line of ink through a soldier's name on the payroll, because of a mistake in his line on the roll, or in the remarks underneath his name, was just about the cardinal sin in the Army. It meant the soldier did not get his pay that month" (Jones 346).

even an ordinary everyday payroll. The Finance Office allowed not even the slightest deviation. No strikeouts, no erasures, even a bad smudge of a single letter...would cause the unfortunate soldier whose name it appeared in, or after, to be redlined. And Landers had been working with blocks of six to eight lines of remarks under each entry's name, taken directly from the service record. (Jones 348)

Even if most soldiers didn't know what Landers had accomplished "Prevor knew, and caused the entire 3516th to know," toasting Landers with champagne to celebrate his achievement (Jones 348). In the midst of the New Army rising up around them, it is a return to the very best elements of the Old Army, where a soldier could find one thing to excel in and earn rank, status, and prestige for that excellence. True to his word, Prevor quickly restores Landers's lost stripes, along with a rocker¹¹⁰ to demonstrate his importance to the company. Landers grows such an attachment to his new posting that he transfers the emotions he had once had for the "old company" to the 3516th. He even skips Prell's wedding to Della Mae Kinkaid to do work that might keep the new company under the command of Lt. Prevor, reasoning that "his new emotional commitments were no longer with Bobby Prell, they were with Prevor and the 3516th" (Jones 364).

Unfortunately for Landers, Winch's predictions that Second Army will find a way to screw Lt. Prevor prove true. Despite his competence in molding a disparate group of recruits and retreads into an effective unit, Prevor is replaced as company commander by the incompetent Captain Mayhew. Rather than being transferred elsewhere, Prevor is kept in place with a demotion from company commander to executive officer. "There

¹¹⁰ A promotion from buck Sergeant (three chevrons) to Staff Sergeant (three chevrons above a rocker insignia).

was no way the former commander could avoid losing face, in such a position. Simply being there, with nothing to do, was a loss of face” (Jones 366), which is precisely why the Second Army higher-ups do it. Such blatant disrespect “made [the company] angry. The whole deal offended them, and offended their sense of fair play...that was not the kind of reward a man should receive” for excelling at his job. If Prevor’s reign as company commander represents the finest aspects of the Old Army’s humanity, his de facto demotion-in-grade to executive officer represents its lowest aspects, its old-boy-network petty spitefulness at its worst. To the men, it is analogous to Captain Stein’s removal taking place all over again.¹¹¹ Needless to say, “the company began to disintegrate immediately” (Jones 366-7).

Landers reacts poorly to the inept Mayhew’s habit of inflicting petty humiliations on the enlisted men around him. Where Prevor had recognized his value to the Company, Mayhew antagonizes Landers for holding a rating beyond what the official T.O. suggests and denies the clerks small privileges that Prevor had allowed, like access to the office coffeepot. Under Prevor, Landers had found a niche that allowed him to excel, but the same position under Mayhew quickly becomes a burden to him. Though he had happily worked extra hours training the Supply and Mess Sergeants to serve the cause of saving Lt. Prevor, under Mayhew “Landers began to slack off in his evening work, and evening teaching” because he knew Mayhew could not order him to perform extra work “without risking an investigation” (Jones 368). The renewed, self-actualized Landers who had

¹¹¹ Based on the biographical information available, I do not believe Stein and Prevor are based on the same officer. Stein and *From Here to Eternity*’s Lt. Ross both appear to be based on Jones’s F Company commander Captain William Blatt, whom Jones did not see again following Blatt’s removal from command while Jones was in the field hospital on Guadalcanal. Prevor appears to be based on a different Jewish officer who was also treated poorly by higher-ups during Jones’s time clerking for the 842nd QMGS Company. Though Frank MacShane does not name this second officer, more information can be found in *Into Eternity* pgs 68-9.

flourished under Prevor disappears, replaced by the depressed Landers of the Luxor Hospital. Mayhew's insistence on never picking up the office phone (so that he could humiliate Landers by forcing him to screen Mayhew's calls) proves to be more than Landers can bear. He decides to escape his problems by 'going over the hill' and heading A.W.O.L. to Luxor for a bender. He tries to make plans with Strange, who sees through his feeble lies about having a pass, and his old bed partner Mary Lou, who is busy with a new beau. He ends up with another former regular at the Peabody Suite, Annie Waterfield. Though she declines to go on a two week bacchanal with Landers (having gotten a better offer from a Navy pilot), she offers to set him up with her father Charlie, a small-town sheriff in Barleyville, Tennessee. Landers is reluctant to go, but Annie promises that her father can provide him a safe haven from pursuers (being himself the only law in Barleyville), all the blank pass forms he can use, and the services of her pregnant 17-year-old sister Loucine. When he asks why she would go to such trouble to help him, Annie replies that she's motivated partly out of guilt for not going with him and partly because "I've had to run a couple of times in my life...and I know what it's like. Especially if you have no *place* really to run to," emphasis mine. Annie's phrasing is more appropriate than she knows, given that Landers has disowned his family and lost the "places" he had once had in the old company and in the 3516th with Lt. Prevor. Landers is too stubborn to admit this though, insisting "let's get something straight...I'm not running anyplace. I'm leaving an untenable position" (Jones 376). Annie doesn't press him on the difference, and helps him get away when Strange shows up to try to persuade Landers not to go through with his escape. The next day, Landers arrives in Barleyville.

Though Jones does not devote him nearly the amount of attention given to his counterpart, it would not be too far off-base to classify Charlie Waterfield as a foil to Jack Malloy, the yang to Malloy's yin. If Malloy was a 'spirituality instructor' to Prewitt, than Charlie Waterfield is very much a 'reality instructor' to Landers...or at least he tries to be. His daughter Annie describes him as having been "born knowing" (Jones 375) women, which she attributes to his innate understanding of female sexuality. Charlie Waterfield also functions as a kind of civilian version of a First Sergeant, having built up a fiefdom in his little West Tennessee County over which he exerts total, if not entirely official, control. He presents Landers with a stack of blank pass books and a Don Corleone-esque assurance that no harm can possibly come to him within the confines of Barleyville. Though Landers had initially entertained thoughts of deserting permanently, after three weeks spent drinking beer and servicing Loucine¹¹² and the other lonely women of Barleyville, he makes up his mind to return to the 3516th. Even though Charlie has assured him that he's "welcome to stay...as long as [he] like[s]," Landers knows that running away to Barleyville "didn't solve anything" and that "the problem was somewhere else." When he thinks of what Mayhew has done to his newly beloved 3516th "he went into a rage that was murderous" and swears, much like Witt, that he'll never return. But unlike Witt, the thought of never returning to the company "was always followed by a monstrously deep, black depression, which drove him out to wherever there was whiskey" (Jones 382). Landers may have seen his status under Captain Mayhew as "an untenable position," but his position in Barleyville is equally untenable. In a foreshadowing of what will happen upon his return, Landers is caught between his

¹¹² Though he had initially been shocked by Annie's suggestion that he would end up sexually involved with her younger sister within three days, he mentally credits her powers of prediction after he starts sleeping with Loucine after two days in Barleyville.

hate-fueled desire never to see the 3516th again¹¹³ and his despair at the thought of being permanently separated from the outfit he has come to love.

When Landers tells Charlie he has decided to leave Barleyville, Charlie offers Landers a bargain in the best tradition of a wily, favor-trading Old Army N.C.O. With all of his practical, real-world wisdom, Charlie tries to convince Landers that the war will only last another year and a half, that his “friends in Washington” have assured him of this fact and that “it would be pretty silly for you to get killed in this war, now” considering that Landers has already “done [his] share.” Knowing how taken Loucine has become with him, Charlie offers Landers “a proposition...you just stay here with us. Forget about going back to the Army.” Charlie promises that “in a month you can start putting on civilian clothes” and working as one of his deputies. He reiterates his earlier vow that within his territory, “nobody’s going to say a word to you. Nobody’ll pick you up. Not in my county” (Jones 386). Landers mentions the certain loss of his citizenship rights if he deserts permanently (being sure to add “not that I give a shit about voting”), but Charlie claims that even that “can all be taken care of. Maybe not right now. But certainly after the war...I told you, I got friends in Washington.” Landers finds it a “little breathtaking, that the law could be so grandly circumvented so totally, and with such confidence,” though speaking objectively Charlie’s behavior and influence is not so different from any Old Army first sergeant Landers would have known. When Landers questions why Charlie would go to such trouble to help him, his answer reveals a reasoning as arbitrary and personal as any first sergeant’s reasoning for dispensing a plum assignment. “Well, we like you...and Loucine has gotten to like you a lot. I even

¹¹³ At least as long as Mayhew commands it. And since Mayhew is a favorite of Second Army, it is unlikely that anything other than a combat wound will cut his stewardship of the 3516th short.

suspect that she's in love with you." With his insight into the feminine mind, Charlie explains that "young women her age fall in love...if you happen to be standing close to them, and are in focus at the right moment, they fall in love with you. You move away a few feet, they fall in love with another one, that happens to be closer. That's just the way it is" (Jones 387). Landers's good fortune to be "standing close" enough to Loucine at the right moment is reason enough for Charlie to offer his protection. Landers knows that "it was a munificent offer, in its way. Almost unbelievable" given that Charlie has said nothing about marrying Loucine or giving his name to her soon-to-be-born child. Still, after two days of thought he tells Charlie that he "just can't" accept his offer because "too many things aren't finished. I've got to run out the string, you know" (Jones 388). Charlie generously adds that the offer will remain on the table, at least until Loucine finds another young man to focus her affections on, but Landers's mind is made up. He returns to the 3516th, where Winch's intervention gets him placed in the Psych Ward instead of the Stockade. Landers's future in the Army will depend on the recommendation made by the evaluating board after several weeks of observation.

"There was an awful, frightening depth to the depression that hit Landers" when he returns to the base at Camp O'Bruyerre, though his new depression is not qualitatively different from the one he felt in Barleyville whenever he thought of never seeing the 3516th again. "Landers hated himself for coming back to it when he could have stayed away. But he could no more have stayed away than he could have changed himself into a genuine deserter" (Jones 390). The weeks he spends under psychological observation allow Winch to 'fix' his A.W.O.L. trip to Barleyville so that he will face no formal punishment or stockade time. However, Winch sends Strange to deliver the message that

before his Medical Board evaluation Landers must do “some serious thinking” about “whether he wanted to be discharged out of the Army...or not.” If he decides to be discharged, Winch will secure a clean ‘White’ discharge for him instead of a Section 8, ‘Yellow’ or ‘Blue’ discharge.¹¹⁴ Should Landers choose that option, Winch will fix it so he receives “a Section Two Medical...for neuropsychiatric reasons, service-connected; no loss of citizenship; no loss of voting; no taint.” If Landers decides he wants to stay in the Army, Winch will fix that as well, and “guarantee him with a seventy to seventy-five percent surety that he would be transferred to Winch’s outfit” (Jones 402).

Like Charlie Waterfield’s offer, Winch’s offer is unbelievably, almost-too-good-to-be-true generous. Unlike the vast majority of drafted enlistees, Landers is offered a chance to control his own destiny, to choose for himself the path he feels will make him the happiest. The only problem is, after days of thought, Landers still has absolutely no idea which option to choose. As he debates what to do, Landers links together the decision over whether to take a discharge or stay in the Army and the judgment that he makes on humanity as a whole. He keeps thinking of how he “hated...war and humanity. And people...like Mayhew, and the [smug] German prisoner” (Jones 403) in the Psych Ward who had become “representative of everything about the human race that had sickened him” (Jones 400). While trying to decide whether to stay in or get out of the Army, Landers “thought a lot about Mayhew, and the German, and what it was that made them like they were.” He worries that there are “a great many more like them in the world, than there were people like Strange...or Prevor.” The thought that there are more

¹¹⁴ Strange discounts these possibilities on pg 402. ‘White,’ ‘Yellow,’ and ‘Blue’ Discharges derive their nicknames from the color of the paper on which they were printed—White for Honorable, Yellow for Dishonorable, and Blue for Discharge Without Honor, a category which was technically neutral but sometimes provoked discrimination as ‘Blue’ Discharges were often used by commanders to get rid of soldiers they suspected of homosexuality. Section 8 Discharges were given for servicemen considered psychologically unfit for duty.

Mayhews than Prevors in the world, and that the Mayhews might be the more representative example of “the human race...sickened Landers and filled him with... despair.” He feels as if having to be a member of the same human race as the Mayhews is what “made him into this terrible, lonely thing...of an outsider” (Jones 403). The thought that staying in the Army will only lead to fighting—and possibly dying—because humanity is composed primarily of petty, cruel, self-centered Mayhews makes him lean towards getting out. Yet when Landers “thought about Winch, and Strange, and Prevor... he did not want the discharge. He wanted to be with them.” For Landers, the decision of whether to accept the discharge or stay in the Army becomes nearly synonymous with a moral judgment of the human race’s capacity for good. And so, after two straight days of thought, “Landers simply could not make up his mind if he wanted the discharge...or not” (Jones 404).

Landers has still not made up his mind when a representative from the 3516th’s officers, Lt. Drere, comes to get his decision. He tells Landers that the other officers in the 3516th all know what kind of report Captain Mayhew will write and what kind Lieutenant Prevor will write, and have decided as a group that the rest will phrase their reports in whichever way will be most helpful to Landers. To do that, however, they “need to know how [Landers] wants us to slant them.” Put on the spot, Landers’s initial response is to “disconsolately” mutter “I don’t know...I just don’t honestly know. Which way. I don’t know whether I want out or not.” He asks for more time to think, but Drere tells him he needs an answer immediately. Landers “still did not answer, for a long moment” then asks Drere to “slant the reports towards a discharge. I’d rather be out of this fucking mess. Than in it...as long as the Mayhews of the world are in it.” Drere

kindly tells him “I’m afraid the Mayhews of the world will always be with us...that’s the human race. Imperfect, to say the least,” and asks if Landers is sure of his decision.

Landers bitterly snaps that he’s not, and explains his reasoning by saying that he “think[s] that if [he] want[s] to change the decision, in front of the board” it’d be easier to talk them into letting him stay “than to change it to wanting to get out” (Jones 405).

Landers’s mind is still not made up when he goes in front of the board. Then he gets a look at the “group of five civilian-looking men wearing lots of hardware on their collars,” whom he sees as a “kindly, middle-class, bourgeois enemy,” and “suddenly knew that he wanted desperately out of the Army.” At the same time, “he was prepared at any moment to tell them he wanted to stay in the Army.” What finally seems to tip him over the edge is the questioning of the “kindly, middle-class, bourgeois” board, who he feels are “trying to get him to say” that he wants to stay in. “The moment” when he is prepared to say that he wants to stay in the Army “would not come” because “every question they asked him...seemed to drive him away from the point of wanting to say it...all the questions they asked him...about his abilities and intentions,” remind him of an earlier interview at Kilrainey, and nudge him gradually but inexorably towards a final decision.

The language Jones uses to illustrate that Landers has finally made up his mind is telling. After turning down a series of potential assignments from the board, the “round-faced, jowly” Colonel in charge asks bemusedly “Well, Sergeant, what kind of job in the Army would you like?” Landers “stolidly” replies “Sir, there’s no job in the Army I want” (Jones 407). Without any further questions, the board dismisses him to deliberate, and unanimously votes to approve a discharge. Five days later, “totally unprepared for it,

he was suddenly out in the street in front of the hospital, in uniform...a free man able to go anywhere he pleased to go” (Jones 408). He watches a long column of soldiers destined for the Normandy invasion march by, clearly heading for a field exercise, and ponders “all the places he was now free to go. Places these guys couldn’t go.” Despite this freedom, he admits that “he would probably wind up going home, to Indiana, in the end. To his lousy family. The thought of going home filled him with anguish.” He thinks of going to Luxor, but knows Strange will be on duty. He also can’t stand the thought of having to see Winch in order to find out exactly where Strange is. He thinks of going to the Peabody by himself, but knows that Strange had to give up their suite after finally running through his savings. When the column of troops finally passes he is “devoutly glad he wasn’t one of them,” but decides that “on the other hand, he had no desire really to go into the Peabody all by himself” (Jones 409). Seeing only one other option between being one of those soldiers ticketed for Normandy, heading to the Peabody alone, or heading back to Imperium, Indiana, he steps in front of a car driven by a woman who looks like an officer’s wife, and is killed almost instantly.

Later, when Winch breaks the news to Strange, Winch is unable to understand why Landers kills himself. “He was getting exactly what he wanted. That’s what he told that company officer of his he wanted. That’s not a suicide position,” Winch protests. Strange’s reply offers perhaps the most incisive analysis of Landers’s act: “I don’t think he got what he wanted” Strange says, “I think he wanted both equally. Exactly equal. That’s an unsolvable position” (Jones 443). The position Landers is put in, being made to decide whether or not to stay in the Army, is indeed unsolvable for a man like him. Whatever choice he makes cannot help but be wrong, and he knows this as soon as he is

forced to make a definitive decision. This is why he tries to put off the decision as long as he possibly could, and tells Lt. Drere to slant the reports towards a discharge because it would be the easiest to reverse. Even had he asked to stay in the Army, the end result would have been no different. Though he began as a draftee,¹¹⁵ over the course of his time in the Army Landers turned into a genuine Old Army man. Though he may not have initially entered of his own will, Landers eventually discovered the same rewards that came with being a soldier as any Depression-era Regular Army enlistee. Within the Army he found a niche through which he could pursue self-actualization, a place where he could have more pride and prestige than ever would have been available to him in civilian life, and a company of men who became more of a family to him than his own flesh-and-blood relations. As much as he hated the Army for sending him (and the old company) into combat and mistreating good men like Lt. Prevor, once he became an Old Army man in spirit he could never be happy anywhere; it had become as much his “place” as it was Winch or Prell’s.

If anything, his hatred of the Army is even less pertinent to his “unsolvable position” than the fact that with the destruction of the old company he had become a square Old Army peg in a New Army that contained only round holes. The wording of his final reply to the Medical Board captures this notion perfectly. By the third book of the trilogy, it should be apparent how important it is in Jones’s Army for a soldier to find a place, more specifically a job through which he would have the opportunity to self-actualize. So it can be no coincidence that Landers finally commits to securing a discharge from the unfamiliar New Army by telling the Medical Board that “there’s no

¹¹⁵ One of the first points that flashes through Prell’s head when Strange informs him of Landers’s death. See Jones pg 416.

job in the Army I want” (Jones 407), at least not anymore. Though Landers sees his decision as a kind of personal judgment on the moral makeup of humanity, on whether the Prevors of the world make up for the prevalence of the Mayhews, his view of the situation is clouded. It is not as simple as saying that Landers thrives under Prevor and languishes under Mayhew because Prevor is a good officer and Mayhew a bad one, because to a large extent it had been the job itself that had revitalized Landers and the changing of that job that had thrust him back into depression. Landers sees it as a clear-cut case of one officer being good and the other being bad, but what he doesn’t seem to recognize is that Prevor’s good qualities allow him to find meaning and purpose in his work again and Mayhew’s bad qualities turn that same work back into meaningless drudgery. He focuses on Prevor’s replacement as the root of his problem, and to be fair there is truth to that. But while Landers identifies this as an issue of justice, the tainting of his work and the loss of his niche are really the more pressing issues. If Prevor had been replaced by another competent and sympathetic officer it would still be unjust, but Landers would yet have had the opportunity to find meaning in his labor. Landers’s decline is initiated not merely because Prevor is replaced, but because Prevor is replaced by an incompetent officer who takes away the pride Landers had briefly regained in his work.

While Landers’s Prewittian “sense of justice” is truly offended by Second Army’s ill treatment of Prevor and favoritism towards Mayhew, it is not that which places him in what Winch calls a “suicide position,” Strange calls an “unsolvable position,” and Landers himself calls an “untenable position.” Landers finds himself in that position because the Mayhew incident confirms that his fears from the hospital were true, that

with the old company's spirit destroyed by combat and its few survivors scattered throughout the Army, he was a permanent "orphan" (Jones 4), a soldier without a place. Though he had thought he found a new home in the 3516th under Prevor, Mayhew's arrival proves that that had been wishful thinking. The old company had always been his real home, and the 3516th under Prevor was only a reasonable facsimile that he could devote himself to. When even that facsimile is taken away from him, there is "no job" left in the Army that Landers could possibly make his own, and therefore no hope of ever finding a home inside the Army. At the same time, having turned into a genuine Old Army man, there is also "no job" outside the Army that he could ever find fulfilling; his service has turned him into as much a "Thirty Year Man" as Prewitt. The fact that he happens to hate the Army with a passion (at that moment, at least) is nearly irrelevant, as is his no longer having a civilian family to return to. Landers wants to stay in the Army and leave it "exactly equal" because once he is effectively evicted from his niche there is no significant way for him to distinguish between the two choices. In Jones's Army, to be placeless is to be directionless, and if the former quality becomes permanent, so must the latter. Much like the Gordian Knot, the only possible solution to Landers's "unsolvable" problem is to destroy its cause. As long as he lived, he would have been doomed to a lonely existence as a man who could have only found happiness in a place that no longer existed, whether he had stayed in the Army or not.

Whistle opens with its chorus narrators describing Landers, Prell, Winch and Strange as "the four most important men the company had had" (Jones 3), and Jones's decision to focus on those four characters represents a clear departure from his previous style. *From Here to Eternity* had two protagonists, Prewitt and Warden. In *The Thin Red*

Line, C-for-Charlie Company as a collective organism serves as the protagonist. *Whistle* blends the two approaches, focusing on four individual protagonists who represent the collective experiences of their company, and “retread” returnees as a whole. Landers, Prell, Winch, and Strange are all individuals, and are all given individual attention by Jones, but they are also meant to serve as stand-ins for the vast bulk of returning combat soldiers who will not have their individual stories told. The opening chorus narrators do not only introduce the four protagonists Jones chooses to focus on, but introduce the concept that those four protagonists will individually personify the typical experiences of the great collective of returning soldiers; in effect, they will be the voice of the many “mute Miltons” who experience the same struggles upon returning from combat and enduring the “De-Evolution of a Soldier” Jones writes of in *WWII*. This technique is simultaneously *Whistle*’s greatest strength and its greatest weakness. It is a weakness during the repetitive middle sections of the book, which feature perhaps too much overlap in its depictions of Landers, Strange, and Winch undergoing similarly disappointing homecomings, making similarly futile attempts to drink or fight or fornicate their survivor’s guilt away, failing to dispel their similarly powerful nightmares, and so on. At the end of the novel, however, this technique becomes one of its greatest strengths, as Jones skillfully depicts how Landers, Prell, Winch, and Strange all fall victim to the same demons they brought home with them from combat and leaves the reader to conjecture how many other nameless veterans suffered similar fates in reality. Though they may not realize it, Prell, Winch, and Strange have all been put into positions just as “untenable” as Landers’s had been. Watching them succumb, one by one, to the same forces that drove

Landers to suicide, any reader could safely look to *Whistle* as a textbook introduction not only to Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, but to the conventions of literary Naturalism.

When Prell first learns of Landers's suicide from Strange, his reaction seems uncharacteristically callous. Prell thinks to himself "So what? Why call him? If old Landers wanted to knock himself off, he had the same right everybody else had" (Jones 416) and feigns interest only out of his respect for Strange. Yet his seemingly careless reaction in actuality speaks much more to Prell's own state of mind about himself than it does about his feelings on Landers. Prell, like his first incarnation Prewitt, wants nothing more than to be a "Thirty Year Man," to live an infantryman's life until advanced age forced him into retirement kicking and screaming. Just like Prewitt, the very qualities that make Prell an outstanding infantryman in combat ensure he will never have the chance to live that dream. The Prewitt/Witt/Prell character archetype is perhaps the most identifiably naturalistic figure in Jones's canon, determined by his fearless, headstrong nature to stir up trouble in garrison and excel in combat until he is brought down by either an overzealous officer or the long odds of surviving combat unscathed. Prewitt was felled by the former; Prell happened to be felled by the latter. The patrol that wins him the Medal of Honor is for Prell a kind of devil's bargain. The award opens up possibilities that he would never have otherwise, even though he adamantly feels that he "didn't really deserve the Medal" (Jones 420). But it comes at the cost of having full use of his legs, a price that will ultimately prove too steep for a born infantryman like Prell.

When Strange calls to inform him of Landers's suicide Prell is in a hotel room in Kansas City. His legs have healed just enough for him to be sent on a war bond tour, but are "like two toothaches...the pain was always there" (Jones 415). He has been paired

with speechwriters and “Hollywood types” (Jones 414) in uniform like his P.R. man Major Kurntz, and spends his days being trotted out in a wheelchair to make patriotic speeches and his nights desultorily romancing the society ladies who Kurntz fixes him up with. For almost any other soldier it would be the perfect life, looked upon as a well-earned reward for time spent in combat. But Prell, like Prewitt and Witt, is not any soldier. Rather than enjoy the pleasures of such a soft skate duty, Prell spends his days wracked with “guilt” wondering “what was a man like him doing here? Making speeches for a living. He had become an entertainer. Him, and his Medal of Honor. They were a vaudeville team. It was something he had to wrastle with and defeat every day. And every new day it was back again, stronger and more powerful, to be wrassled with and defeated again.” In theory, for most soldiers wounded in combat a tour of duty spent peddling war bonds and romancing lonely women might be the closest thing he could conceive to a heaven on earth. For Prell, who wants nothing more than to be an infantryman until the day he dies, it is his own private hell.¹¹⁶ To his way of thinking, nothing could be more humiliating than for a natural-born combat soldier to become an “entertainer,” wheeled out every day in a chair he wished he didn’t need to read speeches written by Hollywood P.R. flacks like some kind of organ-grinder’s monkey. The only reason he continues to do it is “because he wanted to stay in the Army.” He knows that if

¹¹⁶ This is not as far-fetched as it might seem. In real life there are at least two notable examples of decorated veterans who preferred to return to combat rather than continue on a war bond tour. John Basilone, awarded the Medal of Honor for his actions on Guadalcanal, got his wish and was reassigned from a bond tour to the 27th Marine Regiment in the newly-formed 5th Marine Division. Basilone was killed in action shortly after landing on Iwo Jima, earning a posthumous Navy Cross (second in precedence to the Medal of Honor) in the process. Ira Hayes, who had been one of the three survivors of the group who raised the American flag on Iwo Jima, also requested reassignment from the 7th War Bond Tour back to a combat unit. His request was honored, in part because his heavy drinking frequently made him a public relations embarrassment, and he was returned to his original unit (the 28th Marine Regiment of the 5th Marine Division). Hayes did not see any further combat with the 28th, but did participate in the post-war occupation of Japan. For further information see James Brady’s *Hero of the Pacific: The Life of Marine Legend John Basilone* or James Bradley’s *Flags of Our Fathers*.

he wasn't selling war bonds "he would be a civilian out on the street somewhere" (Jones 418).

For a man like Prell, to go from being an elite combat soldier to a mere entertainer is a demotion so demeaning as to be nearly unbearable. It might be said that Prell has the exact opposite problem that Landers had, but his position is as "untenable" in its way as Landers's had been. All Prell ever wanted was to be a soldier, but his wounds ensure that he will never see combat again. The Medal he earned while receiving those wounds allows him the means to stay in the Army, but in a job that ensures he will never feel like a real soldier again. Landers dies because, in the wake of his combat experiences, he could not find a single job in the Army that would leave him fulfilled. Prell dies because in the wake of his combat experiences, the only job that he ever wanted is closed to him forever. Like the other three protagonists he finds temporary solace in a revised loyalty, but it doesn't last long. Landers, Strange, and Winch find temporary comfort by pouring their loyalty into new outfits, while Prell redirects the loyalty he had once felt for the old company towards one man: Colonel Stevens. He forms a "son-and-father" (Morris 466) relationship with Stevens,¹¹⁷ who he sees as a "fine example of the old-time, old-line, gentlemanly school of Army officer who had once existed...back when he first enlisted" (Jones 420). In other words, Stevens is the living embodiment of what an Old Army officer should be, at least in Prell's mind.¹¹⁸ Stevens is well aware of Prell's "dislike" for bond tours, but has made it plain that if Prell "want[s] to stay in the Army, I don't see any other way...to keep you in. In the shape you're in" (Jones 418). Because of Prell's

¹¹⁷ When Prell begins thinking of Colonel Stevens "as a father," Jones notes that "it was as close to a father, anyway, as a West Virginia orphan boy had ever had" (421). Though the details are slightly different Prell's background maintains a spiritual accord with Prewitt's, who lost his father at a young age.

¹¹⁸ It is worth noting that Prell cannot think of his admiration for such officers without adding that "he hadn't found too many of them" (Jones 420).

Medal, Stevens feels that he “deserve[s] everything the Army can do to help,” and has concocted a plan to secure Prell a “coveted ROTC post” (420) teaching officer candidates after the war. Both Prell and Stevens know that “after the war, there were going to be an awful lot of men hanging around looking for work as soldiers. And there weren’t going to be that many jobs for all of them” (Jones 419). If not for his Medal, Prell’s wounds would certainly guarantee that he would number among them. Knowing that after the war all wartime ranks will be reduced two grades, Stevens has outlined a plan to have Prell make 1st Lieutenant before the end of the war so that afterwards he can take a Master Sergeant’s slot at a ROTC job. Even though babysitting officer candidates is no more fitting a job for an infantryman than selling war bonds, Prell is “dazzled by the old gentlemen’s honesty and sense of honor,” along with the “prospect of such swift promotion” (Jones 421). More important, it would also be the only way for Prell to stay in uniform once the war ends, so he agrees enthusiastically to Stevens’s plan.

Like the others, Prell finds, to his “sorrow,” that the object of his newfound loyalty will not be the savior that he had hoped. After Stevens is promoted to Brigadier General, Prell has a conversation with him in which he discovers that Stevens “did not truly understand his feelings of guilt and inadequacy, and that in fact Stevens never had understood him.” He leaves “more desolate than ever, realizing that perhaps Strange and Winch were the only two people who genuinely did sympathize with what was happening to him.” With a Prewittian sense of stubbornness, however, Prell does not attempt to contact them, but sinks further and further into self-pity and “rage” (Morris 467) at the “unsolvable” position he has been left in. Like most of Jones’s soldiers, Prell’s dilemma is exacerbated by his simultaneous reluctance to discuss his feelings aloud and conviction

that he won't be understood even if he did seek counsel. Even though he is almost certainly accurate in his suspicion that Strange and Winch would be the best resources to turn to, he is too proud and stubborn to discuss his problems with them. Instead of seeking help, he proves that his seemingly indifferent response to Landers's suicide was not so much callous as it was prescient. He begins going to "tough bars" and picking fights with the "mean drunken soldiers" he finds within. At the first bar he goes to, "the irate soldiers whom he had insulted and challenged [are] about to beat him, perhaps even kill him," when one suddenly recognizes Prell from publicity photos of his bond tour. The soldier immediately stops the fight, and the group is horrified by the thought that they had nearly beaten a Medal of Honor winner. Prell tries again at the next stop at the bond tour, and this time no one recognizes him. "The result was a bloody brawl, with Prell at the center...in the smoky haze one of the soldiers picked up a pool cue." Prell is hit over the head and killed. At that point his driver rushes in and tells the men who he was. "The soldiers were horrified, but left the impression that Prell had brought it all on himself, as in fact he had done, deliberately picking the fight with them" (Morris 467-8).

Like Prell, Winch has found himself in a position that most soldiers would envy, but which only serves to remind him that he can never return to the position he wants to be in. The heart condition that was brought on by a combination of malaria and decades of heavy drinking ensures that Winch will never be sent back into the field. Though the connections he has built up over the years secure him a powerful position as an administrative Warrant Officer, Winch would trade his increased power and influence in a heartbeat (no pun intended) to become a company first sergeant again, much like Prell would trade his Medal of Honor for an infantryman's unwounded legs. While discussing

Prell's assignment to the war bond tour, Strange mentions that Prell "wasn't too happy" about his seemingly good fortune because "he wanted to go back to regular duty." Winch "sourly" replies "we all want to go back to regular duty," and Strange notes that "it wasn't the same with Prell...Prell really meant it, and believed it" (Jones 360). Winch has no such illusions, unlike the others he is "too sophisticated to think he could change what was happening to them." Yet even as he mentally grouses that "he had never wanted to be a father substitute for kids" from his former company, the fact that they are all "floundering" and he can do nothing to stop it eats away at him. An earlier visit with an undistinguished member of the company is enough to "[bring] back the reality of the bogging, gasping, mud-swallowing platoons...somewhere there was a mistake, because Winch should have been right up there with them, right now." Even as he recognizes that he could not "change what was happening to them," like Witt he feels that he "could have cushioned it and molded it so that some semblance of the old personality remains." Though that visit leaves Winch with an itch "to be simply a watcher. With no loyalties and no commitments," Jones makes it clear that this is no more than wishful thinking. In *Whistle* he characterizes Strange and Winch as foils.¹¹⁹ Strange is outwardly sympathetic but inwardly too removed to care about the bulk of his charges, while Winch covers his deep concern for his men with an outward show of indifference. Though he might wish he was rid of them, Winch's "loyalties" and "commitments" run deep. When he asks himself "where did your responsibility end?" he has to admit his answer is "Nowhere, apparently. Never. It never ended" (Jones 198-9).

¹¹⁹ This is a familiar characterization for Jones. As Giles points out "in all three novels, the mess sergeant function[s] as a contrast to Warden-Welsh-Winch" (183).

This explains why Winch, despite his grumbling, endlessly covers for Landers and Strange and incites Prell to channel his anger towards him if it will help Prell walk again. Notwithstanding his outward show of indifference, Winch's feelings of responsibility for the former members of his company, both living and dead, lead him to place the most mental pressure upon himself of the four protagonists. Though all are troubled by nightmares, Winch's trouble him the most and inevitably focus on the soldiers he failed to bring home. Landers's recurring nightmare focuses on the suffering of his platoon when they had been forced to go without water as a reflection of his waking mind's focus on human suffering and morality. Winch's recurring nightmare is one only a leader could suffer, in which he "shout[s] and wav[es] frantically...Get them out of there! Get them out of there! Can't you see what they're doing? They're bracketing in on them! Get them out of there!" (Jones 305) All four suffer from survivor's guilt, but Winch's is so bad that a night of sex and relaxation with Carol Firebaugh is enough to trigger a waking vision of Pfc. Freddie Jacklin, "one of the men, one of the dead, from the platoons. The forever beleaguered platoons of Winch's mind" (Jones 313) on his drive home from Carol's. His nightmares center on the burdens of command, of having to watch his unseen platoons get ground up by artillery without being able to do a thing to help them. By the latter half of the book Winch's "life consisted of Carol...and the nightmares. And the nightmares were gaining ground" (Jones 352). Without a full company anymore he narrows his loyalties to only Prell, Landers, and Strange, who he considers to be "what was left to him of his real life." Jones forges another connection between Witt and Winch through Winch's superstitious conviction "that if he could bring Strange and Prell and Landers through, without them dying or going crazy, and make

them come out the other side intact, he himself might come through,” with Jones careful to follow this thought by noting that Winch’s “nightmares had been getting worse and worse” (Jones 299-300).

Winch’s conviction turns out to be sadly prophetic. Jones planned Chapter 33, which was to have been the book’s penultimate chapter, to focus on Winch’s crackup in the face of his accumulated mental pressures. Willie Morris puts it bluntly: “after learning of the death of Prell...we see the progressive deterioration of Winch. He goes crazy.” Between his nightmares, “his pent-up grief over the death of Landers,” Prell’s death, and “the increasing symptoms of congestive heart failure,” the “mental stress” becomes too much for Winch to take. Having become fixated on the PX’s Wurlitzer Jukeboxes, “chrome, and pipe, and plastic, and whirling iridescent lights, and jarred, canned, music” (Morris 469) as symbolic harbingers of the plasticized future to come, Winch steals a few grenades from the practice range and attempts to blow the Wurlitzers up in a deranged “raid” that marks his final slide into insanity. He “laugh[s] manically” at the damage he has wrought while hiding in some nearby bushes until the M.P.’s show up. He attempts to run away, “still laughing wildly,” but because of his heart condition quickly becomes winded and taken into custody. His prediction that should he help the other three “come out the other side intact, he himself might come through” comes perversely true. After Prell and Landers’s fail to “come out the other side intact,” neither does he; Winch goes crazy and “[winds] up in the hospital prison ward” (Morris 4701-1)¹²⁰ just before D-Day.

¹²⁰ When Landers is sent to the N.P. Ward after returning from Barleyville, he “hear[s] a man screaming faintly from one of the wards on the floor below, and yelling over and over something like ‘Get them out of there, goddam it, get them out of there...one night he did not hear it anymore, and the scuttlebutt came around that the old-timer 1st/sgt who had been doing the screaming had been discharged out of the Army and moved to a Veterans’ Administration hospital somewhere. The rumor said he had been a sergeant in a company on Guadalcanal in Landers’ old division” (Jones 399-400). This incident is either a brilliant foreshadowing of Winch’s fate or an inconsistency that slipped past Jones uncorrected before his death. The man that Landers hears screaming “Get them out of there” in the N.P. Ward cannot be Winch, because

Strange is the last of the four protagonists to go, and like Landers dies a death symbolically more representative than the simple snuffing out of one Mess Sergeant. When his hand had healed enough for him to be assigned to limited duty, Strange uses Winch to get appointed Mess Sergeant of a Signal Corps outfit destined to be shipped to England for the eventual Normandy invasion. During this time, Strange rarely returns to the Peabody for two reasons: he's run through his \$7000 savings, and "only two [other] old-company men...still frequented the suite" so that "when there was a party there, all of the other people who were there were strangers or outsiders" (Jones 438). The Signal Corps outfit sees a lot of turnover in its N.C.O. corps as sergeants frequently transfer in and out to other units. "If there had ever been any esprit and unit loyalty, it had diminished visibly since Strange had come in." Strange goes to Winch to explain his restlessness, and when Winch sarcastically asks "just where your...fucking majesty would like to go," Strange unhesitatingly asks to be returned to the infantry (Jones 453). Winch grants his wish, and the book's final chapter picks up a month after the D-Day invasion with Strange "now happily set in with the infantry Division to which he had persuaded Winch to transfer him" and preparing for the unit to deploy to France. Like Prell and Landers before him, "with the destruction of the old company" he transfers "all his loyalties, affections, and emotions to his new company and Division," and discovers that replacing his old company will not be as simple as he thinks. Strange's growing

Winch does not lose his sanity until after Landers's death and is directly responsible for getting Landers sent to the N.P. Ward for observation. Despite those facts, I cannot help but wonder if Jones wrote that passage intending to reveal that it is indeed Winch that Landers overhears. It stretches credulity to suggest that another 1st/sgt from Landers's old division suffers from the same recurring nightmares as Winch and also suffers a mental breakdown at the same Army post that Winch does, Camp O'Bruyerre. Whether Jones included this passage as foreshadowing or wrote it intending the 1st/sgt to be Winch himself is impossible to know. If it is in fact the latter, it would indicate that Jones had some intention of placing Winch's mental breakdown earlier within the text. If that were the case, Jones's death precluded him from making the necessary revisions to accurately place Winch's death within the novel's timeline.

affection for his new unit develops into a problem when he thinks ahead to what they will face in combat. Though he does not miss the Signal Corps outfit that he had transferred out of at all, “he now found he was so attached to the new men in the infantry unit that it was almost impossible for him, with his foreknowledge of what they were about to go through...to relive the whole experience” (Morris 471). As his unit crosses the Atlantic on their troopship, headed straight for the heaviest fighting, Strange flashes back and “pondered the fate of the old company.” He thinks of his visit to Winch in the Camp O’Bruyerre hospital, who can only shout the refrain from his nightmares “Get them out! Get them out of there! Can’t you see the mortars got them bracketed!”¹²¹ and of his wife Linda Sue, and of his “terrible grief” over the deaths of Prell and Landers. And “he faces finally the fact that he simply cannot go through the whole process again...and sit back from his relatively safe position as a mess sergeant and watch the young men be killed and maimed and lost.” He realizes that he has set a “trap” for himself “by insisting...that he should go in an outfit, an infantry Division, that he likes rather than the Signal Corps unit he had a great deal of power in and didn’t really care that much about.” With that in mind, “somewhat on the spur of the moment,” Strange vaults over the troopship’s railing “and just slips over the side, quietly without anyone around.” When he hits the water he is shocked by his own actions, but makes no attempt to draw attention from the ship. As he treads water in the cold Atlantic he feels his hands beginning to swell, and:

in a sort of semihallucination, all of him seems to begin to swell and get bigger and bigger...until he’s bigger than the ocean, bigger than the planet, bigger than the solar system, bigger than the galaxy out in the universe. As he swells and grows this picture of a fully clothed soldier...

¹²¹ See previous footnote on the significance of this phrase.

seems to be taking into himself all of the pain and anguish and sorrow and misery that is the lot of all soldiers, taking it into himself and into the universe as well. And then still in the hallucination he begins to shrink back to normal, and shrinks down through the stages...back to Strange in the water. And then continues shrinking until he seems to be only the size of...an atom.

He did not know whether he would drown first or freeze” (Morris 473-4).

Strange’s death, like Landers’s, is symbolically representative of the universal problems that affect returning soldiers, the “retreads” who find little prospect of a happy ending after surviving combat. *Whistle* ends with the unsettling notion that try as they might, “the four most important men the company had” (Jones 3) will never successfully get over the disintegration of the old company. After his conversation with Prell about Landers’s suicide, Strange unwittingly hits on the core of the problem while musing over the consequences of that disintegration. “Prell’s indifference [to Landers’s suicide]... shock[s]” Strange because “it had never occurred to [him] that someone, especially among themselves, wouldn’t care about Landers.” The fact that such indifference comes not from one of “the company remnants” but from Prell, one of the “old hard-core nucleus...meant that now even the nucleus was breaking up, its parts going off in different directions, pushed by new interests, new loyalties.” To a civilian this kind of gradual breakup might seem like a natural result of the passage of time, but Strange cannot accept the breakup of the “old hard-core nucleus” because it forces him to question the very nature of loyalty itself. It strikes Strange that for Prell, Landers, Winch, and himself to drift apart must mean that their loyalty “wasn’t really loyalty, apparently.

It was a commodity to be sold, traded off, exchanged, according to the whims of the Army in a war, an Army too big to worry about loyalties except in very large bundles.” He remembers Winch telling him as soon as their hospital ship had pulled into San Diego “Johnny Stranger, all that shit of the old outfit is over,” and realizes Winch had been right, “as he usually was.” He wonders how anyone “could have loyalty” to an organization like his Signal Corps outfit, which was “just a bunch of people, brought together from scattered parts” and can only conclude that “you could have loyalty to your work, but that was all.” Once again a statement turns out to be prophetic, given that after the death of the cold company not one of the “nucleus” manages to find “work” that will fulfill him in the long term (though Landers does come close in the short term). Though all attempt to move on from the old company, the details of their failure are quintessentially Jonesian: after their experiences in the old company, the new jobs they find no longer fulfill them, which renders any chance they might have had to achieve self-actualization impossible. Almost universally, Jones’s soldiers enter the Army because they are men without a place. The Army gives them one, either through an occupational niche or through a broader membership in a unit which they can call their own. They can achieve some degree of happiness through one or the other, but cannot function if they lose both. When Strange examines his expansive loyalty to “the old-company men who had met at his suite at the Peabody,” he knows it was destined to become “a thinning and diminishing loyalty...as more and more of them went back to duty and were scattered.” But he also knows that his loyalty to the old company remnants was not as important as “his prime loyalty of all, to the nucleus of four he had been a part of and come home with. Strange had never believed that they could break apart. But the

hospital appeared to have been the breaking and thinning point of all a man's loyalties" (Jones 431-3).

Whistle brings Jones's characters full circle to where they began in *From Here to Eternity*: all struggling to deal with the same problems and feelings yet all afraid to seek help or discuss them aloud for fear of being misunderstood or made fun of. Karl Marlantes writes that this is such a "great fear" for combat veterans precisely because "being misunderstood means being thought bad because of having certain feelings about [one's] experiences, few of which were under our control at the time." Marlantes views "this code of silence" as a descendent of "the stiff-upper-lip aspect" wherein "one... doesn't brag" and "never complains." This discourages veterans from communicating about their feelings because in Marlantes's "experience... war is 95 percent things to complain about, 4 percent things to be ashamed of, and about 1 percent things to brag about. So if the code is don't complain, you're left with very little to talk about" (215). In *WWII*, Jones sums up the difficulties many veterans found communicating as follows: "instead of talking about it, most men didn't talk about it. It was not that they didn't want to talk about it, it was that when they did, nobody understood it. It was such a different way of living, and of looking at life even, that there was no common ground for communication in it" (Jones 255). The only people who possibly *could* relate to them were other veterans, and for the "nucleus" of Winch, Landers, Prell, and Strange, each member that drifts away or dies or goes crazy is one less person around who would be capable of understanding the dwindling survivors. In his view of the "De-Evolution of a Soldier," Jones feels that

About the last thing to go was the old sense of *esprit*. That was the hardest thing to let go of, because there was nothing in civilian life that could replace it. The love and understanding of men for men in dangerous times, and places, and situations. Just as there was nothing in civilian life that could replace the heavy, turgid, day-to-day excitement of danger. Families and other civilian types would never understand that sense of *esprit* any more than they would understand the excitement of the danger. Some old-timers, a lot of them, tried to hold onto the *esprit* by joining division associations and regimental associations. But the feeling wasn't the same, and never would be the same, because the motivation—the danger—was gone. (Jones 256)

All four protagonists can directly attribute their death (or insanity, in Winch's case) to an inability to find a new "place to call [their] own" with the old company gone. While this can largely be tied to their failures to find new jobs that will fulfill them in the same way their jobs with the old company had, their collective failure to find new 'niches' is a symptom of this greater problem, what Jones calls "*esprit*" in *WWII* and what Strange calls a thinning of loyalties. Among the myriad of codes and unofficial rules that govern behavior and success in Jones's Army, none supersedes the most important code of all: staying true to that "prime loyalty," the loyalty to one's buddies. Strange "had never believed" that the nucleus—himself, Winch, Prell, and Landers—"could break apart," because the implications of such a breakup would be catastrophic. Even without the old company and without positions as Mess Sergeants and 1st Sergeants and Clerks and Infantrymen, the four of them would have a "place," what Vonnegut

would call a *karass*, so long as they could maintain that loyalty to each other. Without each other, none of them stood a chance.

CONCLUSION

Throughout Jones's war trilogy the attributes that make a successful soldier (which in Jones's mind means a self-actualized soldier) remain constant; the only thing that changes from book to book is the likelihood of a soldier achieving that success. *From Here to Eternity* establishes the baseline codes of the Old Army, an Army of professionals who enlisted "because [they] could live better on the Inside than [they] could on the Outside" (Jones 9). *The Thin Red Line* chronicles the process by which an Army composed of men brought up with those codes adapts to combat, where a frontline soldier's life is boiled down to a daily battle for survival and self-actualization is an almost frivolous luxury that can't be bothered with. The tragic irony that Jones explores in *Whistle* is that for true Old Army soldiers, the bonds they forge in combat will be so strong as to prevent them from ever finding a home anywhere else. Their loyalty to their combat unit will run so deep, their only real choice will be to either die with their old company in combat or die as an "orphan" outside it. This decision is truly a Catch-22, for to stay in combat is to risk almost certain injury or death, but to leave one's combat unit is to leave the finest home that a soldier will ever know. If *The Thin Red Line* makes clear that "the only sane thing to do" in a combat zone is whatever becomes necessary to leave it, *Whistle* makes it just as clear that to leave one's "old company" is to risk insanity or worse. It is truly, as Strange puts it, "an unsolvable problem."

The basic qualities that Winch, Prell, Landers, and Strange need to meet in order to achieve happiness are no different from those needed by Warden, Prewitt, Stark, and Maggio. They still feel the same callings, and still crave a niche in which they can "become what [they are] supposed to be"; in that sense, nothing has changed since *From*

Here to Eternity. But while the needs of the soldiers in *Whistle* have not changed, the environment they return to has. It has changed enough to become evident that an Old Army professional can never truly fit into the New Army of draftees and ‘civilians in uniform’ that became necessary to fight the Second World War. Ultimately Jones’s war trilogy is not just a tale of the prices enacted upon those who fight in combat, but a chronicle of the destruction of the Old Army as Jones knew it. *From Here to Eternity* grew out of Jones’s desire to “to do a novel on the peacetime army...something I don’t remember having seen” (MacShane 82) and that desire never truly changed in either of its sequels. By any rational measure the New Army that emerged in World War II was a fairer, more efficient, better organized, and better led Army to be part of than the Army Jones enlisted in. Yet the trilogy as a whole still serves as Jones’s tribute to the Old Army that he knew: flawed, inefficient, arbitrary, petty, brutal, but also proud, dignified, professional, noble, and above all else, human. It was an Army of contradictions, an Army that could punish men like Prewitt and Bell in garrison but lionize them in combat, and elevate both the Mayhews *and* the Prevors of the world to command. It was an Army where the unspoken rules held more sway than anything written down in the AR’s, an Army driven by codes that represented both the worst and the best aspects of human nature. As an institution, it was an Army that could not possibly survive the mechanical nature of war in the 20th century. Considering the significance of its flaws, it is probably fair to say that it did not deserve to. But despite its shortcomings, it was also an institution that took in men like Prewitt, Warden, Stark and Maggio in the midst of the Great Depression and gave them a life they could never have found elsewhere. In the end, Jones’s war trilogy, which he intended to “say just about everything I have ever had to

say, or will ever have to say, on the human condition of war” (xix) could be classified in many ways. Taken as a whole, perhaps the most fitting title to apply to it would be “elegy,” both for the pre-war Army as an institution and the by-gone professional soldiers, like Prell, Winch, Landers, Strange and a young Private named James Ramon Jones, who had served in it.

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