

# War: Glory or Doom of Humankind

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Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

Study Programme: Double Major MA Study Programme in English Language  
and Literature and Pedagogy

Petra Maderek

**War: Glory or Doom of Humankind**

Master's Thesis

Supervisor: Dr. Biljana Oklopčić, Associate Professor

Osijek, 2017

J.J. Strossmayer University of Osijek

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

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## **Abstract**

War is the bloodiest event humankind has known. It destroys millions of lives and leaves only pain, suffering, and death in its wake. In war, people lose their lives, their homes, their loved ones, but the people that lose the most in war are not civilians but soldiers because they do not just lose their comrades, friends, loved ones, homes. They lose themselves. To be a soldier you have to be mentally and physically tough and brave because they suffer through the bloodiest battles and witness horrendous scenes of murder and torture in war. The wars that took the greatest number of lives are the World wars. Soldiers in these wars suffered many mental and physical illnesses. Some came out of the war as heroes but some got mentally and physically wrecked because they were turned into killing machines be it of their own volition or against their will. Here the duality of war can be seen because some men are considered war heroes either because they saved many lives or because they took many lives. A soldier can thus be either a hero or a monster. This thesis is about the worst battles of the Second World War depicted in the novels *The Naked and the Dead* and *From Here to Eternity* and the movies *Hacksaw Ridge* and *Saving Private Ryan*. It is also about the soldiers who suffered through those battles. It will show what physical and mental damage the war left on them and why the war is considered both glory and doom of humankind.

**Key words:** the Second World War, soldier, *The Naked and the Dead*, *From Here to Eternity*, *Hacksaw Ridge*, *Saving Private Ryan*.

## Introduction

War is a horrendous invention of humankind and only the bravest and toughest survive it. The bravest among them are soldiers. Soldiers are the ones who give up the most when they decide or are coerced into going to war. They endure the most horrifying scenes of dying and torture in war. It is a miracle if they come out of the war sane. Because of their sacrifices, they should be praised not degraded. They can be both monsters and heroes in one person, which shows the duality of war as both glory and doom of the human race. The aim of this Master thesis is to show how soldiers are depicted in both literary works and movies. The first chapter thus introduces the historical context of the thesis: the Second World War – all the important battles that were fought in both Europe and the Pacific and are depicted in the novels and the movies. In the second chapter, various mental and physical illnesses that soldiers suffer in war will be listed and described. In the third chapter, the main soldier characters of Norman Mailer's bestselling war novel *The Naked and the Dead* will be described and analyzed as every one of them has a special story to tell both before and during the war. The fourth chapter will focus on the main soldier character of James Jones's novel *From Here to Eternity*. In the remaining chapters there will be a particular focus on the life of the main soldier characters of the movies *Hacksaw Ridge* and *Saving Private Ryan*. In *Hacksaw Ridge*, the life of Desmond Doss before and during the war will be described.



# 1. The Historical Context – The Second World War

## 1.1 The Second World War: The Background

The Second World War is one of the greatest political and military conflicts that involved practically every part of the world, with the bloodiest battles being fought in Europe. It lasted from 1939 to 1945. The principal belligerents of the war were the Axis powers – Germany, Italy and Japan, and the Allies – France, Great Britain, the United States, the Soviet Union, and China (Graham Royde-Smith). The Second World War grew out of the issues unresolved by the earlier conflict – the First World War, also known as the Great War, in particular the political and economic instability in Germany, and the resentment over the harsh terms imposed by the Versailles Treaty, which marked the end of the First World War. This fueled the rise of Adolf Hitler and his National Socialist Party. As early as 1923 in his memoir and propaganda tract *Mein Kampf* (*My Struggle*), Hitler predicted a general European war that would result in the extermination of the Jewish race in Germany (Bourke 143).



**Figure 1.** Adolf Hitler (1889-1945) was leader of the National Socialist (Nazi) Party (from 1920-21), chancellor (Kanzler), and Führer of Germany (1933-1945). After President Paul von Hindenburg's death, he assumed the twin titles of Führer and chancellor.

In August 1939, Hitler and Stalin signed the German-Soviet Nonaggression Pact. In this Pact, these two countries agreed to take no military action against each other for the next ten years (Bourke 219). Stalin saw the Pact as a way to keep peace in his country. Hitler used the Pact to make sure Germany was to invade Poland unopposed. It also contained a secret agreement in which the Soviets and the Germans divided Eastern Europe amongst themselves. The Pact also ensured that Hitler would not face the War on two fronts and would have Soviet

assistance in dividing Poland. The Pact was broken in June 1941 when the Nazis invaded the Soviet Union.

The Second World War began when Hitler invaded Poland on September 1, 1939, which incited France and Great Britain to declare war on Germany. On September 17 of the same year, the Soviet Union invaded Poland and the Soviets and the Nazis divided Poland between them. Stalin then occupied the Baltic States (Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania) and defeated Finland in the Russo-Finnish War (Bourke 9).

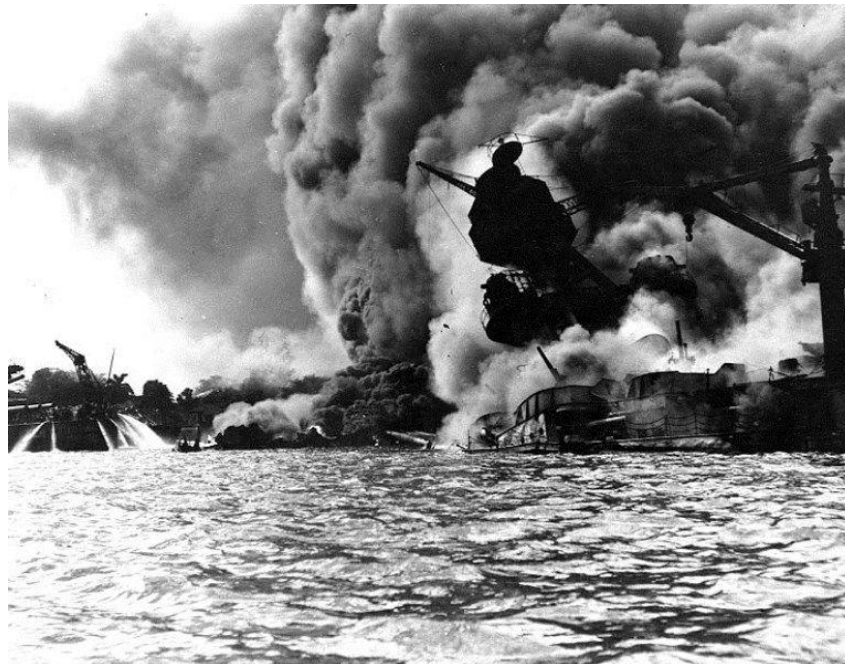
## **1.2 The Battles of the Second World War Depicted in the Novels and Movies**

In the following subchapters, the battles important for the trajectory of the Second World War and for the characters of the analyzed novels and movies will be described. These battles left a great deal of physical and mental damage on the soldiers in the movies and the novels that will be analyzed in the second, third, and fourth chapters. Some of them are also the turning points in the Second World War, especially Pearl Harbor and the D-Day.

### **1.2.1 Pearl Harbor**

The US naval base at Pearl Harbor on Oahu Island, Hawaii, was attacked on the morning of December 7, 1941 (Bourke 20). The strike climaxed a decade of the worsening relations between the United States and Japan. The Japanese managed to destroy 20 American naval vessels and more than 300 airplanes. More than 2,000 American soldiers died in the attack and another 1,000 were wounded (Bourke 19). It was a failure of the US Army private who noticed a large flight of planes on his radar screen but was told to ignore them since a flight of B-17 from the US was expected at that time. At 8:15, a.m. an 1,800 pound bomb smashed through the deck of the battleship USS Arizona and landed in her ammunition magazine. The torpedoes pierced the shell of the battleship USS Oklahoma. Other destroyed battleships included: the USS California, USS West Virginia, USS Utah, USS Maryland, USS Pennsylvania, USS Tennessee and USS Nevada. Roosevelt called this date “a date which will live in infamy” (Bourke 21). On December 8, 1941, Congress approved Roosevelt’s

declaration of war. Three days later, the Japanese allies Germany and Italy declared war against the US.



**Figure 2.** The USS Arizona burns after the attack on Pearl Harbor. Photograph courtesy of the US Naval History & Heritage Command.

### **1.2.2 The D-Day**

In January 1944, General Dwight Eisenhower was appointed Commander of the Operation Overlord. It was a massive deceptive operation intended to make the Germans think the target was Pas-de-Calais rather than Normandy. Eisenhower chose June 5, 1944 for the invasion but it was delayed due to bad weather conditions. The amphibious invasion began at 6:30 a.m. This was followed by heavy naval bombardment. To the east, the British and the Canadians came ashore on Gold, Juno and Sword beaches (Bourke 37). At Omaha beach on the west, the US troops became pinned down by heavy fire from the German 32nd Infantry Division. The US troops were unable to penetrate the German defense. It is estimated that by the end of the day there were more than 400 Allied casualties and 2,400 American casualties. Less than a week later, on June 11, 1944, the beaches were fully secured. The Normandy American Cemetery, overlooking Omaha Beach and the English Channel, was established on June 8, 1944, as the first U.S. cemetery in Europe during the World War II. It holds the graves of more than 9,300 U.S. servicemen who died in the D-Day invasion or subsequent missions.

The most visceral recreation of the Omaha landing was presented in the movie *Saving Private Ryan*, which this thesis will analyze in one of the following chapters. There were many attempts to recreate this landing Spielberg's being one of the most truthful ones. By depicting the horror and brutality of war as truthfully as possible, Spielberg wanted to make a movie that veterans could recognize and be moved by (Haggith 178).



**Figure 3.** Omaha Beach on D-Day.

### **1.2.3 The Battle of Okinawa**

The Allied forces sought to capture an island near Japan to serve as a base for air operation support of the proposed invasion of Japanese home islands. The naval campaign at Okinawa began in late March 1945. The Japanese navy and army mounted mass air attacks by plane “suicide” missions; the Japanese also sent their last big battleship, the *Yamato*, on a similar mission with a few escorts (Horner 61). This was the operation called Ten-Go. As the land battle progressed, Allied naval vessels remained in the area and were subjected to a relentless succession of kamikaze attacks (Horner 83). There were around 1,900 kamikaze missions that sank 36 Allied ships. The Initial US landing began on March 26 when the 77th Infantry Division captured the Verana islands to the West of Okinawa. On March 31, the Marines occupied Keise Shima. Having encountered light resistance, Buckner ordered the 6th Marine division to begin clearing the northern part of the island. Pushing south, the Allied troops fought a bitter battle to capture Cactus Ridge on April 8 before moving against Kakazu Ridge. Forming part of the Ushijima's Machinato Line, the ridge was a formidable obstacle and an initial American assault was repulsed (Horner 85). Reinforced by the 27th Infantry, Hodge launched a massive attack on April 19 backed by the largest employed artillery bombardment.

In five days of brutal fighting, the US troops forced the Japanese to abandon the Machinato Line and fall back to a new line in front of Shuri. The commanding generals on both sides died in the battle. Other US losses in combat included 7,374 killed, 31,807 wounded and 239 MIA. The navy suffered 4,907 killed or missing aboard; 34 ships were sunk and 368 damaged; 763 aircraft were lost (Horner 85). The battle of Hacksaw Ridge, depicted in the movie of the same name, was a part of the Battle of Okinawa.

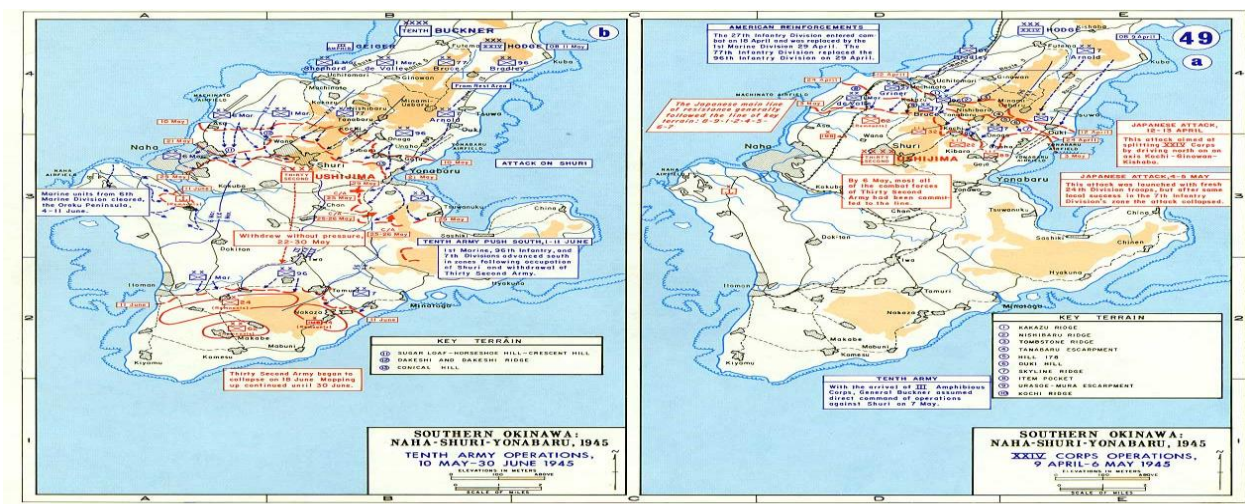


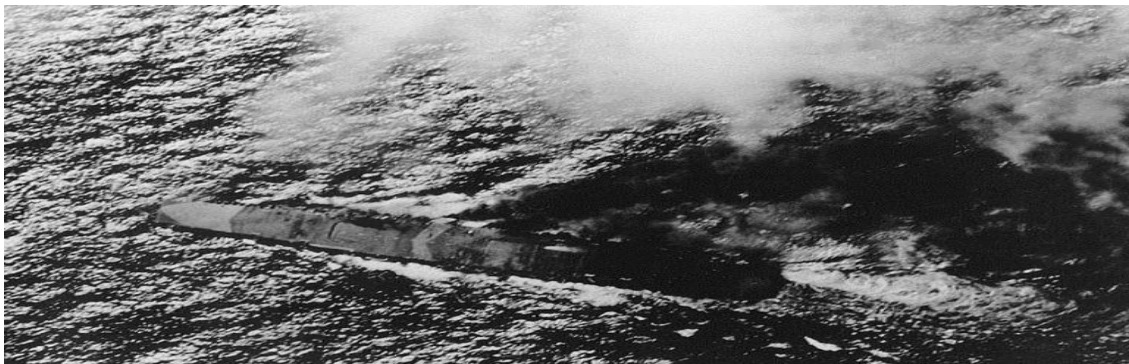
Figure 4. Map of the Okinawa battle. Source: Thoughtco.com.

### 1.2.4 The Battle of Leyte Gulf

In late 1944, began the operations to liberate the Philippines. The initial landings were to take place on the island of Leyte with ground forces commanded by General Douglas MacArthur and the US 7th Fleet of amphibious force commanded by Vice Admiral Thomas Kinkaid. Aware of American intentions in the Philippines, Admiral Saemu Toyoda incited the plan Sho-Go to block the invasion. Sho-Go was a plan to decoy the US 3rd Fleet north away from the San Bernardino Strati while converging three forces on Leyte Gulf to attack the landing; the First Attack Force was to move from the north across the Sibuyan Sea through the San Bernardino Strait, with the Second Attack Force and C Force moving from the south across the Mindanao Sea through the Surigao Strait (Britannica.com). Beginning on October 23, 1944, the battle of Leyte Gulf consisted of four primary settings: the Sibuyan Sea, the Surigao Strait, Cape Engano, and Samar. A series of continuous surface and air clashes followed



especially at the Sibuyan Sea. On October 25, three major engagements of the battle were fought almost simultaneously. At the Surigao Strait, battleships and cruisers from the Seventh Fleet destroyed C Force and forced the Second Attack Force to withdraw. Meanwhile, the First Attack Force passed through the unguarded San Bernardino Strait and inflicted heavy damage on the Seventh Fleet escort carriers off Samar but withdrew unexpectedly just as they seemed ready to attack the landing operations. In the north, off Cape Engaño, a part of the Third Fleet sank Japanese carriers while another part moved south, attacking and pursuing the First Attack Force (Britannica.com). In the battle, the Japanese lost 4 aircraft carriers, 3 battleships, 8 cruisers and 12 destroyers as well as 10,000 + were killed. Allied losses were much lighter and included 1,500 killed as well as 1 light aircraft carrier, 2 escort carriers, 2 destroyers, and 1 destroyer escort sunk (Horner 7). This battle is important because the fictional island of Anopopei from the novel *Naked and the Dead* mirrors the island of Leyte and all the military operations on it.



**Figure 5.** The Japanese carrier Zuikaku burns during the Battle of Leyte Gulf. Photograph Courtesy of the US Naval History & Heritage Command.

## **2. The Wounds of War – Visible and Invisible**

In war, soldiers suffer from different illnesses, both physical and mental, which mostly occur due to poor conditions in war zones including personal hygiene. The close proximity of people in the Second World War meant diseases such as tuberculosis, asthma, trench foot, musculoskeletal injuries and pain. These were the most frequently occurring physical illnesses of the Second World War. There were also other physical illnesses and problems that veterans experienced during and after the war. The side effects included diabetes, depression, and heart diseases at an older age. In addition, because so many men died during the conflicts, the war also lowered the probability that women would marry and many children had to grow up without fathers – a key factor in lower levels of education among those who lived through the war.

Along with the physical illnesses, there occurred many mental problems for soldiers such as depression, insomnia, schizophrenia, violent behavior, and alcohol abuse. The most common mental problem of the war is the so-called PTSD (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder), which will be explained in one of the following subchapters. PTSD is not just connected with war but with other stressful events a person goes through in war like witnessing killings of their loved ones, rapes, and torture in concentration camps.

### **2.1. Physical Diseases**

#### **2.1.1. Tuberculosis**

Tuberculosis is an infectious disease that usually affects the lungs. It is the second biggest killer globally. The *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* causes TB. It is spread through the air when a person with TB (whose lungs are affected) coughs, sneezes, spits, laughs, or talks (McIntosh). People who have compromised immune systems are most at risk of developing active TB. Tabaco use has also been found to increase the risk of developing active TB. According to James McIntosh, the symptoms of active TB include: coughing, sometimes with mucus or blood, chills, fatigue, fever, loss of weight, loss of appetite, night sweats. The majority of TB cases can be cured when the right medication is available and administered

correctly. The precise type and length of antibiotic treatment depends on a person's age, overall health, potential resistance to drugs, whether the TB is latent or active, and the location of infection (i.e. the lungs, brain, kidneys) (McIntosh). TB medications can be toxic to the liver, and although side effects are uncommon, when they do occur, they can be quite serious. In the Second World War, tuberculosis was caused by unsanitary conditions in the trenches and on the battle field.

### **2.1.2. Trench Foot**

Trench Foot is a condition caused by prolonged exposure to damp, cold, unsanitary conditions especially in the war trenches. The blood vessels constrict in an attempt to keep warm by reducing blood flow to the extremities. This reduces the amount of oxygen and nutrients to the feet, which can result in tissue and nerve damage. The foot becomes numb, changes color, swells, and starts to smell due to damage to the skin, blood vessels, and nerves in the feet. It occurred in the Second World War due to terrible weather and poor hygienic conditions in the trenches.

### **2.1.3. Asthma**

Asthma is a chronic lung disease that inflames and narrows the airways in the lungs. The symptoms include coughing, shortness of breath, and chest tightness. Asthma symptoms may be triggered by exposure to an allergen (such as ragweed, pollen, animal dander or dust mites), irritants in the air (such as smoke, chemical fumes or strong odors) or extreme weather conditions. Exercise or an illness — particularly a respiratory illness or the flu — can also make you more susceptible. A physical display of strong emotions that affects normal breathing patterns — such as shouting, crying or laughing — can also act as an asthma trigger. Panic can prevent a person with asthma from relaxing and following instructions, which is essential during an asthma attack. Scientists have found that rapid breathing associated with strong emotions can cause bronchial tubes to constrict, possibly provoking or worsening an attack. Asthma symptoms can appear at any time. Mild episodes may last only a few minutes and may be resolved spontaneously or with medication; more severe episodes



can last from hours to days. It occurred during the Second World War due to smoke and smell of gunpowder on the frontline.

#### **2.1.4. Musculoskeletal Injuries and Pain**

Injury is typically defined as “bodily harm” resulting from acute exposure to external forces or substances (i.e., mechanical, thermal, electrical, chemical, or radiant) or from absence of such essentials as heat or oxygen caused by a specific event. There is a study of musculoskeletal injuries and pain that classifies these injuries. These include different types of injuries in different body regions. They are as follows: inflammation and pain (overuse), joint derangement, joint derangement with neurological involvement, stress fracture, sprain/strain/rupture, dislocation, etc. (Hauret et al. 63). The injured body regions include: vertebral columns (cervical, thoracic/dorsal, lumbar, sacrum, coccyx, spine and back); extremities such as shoulder, upper arm, elbow, forearm, wrist, hand, pelvis, hip, thigh, knee, lower leg, ankle, and foot (Hauret et al. 63). They occur in any war due to big physical effort of combat.

## **2.2. Mental Illnesses**

### **2.2.1. Depression**

In the Second World War, depression occurred because of the separation from loved ones and because of the traumatic experience of witnessing the killing of comrades and friends. Depression (major depressive disorder or clinical depression) is a common but serious mood disorder. It causes severe symptoms that affect how you feel, think, and handle daily activities, such as sleeping, eating, or working. According to the web page of the National Institute of Mental Health, there are different forms of depression:

**1) Persistent depressive disorder** (also called dysthymia) – a depressive mood disorder characterized by chronic and persistent but mild depression, dysthymia manifests as a depressed mood persisting for at least two years (one year for children or adolescents) that lasts for most of the day, occurs on more days than not, and is accompanied by at least two of the following symptoms:

- (1) Poor appetite or overeating,
- (2) Insomnia or hypersomnia,

- (3) Low energy or fatigue,
- (4) Low self-esteem,
- (5) Poor concentration or difficulty to make decisions,
- (6) Feelings of hopelessness.

In the past, dysthymia has had several other names, including depressive neurosis, neurotic depression, depressive personality disorder, and persistent anxiety depression. The best treatment for dysthymia appears to be a combination of psychotherapy and medication (Ishizaki and Mimura 1).

**2) Psychotic depression** is characterized by the presence of delusions and/or hallucinations in addition to depressive symptoms. Typical cases display severe anhedonia, loss of interest, psychomotor retardation, and are tormented by hallucinations/delusions with typical themes of worthlessness, guilt, disease, or impending disaster (Østergaard et al. 212).

**3) Seasonal affective disorder** winter type, is a well-studied syndrome, characterized by almost yearly recurring depressive episodes in autumn/winter alternating with symptom free episodes in spring/summer. Exposure to bright light is the treatment of choice for patients suffering from SAD winter type (Meesters et al. 1).

### **2.2.2. Insomnia**

According to Bramoweth and Germain (2013), insomnia is a prevalent disorder that greatly impacts military personnel, especially those deployed in support of combat efforts. Deployment-related stressors like combat exposure, mild traumatic brain injury, irregular sleep-wake schedules, and adjustment to the return home all contribute to insomnia. However, insomnia can also exacerbate the deployment experience and is a risk factor for traumatic stress reactions such as PTSD, depression, and suicide.

Insomnia or sleeplessness is a sleep disorder in which there is inability to fall asleep or to stay asleep as long as desired (Heyat 1). A person who suffers from insomnia also wakes up frequently during the night or wakes up early feeling exhausted, slow, not refreshed, and not being able to concentrate. The effects of insomnia also include irritable mood and increased

possibilities of accidents while driving or working with machines. Insomnia is not a symptom of other disorders, but is secondary to other medical conditions.

Heyat (1-2) has classified insomnia according to three elements:

1) Etiology:

- a. Primary insomnia is a subtype of insomnia where there is no corporal (pain) or emotional (depression, anxiety) ecological cause;
- b. Secondary or comorbid insomnia, which is caused by medical problems such as cancer, pain or substance abuse.

2) Sleep pattern:

- a. Onset insomnia occurs when the person takes too long to fall asleep;
- b. Maintenance insomnia is the inability to stay asleep. People with maintenance insomnia wake up during the night and have difficulty returning to sleep.

3) Duration:

- a. Transient insomnia lasts less than a week and it is the most common form among the population;
- b. Acute insomnia lasts between one and four weeks; acute insomnia is usually caused by a life event, such as a stressful change in a person's job, receiving bad news, or travel. Often acute insomnia resolves without any treatment;
- c. Chronic insomnia lasts for more than four weeks and is caused by a long-term physical or psychiatric illness.

### **2.2.3. Sleep Apnea**

The frequency of sleep problems including insomnia and other forms of disordered sleep among military personnel is alarming and strongly suggests the need for more attention directed at treatment and prevention. A study conducted at the Madigan Army Medical Center examined the prevalence of sleep disorders among active-duty military personnel who had been referred for sleep testing. Most of the soldiers included in the study were male and most

had participated in combat duty. Researchers found that more than 85% had a clinical sleep disorder. More than half the group was suffering from obstructive sleep apnea.

Sleep apnea is a condition in which a person stops breathing either completely or partially over and over again during sleep. These interruptions in breathing can be several seconds or minutes long (Soparkar). The pauses in breathing interrupt the normal sleeping pattern and if they are long enough, drop the oxygen level in the blood.

According to Soparkar, there are two types of sleep apnea:

### **1) Obstructive sleep apnea**

In OSA, the person is essentially strangled repeatedly during sleep due to the air passage being narrowed or closed off by negative pressure. Large tonsils or adenoids or a large tongue can also make the obstruction worse.

### **2) Central sleep apnea**

In CSA, there are pauses in breathing but not because the air passage is narrowed or closed off. In this case of apnea, the brain “forgets” to send signals to the lungs to breathe.

It occurred during the war because of the poor air conditions and is connected to insomnia.

## **2.2.4. PTSD**

PTSD is the main classification that is used in the diagnosis of war trauma (Hunt 50). The construct now known as PTSD has existed for many years under a variety of formulations and names, mainly relating to battle experience (battle fatigue, combat neurosis, etc.). These terms all refer to a specific set of symptoms that are the result of a traumatic experience (Hunt 50).

According to Hunt (52-53), the main diagnostic criteria for PTSD are as follows:

Criterion A: The person has been exposed to a traumatic event in which both of the following were present:

- (1) The person experienced, witnessed or was confronted with an event or events that involved actual or threatened death or serious injury, or a threat to the physical integrity of oneself or others.
- (2) The person's response involved intense fear, helplessness or horror.

Criterion B: The traumatic event is persistently re-experienced in at least one of the following ways:

- (1) Recurrent and intrusive distressing recollections of the event, including images, thoughts or perceptions.
- (2) Recurrent distressing dreams of the event.
- (3) Acting or feeling as if the traumatic event were recurring (includes a sense of reliving the experience, illusions, hallucinations and dissociative flashback episodes, including those that occur upon waking or when intoxicated).
- (4) Intense psychological distress at exposure to internal or external cues that symbolise or resemble an aspect of the traumatic event.
- (5) Physiological reactivity on exposure to internal or external cues that symbolise or resemble an aspect of the traumatic event.

Criterion C: There is persistent avoidance of stimuli associated with the trauma and numbing of general responsiveness (not present before the trauma), as indicated by at least three of the following:

- (1) Efforts to avoid thoughts, feelings, or conversations associated with the trauma;
- (2) Efforts to avoid activities, places or people that arouse recollections of the trauma;
- (3) Inability to recall an important aspect of the trauma;
- (4) Markedly decreased interest or participation in significant activities;
- (5) Feeling of detachment or estrangement from others;
- (6) Restricted range of affect (e.g. unable to have loving feelings);
- (7) Sense of a foreshortened future (e.g. a person does not expect to have a career, marriage, children or a normal life span).

Criterion D: There are persistent symptoms of increased arousal (not present before the trauma), indicated by at least two of the following:

- (1) Difficulty in falling or staying asleep;
- (2) Irritability or outbursts of anger;
- (3) Difficulty in concentrating;
- (4) Hypervigilance;
- (5) Exaggerated startle response.

Criterion E: Duration of the disturbance (symptoms in Criteria B, C, D and E) is more than 1 month.

Criterion F: The disturbance causes clinically significant distress or impairment in social, occupational or other important areas of functioning.

It must also be specified whether the duration is of less than 3 months, in which case it is classified as “acute,” or 3 months or more, in which case it is “chronic.” It is classified as “delayed onset” if the onset of symptoms occurs at least 6 months after the event. It occurred in the war due to witnessing horrible scenes in war – the scenes of killings, rapes, and dying.

### 3. Soldiers in Literature and Movies

In this chapter, the main soldier characters of the movies and novels will be analyzed. The soldiers' life before the war will be analyzed because it affected the way they behaved in the war. These novels and movies were chosen because they made a great impact on the depiction of the Second World War. The novels that will be analyzed are: *The Naked and the Dead* by Norman Mailer and *From Here to Eternity* by James Jones. These are the bestselling war novels about the Second World War and as such add a great value to war literature. The movies that will be analyzed are *Saving Private Ryan* and *Hacksaw Ridge*.

#### 3.1. *The Naked and the Dead*

*The Naked and the Dead* was published in May 1948. According to Kazini (qtd in Glenday 197), it is probably still the best novel about Americans in the 1941-1945 war effort. This is a novel about the perils and mishaps of a platoon of soldiers conquering the fictional Japanese island of Anopopei—a fictional setting, though Mailer himself saw action on the Philippine islands of Luzon and Leyte in 1945. As such, the novel inaugurates some of Mailer's most enduring themes (Glenday 197). Power and its relationship to violence in both the individual and the state leads to Mailer's first dramatization of totalitarianism in American life, with the character of Major General Cummings finding in Hitler the "interpreter of twentieth century man" (Glenday 197). Through its main characters, particularly the American commander, Major General Edward Cummings, and his junior officers Lieutenant Hearn and Sergeant Croft, the reader is forced to consider the pathology of power in a military context as Hearn and Croft lead a reconnaissance platoon on their trek towards Mount Anaka (Glenday 197). The storyline is very intricate. The life of each individual soldier is woven into the main storyline, which is constantly interrupted to tell the exact story of the main soldier characters in the platoon. Each of the individual stories is told in the form of stream of consciousness. Some of the soldiers even die in the course of conquering the island. Each of the individual soldiers has a unique life story. Each story starts with the description of the place where the character has grown up and then it goes into details about his family and his upbringing all the way to the point when they enlist and become soldiers. Each of the soldiers' stories will be analyzed in detail in the following chapters.

### 3.1.1. Julio Martinez

Julio Martinez grew up in San Antonio. His biggest dream is to become a plane architect or an aviator: "When I am big I build fly planes ... Momma when I am big I fly plane" (Mailer 63). He grew up in a Mexican quarter, which is described quite picturesquely:

The Mexican quarter is unpaved, and little wood lean-tos sag in the heat. You can always breathe earth-powder, always smell the kerosene, the cooking grease, always sniff the mangy summer odor of spavined horses drawing carts, barefooted old men sucking at pipes. (Mailer 63)

He loves his mother a lot and she always supports his dreams and wishes but first he has to do the things he is told to do: "You will make money; you will own land, but no hurry" (Mailer 64). He is very quiet and shy and that makes it hard for him to find a girl: "When you are quiet and shy it is hard to find girls" (Mailer 64). He looks up to his big brother Ysidro. He is a ladies' man: "Ysidro is your big brother; he is twenty and slick dresser. His shoes are brown and white and his sideburns are two inches long. Julio listens to him. I screw good stuff. Big girls. Girls with plat'num blonde. Alice Stewart, Peggy Reilly, Mary Hennessy. Protestant girls" (Mailer 64). Julio has his first sexual intercourse at the age of fifteen. He makes love to a promiscuous little girl called Ysabel Flores: "There is a little girl on the earth-pressed street with no bloomers. Ysabel Flores, dirty little girl. All the boys she makes love to" (Mailer 64). Julio grows up and works behind the counter in a hash house, which is filled with different smells and people: "The foul rich barbecue smell, the garlic molten in the hot dogs on the griddle. Joe and Nemo, Harry and Dick, White Tower. Grease on a sizzling plate and the crumblings, the rancid fat, all to be scraped with a spatula" (Mailer 64). He is dissatisfied with his job and disappointed because he cannot find any real work in San Antonio because of his Mexican origin: "But there are no jobs with much money. What can a Mexican boy do in San Antone? He can counterman in hash house; he can be bellhop, he can pick cotton in season, he can start store; but he cannot be a doctor, a lawyer, big merchant, chief" (Mailer 65). Julio then enters an agreed marriage with Rosalita: "You will marry my daughter, Pedro says. Si. But there are prettier girls than Rosalita. It is time you were married anyway" (Mailer 65). He is unhappy with his life and enlists in the army in 1937: "Nice shy Mex kid with good manners. His equipment is always spotless, and that is sufficient for the cavalry" (Mailer 65). He runs various errands for the officers: "You weed the officers' gardens; you can be houseboy at their parties. You groom a horse after you ride it; if it is a mare you swab out its



dock” (Mailer 65). Then he becomes an orderly for Lieutenant Bradford whose wife likes him very much: “Ah think yore the best boy we eveh haf, Hooley” (Mailer 66). Then he makes corporal but is too scared and too soft for this position: the first time he drills a squad, he is so frightened he can barely sound the commands (Mailer 66). Then he becomes a corporal in General Cummings’ infantry division and goes overseas. There he discovers Australian girls and becomes a ladies’ man: “The blonde prostitutes to whom he makes love. Oh, what a roll you got Joolie, what a bloody bloody roll. Gi’ it to me, again. I do that. (I screw Mrs. Lieutenant Bradford now, I screw Peggy Reilly and Alice Stewart, I will be hero)” (Mailer 67). In the battle, he is scared but despite fear does the right job: “He lofts it (the grenade) into the air, he hugs his head in the deep secret embrace. (Momma’s arms are great and her breasts are soft)” (Mailer 67). In the end, he becomes sergeant.

In the war, he is as shy as he is in his private life. Yet, he is praised by everyone for having the courage to do things no one else has the courage to do. He drops a grenade on the Japanese soldiers and kills one of them causing a stir and then the evident failure of the platoon but he does as he is told and that is his biggest fault: he always blindly obeys orders. He is a pseudo-hero because although everyone praises him at first, in the end he causes harm to the platoon so it is hard to say whether he is a hero or a monster. For him, the war is neither glory nor doom; for him, the war is an escape from the quarter where he has been living and his dream is actually to become a war hero so he can chase girls and be popular. Julio sees war just as a means to an end. He fought at conquering the Toyaku Line and at Mount Anaka. He does not suffer from any kind of physical or mental illness, yet he is frail and sensitive, hears every sound, and senses every little movement. One could say he suffers from hypervigilance, which is one of the symptoms of PTSD. Through the character of Julio Martinez, Mailer addresses racial prejudice in the American society and the treatment of other races in the war.

### **3.1.2. Sam Croft**

At the beginning of his story line, the narrator asks himself why Sam Croft is the way he is and he gives several reasons:

He is that way because of the corruption-of-the-society. He is that way because the devil claimed him for one of his own. It is because he is a Texan; it is because he has renounced God. He is that way because the only woman he ever loved cheated on him, or he was born that way, or he was having problems of adjustment. (Mailer 156)

His father thinks he was born mean: "Well now my Sam is a mean boy. I reckon he was whelped mean" (Mailer 156) and asserts this about him as well: "Course Sam got mother's milk if ever a one did, but Ah figger it turned sour for him 'case that was the only way his stomach would take it" (Mailer 156). His father was a mean hillbilly and he beat him constantly, yet Sam was a tough one and would always fight back. He was very competitive too: "Couldn't stand to have anyone beat him in anythin" (Mailer 157). Since he was little, he has been a good hunter: "Why, Ah 'member once Ah took Sam huntin', he was only an itty-bitty runt, not big enough to hold up the gun hardly ... but he was a mean shot from the beginning" (Mailer 156). He was stubborn and impatient: "Ah'm fugged if Ah'll wait for any ole dear. Ah'm gonna track 'em" (Mailer 157). Once he got mad at his father because he killed the deer that he had tracked: "That was mah deer. I'll kill the sonofabitch who shot him" (Mailer 158). Croft was a very belligerent little boy. Once he beat to a pulp a kid who constantly picked on him. Croft was a good horse rider, too. He grew up in the Texas countryside listening to the tales of his parents and his brothers, which made him tough. Yet, he longed for a town: "Thinking of town maybe. (Bar and a whorehouse, dry goods)" (Mailer 159). He goes out to Harper and enlists in the National Guard and that is the first time he kills a man. When he kills him, "Croft feels a hollow excitement" (Mailer 161). Croft marries Janey: "Ah tell ya she was a mate for him till they busted up" (Mailer 161). Their love eventually turns sour and they start cheating on each other. He becomes violent toward her: "He strikes her so heavily that she falls" (Mailer 163). After they broke up, he made love to married women: "You're all fuggin whores, he thinks" (Mailer 163). In the end, he becomes a bitter and hateful killing machine: "You're all deer to track" (Mailer 164). He hated "everything which is not in himself" (Mailer 164).

In the war, he is a leader of a seemingly functioning platoon. He is an arrogant and powerful leader, very stubborn as he is in his private life. He leads a platoon of soldiers all the way up to Mount Anaka although he sees they are doomed to fail their mission. Nevertheless, he just goes on no matter how difficult the conditions for the soldiers are. Croft fails to lead his platoon to the summit of Mount Anaka "and it hurt him vitally" (Glenday 200). In addition, he is an unrelenting authority as he is ready to kill the ones who disobey him. He

fought at Mount Anaka and took part in the conquest of Anopopei. He is physically healthy and strong yet emotionally damaged because of the hardships he suffered in his childhood. Those scars, however, make him mentally stronger and a survivor. Through the character of Sam Croft, Mailer draws attention to the issue of absolute power and authority. Anyone who disobeys Croft must die or be killed by his own hand. He is a mean man and he should be considered a monster in this war but Mailer suggests otherwise: “The characters for whom I had the most secret admiration, like Croft, were violent people” (qtd in Glenday 202). While it is true that Croft shares with Cummings many evil traits—he is for the most part inhumane in his dealings with others, and like Cummings, he can kill easily and with relish, he yet possesses certain qualities which make him an enemy, rather than a servant of a totalitarian system. Cummings and Croft, so far from being outright villains, can even be seen as the novel’s natural heroes (Glenday 202).

### **3.1.3. Red Valsen**

Red Valsen is a miner’s son whose father was killed in a mining accident in 1926, which leaves Red the only male in his family. The whole family is on the shoulders of a fourteen-year-old boy who has to work in the mines like his father did: “Puberty in the coal dust” (Mailer 223). As a restless eighteen-year-old, Red wants to go out of town and explore the world: “To hell with that I’m getting out of here (Mailer 223). He has a girlfriend called Agnes whom he is afraid to leave: “(The sense of minor loss and pleasurable self-pity as he thinks of leaving her)” (Mailer 223). He does not want to lead a life like his father. He wants to take her to town but is afraid that the town will corrupt her: “all women turn into cordwood in town” (Mailer 224). He is sick of this day-to-day life and wants to get away but they do not let him. His mother wants him to marry Agnes. This incites a fight between him and his sister who has a bastard child already:

I am not gonna waste my life in a back of drill, waiting for a goddam tunnel to collapse on me. His sister comes into the kitchen. You lousy kid, you're only eighteen, where do you talk of getting away? Stay out of this, he shouts. I'm not going to; it's my business more than ma's. That's all you men are good for, you get us in trouble and then you skip out. Well you can do it! She screams.” (Mailer 225)

He goes away and travels and works all around the United States: “Freight trains out of Montana through Nebraska into Iowa. Handouts at farmhouses for a day’s work. The harvest and working in a granary. Manure piles” (Mailer 225-226). He feels he lives a provincial life: “To a kid from a mining town, getting drunk in a flatcar on Saturday night is still fun” (Mailer 226). He then lives as a hobo with a bunch of revolutionary guys and works various jobs: dishwasher, short-order cook, a shingler, a farm hand, a house painter, a plumber, even at a gasoline pump (Mailer 1948; 228). Red occasionally gets confused about life: “Aah, I been doing this too long. It’s no good steady, and it’s no good bumming. Ya lose whatever you want when you start goin’ for it” (Mailer 231). He starts working as a truck driver on freight route from Boston to New York and does that for years but he gets bored quickly. He becomes ill and “drinks a lot, drifting along the bars on Ninth and Tenth Avenues, and sometimes he spends his free time in one movie house after another, the tawdry second-runs on 4nd Street” (Mailer 231). While working as a dishwasher in a restaurant, he meets Loise who is a waitress there and they start dating. Loise wants to divorce her husband Mike so that she can stay with Red but Red cannot stay with her: “I ain’t made for stayin’ in one place, I dunno there’s somethin’, it’s kind’ve big country” (Mailer 234). Finally, he decides to go to war: “In the war you keep on moving ... But if you stop and quit moving, you die” (Mailer 234).

Red Valsen has a rather cynical view of the war. He sees war in the same way as Julio, as an escape from the dilapidated life of his. Likewise, he sees no pleasure in killing. For Red, the war is just nonsense. He fought at Mount Anaka. Through Red’s cynical and escapist view of the war, Mailer addresses the theme of escapism – the war is seen as an exciting incident to escape the boredom of everyday life even if it means putting oneself in harm’s way.

### **3.1.4. Roy Gallagher**

Roy Gallagher grew up in Boston: “In South Boston and Dorchester and Roxbury the gray wooden houses parade for miles in a file of drabness and desolation and waste ... There are no Jews or Italians or Irish-their features have blurred on anonymous mortar which has rendered them homogenous and dusty” (Mailer 266). He is a member of a gang and nothing scares him: “Fear is something alien to the gang, stored down far down in his stomach” (Mailer 267). They fight Jews: “we’re gonna clean up the Yids” (Mailer 267). His family is very unpleasant,

especially his father of whom everybody is afraid: “In the house his mother winces at sounds and walks on tiptoe. His old man sits at the round table in the living-dining room” (Mailer 267). His father is a drunk and beats his mother up: “He stands up, lurches toward her, and strikes her. She slips to the floor and lies there without moving, uttering a dull passionless whimpering”

(Mailer 268). Roy promises to himself that he will not be like his father, that he will protect his woman. Later he joins the Democratic club because he thinks he will get some profit out of politics: “The only thing is politics, that’s what gets you somewheah, you put in a couple of yeaahs, you show ‘em you’re a right guy an’ you’re made” (Mailer 269). In the Club, Roy gives out pamphlets: “theah’s money to be made in this, you know you tick with the boys theah’s always a lot of jobs, a lot of easy gelt, you’ll be a big guy someday” (Mailer 269). He doubts his usefulness in the club and hates his job: “I work my ass of for the club and what does it get me?” (Mailer 270). Gallagher then joins the new anti-Jew initiative *The Christians United*: “We got to start mobilizing and get ready, the International Jews is tryin’ to get us to ar, yn’ we gotta get them first, ya see the way they take away ll the jobs, we let it go and we won’t have a fuggin chance, they’re high up but we got our friends too” (Mailer 272). He finds a girlfriend Mary with whom he spends a lot of time so that he would stay out of the CU. They get married and he starts driving a truck and then he goes off into the army unhappy and disappointed with his life.

Gallagher’s wife dies during the war and he blames himself for not being there and because of it he hates the war and he also questions his faith in God and his love for his wife. When his wife dies, he is in an apathetic mood for some time. He walks around like a zombie and does not want to fight, which angers Croft greatly, but eventually he recovers and becomes a monster, a killing machine. He represents the doom of the humankind in the war. He suffers from apathy and depression and it affects his combat ability for a short period. His performance in the war is impaired after he finds out his wife has died and he thinks only about her death and who will take care of his child. Roy Gallagher stands for the theme of collectivism because he just wants to be a part of a collective and every time the collective falls apart he is lost, apathetic, and depressed.

### **3.1.5. Robert Hearn**

Robert Hearn grew up in Chicago, “in the city, lashing at one’s senses” (Mailer 328). The city’s vastness engulfs you in its embrace and makes you see how small and unimportant you are: “How do you conceive your own death, your own unimportance in all that man-created immensity” (Mailer 328). His father is a businessman and his mother is a socialite. He is a very shy boy at first. Robert’s mother only cares for her social duties and activities, which makes his father mad and he accuses his mother of not taking care of Robert:

that society stuff don’t impress me ‘cause the truth is it’s the money that counts, and we ain’t got a daughter to worry about, and as far as Robert goes with all the books he reads he ain’t gonna be much on the social end anyway not so long as you’re never around the goddam house, and he’s got a nigger cook for a mother. (Mailer 330)

Hearn lives a spoiled rich life: “there are all the intimate and extensive details of wealth, the things he takes for granted and understands, separates only later. There is also six years at Fieldmont Country Day” (Mailer 332). He drinks a lot. The last summer before college is for him a succession of “golden days and shining beaches, the magic of electric lights on summer evenings and the dance band at the summer bathing club” (Mailer 334). He meets a girl called Sally Tendecker. The trouble with Robert is the following: “I just get all worked up and stew around, and I don’t want anything, I’m going to Harvard just ‘cause my father said something about Yale and I don’t know, there’s things, there’s something else, I can’t put my finger on it, I don’t want to be pushed, I don’t know” (Mailer 335). When he goes to college, he wants to be a biology researcher. Soon he discovers new horizons and switches his major to English. His father is not very pleased with his decision and they get into a fight and Robert does not want any money from them anymore. He works different jobs: his “junior year is a grind of selling college subscriptions and pressing and laundering contracts to freshmen, odd jobs on weekends, and waiting on tables in the house as substitute for dishwashing” (Mailer 341). He rebels against his father. He even gets engaged in politics but he gets thrown out for being a “bourgeois intellectual idealist” (Mailer 345). In his senior year, he plays football and makes the All-House football team. After college, he works as a reader and junior editor at Ellison and Co. in New York. He wastes his time with different women but “still there are moments. Different women, different nights, when he lies in embrace, steeped in a woman’s flesh until the brew is intolerably joyous. There are love harvestings, sometimes months in a row when there is one woman, one affair, and a proud secret knowledge of each other’s loins ... only it never lasts” (Mailer 348). He tries to join the Canadian Air Force when the war in Europe

starts but he has poor night vision. Through a friend, he gets a job as a union organizer but it does not last too long: “A dilettante skipping around sewers” (Mailer 350). He gets back home for a few weeks and is immersed into his old socialite snobby life. He has an affair with the already married Sally. Disappointed with his life, he enlists into the army a month before Pearl Harbor.

The character of Lieutenant Hearn can be assumed to be based on Mailer himself because Hearn is a liberal Harvard man who despises other officers. There is a situation when he rebels against Cummings by throwing a cigarette butt on the floor and is then forced to pick it up. He is humiliated and hates him even more. He can be considered a monster because the war made him so rebellious. He fought at the Toyaku Line. He is strong and healthy but like Croft suffers from some internal scars from his youth. Through the character of Robert Hearn, Mailer speaks about the rebellion in war as Hearn does not follow the orders of his authorities and that is why he represents the doom of humankind. His rebellious nature eventually gets him killed.

### **3.1.7. General Edward Cummings**

Edward Cummings is the son of Cyrus Cummings, the richest businessman in Boston. His mother is a “fancy eastern woman with Culture. Cy’s father is a hard man but he isn’t the fancy one” (Mailer 404). His father catches him sewing and afterward he quarrels with his mother: “I won’t have him actin’ like a goddam woman, you’re to stop feedin’ him all these books, all this womanish . . . claptrap ... And you are to act like a man from now on, do you understand?” (Mailer 405). His father teaches him valuable lessons: “Life’s a hard thing and nobody gives you nothing. You do it alone ... if they don’t like you they can still lick your boots” (Mailer 406). To toughen him up, his father sends him to a military school. After the military school, he goes to West Point. When he has days off, he travels to Boston to meet his mother’s relatives and there he meets his cousin Margaret and they become so close that they even get married despite Cyruses’s disagreement: “Their lovemaking is fantastic for a time: He must subdue her, absorb her, rip her apart and consume her” (Mailer 415).

In the army, he lives through real battles and learns the importance of practice over theory. His and Margaret’s marriage turns eventually sour because he is fighting his own battles when he makes love to her. To become promoted to a general, they invite the General home for

dinner and everything goes great except for Margaret's resentment "You know, honestly Edward I wonder what the point to it all was, you can't get promoted any faster, and the old fart (she has taken to searing mildly) will be dead by the time it's a question of recommending you for generals rank" (Mailer 417). Finally, he becomes captain and is considered one of the best junior officers on the post: "In '36 he is considered the most promising filed officer of the year at the War College in Washington" (Mailer 420). He engages in a few military and diplomatic missions arranged by his brother-in-law. First, he is successful but then he gets drunk, beaten, and robbed. In the end, he decides to keep his eyes open at all times.

In the war, he is similar to Croft – an unrelenting authority in his futile missions, which makes him a lot of enemies. He is violent, does not tolerate disobedience, and is ready to kill anyone who disobeys him. He tries to breach the Toyaku line but is intercepted by major Dalleson, which shows his inability to lead and organize men in the war. Despite his military schooling, he is not a good leader and acts the same way as he acted in college. He is only interested in tactics and not in men. This makes him a monster of war. In the novel, Edward Cummings embodies the unrelenting power-hungry authority.

### **3.1.9. William Brown**

William Brown is an average guy who lives in the suburbs. He is a typical American-dream kind of guy. He is very popular and has a beautiful sister who teaches him to dance: a "nice-looking boy you have there, they always say to his father, James Brown. Fine boy, but you ought to see my daughter; she's the bee-sooty" (Mailer 546). The Browns are an average family: "Nice people, nice family, church on Sundays of course" (Mailer 547). He begs his dad to get him a car because: "Folklore: If you want to make a girl, you got to have a car" (Mailer 548). He wants to become a field engineer and his father supports his decision. He also teaches Brown a valuable lesson: "It's perfectly all right to know that you can do something better's the next man, but it isn't good sense to let other man know it" (Mailer 550). The summer before college he works as an usher in the Crown Theatre. He knows half of the people there: "(It's good idea to be friends with everybody; you never can tell when you'll want a favor from a man)" (Mailer 550). Brown meets Beverly and falls in love with her. At college, he is part of the Tau Tau Epsilon fraternity. He parties more than he studies and he flunks and thus becomes a huge disappointment to his father. Afterwards he decides on



a career in selling: “I’m the kind of fellow who needs something he can get his teeth into better. I believe I’m cut out for selling or something like that. I like to be around people” (Mailer 553). In the meantime, his sister divorces, which is a huge disgrace to his family. He goes around whorehouses and cheats on Beverly but comes back to her again. Brown eventually ends up working in an office but “It’s more fun being out with the gang from the office on a tear” (Mailer 557).

Being an average guy in private life, he is also an average soldier. He is neither a monster nor a hero. He just does what he is told, obeys his superiors and eventually dies because of it. He fought at Mount Anaka. Through the character of William Brown, Mailer depicts the American Dream that is called into question by the war.

### **3.2. *From Here to Eternity***

*From Here to Eternity* is a bestselling novel by James Jones about the adventures and mishaps of Robert Prewitt. The novel starts with his transfer to Schofield Barracks and tells the story of his life there up to the Pearl Harbor bombing. This novel is one of the most important war novels because it shows life in the army and how it affects soldiers, what it transforms them into, and what it makes them do in the war. It shows the soldiers’ life in and out of the war. It also addresses some contemporary problems and themes such as crime and punishment, homosexuality, antisemitism, the issue of suicide in war, and the question of power and authority.

#### **3.2.1. Robert Prewitt**

At the beginning of the novel, Robert Prewitt is described as “a very neat and deceptively slim young man in the summer khakis that were still early morning fresh” (Jones 9). He has a unique life story. As Jones based Prewitt on an old friend of his in the army, Robert Stewart, it is not surprising that Prewitt has the characteristics of someone whom Jones knew (Sonnenburg 35). Prewitt has a love/hate relationship with the army. He received most of the information about life from his uncle John Turner: “The tall man would squat on his hams in the little yard—the coal dirt was too thick on all the ground to sit—and in an abortive effort to

dispel the taste of what the Encyclopedias all 'Black Gold' he would tell them stories that proved conclusively that there was a world beyond the slag heaps and these trees whose leaves were always coated black" (qtd in Sonnenburg 36). Prewit grew up in the Kentucky Mountains along the West Virginia Line. Small towns exhibit traits based on the limited mindset that the occupants have, as anyone from a small town would most likely affirm (Sonnenburg 36). He wanted to go out and see the world. In his previous division, he was a bugler but he has passed over for the top bugler position so he transferred to the G Company's Infantry Division. He also boxed but quit boxing. His decision not to box was deeply rooted and dated back to a deathbed promise he had made to his mother (Sonnenburg 40): "'A deathbed promise is the most sacred one there is,' she hawked at him from the lungs that were almost, but not quite, filled up yet, 'and I want you to make me this promise on my deathbed: Promise me you won't never hurt nobody unless its absolute a must, unless you just have to do it'" (qtd in Sonnenburg 41). His decision to quit boxing was influenced by an accident when he blinded his friend Dixie Ells. His decision to quit boxing was received negatively by the army's authorities. In the G Company, he makes both friends (for example, Maggio) and enemies (for example, Ike Galovitch, who accuses him of assault and sends him to the Post Stockade). He runs away from the Post Stockade and swears to himself that he will kill the cruel overseer Fatso Judson. He does the deed and then runs to his girlfriend Alma aka Lorene whom he met in a whorehouse and fell in love with. There he spends his time drinking and reading all the books from Alma's roommate. He ends up tragically by being shot on his way to his Company. He does not even live to go to war. Through the character of Robert Prewit, Jones addresses the crisis of identity in war because Prewit is not sure whether he belongs in the army or not. The army actually plays a formative role in Prewit's life because there he is faces all the different life questions he needs to answer. He is eventually killed because he did not understand the army life. He is neither a hero nor a monster. He is just the tragic victim of his identity crisis in the war.

### **3.3. *Hacksaw Ridge* – a War Movie about Peace**

*Hacksaw Ridge* is one of the greatest war movies of modern times. It tells both the story of the battle of Hacksaw Ridge in Okinawa and of Desmond Doss, his life, his ups and downs, and his heroic deeds in the war. The main themes of the movie are: pacifism, the monstrosities of

war, love, friendship, faith, and religion. Directed by Mel Gibson, the movie stars Andrew Garfield, Theresa Palmer, Vince Vaughn, and many others. The movie won several Academy awards in 2017 and is considered one of the best war movies of 2017. This movie changed the way I see war and life and it has been a major influence in choosing the topic of my Master's thesis. The movie shows that there are also good sides to the war. It can yield good things such as respect, friendship, or freedom. This is a movie based on a true story about a real man and as such adds great value to the cinematic art.

### **3.3.1 Desmond Doss**

Desmond Doss is the main character of *Hacksaw Ridge*. He is a conscientious objector, which means that he refused to serve in the armed forces or bear arms on moral or religious grounds. Conscientious objectors usually serve in the army as medical staff. He strives from the very start to become a medic. The beginning of the movie is idealistic and picturesque. He grew up in the Virginia countryside with his brother and parents. His father is a war veteran burdened by past times and he does not want his sons to go to war because he thinks they will not get anything in return for serving their country. There is a turning point in the movie when in a mock-fight Desmond hits his brother with a brick. This act deeply scars him and he decides not to hurt or kill any living being any more. He then helps a man who had a leg injury and from that moment he knows he wants to become a medic in the army. He meets nurse Dorothy and as he falls in love with her his intention to become a medic increases. Then he decides to go to war. This disgruntles everyone around him especially his father and Dorothy. In the army, he gets rough treatment for not wanting to carry arms and nobody thinks he will contribute to the army and the war. He is even court-martialed for his beliefs but his father comes to his rescue and he goes to war as a medic where he saves around a hundred men at Hacksaw Ridge. Through the character of Desmond Doss, the movie addresses the themes of heroism, pacifism, and unconditional love in war times because those values are almost impossible to be found in the war.

### **3.4. *Saving Private Ryan***

*Saving Private Ryan* is still widely recognized as one of the best of the “epic battle” films, especially because of the visceral recreation of the landings on Omaha beach, according to one anonymous viewer – a “byword for war realism” (Haggith 177). It is a war movie where the main character, John Miller, is on a mission to find Private Ryan, who lost his four brothers in battle, and is to be sent home due to the tragic circumstances. Directed by Steven Spielberg, the movie stars Tom Hanks, Matt Damon, and others. Spielberg won an Academy award for best director and four other Academy awards. Another important Hollywood convention, even cliché of war films, is that the audience is given time to become acquainted with the characters before they die (Haggith 177). The movie is a mixture of history and fiction. It portrays the Second World War very realistically. The main themes of the movie are brotherhood, courage, sacrifice, and leadership. This movie gives the most realistic portrayal of the Normandy invasion. *Saving Private Ryan* has been widely praised for bringing a heightened level of realism to the representation of war. Some even regard it as a landmark in the history of war films, praising Steven Spielberg for recreating battles so realistically to bring truth to the representation of war (Haggith 177).

### **3.4.1. Captain John Miller**

John Miller is a good captain, respected by his men. He is devoted to his job of serving as a soldier. He has a good heart which can be seen when one of his privates convinces him not to kill a German soldier. He cares for his men and this can be seen in a scene when he cries for one of his soldiers who was killed in combat. He is devoted to fulfilling his mission of finding James Ryan. When he finds him, Ryan does not want to go home, he wants to fight in the last battle. Miller is little concerned and angry but respects his decision and sees him as a true and brave soldier who is ready to give his life for the country he loves. He is tactful and self-controlled when he leads the men during the D-Day. He is a multidimensional character as well. On the one hand, he is a capable leader but on the other he confesses to his men that he will do whatever it takes to get home to his wife and his students. Initially, he seems dedicated to his mission. Later, he confesses he just wants to go home. He fought in the trenches of France and Germany. Through the character of John Miller, the movie speaks about the role of duty in war.

## Conclusion

All the analyzed characters were brave and honorable soldiers and should be praised for who they were. They fought bravely and defended their homes and families and the lives of people they did not even know. They gave up the most in the war and are real heroes that should not be made into monsters. The duality of war is a tricky thing. It is very concerning when men who are to be considered heroes are turned into monsters because of the actions they were ordered to do. The movies and novels analyzed show this duality of war in their soldier characters. Some are heroes at the beginning and remain so until the end and some turn into monsters. Their private lives also influence the way they behave in the army and in the war. This can be best seen in the case of Desmond Doss and the cases of soldiers in *The Naked and the Dead*. When Desmond hurt his brother with a brick, he decided that he was never ever going to hurt anyone. On the other hand, Sam Croft, for example, was a mean child growing up and this persisted in his adult life and influenced his behavior as a soldier.

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