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**World War II in selected Novels and Short Fiction
by American Writers**

***Druhá světová válka z pohledu amerických autorů
ve vybraných povídkách a krátkých příbězích***

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this diploma is to offer an interpretation of a particularly American perspective on World War II (a two-front war which included not only the European front but the Pacific theater as well). Among the topics under study is regimentation, indoctrination, the military hierarchy, racism in the army (concerning both Afro-Americans and Jews) and politics. I would also like to focus on the problems of American individuals confronted in the most destructive war in history.

ANOTACE

Cílem této diplomové práce je interpretace vybraných povídek a krátkých příběhů amerických autorů zachycujících druhou světovou válku, která nepostihla pouze evropský kontinent, ale která se odehrávala rovněž i v Pacifiku. Práce se zaměřuje na témata jako je reglementace, mocenské postavení v hierarchii armády i v rámci společnosti a rasismus v armádě (týkající se nejen Židů, ale i Afro-Američanů). Cílem je vystihnout problémy, se kterými se lidské bytosti potýkali během nejničivějšího válečného konfliktu v dějinách, a to nejen na bitevním poli, ale i z hlediska intelektuálního rozvoje osobnosti.

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1. INTRODUCTION

“Never think of that war, no matter how necessary, nor how justified, is not a crime. Ask the infantry and ask the dead.” (Trogon 2002: 262)

- Ernest Hemingway

This quote may be designated a linking statement for all the books to be covered, for the reason that the infantry, the dead and assuredly the survivors in these pieces of work could stand for that specific attitude.

The aim of this diploma is to offer an interpretation of a particularly American perspective on World War II (a two-front war which included not only the European front but the Pacific theater as well) via fiction novels. Among the topics under study is regimentation, indoctrination, the military hierarchy, racism in the army (concerning both Afro-Americans and Jews) and politics. I would also like to focus on the problems American individuals confronted in the most destructive war in history.

Among the authors to be covered belong Norman Mailer, Kurt Vonnegut, Saul Bellow, Philip Roth and Joseph Heller. Except for Saul Bellow and Philip Roth, who did not face the combat and witnessed the war in a different way, the rest of the authors of the selected novels experienced the war and each of them had a particular manner of dealing with these dreadful and misfortunate experiences and this is reflected in their writings.

Some of them are labeled with a touch of irony, sarcasm, others illustrate events explicitly and veraciously without any effort to intenerate or assuage them anyway.

War can be treated variously and each of these conceptions is an original one and each of them brings something new to the reader -

either it reflects the war as an eventful sequence of combat events, or it does not have anything in common with a physical destruction within fights and it refers rather to a human mind and the intellectual substance. Even though somebody did not have to get involved straight into the fights and did not have to subsist in the first line of combats, everyone really felt the consequences and impact of the war in each of everyday life situations. The purpose of this work is to delineate the ideas depicted in five chosen novels from a huge throng of masterpieces which have been written on any kind of topic related to World War II.

2. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The period of the American history which attracts our attention starts with WWII, particularly with the year 1940 when the German invasion of France happened and when up to this time individualistic United States of America started rearming themselves and reevaluating the circumstances yet again. The U.S. Army implemented operations within numerous parts of the world, both Europe and the Pacific; the Pacific theatre played definitely thoroughly significant role within these military actions. The entrance of the United States of America into the war began the day after the attack on the navy base of Pearl Harbor in the United States' Territory of Hawaii by the Empire of Japan on December 7, 1941. This took place before the handing-over of the Japanese declaration of the war in Washington. As a result of that, the hatred within the Americans towards the Japanese was ignited.

That time, Franklin Delano Roosevelt (1882-1945) served as President through most of the war. In 1934 he recognized Soviet Union and soon started rebuilding the U.S. fleet, in part owing to Japanese military activities in Far East. In 1936 he defeated Kansas Republican governor Alfred M. Landon, winning every state except Maine and Vermont. By 1937, economic recovery continued successfully, but a smaller economic crisis followed and, along with the labor unrest, it led to Republican congressional victories in 1938. In the same year, concerned about Hitler's intentions in Europe, Roosevelt appealed to the Nazi leader to accept the negotiated settlement in a disagreement with Czechoslovakia. After the Munich conference on September 30, 1938, and its consequences, Roosevelt ordered an enormous increase in production of combat airplanes in November. In November 1939, European war prompted Roosevelt to seek changes in Neutrality Act to allow Britain and France to obtain arms from the U.S. In September 1940, Japan, at war with China, signed a triple alliance with Italy and Germany in Berlin. As Roosevelt urged, Congress passed the first peacetime conscription bill in U.S. history, requiring all men between 21

and 35 to register for the draft and arranging for the induction into armed services of 800 000 draftees.

For the third time, Roosevelt was inaugurated on January 20, 1941. The same year in August “he met Churchill and drew up Atlantic Charter of “common principles”, containing eight-point declaration of peace aims” (Roth 2004: 367). In September he announced that Navy had been ordered to destroy any German or Italian submarines entering the U.S. waters or threatening U.S. defense and asked Japan to begin military evacuation of China and Indochina, but the war minister, General Tojo, refused. The Japanese were determined to prevent the U.S. from interfering into their expansion into the Eastern Asia. The Japanese aimed to implement their imperialistic goals on the continent. Basically, there was no way how to avoid a military confrontation between the Japanese and the United States.

In November, a massive Japanese striking force was assembled secretly in Pacific in the time of negotiations with U.S. on military and economic issues. On December 6, 1941, Franklin D. Roosevelt resolved to make a last attempt: he, as the President of the United States, addressed Emperor Hirohito with a direct plea. However, Japan took an absolutely dissenting attitude. Later on, Japan launched a surprising attack on U.S. possessions in the Pacific and far eastern possessions of Great Britain. Therefore, Congress declared war to Japan and on December 11, 1941, Germany and Italy declared war on the U.S. and Congress, in response, declared war on Germany and Italy. The attack on Pearl Harbor was undoubtedly a malicious one, but this is just a Japanese habit – they follow the code of “*bušidó*”, which allows everything without any exception during the war (cf. Hubáček, 1987).

In 1942, alongside with Churchill, Roosevelt announced the creation of unified military command in Southeast Asia. The Strategy conference with Churchill in June resulted in the November invasion of French North Africa by Allied troops under the command of General Dwight D. Eisenhower. In June Roosevelt asked Congress to recognize existence of state of war against fascist regimes of Romania, Bulgaria,

and Hungary, allied with Axis powers. In September, president's emissary Wendell Willkie was received by Stalin in Moscow, where Stalin urged a second military front in Western Europe.

In 1939, the most renowned scientist in the world, professor Albert Einstein, a German Jew, who emigrated to the U.S to avoid the Nazi anti-Semitism, warned President Roosevelt about German attempts to construct an A-bomb. Nevertheless, nobody took any notice to this warning. However, these experiments eventually failed in 1944. In April 1941, Japan issued an order to research and to develop the A-bomb.

President Franklin Delano Roosevelt died suddenly from a cerebral hemorrhage on April 12, 1945 at the age of 63, and consequently, the Vice President Harry S. Truman was inaugurated the 33rd President of the United States. As the 32nd President of the United States of America and a member of the Democratic Party, Franklin D. Roosevelt served as president from March 4, 1933 until April 12, 1945.

The United States with Truman as President and the rest of the Allies insisted on the unconditional surrender, but the Japanese did not want to abnegate the monarchy – and that presented the condition. Truman maintained the position that Japan must surrender. If not, the United States will drop a bomb on an industrial zone in Japan – without any warning and as soon as possible. The primary priority of the United States was to avoid the invasion into Japan.

From July 16 until August 2, 1945, the Potsdam Conference was held in Potsdam. The representatives of the United States (Harry S. Truman), United Kingdom (Winston L. S. Churchill) and Soviet Union (Joseph Stalin) participated in the Conference. In here, Truman aimed to force the Russians to fulfill their part of an agreement to declare the war to Japan just three months after the German capitulation. According to the Administration, this solution, not the bomb, should have forced the Japanese to surrender. Stalin agreed on that, but Truman finally made another decision anyway. He figured out that the bomb would be the most efficient way how to resolve this situation without any kind of the Soviet intervention. Truman did not trust Stalin, and therefore he decided to drop the bomb before the Soviet intervention.

The Potsdam Declaration from July 26 was broadcasted in Japanese and it promised an immediate and fatal destruction if not proceeding given conditions: Japan had to give up the militarism, set all the prisoners of war free, leave all the overseas areas conquered after the year 1895, assure the human rights, and also surrender unconditionally. There did not feature any note about the throne – the Japanese were just supposed to implement “peace-oriented and responsible Administration”. On July 30, the Prime minister Admiral Suzuki commented on this Declaration and he murmured the answer not clearly at all. The misunderstanding occurred during the translation (instead of “the Administration will not comment on this *for now*”, he was understood: “the Administration will not comment on this *at all*”). This statement was received as a scornful refusal, and thus devastating consequences followed.

On August 6, 1945, an aircraft Enola Gay took off from the air base on Tinian with the A-bomb with a codename “Little Boy” on its board. This plane headed to Hiroshima. The bomb was dropped at 8:15, 600 meters above the ground, and as a result of that – the downtown was completely devastated, ruined, evaporated and absolutely flattened. Immediately, more than 78 000 people died, and several thousands died afterwards in a painful and long agony. The Japanese fell into an absolute shock and became incapable of making any kind of decisions.

The Soviet Union kept their word and on August 8 they declared the war to Japan. The next day their army entered Manchuria. The same day, the town of Nagasaki in southwest Japan was destroyed as well as the town of Hiroshima was – the bomb “Fat Man” was dropped on it. More than 24 000 people died.

Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of the Navy stood for the acceptance of the conditions given by The Potsdam Declaration. War Minister Korechika Anami, general in the Imperial Japanese Army Umezu and admiral in the Imperial Japanese Navy Toyoda opposed the acceptance of the Declaration. Emperor Hirohito was supposed to resolve this impasse situation – and he declared that it is time to surrender inevitably and to “endure the unendurable”.

The European war lasted from January 1943 until August 1945. In Far East, the war ended when Japan surrendered unconditionally on August 14, and eventually World War II was over.

3. AUTHORS PRESENTATION

Saul Bellow, Kurt Vonnegut, Joseph Heller, Norman Mailer and Philip Roth: these are the authors to be covered in my diploma work together with the interpretation of their works. These novels are not supposed to be their masterpieces necessarily. That is not essential at all. These novels are believed to depict a certain topic related to World War II. These authors lived mostly in the second half of the 20th century, therefore they all went through the torture of the war, either personally, or not. This makes them the most qualified to comment on this topic.

3.1. SAUL BELLOW

„Happiness can only be found if you can free yourself of all other distractions.“

- Saul Bellow

This Jewish-American novelist and short-story writer was born Salomon Bellow on June 10, 1915 two years after his parents' arrival in Canada from Russia in 1913. He grew up in Chicago, which became the setting of most of his fiction and which he was attached to very closely all his life. While moving from Canada to Chicago in 1924 the Bellow's family gained a great amount of experiences and his early childhood he spent in a polyglot society full of Russians, Poles, Ukrainians, Greeks and Italians. For Bellow, as well as for other immigrants, it was important to be American. They knew that they would

not be excluded from a society if they knew the language, history and culture and tried to fit in.

Throughout his life, he was a great reader. He spent hours as a student in the library in Chicago. As a Jew he felt part of a Jewish community while also recognizing some elements of anti-Semitism in society. This feeling of being an outsider, because he was Jewish, later recurred when he studied at Northwestern.

His mother, Liza, was very religious and Bellow himself had learned Hebrew and Yiddish as a young man. He started to learn Hebrew at the age of four and that is when his great lifelong love for Bible begun. After mother's death, thoroughly a harsh period stood ahead of him. He attended the University of Chicago, Northwestern University receiving a B.Sc. in anthropology from Northwestern in 1937. He took one semester at the University of Wisconsin but he dropped out quickly.

As Malin describes, "Bellow participated in the Chicago branch of the *Works Progress Administration Writer's Project*, where such future Chicago literary personalities as Richard Wright and Nelson Algren participated in. Bellow was a Trotskyist and due to a large number of Stalin-supporters, he had to bear unpleasant gibes from them" (Malin 1969: 24). However, Bellow became a "genuine" U.S. citizen in 1941.

Bellow desired to enter the army after the beginning of the U.S. entering World War II, but he was rejected due to his hernia. Finally, between the years 1944 and 1947 he served in the US Merchant Marine. Just before his service he finished and published his first novel, *Dangling Man* (1944). Bellow's first published works were short stories, including *Two Morning Monologues*, one of which is spoken by an unemployed man waiting to be called up. According to Malin, "this idea gave rise to his first novel, *Dangling Man*, whose protagonist is in a similar situation, having given up his job to await the draft" (Malin 1969: 97).

As Malin depicts, “Bellow was also an essayist, reviewer and cultural commentator, gradually shifting from Communist values to the Conservatism. Trotskyism influenced him at the beginning of his career and when starting, Bellow also refused Ernest Hemingway’s model of a tough guy in American fiction and was interested in a wide range of various cultures and nations and philosophic courses (Nietzsche, Russian- Jewish heritage)” (Malin 1969: 65).

He was evidently a writer who took his time and he produced only six novels over a span of two decades. Sometimes there were more than five - or six -year intervals between the books. Bellow filled the interim periods by accepting professorial and other academic assignments, and by writing stories and articles. Besides many others, Bellow was a visiting lecturer at Princeton and New York Universities long time. He quit his postgraduate studies at University of Wisconsin to become a writer and also lived in Paris and travelled extensively in Europe. In Europe, he wrote what would become *The Adventures of Augie March* (1953). Augie is a fairly passive character who falls into various adventures (stealing books, going to Mexico) and tries to find his true self and is determined to “become what he is”.

Malin explains that “Bellow disposes a great ability to laugh at characters’ foibles at the human condition. Bellow always gives the reader “true impressions”, hints of deeper meaning, glimpses beyond appearances to the inner part of the personality” (Malin 1969: 114). One can trace the comic elements in Bellow to the older generation of Jewish writers (Isaac Bashevis Singer) and these two writers were Jewish American writers to be awarded Nobel prizes for literature.

Bellow viewed contemporary society as a thread. Everywhere there are things - goods, appliances, and false information - which distract us. We are surrounded by such attractive things, we do not realize into which extension they could be destructive. We no longer have a sense of uniqueness. There is really no free choice and we surrender to social drives. The terrifying density of society is always suggested in Bellow’s

novels. He also suggests that conversations only introduce more confusion. People pretend to say one thing, but their remarks are ambiguous or malicious. This is depicted also in his novel *Dangling Man* interpreted below.

Bellow is fascinated by the problem of money in his works. Poverty forces human beings to return to their own real basis. Poverty equals reality. We can see the importance of money for Bellow's fiction.

Bellow himself says very little about Jewishness in his writings. In a review of *The Adventure of Mottel the Cantor's Son* he says:

"The Jews of the ghetto found themselves involved in an immense joke. They are divinely designated to be great and yet they were like mice. History was something that happened to them; they did not make it." (Bellow 1953: 15)

Less interested in religion as such, Bellow does not mention laws or rituals - than in vision. For him this vision is ironic. The humor is said, expressing a longing for elevation; underneath, it asserts a glad acceptance of a divine justice.

At the heart of Bellow's fiction there is always a family. It is the "holy center" of values. Family closeness has always been important in Jewish literature. However, he characterizes women less flatteringly and adequately than he does fathers and sons; women are nonsubstantial, expect when they pursue or assert power. A relationship between a father and son has always been a great issue in all of his books as though in his own life.

Bellow often uses images of deformity or disease to express the painful mortality we bear. *Dangling Man*, for example, shows the deterioration of Joseph: living in a "dullness", coughing of Vanaker next door or his father-in-law - but his sickness is of the soul.

Bellow's characters feel trapped, pressured, and even devoured by the environment (and themselves), they want, at least consciously, to move. They search answers for their quandaries, but their movements are usually erratic, circular, violent, or indecisive. His heroes, as well, are obsessed by vision. As "visionaries" they tend to see existence in oblique or unbalanced ways; the mirrors into which they peer are frequently distorted - Joseph is unnaturally self-centered and the others reflect his preoccupations - they are inversions of his true image.

As for the style, Bellow is able to mix styles remarkably. Bellow's fiction contains many different realistic descriptions. These realistic descriptions depend usually on their effects on rhythm. There are many qualifications. His realistic style becomes much more suggestive, unreal and complex. Although he gives us many other descriptions of various things, for example, he makes them much more fascinating. Bellow's fiction contains many different kinds of comedy: parody, farce, irony and "sick" humor. In *Dangling Man* he uses "bureaucratic comedy". Bellow affirms that there is more than one way - realistic, fantastic, or comic - of responding to life. His fiction echoes his insistence (in essays and reviews) upon imaginative, dynamic freedom. Bellow accepts the "tasteless" quality of his novels, because it signifies a personal struggle to overcome reality, shaping it- although awkwardly or brutally - to his own ends (cf. Malin 1960).

Bellow has become member of the National Institute of Arts and Letters and he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1976. The Royal Swedish Academy, which makes the award, singled out for special praise *Seize the Day*. Among his other published novels, we can mention the first one *Dangling Man* from 1944, followed by *The Victim* from 1948. *The Adventures of Augie March* from 1953 were followed by *Herzog* from 1964 and both of them won the National Book Award. Saul Bellow's personal account of a journey to Israel was published in 1976 and it is called *To Jerusalem and Back*.

His beliefs were undogmatic and rational but with an emotional, mystical edge. He was a man who put great emphasis on the spirit, on the mystery of the human being. Literature has to capture the soul of the character. It needs to reveal the nature of what it is to be human.

He firmly believed in the role of a writer to help people to glimpse the true nature of humanity and to call attention to the moral seriousness of literature. Saul Bellow died on April 5, 2005 in Massachusetts.

3.2. KURT VONNEGUT, Jr.

Kurt Vonnegut, Jr., an American novelist, essayist, and short fiction writer was born in Indianapolis, Indiana on November 11, 1922 as an offspring of well-known German-American families. Both his parents were nonconformists (freethinkers) and Vonnegut considered himself to be an atheist, freethinker or skeptic and he did not believe in supernatural forces. His opinions concerning religion were not conventional at all. His Bible usage in his writings could be little confusing - he did not agree with the theology of Christianity, but believed in its basic principles and ethics.

Despite of the fact both of his parents spoke German fluently, they refused to teach him this language as a consequence of an extensive anti-German attitude after WWI. The family's fortune assured him a decent education and although the Great Depression in 1930s affected his family, he continued his studies of chemistry at Cornell University for more than two years. Vonnegut wrote in student newspapers at both Shortridge High School and at Cornell University which he left without graduating and enlisted in the U.S. Army for basic training in 1942. He returned home on Mother's Day in 1944 only to learn that his mother had committed suicide the day before. After her funeral Vonnegut was ordered to go overseas.

He was imprisoned after the Battle of the Bulge in the Ardennes Forest in Belgium which took place from December 1944 up to January 1945. German troops captured him in December and imprisoned him in a slaughterhouse in Dresden that had modified altered into a prison. Due to their location three stories underground Vonnegut survived an atrocious attack when British and American planes bombed the city killing tens of thousands of people within one night on February 13, 1945. The Americans broke free from the prison and witnessed an obliteration resembling a moonscape - this description also appears in his book *Slaughterhouse-Five*, a place hardly looking like a flourishing city which it used to be a day before. More than 130 000 people were slaughtered and Vonnegut and the others were assigned by the Germans to gather up bodies for mass burial. His war experience, especially the one from being captured in the town where the bombing occurred, obviously influenced his life and of course his work and his way of world perception significantly. He drew much of a book's background narrative from Dresden where he saw such horrible things he could not have forgotten in any way and he had to carry this trauma with him as an uncomfortable encumbrance for the rest of his life. Not without reason it is said that survivors from all of wars suffer from the psychiatric trauma the most, not from the physical injuries.

After his return to the United States, Vonnegut was awarded a Purple Heart and spent the next couple of years at the University of Chicago studying anthropology and then at the Chicago News Bureau as a police reporter. Vonnegut was a forthright and exceedingly visible cultural figure throughout his career - he appeared in different movies, provided various interviews and he served as the honorary president of the American Humanist Association. Later, Vonnegut became a candid critic of the American political system. His masterpiece, *Slaughterhouse-Five*, appeared in the period of a peak of protests against American involvement in the Vietnam War between 1955 and 1975 - when American troops were sent to help South Vietnam in their fight against North Vietnamese communists. He signed the "*Writers and*

Editors War Tax Protest” oath, swearing to refuse tax payments in protest against the Vietnam War in 1968. More recently his columns in *In These Times* were often attacking the politics of President George Bush and the Iraq war. He assembled lots of his opinions into a critically acclaimed and best-selling *A Man without a Country* (2005). He was, like Saul Bellow, deeply influenced by the Russian Communist - Leon Trotsky.

As a survivor of the dreadful bombing in Dresden, he was obviously skeptical about war. He often said that *“The only difference between Bush and Hitler is that Hitler was elected”*¹.

Those who fight act in the interest of a higher power, the Left or the Right, or of whatever religion, those are the most treacherous creatures in the world (cf. Wasserman 2006). As he depicts in various works, people are forced to face different obstacles in their life, but they have to deal with them, because there is nothing else left to do. *“So it goes.”* often repeated in his *Slaughterhouse-Five* expresses this though perfectly - three simple words utter that disasters happen, but it is just the way our life is.

From the beginning he devoted himself to science-fiction and social novel. In his works rewords individuals’ destinies in the law-restricted world. He entered the literature world with the *Player’s Piano* in 1952 followed by *The Sirens of Titan* in 1959, *Mother Night* in 1961, *Cat’s Cradle* in 1963, *God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater* in 1965 and in 1969 is published his masterpiece *Slaughterhouse-Five*. He established himself as a leading American author with this novel. He excelled in the mastery of combining elements of irony, black comedy and science-fiction.

Vonnegut was a beloved cultural icon throughout his career and is remembered as a sarcastic satirist and influential stylist. Thanks to his simple vernacular language and rebellious themes also young readers

¹ Wasserman, H., „Kurt Vonnegut’s Stardust Memory“ In *The Columbus Free Press*, March 5, 2006.

find a way to his work. He died on April 11, 2007 in New York at the age of 84 as a consequence of a fall complications.

3.3. JOSEPH HELLER

American novelist and dramatist, Joseph Heller, was born as a son of poor Jewish parents who from Russia in 1923 in Brooklyn, New York, where he was raised in the part of Coney Island. In the WWII after being a helper at the Navy Yard in Norfolk in Virginia, he served as a Shipping File Clerk in the army and in October 1942. At the age of 19, he joined the U.S. Army Air Corps. At cadet school he graduated as a First Lieutenant in 1944. Afterwards he was involved actively into the service over Italy. There he served as a B25 bombardier and flew his 60 combat missions. At early beginning he did not perceive the war as something strictly awful and he believed there was something really exciting about it and there was something you could be proud of:

“People think it quite remarkable that I was in combat in an airplane and I flew sixty missions even though I tell them that the missions were largely milk runs.” (Mallory 2007: *The Joe and Kurt Shoe*)

This experience of his life in the U.S. Army and of combat served as the background for his highly praised novel *Catch-22*. It has become to be viewed as a masterpiece that expresses the absurdity of war and life within the society governed by a merciless capitalism and the irrational logic of “*Catch-22*”.

Afterwards, he attended initially at the University of Southern California and the University of New York, where he took a short story course taught by Maurice Baudin who influenced him a lot. He was a Phi Beta Kappa student here in New York and received his B.A. in

English in 1948. In these times he already publish various short stories. The next year he took his M.A. at Columbia University and then continued in his studies at Oxford thanks to a Fullbright scholarchip.

Heller's first success as a writer came with the publication in *Story* and *Atlantic Monthly* of some short stories. His first work was at Pennsylvania State University between the years 1950-1952 where Heller taught English composition. Then he returned to New York and for the next eight years, while writing his novel, earned his living in the private business sector as an advertising writer for advertising departments of *Time* (1952-1956), *Look* (1956-1958) and *McCall's* (1958-1961) magazines. During this period the idea of *Catch-22* came into his mind and it took him eight years to complete it, thus *Catch-22* was first published in 1961, but it was in mid-fifties when he had begun writing a manuscript entitled tentatively *Catch-18* and the opening chapter of this novel appeared in *New World Writing* in 1955 under this title. Initially response and sales in the United States of America were limited and slow, but by 1962 it had entered the bestseller lists in the United Kingdom. Partly due to its anti-war sentiments and the increase of resistance to the war in Vietnam and the 1960s mood of anti-authoritarianism among youth with which the text resonated, sales increased and by 1968 two million copies had been sold (cf. Malin 1999).

He enjoyed a long career as a teacher and writer and his first novel, *Catch-22*, remains up to nowadays his most famous and best-selling book. Joseph Heller died of a heart attack in December 1999.

3.4. NORMAN KINGSLEY MAILER

Pulitzer prize winner Norman Kingsley Mailer, novelist, essayist, journalist, poet, and also playwright, was born on January 31, 1923 to Jewish parents Isaac, a South-African born accountant, and Fanny, an agency-for-domestic-goods keeper, in Long Branch, New Jersey. He was given a middle name Malech, because, as his mother explained: "Malech is 'king' in Hebrew, and he was our king." (The name on the birth certificate reads "Kingsley".) (cf. Campbell 2007). He was raised in Brooklyn where he attended the Boys High School. Afterwards he entered Harvard University in 1939, studied aeronautical engineering and graduated in 1943. It happened there where he became attracted to writing. He was already writing stories and beginning to publish. In 1944 he was drafted into the U.S. Army and placed in the Philippines into the 112th Cavalry Regiment during the Philippines Campaign. He served for two years in this Pacific theatre. Even though Mailer was not involved in much combat and finished his military service as a cook, this experience inspired his first novel *The Naked and the Dead*, which he wrote after the war, and he managed to capture the atmosphere of the events outstandingly.

Later on, he published another fictional novel *Barbary Shore* in 1951, *An American Dream* in 1965, *Why Are We in Vietnam?* in 1967. As Foster describes, "the same year in October he was arrested for his participation in an anti-Vietnam War demonstration at the Pentagon. It took place on October 21 and it was the first national demonstration against the war. *The Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam* organized the protest to get the greatest national visibility for the anti-war movement. No one knew what form this protest would take, whether peaceful or violent. All day many long speeches were made and after that a determined crowd of 35,000 headed for the Pentagon. The Deputies and soldiers were taunted and assaulted with vegetables, rocks, and bottles. The troops inside the Pentagon rushed outside as the violence escalate and a full-scale riot erupted and lasted all night. The Deputy Marshals, acting as the civil authority of the federal

government, made all the arrests. As soon as they finished, many of the demonstrators basically gave up” (Foster 1974: 165). On Sunday morning nearly all the demonstrators left. This demonstration was the first national protest against the war and it exemplified the agonizingly discordant debate concerning Vietnam. Ironically, the demonstrators helped the federal government confirm its own commitment to civilian control. Civilian Deputy Marshals, rather than soldiers, arrested them. The Deputies were fulfilling the historic role of the U.S. Marshals, for each arrest affirmed the enduring concept of civilian supremacy in the United States. Related to that, in 1968, Mailer wrote *Armies in the Night*, an eyewitness account of an anti-Vietnam demonstration held in front of the Pentagon in Washington (cf. Foster 1974). This mixture of reportage, social and political speculation, and personal confession was written in a wildly excited prose. Vietnam war represented a military conflict in which communist forces of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam and the indigenous forces of the National Front for the Liberation of South Vietnam, (also known as the Việt Cộng) fought against the anti-communist Republic of Vietnam. Its allies - most notably the United States - in an effort to unify Vietnam into a single state that would be based on communist ideology (cf. Chris McNab, 2000). In 1969, he was candidate for mayor of New York on a "left conservative" platform urging that the city become the 51st state, while its "black ghetto dwellers" should vote on getting their own government.² (Cambell 2007). Naturally, Mailer lost and was not taken so seriously as a candidate. In 1960s he highly esteemed President John F. Kennedy whom he regarded as a “existential hero”. In 1960 he wrote *Superman Comes to the Supermarket* where he highlighted John F. Kennedy’s emergence at the Democratic Party convention.

²Campbell,J.:

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/news/2007/nov/12/guardianobituaries.usa?INTCMP=SRCH>, 12 November 12, 2007

Foster emphasizes, that “many of his writings are existentialist in their exploration of the nature of the self (*American Dream, Why Are We in Vietnam?*). The second mentioned novel is narrated by an 18-year-old who is heading for Vietnam and examining and questioning the nature of both God and mankind. Mailer’s protagonists are often pushed to the limit and forced to face their deepest fears and destructive forces just as Mailer did. They must undergo an intense transformation of self by testing themselves in fearful circumstances, and they discover their own potential” (Foster 1974: 79, 80). Foster also emphasizes that Mailer’s contemporaries did not appreciate his innovativeness, though his work still received significant attention. Nevertheless, Mailer’s contribution to American literature gradually came to be recognized (Foster 1974: 81, 92). He was a colorful character who enjoyed heavy drinking. He was married six times, had nine children and almost killed one of his wives during a drunken fight. Media attention to his private life often overshadowed his literary work. However, Mailer’s work is closely linked to his own life experience which has led to a certain critical confusion whether or not his work should be read as autobiographical nonfiction.

From his plays it is possible to refer to *The Deer Park: A Play*, a Hollywood satire, published in 1967 as well or his non-fiction novel *The Big Empty: Dialogues on Politics, Sex, God, Boxing, Morality, Myth, Poker and Bad Conscience in America* published in 2006. In his second and third novels, *Barbary Shore* and *The Deer Park*, he began to use a more experimental style. He died aged 84 of acute renal failure on November 10, 2007.

3.5. PHILIP ROTH

“Is an intelligent human being likely to be much more than a large-scale manufacturer of misunderstanding?” (Roth 1986: 145)

Philip Roth

Philip Milton Roth is a American novelist and writer still alive. He was born on March 19, 1933 in Newark, New Jersey, as a son of the American parents Herman Roth and Bess Finkel Roth. Herman, Roth’s father, was a Jewish immigrant from Galicia, and Philip grew up as a member of a consistent Jewish community in Newark (cf. Graham 2007). Newark has become a setting of most of his American – set novels. Herman Roth made a career as an insurance salesman. His family was well aware of itself as Jewish, but largely indifferent in terms of religious practice. Philip Roth received little formal education in Judaism and Jewish history. Like many Jewish Americans of his generation, who were the children of immigrants or of second-generation Americans, he followed a typical path of assimilation into American life – Philip and his older brother Sandy attended Weequahic High School, a school for Jewish students, but then Philip went to college taking a bachelor of arts and master degree. From 1951 to 1953 he studied at Bucknell University where he founded the university’s literary journal *Et Cetera*. He graduated in English and won a scholarship to study for an MA in English at the University of Chicago in 1954. By this time he had begun writing and publishing stories, but it was a while before he seriously considered a career as a writer.

After a brief period in Army, Roth was released from the service when he suffered a spinal injury which required hospital care. He began a PhD program at the University of Chicago, but left the program after only one semester. However, he stayed there to teach classes in freshman composition, and it was in Chicago where he met Saul Bellow. This renowned Jewish novelist together with Franz Kafka and Bernard Malamud in an immense way influenced Roth’s writing.

Roth's literary work covers more than seven decades from the 1950s up to today. It depicts a central concern with issues of identity as they emerge from the interactions between the self (usually male) and the other, whether that other is represented in individuals, communities or American society, and its political and cultural history. A great amount of his characters bear distinct resemblances to their author, a self-conscious strategy on Roth's part which deliberately smears the boundaries between fiction and autobiography in his writing. The distinction between autobiography and fiction is always problematic, and as Parrish emphasizes, "no writer poses a greater challenge to untangling the treads of life and art than does Philip Roth, who goes out of his way to bedevil his reader. He both encourages and discourages public scrutiny of his life. He frequently uses real characters' names in his novels while contenting at the same time that he is imagining events that never happened" (Parrish 2007: 56).

Roth wrote his first important work in 1957. It was a novella *Goodbye, Columbus* about the relationship between two Jewish students who come from very different social backgrounds. This book was awarded the National Book Award in 1960. Since that time he has published a variety of multifarious books, *The Ghost Winter* (1979) or *The Prague Orgy* (1985). Roth has also repeatedly resolved what it means to be a citizen of modern America. Therefore, his fictions are read as an outgoing chronicle of American politics and culture, and a current commentary on it.

In his novel from 1969, *Portnoy's Complaint*, Roth finally found his style and subject matter that gained him huge success and large following. It is framed as a monologue from a psychoanalyst's couch. Portnoy's narrative ends in a tormented scream of rage at his own impotence. Parrish reminds us that "the immediate inspiration for *Portnoy's Complaint* was the session of psychoanalysis which Roth had undergone following the break-up of his traumatic marriage, but the roots of the narrative went deeper" (Parrish 2007: 94).

The Plot Against America from 2004 was awarded the W. H. Smith Award for the best book of the year. In this book, “Roth used a narrative technique borrowed from a science fiction to create an alternative reality in which the anti-Semitic Charles A. Lindbergh defeated Roosevelt in the 1940 election” (Parrish 2007: 74). Roth here re – imagines his own childhood lived out in very different political circumstances and it offers, as Parrish presents, “his most sympathetic portrait of a Jewish community” (Parrish 2007: 87). This novel was also proclaimed to be one of Roth’s major successes, and in general received excellent reviews on various places of the world.

On Roth, loads of critics have been published. As his collection of work continues to grow, so his older work continues to be re-assessed in the light of the new. So far, according to Parrish, “Roth’s novels have been in the special interest of literary scholars working in the fields of gender studies³, psychology, autobiography, meta-fiction, politics and the history of the novel. Even though Roth himself does not like the tendency to be labeled as a Jewish writer, his work makes a significant chapter in the history of Jewish-American literature and may be surely studied alongside the work of other major Jewish novelists such as Saul Bellow and Bernard Malamud” (Parrish 2007: 110). Addressing an audience in Israel, Philip Roth once proclaimed himself “to be an American writer who happens to write about Jews” (Parrish 2007: 145). With this simple statement Roth perfectly captures the complicated merger of cultural identities that marks his work. Moreover, as Parrish highlights, “Roth has always insisted that he is primarily an American writer; yet his work cannot be fully understood without addressing how Roth engages a sense of Jewish history that cannot be understood to be equivalent with his perspective as an American writer” (Parrish 2007: 178).

³“Roth’s interest in the lives of twentieth-century American men has often taken shape in narratives of heterosexual pursuit. He has been fearless in challenging readers to look upon raw male desires” (Parrish 2007: 107).

Philip Roth is supposed to belong among the greatest living novelist in the United States. In 1970 he became member of the America's National Institute of Arts and Letters. His *American Pastoral* has been awarded the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction. His novel *A Plot Against America* won Sidewise Award for Alternate History in 2005. In April 2007, he received the PEN/Faulkner Award for Achievement in American Fiction (1993, 2000).

4. SELECTED WORKS INTERPRETATIONS

4.1. DANGLING MAN

“Bellow, too, is convinced that to have a conscience is, after a certain age, to live permanently in an epistemological hell. The reason his and Dostoevsky's heroes are incapable of ever arriving at any closure is that they love their own suffering above everything else. They refuse to exchange their inner torment for the peace of mind that comes with bourgeois propriety or some kind of religious belief. In fact, they see their suffering as perhaps the last outpost of the heroic in our day and age.”

- Charles Simic in *New York Review of Books*, May 31, 2001

Bellow's first war novel, which is not definitely about war, was published in 1944. It is retold in the I - form and written in a diary form. This diary serves as a willow tree for the main protagonist's personal confessions. This highly confused intellectual Marxist tries to resolve what to believe in. The diary also reflects the atmosphere in Chicago during the war and especially the way of life of Joseph at the age of 40 whose draft has been delayed due to some sort of bureaucratic chaos. Even though the war rages around him, Joseph wanders through the

streets of Chicago and through his past. More than from his patriotism or duty he intends to enter the Army to bring a new meaning into his life. He thinks that general opinion about writing a journal is rather sceptic and it would be found ridiculous, because he considers this epoch as ruthless and indolent towards those who face troubles and would need at least a hint of our care:

“Do you have feelings? There are correct and incorrect ways of indicating them. Do you have inner life? It is nobody’s business but your own. Do you have emotions? Strangle them. [...] If you have difficulties, grapple with them silently, goes one their commandments.” (Bellow 1963: 7)

In *Dangling Man* we can see a major topic of time. Joseph states that “once upon a time” people kept journals to record their feelings – they felt no shame. However, “nowadays” people are different. He says there is no personal future anymore, nevertheless his brother Amos looks only at future as something to proceed constantly – and he is strongly convinced that everybody else should do it the same way. The future becomes time and Joseph does not want to accept this concept. He starts to neglect some things – all days are now undistinguished, all days are equal, and it is difficult to tell Wednesday from Sunday.

In spite of his strong belief in general indifference, he feels a requisite need to keep writing. Joseph depicts the events day by day from December 15, 1942 until April 9, the day his way of life as an idler comes to a standstill and his career in the U.S. Army begins.

As a person on a waiting list who is supposed to be drafted soon, working possibilities are badly limited. Therefore, he is just dangling, dangling in his life. The motif of dangling man appears not only in novel *Dangling Man*, but it goes through a variety of Bellow’s novels.

The single room, he is staying in, emphasizes the solitude and isolation he has chosen to live in hoping to achieve this spiritual enlightenment, without any work and any obligations. A day by day

reminds him the solitude which surrounds him. He is not alone in his life, but he feels like that and his life is filling up with emptiness constantly. His wife, Iva, a quiet devoted woman, considers him as an available labour force considering his situation and forces him to help her father, his father-in-law, Almstadt. This man, ironically, treats him better and more considerably than his own father mainly in the question of his laziness and idleness. Joseph's father despises him due to this "dangling situation" and especially due to a matter of getting a job. Almost each of Bellow's novels features a complicated father-son relationship. Usually the character of father is not a fiend, he is rather full of self-love. The father always creates an atmosphere of competition. However, Joseph wants to have a father to guide him and to lead him, a spiritual guide, but he cannot find one in anyone, neither in Mr. Almstadt. Joseph always acts as a son. The lack of authority leads him to do "childish" things. We do not get a picture of the real father, thus there are only hints to suggest his personality. His relationships with men are complicated because he views them as potential fathers and those regards on him as a son. The others sense Joseph's lack of maturity. They recognize that he has not grown up. However, who is the real father in fact? It is not presented in here. His own father is a protector of the social system. He prefers Amos who takes responsibly for all his duties; this older son reflects his interest in business. On the other hand, asocial Joseph does not belong at home. However, technically, Joseph says very little about his parents. He describes his brother Amos, the pompous Jew, who has surrendered to the materialistic world – to exile. Joseph disposes of no real concept of the family since he spends much of his time as a bachelor, while Iva works. Nevertheless, Joseph's sense of family is Jewish – family closeness has always been important in Jewish literature – especially the father- son relationships. A family represents a holy centre of values at the heart of Bellow's fiction.

Bellow himself tells us hardly a thing about Jewishness in his novels. We are never explicitly told that Joseph is Jewish or that he has

old-world vision. Joseph thinks of his American society as hardboiled, whereas he suffers – or the other way around. He tells us little about his appearance, but what he points out that he looks Jewish – with dark eyes, black hair and a straight nose.

A man sometimes gets caught in just an awkward situation when facing given obstacles not really efficiently. This feeling of incapability to deal with his life drives him crazy and it is multiplied by the shame which accompanies this fail inevitably. A cripple from the war or as a consequent of an accident also has to dispose of a great amount of inner power to cope with the present condition. He used to be able to take care of himself as well and now that does not hold good anymore. He does not want to be pitied or given any kind of compassion. He just desires to have his life back, or at least partially. In those times, a man was supposed to be a provider, and a woman was supposed to stay at home and take care of a household. In this case, the roles are inverted – Iva serves as the provider and Joseph wastes his time doing basically nothing. This humiliation impacts both on his inner feelings, because he knows that it is not right, and from outside he is being attacked all the time by biting notes of his father, by pitying words of Iva, etc. For Joseph, it must be really harsh to accept the situation. He feels deeply humiliated.

Joseph suffers from this feeling as a good-for-nothing and what is maybe even worse - he suffers badly from being pitied and refuses any kind of help. Due to this lack of stimulation and lack of even motivation, his character undergoes a serious development and becomes partially a different personality. He undergoes a feeling of shame for doing nothing and that is why he is avoiding certain places deliberately, not just avoid the place, but also curious looks of passers-by and inquisitive questions about his whereabouts in the middle of the day. Inside of his mind he becomes paranoid and aware of absolutely innocuous events. Sometimes, this paranoid and Joseph's fear are really legitimate – he avoids old real communists (Stalin – lovers) who consider him to be a traitor. Hot-blooded people like to get into fights very hastily. His

situation impacts on his marriage significantly - it is reflected in his relationship towards his wife, this marriage used to be relatively contended one, but now that is just a bond of two married people, a couple, waiting for something to happen: "We no longer confide in each other; in fact, there are many things I could not mention to her. We have friend, but we no longer see them." (Bellow 1963: 9) We have to live in ordered ways, but we must stay flexible. Joseph quotes Goethe:

"All comfort in life is based upon a regular occurrence of external phenomena. The changes of the day and night, of the season, of flowers and fruits and all other recurring pleasure that come to us...- there are the mainsprings of our earthy life." (Bellow 1963: 28)

However, this regularity becomes dull; it is viewed as inflexible (cf. Malin, 1969). The world itself is presented as the necessary, inescapable concept which challenges individual identity. Bellow emphasizes painful irresolution: rebellion or submission; narcissism or communion; and fear or courage. The density of society is always suggested in Bellow's novels. The newspaper with its crowded, paralyzing columns – it perfectly reflects the identicalness of everything: recipes, puzzles, serious news, and gossip are equally valuable or significant. Bellow realizes that our society has more luxuries than past societies. These finite things overshadow us. Joseph rereads the lists and stares so much at solitary objects in his closed room that he finally studies himself as a thing. Joseph has lost his faith in God, but he wants to believe in divinity so badly, but he is hopelessly trapped. Although Joseph sees himself as imprisoned, he also finds himself dangling. *Dangling Man* represents a work of a young writer who has not completely found his voice, and his entries in his diary remain isolated entries, which lack that humanity sought by Joseph so badly. One can ask about the meaning of identity in modern world; what is the nature of good and evil? Are there any possibilities of any fulfilment?

If everybody around but you is heading somewhere, how would you feel? It may be assumed that without any goals or aims, each person becomes frustrated and desperate with unpredictable outbursts of anger and rage towards those people who do not deserve it at all. Moreover, his inner feelings disturb also Joseph himself and it is just a natural consequence of his way of living when he becomes more and more exasperated while the impulses become more and more insignificant. However, everyone is his own “fortune/future – architect”, and Joseph is undoubtedly lazy, he lacks a quantity of skills and also friends affiliations. Within himself, he feels just anger - towards the others, towards the world, towards the circumstances and most of all towards himself. Inside he realizes that it is just his personal frustration that comprises the major problem. He becomes mad at himself because of being fed up with his friend Abt’s unhappiness. Due to this he has grown to be one of those who had despised at the beginning, one of those who do not care of anyone and anything except himself:

“Still more, I was disturbed at myself because I knew that at heart I was tired of Abt’s unhappiness and of seeing him rise to it like a jaded but skilful boxer. I did not want to admit that. I urged my sympathies to work for him.” (Bellow 1963: 39)

Nevertheless, he realizes that Abt’s disappointment with life arises rather from his nature and it is just the way Abt is like and he has no right to get angry with him at all. As an aspiring writer, Joseph is rather a man of the word than of the deed. The “dangling” in his life may be seen as a pure laziness and maybe that is exactly what Bellow desired us to feel. Maybe he wanted to provide us a possibility to judge the main character and in my opinion he had definitely excelled in it. The reader starts to sympathise with him, either with all of his attitudes or just a fraction of them. Joseph begins to look at the world through cynical eyes and he is undergoing these mostly depressing feelings.

Therefore one may be immersed by the irritation Joseph experiences when facing his spoiled arrogant and haughty niece Dolly who has been raised by Joseph's absolutely different brother Amos - a wealthy man slightly despising Joseph for his way of life. He often behaves tactlessly and sometimes even rudely trying not to disapprove of Joseph too often and too openly: *For some reason he has not been able to accept the fact that it is possible for a member of his family to live on so little*" (Bellow 1963: 49). Although any kind of help would be very beneficial for Joseph, he never accepts any, either in a form of money or clothes. He is too proud to do so, for he wants to preserve his dignity, pride, if nothing else, he wants to keep the aura of being self-secured. His brother, always reminding him how hard his childhood was and how much he had to struggle to achieve everything he has at present, represents a hypocrite who states that everybody should fight for the country and should be patriotic, but he personally does not have any intention to get involved into any kind of combat and just seeks for as much comfort as he can save up. Amos and Etta ask him scornfully when he leaves into the Army, and despise him. Amos despises his own brother for not doing anything, but what are his merits beside family welfare and mean vain daughter Etta who spends long hours in front of the mirror and who has a disturbing resemblance bearing to Joseph? Amos is just encouraging Joseph to enter the Army, but he himself stays in the safety of a family fireplace and teaches his daughter phrases like: "Beggars can't be choosers." (Bellow 1963: 58), which she skilfully applies on her own uncle.

The importance of the appearance had been greatly magnified in Joseph's eyes during his childhood, but he managed to free himself from this prejudice. On the contrary, his brother did not succeed in it unfortunately. Besides the many other differences dividing these two brothers are divided by, this great unsubstantial criterion for people judgment stands for one of the most significant dissimilarities between the two of them. One may ask, what is really important in people's life: it represents money, clothes, contacts, job, or other values invisible at

first sight like freedom, attitude, love, health, peace. Everybody should make a list of his own preferences and follow it. In the case of any kind of divergence, people should respect each other, to come to a compromise - but this is not the case of these two brothers, where a social statue plays a role of such an immense significance. An attitude towards benefiting from the war or not, that is just another great difference between Joseph and Amos. People basically get used to slaughter and can make profit of it - Joseph would rather die in the war than consume its benefits, but Amos belongs among those who have adapted to the situation and have been doing their best to make as huge profit as possible.

Joseph did not use to be as idle as nowadays and in fact, he seeks for any kind of distraction, as any person being idle for too long - even troubles with consequences are more preferable than indifference. With no expectations from his future, he hopes to find his peace within the “manacles of the army machinery” as he says: “Future? I wouldn’t stake a pin on my future.” (Bellow 1963: 54)

In this novel, a female voice is massively excluded and the reader finds himself in a predominantly male world. *Dangling Man* demonstrates the role of women in all of Bellow’s fiction perfectly. Although Iva is married to Joseph, we see little of her. She is working to support him and she hopes that she can make life more tolerable for him. Joseph desires Iva to be a subject to his strength, but the passive Iva cares little about such struggles. She lives in her own world of clothes, appearance, furniture, light entertainment, mystery stories, the radio, etc.

Topics such as an individual freedom, meaning of moral responsibility, death and social contract are reflected in the work, and not by accident, because as it has already been mentioned in the biography section, Bellow always provides the reader hints of deeper meaning and his close attention to details is part of what makes the characters come alive in his fiction. In my opinion, as for the freedom,

as well as in the *Slaughterhouse-Five* by Kurt Vonnegut, Bellow here depicts a similar topic - how much freedom do we actually have and what we should do with it? We may pursue an unpropitious effect on Joseph when he disposes of a personal freedom, either true or just ostensible. Even though this novel seems to offer apparent choices, in reality there are none. Joseph longs for isolation and exceptionality, but after a certain time he slips down into the uniform of the time. An absolute individualism and separate peace are not possible and he eventually has to accept his role within the society. In the case, there is a certain amount of freedom, are people willing to accept it? After one year of an absolute idleness, Joseph is happy to finally “hand over” his personal responsibility for himself into the “hands of the U.S. Army”:

“I am no longer to be held accountable for myself; I am grateful for that. I am in other hands, relieved of self-determination, freedom cancelled. Hurray for regular hours! And for the supervision of the spirit! Long live regimentation!” (Bellow 1963: 159)

In some way, he may really relieve much of his concerns, because now it is the Army who is going to fill his free time with duties, who will be responsible for him and who will be supervising him. He will no longer have to think.

When one does not know where to head to, there is nothing more comfortable than to hand this distress over into the hands of somebody else. We seek for freedom, but soon we want to give it up and choose a master and the leash. It may stand for an idea that human beings perhaps dispose of an inability to be free. To dangle – it captures the feelings of men waiting for the draft – for something destructive to happen.

Joseph’s frequent talks with the “Spirit of Alternatives” or “Tu As Raison Aussi” brings the reader into the world of philosophical contemplations about this inability to be free, about the human nature, about not preserving the animal, but the mind:

“We can decide only what is for us to decide. The rest is beyond our power. [...] He was speaking of the soul, the spirit? - The mind. Anyway, the self that we must govern. Chance must not govern it, incident must not govern it, our dignity, our freedom.” (Bellow 1963: 139)

Referring to Spinoza, a thought of having no virtue could be considered greater than that of trying to preserve oneself. It is developed in here as well as a reflection of dangling - if Joseph is the only one dangling or if everybody else are dangling as well - that is just relative and it depends on the point of view - to dangle versus to stay in motion - but for what costs? For all costs?

The anger increasing within Joseph erupts one day and suddenly these dangling days are counted and a final coveted decision brings a breath of relief with the end of never-ending waiting.

4.2. SLAUGHTERHOUSE-FIVE, OR THE CHILDREN'S CRUASADE: A DUTY-DANCE WITH DEATH

"It is so short and jumbled and jangled, because there is nothing intelligent to say about a massacre". (Vonnegut 1991: 44)

This partially autobiographical work belongs among the most culturally resonant books of Kurt Vonnegut, Jr. The novel brought Vonnegut to the height of his career, and it came out in the midst of the Vietnam War. It treats one of the most petrifying event of World War II and one of the most horrific massacres in European history – the firebombing of Dresden, a picturesque city in eastern Germany, on February 13 in 1945. During this bloodbath more than 130 000 people died. Vonnegut begins this fictitious novel with autobiographical information about his own experiences in World War II, and he explains how he has come to write the book. The novel features postmodern stylistic elements such as metanarration, and Vonnegut's typically short nonsequential chapters.

In one of numerous interviews Kurt Vonnegut describes this novel as an attempt to deal with his appalling experience in Dresden, which he underwent on his own as a POW (prisoner of war) by the end of the war, and which he survived due to being kept in a well-insulated meat locker, called Slaughterhouse-Five. Dresden was seen as an ultimate temple of peace, since the rest of towns were bombed and burnt out, whereas this city did not suffer any merest damage and the prisoners transferred there are told to be very lucky, because if there exists any place on Earth to survive the war, it is this town. No war industry, no troops, nothing in there could attract the Allies' attention.

"Somebody behind him in the boxcar said, "Oz." That was I. That was me. The only other city I'd ever seen was Indianapolis, Indiana. Every other big city in Germany had been bombed and burned ferociously. Dresden had not suffered so much as a

cracked windowpane. Sirens went off every day, screamed like hell, and people went down into cellars and listened to radios there. The planes were always bound for someplace else—Leipzig, Chemnitz, Plauen, places like that. So it goes.” (Vonnegut 1991: 58)

Having suffered this firebombing, Dresden is referred to as a *moonscape*:

„Many holes were dug at once. Nobody knew yet what there was to find. Most holes came to nothing—to pavement, or to boulders so huge they would not move. There was no machinery. Not even horses or mules or oxen could cross the moonscape.“ (Vonnegut 1991: 79)

Even though *Slaughterhouse-Five* is classified as a science fiction novel, the basis of his work is founded on an authentic historic event. The devastating power of the firebombing and macabre consequences is pursued to make it a historical-science fiction novel. The readers also perceive an intense and clear antiwar sentiment penetrating throughout the whole story expressed by means of a mock-serious humor. Vonnegut used to say he always aimed to write about these horrendous events, but he found himself incapable of accomplishing this goal for more than 20 years. Vonnegut’s protagonist, a World War II veteran named Billy Pilgrim, was born the same year as Vonnegut himself. His name, Pilgrim, represents a symbol for his time travelling, his time pilgrimage. He becomes “unstuck in time”, experiencing the events of his life nonsequentially, with flashpoints being in Dresden, his capture by psychic aliens from the planet Tralfamador, and the poswar events leading up to his murder. He possesses his own manner of dealing with the indecipherable aggression and obliteration he witnesses. He always says he has come “unstuck in time”:

„People aren't supposed to look back. I'm certainly not going to do it anymore.

I've finished my war book now. The next one I write is going to be fun.

This one is a failure, and had to be, since it was written by a pillar of salt. It begins like this:

Listen:

Billy Pilgrim has come unstuck in time.

It ends like this:

Poo-tee-weet?" (Vonnegut 1991: 98)

This is how he manages to cope with everyday horrors: shifting in time. He finds himself at one place at one moment. He passes through one door, and unexpectedly appears somewhere else, passing through another door. It either considers his swimming lessons at the YMCA, or his speeches at the Lions club or his captivity in Tralfamadore. As a soldier, Billy Pilgrim represents a rather comic or ridiculous character, because he does not resemble a genuine soldier in any way. He is educated to work as a chaplain's assistant, the profession driving away his contemporaries. His peculiar and inappropriate uniform, a ridiculous coat and silver boots serving as a disguise for a *Cinderella* performance, with no preparation for a war conflict, no weapons, all contributes to his image as an odd creature. A hint of irony may be uncovered, because so many real and well trained soldiers equipped with proper and potent weapons, dressed in fitting uniforms, perished in the war, and this absurd figure sailed throughout the war with hardly a scratch.

In spite of that, a post-war period for this veteran implies a rather thriving phase of his life. He becomes both husband and father and runs a prosperous optometrist medical office thanks to his father-in law who owns the school for optometrists Billy Pilgrim attended. His wife, a very rich person, Valencia, died during a tragic-comic accident while rushing towards the hospital her husband after her husband's plane crash on the top of Sugarbush Mountain in Vermont. While she was driving her Cadillac El Dorado Coupé de Ville, she did not pay attention to signposts and missed the right slip road. After having pulled over too fast she was smashed by another car, but this accident was not the

fatal one. It just caused the loss of an exhaust pipe and due to that, when she arrived in the hospital, she died of the intoxication by carbon monoxide.

“*So it goes*”, an expression following each mention of death, resembles omnipresent, accidental, intentional, or natural death. Billy Pilgrim believes that one’s life is predetermined and he cannot do anything to alter the course of his life. This fact makes Billy’s life easier to live, and leads him to be extremely passive. Either just one person dies, or it occurs on an immense extent. Death, as an inevitable part of life, is seen by terrestrials as something that must be reconciled with. “*So it goes*” shows that there is nothing one can do about it.

On the other hand, in the Tralfamadorian world, in Billy Pilgrim’s imaginative world, if a person dies one moment, he or she stays alive in all the other moments. They perceive reality in a different way. We, people, always ask “why”. We seek for answers, for facts, reasons, but the Tralfamadorians offer another point of view, without any *whys*, everything is just the way it is.

On Tralfamador, the Aliens live with the fourth dimension acknowledgement which means that all the moments exist and occur endlessly and that all these moments have already happened, because they repeat all the time, and due to this fact, the Tralfamadorians accept their faith with incredible calmness and tranquility, since they cannot change this faith in any way. He cannot see the Tralfamadorians, because they live in this fourth dimension which is not visible for a human kind. The difference between the humans on Earth and the Tralfamadorians, because the humans consider time to run linearly and thus proposes the possibility to be interfered. The Tralfamadorians never cease to exist, but simply continue reliving their life in random sequence. Therefore, there is no reason to mourn someone’s death, because that person is still alive in many other moments in time. They know how the Universe comes to an end and they would be able to

change it, but this event is just meant to happen and they are not supposed to interfere anyhow.

Billy is exposed on Tralfamador, in this fictive world, in an arranged apartment as a unique example of human kind and here he is asked if he feels happier than on Earth and he replies that it is probably the same.

„Now the first question came—from the speaker on the television set: "Are you happy here?"

"About as happy as I was on Earth," said Billy Pilgrim, which was true." (Vonnegut 1991: 134)

The whole text is structured as a synthesis of three levels: author's subjective narration of his experience, imaginative travelling into the planet of Tralfamador and also the description of the book inception itself. It is all melted together and creates with a fearsome and truthful description a vivid portrait of what the existence within the war entails. It relates to the cited part above from the first chapter, where he explains the longitude of his work by declaring there is nothing intelligent to say about a massacre, and this is expressed by the means of onomatopoeic expressions through the throat of a little bird always twittering *Poo-tee-weet*.

„Birds were talking.

One bird said to Billy Pilgrim, "Poo-tee-weet?" (Vonnegut 1991: 124)

Nothing intelligent may be said about the war and so the bird expresses himself accurately. It is just an appropriate comment on the horrors of combats, since any meaningful word cannot express or describe the meaninglessness of this dreadfulness. Closely related to the theme of destiny is Pilgrim's persuasion about the lack of free will. If our future destiny has already been determined, then we do not possess any free will in fact. The idea of free will is being discussed

there furthermore and it offers us an opportunity to consider, if any free will really exists. If everything we do has been predetermined, it leads us to our fate.

The question may be uttered, if people possess any kind of free will, or if our steps are determined beforehand and limited by the rules and society restrictions. Against Billy's will, he is as a child rescued from the bottom of the pool, later he is drafted into the war and all his acting during the war symbolizes just a "against-his-will" behavior. Acting as free will exists actually does not mean it really exists.

Billy Pilgrim disposes of the ability to pursue the time shifts not only into the past, but also into the future and he is somehow aware of the time and the way of his death. He awaits his death calmly without any fear and it comes exactly the same way, by an assassin's bullet, at exactly the time, he has predicted, as an effectuation of thirty years old death threat.

The book ends when the soldiers leave to fight the Russians and only the survivors may continue in the ruins and debris removal and the war in Europe comes to an end:

"Billy and the rest wandered out onto the shady street. The trees were leafing out. There was nothing going on out there, no traffic of any kind. There was only one vehicle, an abandoned wagon drawn by two horses. The wagon was green and coffin-shaped.

Birds were talking.

One bird said to Billy Pilgrim, "Poo-tee-weet?" (Vonnegut 1991: 154)

In life a human being experiences the good and the bad and to survive, it is important to perceive just the good and do not take any notice of the bad. Pilgrim is often depicted as a Christ-like figure in the novel. Images of Adam and Eve appear there as well, and the story of Sodom and Gomorrah is used in Chapter One. However, Vonnegut

does not use the Bible to proselytize Christianity. He is not in agreement with the theology of Christianity, but he believes in its basic principles and ethics.

Vonnegut appears in the novel as both the narrator of the story and as a minor character in here. However, the main character is not represented by Vonnegut himself, but it is definitely Billy Pilgrim. Even though Pilgrim is a fictitious character who has experienced the same war and the same bombing of Dresden as Vonnegut, it is not Vonnegut. Thus, he provides himself vaster freedom as a storyteller. Though many of the events in the novel are based on historical events, it remains a work of fiction. Vonnegut finishes the book with a similar chapter as at the beginning, because he tells of the assassinations of Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King, and of the ongoing war in Vietnam. He places the novel in the context of contemporary America and reminds the readers that hardly any difference occurred in the world since World War II.

Even though the very first critics did not seem to be propitious at all, *Slaughterhouse-Five* eventually became to be perceived as a crossover science-fiction work of art and an influential anti-war satire. The critical reception of the novel was generally positive but not effusive. The *New York Times* called it “*tough and funny, sad and delightful*” (31 March, 1969). It was one of the American Library Association’s 100 Most Frequently Challenged Books of 1990-2000. The novel was nominated for both a Nebula Award and a Hugo Award in 1970, but it won neither of them. However, today it is regarded as a classic.

4.3. CATCH-22

Catch-22 is the title of his antiwar novel significantly characterized by humor, satire, irony and sarcasm. The tone varies from satire, fantasy, and farce to parody and jibes. It mostly leads off the author's personal experience in the U.S. Air Force, because he knew the atmosphere, the situation and the relations very closely. Heller was very interested in consciousness and language. His prose is hard and violent and he wrote without following narrative rules strictly and roundly.

The book is episodic in structure, and characters are one by one brought nearer to the death or insanity in each chapter. Heller uses these linguistic tools to express the absurdity of war itself. A reader sometimes may hardly believe how bizarre the military situation can become and just withholds his breath in anticipation of the solution. Heller presents the war in a tragicomic, grotesque, absurd manner, but it is more complex, more complicated than it may seem at first sight. Heller agrees that he aimed to attack not only the absurdity of war, but also the hypocrisy, cruelty, and stupidity of our mass society in general.

It presents not just an antiwar idea, but also an idea of any human being's dilemma of necessity to decide when facing any choice, if a soldier, or anybody, should respect the authority at all costs, or if he should follow his conscience, his heart, his personal judgment. It is a simple question of his morality, a question of how people are able to suppress their own way of thinking and to what degree they are capable of adjusting to a given situation. Somebody buckles under the weight of events, while another fights for his truth and opinions.

This fight for his truth, opinions, against this total absurdity, for his personal freedom, for the notion that there must exist a way out, this may describe in short Captain Yossarian. *Catch-22* is set on the tiny Mediterranean island of Pianosa where the 256th bombing

squadron of the U.S. Air Force is stationed during the Italian campaign of World War II. An Air Force pilot is considered to be insane and peculiar just because of his weird Assyrian name which nobody has ever heard before. He distinguishes himself in various things. He does not want to let the world of bureaucracy beat him and be reconciled with pervasive threat of death. On his never-ending fight for freedom he always faces this “catch-22”, which has come into general usage as a cover term for an inconclusive situation. This paragraph prevents him from being grounded.

”Can’t you ground someone who’s crazy?”

”Oh, sure. I have to. There’s rule saying I have to ground anyone who’s crazy.”

”Then why don’t you ground me? I’m crazy. Ask Clevinger.”

”Of course they’re crazy, “ Doc Daneeka replied. “I just told you they’re crazy, didn’t I? And you can’t let crazy people decide whether you’re crazy or not, can you?”

”Can you ground Orr?”

”I sure can. But first he has to ask me to. That’s part of the rule.”

”Then why doesn’t he ask you to?”

”Because he’s crazy”, Doc Daneeka said. “He has to be crazy to keep flying combat missions after all the close calls he’s had. Sure, I can ground Orr. But first he has to ask me to.”

”That’s all he has to do to be grounded?”

”That’s all. Let him ask me.”

”And then you can ground him? Yossarian asked.

”No. Then I can’t ground him.”

”You mean there’s a catch?”

”Sure there’s a catch. Catch-22. Anyone who wants to get out of combat duty isn’t really crazy” (Heller 1994: 51, 52)

It represents a circular reasoning that basically keeps Yossarian flying all the time. Yossarian desperately tries to walk around this

completely ridiculous paragraph, but every time he performs a little hint of self-concern, he is not supposed to be insane, because the insane are not worry about themselves. He faces this reality day by day and does not surrender in any way. He is stubbornly trying to survive the war, either in hospital pretending liver illness, or as a result of being grounded, which seems rather unlikely. His peers despise him because he is so different, because of his unbeatable attitude and his effort to achieve freedom. He may be considered as a trouble-maker. However, he does not mind it at all for it is just his philosophy, his politics in dealing with this life of a pilot condemned to death at this air base.

Firstly, it must be mentioned that Yossarian does not portray a typical hero with his vices and virtues. He does not want to risk his life and does not want to fight in war, for somebody else's well-being. He just desires to be left alone to live his own life and not to abhor of losing his life all the time. In fact, he seeks any kind of reprieve to avoid risking his life.

It is understandable that he does not have any interest in losing his life in some unimportant, illogical, worthless, absurd mission which their flight plan usually overflows with. The pilots were supposed to risk their lives all over again with an inconsolable effort to achieve an always rising number of missions which is. Every one seeks for hope that the situation finally ends well. He could attach to and this mandatory number of missions constitutes such a kind of hope. Pilots may believe there is a light at the end of the tunnel. There is a chance it could come to an end. However, when they reach this dreamed up line, it disperses again and again. Each of them deals with this frantic chase in his own personal way. Somebody gets apathetic, somebody never gives up hope and after reaching a coveted number, he packs his belongings all over again.

It takes a really strong and determined mind to not go insane under such conditions. Living in a constant peril of life when the

friends are dying or fighting for their lives in hospital may ruin even an exceedingly optimistic young will.

Yossarian spends his time with various deeds testing the illogical bureaucracy. While reading letters he keeps deleting certain words and later on he adds a particular signature: *Washington Irving* or its alternation *Irving Washington*. Washington Irving was the first professional American author who wrote short stories popular all over the world and translated into Czech as well. In my opinion, this author had been chosen deliberately due to his fight for the copyright transgression to protect American authors. Yossarian was censoring the letters, thus he was denying any kind of a copyright law. In absolutely absurd settings during just bizarre circumstances only incongruous events may happen and no one ever wonders that this occasion asks for an exceptional solution and one absurdity changes another repeatedly.

“Is this man who signed these names in your squadron?”

“Which one? There are two names here.”

“Either one. We figure that Washington Irving and Irving Washington are one man and that he’s using two names just to throw us off the track. That’s done very often.”

“I don’t think there’s a man with either of those names in my squadron.” ...”

“I would have signed them if I had”.

“With those name? ... Yours or Washington Irving’s?”

“With my own name”, Major Major told him, “I don’t even know Washington Irving’s name.” (Heller 1994: 108, 109)

That is absolute bureaucracy that surrounds Yossarian and the rest of the squadron in *Catch-22*. It may seem ridiculous, obscure, absurd, strange or illogical, but it represents the most terrifying aspect. It is this powerful, impersonal, cruel, merciless bureaucracy that decides whether or not this particular human being will survive.

This bureaucracy, this phenomenon, does not know any exceptions or any special circumstances. Instead, it rolls round and round these meaningless orders, this tragicomic *Catch-22*, heading into an inevitable end. This investigation and various others show how these white-collar bureaucrats do not care about any reasons, any answers, any explanations and that is why the bureaucracy is so absurd, powerful and frightening. What does it show about the language? What is the language good for if it does not fulfil its communicative function? It testifies about the powerlessness of language, because it is exempted from its main purpose - information transmission. And this *Washington Irving* or *Irving Washington* represents just the most suitable person to face this bureaucracy, because he does not exist. The non-existent person stands for an ideal individual for meaningless affairs.

Another significant character, the Chaplain, unlike the others who suffer from gruesome jealousy of their wives, he frets himself with worries about his wife, his children, his family because of being afraid that he did not teach her sufficiently how to manage the household on her own and how to keep herself and the children safe and out of danger.

“The chaplain’s wife was the one thing in the world he could be certain of, and it would have been sufficient, if only he had been left to live his life out with just her and the children.” (Heller 1994: 311)

“He was tormented inexorably by morbid fantasies involving them, by dire, hideous omens of illness and accident. His meditations were polluted with threats of dread diseases like Ewing’s tumor and leukaemia; he saw his infant son die two or three times every week because he had never taught his wife how to stop arterial bleeding; watched, in tearful, paralyzed silence, his whole family electrocuted, one after another, at a baseboard socket because he had never told her that a human body would conduct electricity; all four went up in flames almost every night when the water heater exploded and set the two-story wooden house afire. “(Heller 1994: 311, 312)

Not only is he afraid of his family, he faces one of the most strenuous personal crises he has ever had to deal with. He begins to doubt that in this world full of illogicality, immorality and a constant hunt for something, God could let these happen. He reconsiders his faith in omnipotent God, especially when he witnesses Colonel's Cathcart effort to abuse the Church for his own perverse purposes. This leads into an immense inner struggle between the faith the chaplain had been living for his whole life and new circumstances that provided him a new point of view. He is confused about his role of a virtuousness and ethics holder in the world where a scale of priorities has been reappraised. He is not the only one balancing his persuasion, belief and his personal life attitude as a consequence of living in such absurd and meaningless conditions.

Doctor Daneeka took the Hippocratic Oath, swore he would take care of every human being who needed it and that he would do his best to preserve life. In war, on the other hand, he serves just as an instrument to repair not human beings, but warriors who are supposed to be sent into various fighting fields as soon as possible. In fact, his role resembles just the one of a "repairman" in this bloody machinery. He is not there to make men feel better, but to make them feel as well as possible to manage to come back into the war.

He tries to find out what the role of a doctor is in a world where killing has become a virtue and where man's primary function is to cause an injury, the more serious the better, or even death. He fights his inner struggle about his role, because he meant to help people and he is not sure if he does so. This lack of logic drives him crazy, but this is not an only complication he has to face in this world of "impuissant language". He is desperately afraid of flying, but as a member of the squadron he is supposed to fulfill a certain number of missions. However, a favor is done for Doc Daneeka, his name is listed in particular missions in order to cover this amount of required flying operations. One tragic plane accident happens and Doc

Daneeka is believed to participate in this flight but evidently, he is present just “on the list of passengers”. That is when another in the line of absurd and unbelievable situation occurs.

“Who is in the plane?”

“McWatt”, said Sergeant Knight. “He’s got the two new pilots with him on a training flight. Doc Daneeka’s up there, too.”

“I’m right here”, contended Doc Daneeka,

in a strange and troubled voice, darting an anxious look at Sergeant Knight.” (Heller 1994: 389)

“Two more to go”, said Sergeant Knight. “McWatt and Doc Daneeka.”

“I’m right here, Sergeant Knight”, Doc Daneeka told him plaintively. “I’m not in the plane.” (Heller 1994: 390)

“You’re dead, sir”, one of his two enlisted men explained.

Doc Daneeka jerked his head up quickly with resentful distrust. “What’s that?”

“You’re dead, sir”, repeated the other. “That’s probably the reason you always feel so cold.” (Heller 1994: 392)

No matter how live you feel and how many people see you, in the world of *Catch-22*, if some features in some list and this list plays a certain role, this list becomes sacrosanct. In other words: What is written is given as truth.

As it has been already said, language loses its communicative power and even if many questions are asked, but nobody cares for answers. You may scream, you may shout, you may explain, you may do whatever you imagine, but the invincible power of bureaucracy persists unbeatably. Thus Doc Daneeka shows himself to the others and remains unnoticed, unseen, unheard of, because this is the world of bureaucracy. Once his name is listed, he is

definitely supposed to be present aboard the missing plane and no other possibility is taken into account.

Each of the heroes tries to survive this nonsensical fight for life and most of them struggle to keep their mind in fact. It takes much effort and not everybody succeeds in this never-ending dash. Yossarian preserves his dream and attitude that there must be a way out. Finally, he manages to find it. He cannot have anything granted, but he has his hope he will achieve his goal.

“How do you feel, Yossarian?”

“Fine. No. I’m very frightened.”

“That’s good”, said Major Danby. “It proves you’re still alive. It won’t be fun.”

Yossarian started out. “Yes it will.”

“I mean it, Yossarian. You’ll have to keep on your toes every minute of every day. They’ll bend heaven and earth to catch you.”

“I’ll keep on my toes every minute.”

“You’ll have to jump.”

“I’ll jump.” (Heller 1994: 519)

The publication of *Catch-22* in 1961 evoked a more experimental approach to the war novel. It was among the first of its type to use satire, exaggeration, and discontinuity to depict the internalized logic of war rather than its evident brutality. Heller used black humor and absurdist and surrealist techniques to outline this brutality even more efficiently. The irrational logic is depicted in the novel’s episodic structure, which seems to be rather chaotic and which also seems to resist any kind of progression or cohesion. Moreover, the only chronological aspect is expressed by Colonel Cathcart’s never-ending increasing of the number of missions.

Initially, response and sales in the United States were limited and slow, but by 1962 the book became bestseller in the United

Kingdom. Since 1965, the war in Vietnam became a great American concern, and due to its anti-war sentiments and the increase of resistance against the war, sales increased and by 1968 two million copies had been sold.

It became a major bestseller and especially young people were really delighted with it. The novel captures the general feeling of confusion of a post-war period generation that had experienced the massive destructiveness of American atomic bombings and German mass murder as well as the sneaking fallout of the Cold War and the Korean War. It also expresses the appearing dissatisfaction and rebelliousness of the Vietnam generation. The book was supposed to serve as a reflection on human error, character and the impulse to satirize contemporary mores. The novel's absurdities, either comic or not, serve almost always to show the alarming inhumanities which contaminate our political, social and economic system.

4.4. THE NAKED AND THE DEAD

The psychological anti-war novel with features of retrospective, *The Naked and the Dead*, is based on Norman Mailer's military service with the 112th Cavalry Regiment during the Philippines Campaign from 1944 to 1945. As Kinder depicts, "drawing upon his own experience as an infantryman, Mailer highlights the brutality of combat and the physical and mental abuse suffered by "common soldiers" throughout the war" (Kinder 2005: 191). His novel tells the story of an American invasion on the fictional South Pacific Island of Anopopei, where Japanese forces had been operating for many months. Even though Mailer was not involved in much combat and finished his service as a cook, he managed to capture the ambience of occurrences outstandingly. Kinder reveals that "Mailer does not attempt to romanticize the war or those who fought it" (Kinder 2005: 193). The readers empathize effortlessly with soldiers' destinies,

since each of those soldiers is introduced one by one in the time machine chapters and thus, main characters seem to be closer to the reader. The 559-page long bestseller is divided into four parts with subchapters and retrospective time machine chapters which are supposed to make us familiar with particular characters.

According to Kinder, “in *The Naked and the Dead*, Jews are popular targets of ridicule and abuse. Mailer had happened to be a victim to anti-Semitic insults during the service, and in the novel he goes to great lengths to emphasize the extent to which racism pervaded the wartime military” (Kinder 2005: 192). Although this fictional platoon should stick together and it should be supportive in case of emergency, the men never shed their mistrust of their Jews pals. For instance, one Jewish serviceman, Joey Goldstein is so traumatized by American racism that he begins to lose faith in the war effort altogether. Writing home, he admits that “it’s hard to remember all the fine ideals. Sometimes even with the Jews in Europe I don’t know why we’re fighting.” (Mailer 1976: 163)

Mailer illustrates what factors lead soldiers to join the Army showing that patriotism does not belong among the top priorities at all. Rather, it is the lack of opportunities at home which manoeuvres them to take this step. It does not matter at all what war is fought, who is standing against whom or what pretext people have to lead any kind of a war. The only thing which is crucial is the fact that all the time there are human beings dying, but sometimes people have to face an inevitability of war and have to take part in it. To merely stand for the belief of the pacifism declaring war and violence are always wrong does not represent from time to time an option.

This general idea appears in this book: soldiers are just men as well as soldiers of the enemy. They differ from themselves in various things; their nationality which forces them to stand on a particular side of a battle field, belongs among them. This thought may be suppressed for some time, but it is no longer possible when one

gets into a closer confrontation with a particular member of an enemy's army. Not only they are reluctant to perform their duties, but Mailer's soldiers frequently ask about the purpose of the war itself.

"What have I got against the goddamn Japs? You think I care if they keep this fuggin' jungle? What's it to me if Cummings gets another star?" (Mailer 1976: 128)

One of the two Jewish soldiers in the platoon, Roth, analyses the military hierarchy even better:

"Did you notice how they treated the officers? They slept in staterooms when we were jammed in the hold like pigs. It's to make them feel superior, a chosen group. That's the same device Hitler uses when he makes the Germans think they're superior." (Mailer 1976: 43)

As Schuchalter emphasizes, "while some of the characters in the novel threaten to devolve into types, it is only Roth, who conforms to the classic anti-Semitic stereotype. He is not only physically abhorrent, but he also captures the special type of intellectuality that characterizes the conventional anti-Semitic rendition of the Jew. Rootless, insecure, critical without being creative, sacrilegious, Roth is an ideal type of the so-called Jewish "intellect". Roth is not only physically and intellectually unworthy, but he is also morally unworthy, for his greatest failing is his moral cowardice. When Roth is forced to face a situation, he is not capable of anything – of defending himself against anti-Semitic attacks, or he is not brave enough to prevail in the climbing of Mount Anopopei" (Schuchalter 2007: 151, 152). However, Schuchalter also adds that "the readers may nearly sympathize with Roth's fear, as if the narrative voice does not monopolize other possible ways of understanding his value as a person. Roth, as well, fails to meet the requirements of masculinity, loses his right to live, and dies as a coward" (Schuchalter 2007: 152).

Moreover, such resentment becomes more disruptive when the problem of race accompanies (cf. Kinder: 2005). Abruptly, an impersonal notion about a soldier from the other side gets its outline, from someone in the enemy's uniform becomes a real living person, someone absolutely unknown, and bearing a sign of a potential death cause. This violator, vulnerable as any ordinary human being and begging for not being killed as any frightened man would do, he also possesses in pockets photos of a family. It becomes more and more evident that the enemy is being portrayed by a propaganda in much worse way as somebody who deserves nothing but to be killed. They are longing for their former, more or less common, lives, for their relatives, for their homes, jobs, schools or friends.

There is just this fight that needs to be fought. People benefit from the situation, desperately longing for an active participation in fights - maybe attracted by an idea of becoming heroes and famous and noticed while walking on a street. However, just a fraction of the soldiers really did survive the war, do something exceptional, become famous and make fortune from their deeds. Even this fraction of soldiers with their unique stories led crowds of recruits into an enlistment, and later on, their disillusion was terribly dreadful. The real life was fundamentally different on the beach always wearing wet clothes and always being hungry or eating just rice in the contrary to a paradise on earth described in brochures in an employment office.

Everybody endeavours to overcome it in his own way more or less successfully. A row of monotonous days filled with waiting for something to happen and for orders to come is changed for carrying out duties during dangerous missions in a deep jungle.

Kinder tries to explain, what the title of the book refers to: "The adjective *naked* refers to the *nakedness* and this may be comprehended as the way how Mailer undresses the characters and reveals conditions behind their motivations and fears. Mailer paints

a picture of wartime disunity. An animosity between soldiers and officers often eclipses any sense of national or ideological solidarity. Mailer's fighting men routinely characterize the officer-class as antidemocratic, anti-American – even fascist" (Kinder 2005: 194). Red Valsen, the most outspoken member of the platoon, provides a fitting summary of the collective attitude: "They ain't a general in the world is any good. They're all sonsofbitches." (Mailer 1976: 83)

Although it is not given in as a humorous way as Joseph Heller did in *Catch-22*, Mailer retells the story in his individual unique technique and bases the plot of this book on the story of RECON, a reconnaissance platoon that lands on the island of Anapopei's unprotected invasion beach in South Pacific, as a whole as well as of its individual members with their joyfulness and sorrows of everyday living. RECON, in other words represents a handful of exhausted men who are charged with an impossible mission from which just a few of them will return alive.

The Japanese - held island of Anapopei and related Toyaku Line which is supposed to be conquered, represents a hostile, hot and rainy place full of malaria and mud and steaming jungles. Throughout the story a reader becomes acquainted with each member of this recon by means of time machine chapters. Throughout these sections, Mailer allows the characters to speak for themselves. Thus, the readers shift back and forth from the war into peace to and fro. By those means it is possible to find the most favorite character, the person whom a reader may sympathize with. Revealing a soldier's destiny, family background, the past may seem boring at first, but step by step these chapters become a pleasing change and diversification of the narration. For instance, Joey Goldstein, a good, simple, solid, melancholic, sad, depressed Jew with a wife and kid, survives all the humiliations of the American army. He gives a strange first impression, but upon closer look, the reader becomes more familiar with him and begins to appreciate his relationship with his family, especially with his wife, and with his

mother. While his contemporaries played football, and were chasing girls, he had to work hard with his mother in the candy store and was just dreaming about achieving something bigger than this, about studying at university, about a scientific career, finding the true love and getting married.

After graduation from a welding school, he gets married with Natalie, gets a job for twenty-one dollars a week. All this happens against mother's objections, because she was dreaming about a different deal for her child. Maintaining the Jewish religion brings various complications into Joey's path. Although in Europe the Americans fight against the Nazis who are proclaiming their racial pureness and systematically are slaughtering the Jews (even though people were mostly unaware of that terror of Holocaust), and therefore the Americans are not supposed to be anti-Semites, in the core of the U.S. Army there are also those who do not think about Jews in a congenial way. Thus, Goldstein faces this fact from time to time in his own platoon.

He got used to feeling depressed and it even satisfied him to slide into a depression. Spending long hours thinking about the meaning of life, he fails to figure out where the sense of our effort lies. He tries to uncover why we should try to work, because we are born, we live and then die, and he considers, if that is all we are here for. The more free time he has, the more he fills it with reflection upon that topic. There is one significant feature which differs him from the others in the platoon. Unlike them, he believes in love, in his wife and his child. While not the happiest in the world, his wife and he respect each other and in case of troubles they ensconce themselves into their child and everything goes well. He is reconciled with his destiny. He knows that Jews were born to be victimized, subjugated, to travel from disaster to disaster: "We are born to suffer." (Mailer 1976: 384)

There are always those in leadership positions and those who are led. In general speaking, there are those who command and those being commanded. Workers in uniforms include a working-class troop and officers struggle just to be promoted and gain popularity.

Lieutenant Robert Hearn, an aristocrat living in the shadow of his father Bill, deals with a disesteem from General Cummings' quarter, stands in the middle of a hierarchy. Finally, he is charged to lead the platoon into the reconnaissance and that becomes fatal for him later. A subordinate position led him into a leading one. It was General Cummings who stood behind all of Hearn's troubles. Cummings seems indifferent and cold-blooded against everything that is happening around him. However, after getting to know him better, nothing is as it originally seems. He just follows his part in the game called war, pretending it is a round of chess, and he is doing his best so that he will not let anybody down. His relationship towards the platoon may be compared to a relationship of a factory owner towards his employees. These employees do the essential and not really likeable work and it is the owner who plans, works overtime, but in a different way than the others. It is the owner who has to take care of his employees. He must maintain the difference in their social-level statuses and who claims the troop should be afraid of its leader: "Break them down, let them fear as more." (Mailer 1976: 139).

These two men were fighting against each other in a silent unuttered fight. Both of them were trying to prove to themselves that they had the situation under their control. Robert Hearn, a brusque strict-looking cold-blooded man always standing within the shade of his father Bill Hearn, had to fight for his place in the world. He was believed to be lazy and indifferent to achieve any goals, and he seemed to be looking for his destiny all the time. There is something about Hearn, some kind of outrage or anger about the situation, about the happening, about the fact that he is just one insignificant

human being who cannot change anything. He is, maybe more than the others, conscious of various kinds of injustice related to the discrimination and cruelty and recklessness of some soldiers who have lost their souls during the war.

He rejects reality. He is smart and attentive and often talks to General Cummings. These famous and proclaimed conversations, often led in a definitely philosophical tone, may resemble those of an old man full of wisdom with a young man who is searching for any kind of balance in the world full of imbalance. These philosophical dialogues adopt a really illustrious position and when illustrating the General Cummings' character, this stands for just a perfect feature. In the position of the recon's commander, he wants to prove his capabilities and to equal former commander Sam Croft, but his lack of experience stands against him and he dies due to Croft's nasty act in dealing with the mountain.

In the platoon, representatives of an American young ordinary men are full of enthusiasm, desire for life, ideals and dreams whose lives are turning around three points - women, fights and alcohol. In their souls they are just too shy, too faint-hearted to admit to themselves that their lives are simply desperately empty and unimportant and there is no guarantee that they will achieve something in the future.

This uncertainty eats everybody's heart out. Soldiers represent a collective character and they think both aloud and just in their minds about an imaginary waiting list for death. Maybe they are the next one to die. It would make a sense. If a soldier, who spent at the platoon a shorter time than someone else and died, therefore it could be this soldier's turn.

Woodrow Wilson, named after the American president who lead the USA into World War I due to their shared idealism, died in a stretcher after having been shot. After having spent a few horrible

days in agony and thirst and pain, this young man full of energy and desire to get out of the war and live a meaningful life, passed away.

Gallagher, is always pitying himself, a hot-headed racist from a working class of South Boston. He lived for his family and after having been informed about a tragic death of his wife, he sinks into apathy. For a long time, he is not even capable of accepting the reality and acts as if his wife was still alive. They had plans, they have a newborn son, they had everything ahead of them, but now there is nothing.

Julio Martinez, the Mexican, gives the impression of being absolutely even-tempered, calm, smart, and really competent for his job as a lookout man, but rather non-talkative and non-pushful soldier who obeys commands with no objections. He may have his doubts. However, he is not there to doubt about commands, but to accomplish them. He may feel responsible for Hearn's death, because if he had said the truth about his exploration and about the Japanese platoon ahead of them, Hearn would have probably been alive. Yet he has just done what he had been supposed to do, so there is no need to feel bad about it.

As a Mexican he would like to become a "real American". He feels how hard it is to be accepted as equally as the others. He represents immigrants, in the first half of the 20th century in the United States of America. Even though he is understood as a human being, he is disregarded by the others due to the color of his skin and his national origin.

Staff Sergeant Sam Croft, in the time machine chapter named the hunter, is a monster. Kinder depicts him as "a character unable to enjoying anything but fighting, killing, and achieving various unreasonable goals and leaving loads of the dead behind himself. The man without feelings, just a heartless machine, self-assured and stubborn, determined and steadfast always knows what to do and does not let anybody doubt about it" (Kinder 2005: 196). He

enjoys his position of a recon leader and accepts Hearn, who is later supposed to lead him as a necessary evil.

Croft does not hesitate at all about his commands, even if he is conscious of a possibility that it will cost human lives. In simple terms, he kills for pleasure. This is just a case of Hearn's death when Croft decided to withhold the information provided by Martinez and as a result of that, a platoon of Japanese surprised them. He faces an uprising in his platoon, but he does not befriend soldiers. He is there and has his goal and wants to achieve it at all costs. Only at the end, when everything seems to be over, is he able to make jokes with the rest of the men.

They are trying to survive, to live as a meaningful life as possible, side by side in tragic poor conditions. It seems to be never-ending cycle: to explore a new area, conquer it, to make it inhabitable and to set out on another mission. They do not get on well at all with each, but their coexistence is inevitable. They have to cooperate, but they do not fit to each other as Jews or Christians, aristocrats, or Hispanics, etc. They have to fight not only against the Japanese but also against themselves. These soldiers left their wives, families, children, friends, jobs, hobbies, everything, in the USA, and now they are just alone thousands miles from their homes with doubts and fear and homesickness, sadness. Those who are happier ones trust their wives and they are not jealous of them, the others suffer from dreadful thoughts about their wives and girlfriends who may be cheating on them. They become tough, they are angry with the rest of the world, but then they realize that there is nothing to do but to become indifferent with the situation and gradually they have no problem to make jokes about it. The readers can feel their cynicism coming from every single word. They have not seen their relatives for long months, they are living like animals, being worried about each step they have to make. There are so many traps just waiting for you to be caught in and to be killed in. One must be

aware of everything and get used to living in the jungle, let one's senses to become more attentive and then, maybe, one will survive.

As Kinder emphasizes, "the novel rejects the notion that Americans willingly deferred their ideological or racial interests for national imperatives. It attracts attention to the contradictions between the nation's democratic ideals and the exclusionary practices deemed necessary to ensure Americans' participation in the war effort. Moreover, *The Naked And The Dead* reminds us that the immediate postwar period saw no accord or hegemonic interpretation of the war and its aftermath. On the other hand, this novel suggests that the public memory of World War II was once far more ambiguous and conflicted than it seems today" (Kinder 2005: 190). Part of Mailer's goal is to remind people of what was already being "expunged" from the national memory of World War II (cf. Kinder 2005).

Kinder describes that "the men in Mailer's platoon are not revolutionaries, so that by the novel's end most of them are resigned to accept their fates as cogs in the military machine. Neither men nor the war itself can be successfully mastered by military techniques. There would be always friction between the men and the forces that would rule them – and in that friction there is always a seed of hope" (Kinder 2005: 198, 199). The novel ends up with a hint of hope – Mailer finds a pleasure in exploring the failures of the officer class.

The fight asks for pretending a national unity, and all traces of difference had to be suppressed for the good of the war effort. *The Naked and the Dead* offers a picture of World War II with all of its complexities and contradictions. It reminds us that the experience of World War II provides a few easy answers for the future (cf. Kinder, 2005).

As Kinder shows, "despite some reservations about the novel's language and violent content, the initial reviews of *The Naked and*

the Dead were overwhelmingly laudatory. *Time Magazine* proclaimed it to be the best novel yet about World War II, and *Newsweek* called it to be a war novel in the best tradition. *The Naked And The Dead* has been put by the Modern Library into the list of one hundred best novels in English language of the twentieth century” (Kinder 2005: 191).

4.5. THE PLOT AGAINST AMERICA

„The greatest menace while I was growing up came from abroad, from the Germans and the Japanese, our enemies because we were Americans. At home, the biggest thread came from the Americans who opposed or resisted us – or condescended to us or rigorously excluded us – because we were Jews.” (Roth 1988: 20)

The Plot Against America represents a work of fiction, in better words – a form of alternate history. From Roth’s other fictions, *The Plot Against America* differs in that the alternative history impacts directly on his representation of personal family biography. As it may be read in the note for reader: “the readers should be very aware of tracking where the historical fact ends and historical imagining begins” (Roth 2004: 364). Even though Philip Roth and his family are denoted with their own names in the book, even though he was a young Jewish boy during the war and even though they were living in the Weequahic section of Newark in New Jersey, even though the war period stood for times filled with fear, instability, insecurity, and concerns – both for himself and his family and close relatives; the political circumstances were rather different. In this fictional story, the renowned aviation hero and fanatical isolationist Charles A. Lindbergh defeated Franklin Delano Roosevelt by a massive win in 1940 presidential election and became the 33rd

President of the United States of America. Thus, fear overran to each family in America. According to Parrish “the novel draws on the memory of the Holocaust in order to examine his own sensibilities as a Jewish writer. In this elaborate historical fantasy and fictional autobiography, Roth reimagines his childhood from the assumption that Charles A. Lindbergh, not Franklin D. Roosevelt, was elected President in 1940” (Parrish 2004: 367).

Philip Roth retells what was like for his Newark family to live under a menacing Presidency of Charles A. Lindbergh, when everybody who happened to be a Jew, had every reason to expect the worst. Lindbergh publicly blamed the Jews for selfishly pushing America towards a pointless war with Nazi Germany, and after the inauguration he negotiated a cordial agreement with Adolf Hitler, whose conquest of Europe and whose virulent anti – Semitic policies he appeared to accept without any scruples.

This Charles A. Lindbergh (1902-1974) signifies a real person. In the novel and in reality as well, he is described as an aviation hero, the Minnesota-born flier and airmail pilot who flew the airplane *Spirit of St. Louis* from New York to Paris. He completed the first nonstop transatlantic solo flight. Therefore, he became a celebrity around the globe. He was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross and was commissioned by the President Coolidge the Colonel in the U.S. Army Air Corps Reserve. His wife, whom he married in 1929, was named Anne Morrow, and their son was kidnapped, as it is portrayed in the novel. At the end, the theory about blackmailing by the Nazis is revealed. However, besides being an aviation hero undoubtedly, he was also an extreme isolationist with ties to Nazi Germany – Lindbergh did not deny being a genuine admirer of Adolf Hitler. In *The Plot Against America*, President Lindbergh made a pact with Hitler not to enter WWII, unleashing a wave of American anti – Semitism. With Charles A. Lindbergh as the President of the United States, the American people had to face the threat they had never thought could be real.

Lindbergh actually did make journeys to Germany, but his purpose was to report on Nazi aircraft development, not to “negotiate with Hitler”, as he did in the novel. Nevertheless, as far as their attitudes and opinions are concerned, Lindbergh in the novel and real Lindbergh quite resembled themselves. He said about Hitler that “he is undoubtedly a great man, and I believe he has done much for the German people” (Roth 2004: 369). His wife, Anne Morrow Lindbergh, criticized a “strictly puritanical view at home that dictatorships are of necessity wrong, evil, unstable, and no good can come of them – combined with our funny-paper view of Hitler as a clown – combined with the very strong (naturally) Jewish propaganda in the Jewish-owned papers” (Roth 2004: 369). Anne Morrow Lindbergh, as well as in the novel, was a famous pilot, and having written about her flying adventures, she had to face the refusal by some Jewish booksellers to stock the book due to her husband’s growing unpopularity among the American antifascists. Obviously, their attitude towards Hitler and his regime was not strictly negative. They admired him, in some way, as a great charismatic personality, and leader. Maybe they did not see or did not want to see the brutality hidden in him and his acting. Perhaps, living out there over the ocean in America gave emerge a fake feeling of safety. However, Lindbergh was also awarded the Service Cross of the German Eagle, a gold medallion with four small swastikas, and he received it at American embassy dinner in Berlin from Air Marshall Herman Göring “by order of the Führer”. Lindbergh did not escape various attacks for having accepted the German medal and for his statements and attitudes. Secretary Ickes called him “the No.1 United States Nazi fellow traveler”.

When Hitler invaded Czechoslovakia in 1939, Lindbergh commented on it: “Much I disapprove of many things Germany has done, I believe she has pursued the only consistent policy in Europe in recent years.” (Roth 2004: 370). Despite the fact the President Roosevelt despised him, disliked him and especially he distrusted him, he gave him approval to go on active duty as a colonel in U. S. Army Air Corps. In April 1939 he wrote this entry into his diary: “There are too

many Jews in places like New York already. A few Jews add strength and character to a country, but too many create chaos. And we are getting too many.” (Roth 2004: 370). He and many others were afraid of the influence and effect on the press and radio the Jews had. Basically, they considered the Jews to be a powerful element and one of the reasons the United States were becoming involved in the war step by step; even though the Jewish minority represented a small one amidst the American people. In this book, Lindbergh accepted the candidacy for Presidency and won. In reality, he did not accept the proposal to candidate, because he rather preferred to take political positions as a private citizen. He gave long speeches against the American intervention in European war to large audiences across the country throughout spring and summer in 1941 and received long ovations with cries “Our next president!”. In his speech “Who Are the War Agitators?” he stood for an idea that they cannot allow the natural passions and prejudices of other people to lead their country to destruction.

After Pearl Harbor was attacked, the situation changed dramatically. Lindbergh could hardly maintain his position and stepped back. He took active role in training pilots for Navy/ Marine Corps Corsair, which was the fighter plane he helped to develop for United Aircraft in Connecticut. In 1944 he received a governmental permission to go to the South Pacific to study Corsairs in action. There he got involved actively into combats and bombing against Japanese targets from New Guinea base. He flew 50 missions and returned to America to resume work with the United Aircraft’s fighter program and spent his time with his family in West Port, Connecticut, where they had moved to.

The main protagonist, a young boy named Philip Roth, retells the story of his Jewish family living in Newark – his brother Sandy, father Herman, mother Bess, and cousin Alvin – he left to be drafted and to fight for the country, but he is badly injured, loses his leg and consequently forced to leave the country as a traitor on the basis of various absurd Nazis-like accusations. The gist of the story is based on the author’s personal experience. Nevertheless, *The Plot Against*

America, references an alternate real reality, so the rest is being more or less altered – but it remains up to the reader to detect, how much, into what depth and extent, the book actually mirrors contemporary events. Previous generations of Jews moved to America to avoid persecutions and to seek for safety. As an American child of American parents, Philip Roth and many others took personal security for granted. However, with the Presidency within the hands of Charles A. Lindbergh, nobody is safe anymore:

“Lindbergh was the first famous living American whom I learned to hate – just as President Roosevelt was the first famous living American whom I taught to love – and so his nomination by the Republicans to run against Roosevelt in 1940 assaulted, as nothing ever had before, that huge endowment of personal security that I had taken for granted as an American child of American parents in an American school in an American city in an America at peace with the world.” (Roth 2004: 7)

As Parrish suggests, “being introduced to the President, we face the man who “is misleading the country with promises of peace while secretly agitating and planning our entry into the army struggle”. Roth is maybe not referring to Lindbergh, but to F. D. Roosevelt, and to George W. Bush. President Charles A. Lindbergh’s folksy populism and patriotism have reminded us of President G. W. Bush – the central conflict of the novel – whether to engage in the war on foreign soil – has precisely the opposite valence as it does today – with Bush’s interventionism contrasted to Lindbergh’s pro-fascist isolationism. The novel’s evocation of anti-Semitism gone wild might be read, for example, less a literal commentary on the social position of Jews – either now or in the past – than as an indirect indictment of the contemporary resurgence of right-wing Christianity in American public life” (Parrish 2007: 98).

As a family history, *The Plot Against America* examines Herman Roth’s dignity and manhood, as well as Roth’s mother Bessie’s

resourcefulness and kindness through their heroic response to the challenge posed by anti-Semitism in the United States. In this book, the family plays a crucial role; the fear of being orphaned, being evacuated from one's parents and one's history, it is at the heart of *The Plot Against America*. Philip's father Herman believes in family and its values; he believes in Roosevelt, in democracy and liberty. He believes that none of this could happen if Lindbergh had not been elected President, and most of all, Herman is a devoted admirer of Abraham Lincoln, the 16th President of the United States, who serviced in the office from March 1861 until his assassination in April 1865. Philip's father often refers to him as one of the most important and influential man in American history. In Washington, where the family head for holiday to, he wants his children to see the Lincoln Memorial, even though they have to experience one of a series of an anti-Semitic humiliation there. However, Herman can once again repeat to his family the Lincoln's famous statement from the speech made after the battle of Gettysburg: "All men are created equal." (Roth 2004: 65).

The Roth's family undergoes really a harsh period full of changes and turns of events. As Parrish explains, "the power of *The Plot Against America* lies in the incremental, credible, and sinister steps that lead to the systematic targeting of America's Jews" (Parrish 2007: 167).

Sandy and his aunt, Bessie's sister, became involved into the cooperation with Lindbergh, and that stroke Herman deeply. His own family served to this evil man and they, in the Herman's eyes, betrayed the family and their Jewish values. This project was followed by a "Good Neighbor Project" /Homestead 42: the aimed transfer of whole Jewish families to the gentile hinterlands resulting in the dismantling of the Jewish community by importing gentiles to reside in predominantly Jewish neighborhoods in order to "enrich" everyone's "Americanness". Herman Roth, in order to avoid the deportation to Kentucky, left his job at the Metropolitan Insurance Company, and thus saved his family, living place and – most of all – his dignity and his right to decide on his own; at the cost of working his fingers to the bone at his brother's

company, working around the clock, almost like a slave. During the implementation of Lindbergh's policies, Philip's father maintains optimism, although various experiences have shaken him and his family badly – during his family trip to Washington they faced the fact that their hotel reservation had been denied.

“It was from there that we heard him refer to my father as a loudmouth Jew, followed a moment later by the elderly lady declaring, I'd give anything to slap his face.” (Roth 2004: 65)

Even though the destiny examines him thoroughly, even though he was betrayed by his own blood in some way, even though he sometimes regrets not escaping to Canada as some others did, he preserves his natural bravery, sense for justice, for family, for being the Jew, and keeps doing his best to save his family.

When reading Roth, a historical reference is a good deal more complicated than such a straightforward conclusion would suggest. Even though the novel seems to be just a recreation of a realistic version of a history that never was, more than a few readers may find there a deliberately paradoxical and provoking relationship to contemporary political situation (I mean the period when George W. Bush used to be the President of the United States). With Charles A. Lindbergh as the President, the USA became an ally not of England, France, and Russia, but the Axis powers of Japan, Italy, and most importantly, Nazi German. American Jews are at risk to be scarified to history in the same way six million European Jews were. Roth has said that for him the appeal of the book was not to imagine America as a place where pogroms could happen, but to imagine how his parents might have responded to such a situation. His parents are portrayed as a refuge from all fear. Roth's family – the nuclear Jewish family – is a sanctuary against the oppressive and very real fears generated by the hostile, potentially murderous gentile American culture.

As Parrish depicts, "*The Plot Against America*, according to Roth, is the only possible state he can imagine for acting out his – and their – dramas. However, with the disappearance of Lindbergh's aircraft and re-election of Roosevelt in 1944, all orders are restored, and America returns to itself. The finale of *The Plot Against America* affirms Roth's conviction that "it can't happen here". Roth depicts the facts, his patrimony, and historical plots as singular inventions, yet he can never sever himself from the communal, whether it takes the form of his critical Jewish readers, his demanding Jewish fathers, or the ghosts of his European Jewish brothers. Fiction writers pretend they were, autobiographers insist they were, and Philip Roth refuses to take aside" (Parrish 2007: 268, 269).

5. CONCLUSION

Such a variety of perspective has been already put on about World War II. Each person represents a unique human being with his or her personal attitudes and perceptive skills, and therefore everybody perceives the reality in a different way.

I have focused on five outstanding American authors of the second half of the 20th century. Namely I have been interested in Norman Mailer (1923-2007), Kurt Vonnegut, Jr. (1922-2007), Joseph Heller (1923-1999), Saul Bellow (1915-2005) and Philip Roth (1933-). Except Saul Bellow and Philip Roth, the rest of them experienced the combat in different parts of the world – Mailer spent two years in the Philippines, Vonnegut served in France and Belgium and was imprisoned in Germany, and Joseph Heller flew bombers in Italy. Saul Bellow desired to enter the army, but he was not allowed to, and Philip Roth was too young to be drafted, but he experienced the fear for his relatives and those he knew and those who were fighting.

Except Kurt Vonnegut, Jr., who supposed himself to be an atheist and freethinker, the rest of the authors originated from the Jewish environment. Therefore they could provide the readers a different point of view – the Jewish one. Nevertheless, none of them really concern themselves with the Holocaust. Even though my five chosen authors lived in the same period, and they all experienced the horrific events of World War II – no matter in what form this impacted on them – they all took a different stand on it.

However, each of the authors presents the same topic – World War II – in absolutely distinct views. Mailer shows the real life on a fictive island in the Pacific within the platoon with its daily problems and difficulties, and shows how different people face different obstacles while the only thing they share is the war. Vonnegut offers a story based on his own experience from Dresden, rich imagination and science fiction. Heller, on the other hand, imparts rather ironic and

satiric novel with comic features situated on the island of Pianosa in the Mediterranean. Saul Bellow's protagonist Joseph "dangles" through his life and within the time in his single-room flat in Chicago. Philip Roth interweaves a partially fictional story based on autobiographical facts, which considers the United States becoming a Nazi-regime ruled country.

Even though the authors provide such a variety of attitudes and views of the war, the books are basically based on their personal experience and similar topics occur in their works. For example, Joseph in *Dangling Man* finds himself in such a trap as Heller's hero Yossarian in *Catch-22* does - he would like to proceed somewhere, somehow, but the given circumstances prevent him from doing so. This trap, this catch, it does not refer to a number of flight missions, but to his inability, the lack of qualities to live his life alive, and to move. As for "dangling" in time, Vonnegut's hero Bill is rather travelling back and forth in time, and he as well cannot mollify himself and find a coveted stillness.

The topic of freedom could be discussed. Bellow, as well as Vonnegut, depicts a similar topic - how much freedom we actually have and what we should do with it. Maybe it is just our illusion that we are free and that we make our decisions ourselves. Or, likely, if we have any, we will be finally satisfied "under control of some rules" anyway. In Bellow's *Dangling Man*, Joseph is eventually happy to "hand over" his responsibility to the hands of the Army. He is contented not to have to take care of himself anymore.

Each of these brilliant authors would deserve to be discussed in an entire diploma work undoubtedly. In a given extent, I have been doing my best to cover as much of the problematic as possible to compare these five Jewish-American authors (Vonnegut was not Jewish). It would be great to study their work and their protagonists furthermore, because they compose an enormously interesting ensemble worth exploring. Even though many people have already published on these

luminaries, it should not mind us searching for details related to their philosophical motivation. Why did they write exactly in the way they did? It would be excellent to dispose of an opportunity in here to discuss each of the authors' characters and protagonists one by one in details. These writers represent a genuine treasure of the world literature and they deserve to be read, studied and commented on.

Roth and Bellow were awarded the highest award of the American Academy of Arts and Letters, the Gold Medal in Fiction, previously awarded to John Dos Passos or William Faulkner among the others. Roth received as the first writer the PEN/Saul Bellow Award for Achievement in American Fiction. Bellow was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature and the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction. Mailer, he was awarded the Pulitzer Prize twice and the National Book Award once. He also won the Medal for Distinguished Contribution to American Letters from the National Book Foundation.

Although these authors did not write about World War II for most of them it was the most significant impact on the fiction of their youth. Clearly for Mailer, Heller and Vonnegut, their greatest works of fiction are World War II fictions, and this is a significant issue worthy of study.

As Kinder depicts in his article *The Good War's "Raw Chunks": Norman Mailer's *The Naked and the Dead* and James Gould Cozzens's *Guard of Honor**, "with a potential war with the Soviet Union emerging on the horizon, the immediate postwar period seemed to offer little relief to Americans who desired to put thoughts of global war behind them. Not surprisingly, it was in this atmosphere of growing disillusionment that a number of famous writers – especially veterans – began to challenge the simplicities of Good War propaganda. Veteran – writers crafted powerful narratives about the implications of World War II on the individual and the nation. Thus, they offered alternative versions of the view of World War II, lacking both the moral clarity of wartime productions and the uncritical nostalgia of today's Good War histories. At a time when most Americans – both conservative and

liberal – were struggling to make sense of the war, veteran – writers raised troubling questions about the “price” of America’s victory” (Kinder 2005: 189).

6. RESUMÉ

Ve své diplomové práci se zabývám rozbořem děl pěti předních amerických autorů druhé poloviny 20. století, kteří se věnovali tématu druhé světové války. Konkrétně se jedná o tyto autory: Norman Mailer (1923-2007), Kurt Vonnegut, Jr. (1922-2007), Joseph Heller (1923-1999), Saul Bellow (1915-2005) a Philip Roth (1933).

S výjimkou Saula Bellowa a Philipa Rotha, se zbylí tři autoři osobně ocitli na bojištích druhé světové války, a tudíž tak mohli ve svých dílech těžit z osobních zkušeností. Od každého autora rozebírám pouze jedno jeho dílo: Norman Mailer – *The Naked and the Dead* (Nazí a mrtví), Kurt Vonnegut, Jr. – *Slaughterhouse-Five* (Jatka č. 5), Joseph Heller – *Catch-22* (Hlava 22), Saul Bellow – *Dangling Man* (Rozkolísaný člověk) a konečně Philip Roth – *The Plot Against America* (Spiknutí proti Americe). Každý z autorů přistupuje k psaní svých knih odlišným způsobem, a proto i následný rozbor a interpretace daných děl vyžadují různé metody.

V úvodu své práce stručně nastiňuji historický přehled událostí, které vedly ke vstupu Spojených států amerických do druhé světové války po ničivém útoku na přístav Pearl Harbor 7. prosince 1941. Následně se věnuji životopisům všech pěti autorů a zaměřuji se zejména na jejich rodinné zázemí a prostředí, ve kterém vyrůstali a které je formovalo, a tudíž udalo směr jejich spisovatelské dráze.

Každý z těchto autorů si zvolil jiný přístup k problematice tématu druhé světové války – Joseph Heller svůj román zasadil do prostředí letecké základny, přičemž celé dílo představuje satiru poukazující na nesmyslnost tohoto zdrcujícího celosvětového válečného konfliktu.

Norman Mailer popisuje události při dobývání území na fiktivním poloostrově Anopopei, líčí prostředí válečného tábora a vystihuje osudy jednotlivých vojáků bojového oddílu. Saul Bellow se pro změnu nevěnuje bojům a dopadům války na fyzickou stránku lidských bytostí, nýbrž zachycuje osobní lidské drama a jeho následný vliv na psychickou a inteligenční stránku muže žijícího v Chicagu bez přímého kontaktu s válkou. Philip Roth zas vykresluje pozměněné historické události roku 1940, jejichž sled má za následek rozmach nacismu i ve Spojených státech amerických. A konečně Kurt Vonnegut, Jr., který přichází s příběhem snoubícím v sobě autorovy osobní zážitky z bombardování Drážďan, bohatou představivost a fikci.

Sestavení životopisů autorů, jakožto i interpretací jednotlivých děl, vyžadovalo rozsáhlé studium dostupné literatury. Na základě tohoto průzkumu jsem si zvolila vhodný okruh sekundární literatury, která se soustřeďuje stejně tak na motivaci autorů jako na rozbor jejich děl.

V jednotlivých kapitolách se věnuji rozboru a interpretaci vybraných spisů a zaměřuji se především na témata týkající se mocenského rozvrstvení v rámci armády. Dále se zabývám problematikou rasismu v armádě – ať už s dopadem na Židy či Afro-Američany. Snažím se vystihnout problémy, se kterými se různí lidé museli vypořádat během druhé světové války, ať už této katastrofě čelili na frontě či mimo ni.

V závěru své diplomové práce předkládám krátkou syntézu vybraných děl a porovnání společných rysů i odlišností. Na základě prostudované literatury si rovněž stanovuji možná témata dalšího a podrobnějšího studia v rámci dané problematiky.

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