

The '60s Man: Hierarchical Structures and the Articulation
of Male Experience in Selected Novels of Norman Mailer,
Ken Kesey and Philip Roth.

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June, 1994.

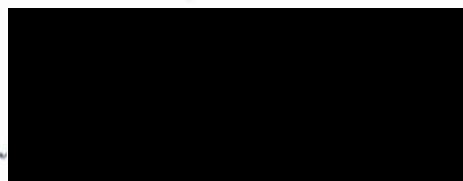
Revised submission: September, 1996.

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy of the University
of New England.

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I certify that any help received in preparing this thesis, and all sources used, have been acknowledged in this thesis.

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Nigel Patrick Spence.

Abstract

This thesis examines the masculine character in American literature. It focuses on representations of ideal masculinity and male character, power, hierarchical social ordering systems, and prestige. The subject matter is a selection of American literary texts depicting men during the 1960s. In the novels studied men are found to pursue power and prestige through hierarchical systems and institutions which work to naturalise the notion that men should conform to a particular archetype of "ideal" masculinity, and that even in texts which present male experience in other terms, male experience is seen to be conditioned by the pursuit of power and prestige through hierarchical structures.

From an analysis of selected American novels depicting men's reactions to the 1960s specific conclusions have been derived. Among the most prominent is the finding that American social/cultural structures and practices reflect an obsession with power and prestige. American social/cultural systems, their structures, and institutions are hierarchical and, for what seems a combination of historical and cultural reasons, patriarchal. American literature provides ample evidence that male competitiveness has been formalised in a culture which systematically valorises certain notions of masculinity, while institutions in American society are directed toward instilling these notions into young men as part of the production of dominant males through a process of "natural selection" resulting from intense inter-personal, inter-group and intra-group competition.

The novels on which the study focuses are: Norman Mailer's *An American Dream* (1965) and *Why Are We in Vietnam?* (1967); Ken Kesey's *Sometimes a Great Notion* (1964); and Philip Roth's *Portnoy's Complaint* (1969); *The Ghost Writer* (1980); *Zuckerman Unbound* (1981); and *The Anatomy Lesson* (1983).

Acknowledgments

I would like to acknowledge the tremendous encouragement provided by my parents, Cmdr. Charles Patrick Spence, R.A.N. (Ret.) and Patricia June Spence.

I would also like to acknowledge the friendship, indefatigable support and proof-reading assistance provided by Leah McGirr.

Phil Blake, Warwick Dunham, Francesca Andreoni, and David Stanton also provided friendship, assistance and motivation, and I thank them.

Finally, I am indebted to the judgement, patience and care displayed by my supervisor, Dr Michael Lee.

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