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

Conclusion: Man in the 1960s.

> DADDY: Was I firm about it?
> MOMMY· Oh, so firm; so firm.
> DADDY: And was I decisive?
> MOMMY: So decisive! Oh, I shivered.
> DADDY: And masculine? Was I really masculine?
> MOMMY: Oh, Daddy, you were so masculine; I shivered and fainted.
> Edward Albee   The American Dream.

The competition for prestige and the struggle for place within hierarchies are the main "topics" of the novels of the 1960s on which I have focused, even when it seems that it is the intention of their authors that other thematic concerns dominate. For example, the competition within D.J. Jethroe's family, between him and his friend Tex, and within the status groups mentioned in the novel is prominent in *Why Are We In Vietnam?* In *An American Dream* Stephen Rojack's thwarted attempt to reach the apex of the hierarchy of national power ends with his descent into murderous superstition in place of political close accommodation. In Ken Kesey's *Sometimes a Great Nation* an altogether smaller but no less intimidating hierarchical structure is the target of a man's drive to acquire power and status. Tracing a long and uneven battle for the "alpha" position of the Stamper clan, the novel shows Lee Stamper finally becoming distantly accommodated to Old Henry's and Hank's "Stamper" (traditional American) values. Philip Roth's Alex Portnoy and Nathan Zuckerman illustrate the inflexible hierarchy of the American family, and the lasting influence of life in the family, and the first accommodations a male must make with the world around him.

Each of the protagonists in the works under discussion—Stephen Rojack, D.J. Jethroe, Hank Stamper, Alex Portnoy and Nathan Zuckerman—is an example of the kind of man American society strives to produce. They are "winners," prepared and trained to lead and inspire and guide, whether on a cultural, regional, or national level. As in the case of any man, how "high" in a given hierarchy (family, economic, social, or physical) each might rise depends on his competence, his ability to accrue prestige, and his ability to successfully accommodate within hierarchical structures. For example, Rojack's "moon madness" disqualifies him from the race to be

president, but nonetheless he reaches Capitol Hill, and gains a certain eminence among those exercising political and economic leverage in the nation's the highest echelons; "D. ." Jethroe, like Hank Stamper, is equipped only to be a leader of a slightly lesser stamp, and he is concomitantly inclined to lesser achievements, although both test their limits with dedication; Hank's antithesis, Lee, and Roth's Nathan Zuckerman, might shun the pursuit of the overt trappings of power, and express disdain for naked materialism, but these two "sensitives" display all the characteristics of tribal myth-tellers, witting or unwitting servants of a prevailing ideology, while their thoughts and words reveal them as men who glimpse the core of the mythos of the ethno-cultural unit, and articulate it. Both Lee Stamper and Alex Portnoy struggle with their responses to the "American way," but their intellectual and emotiona gyrations ineluctably produce accounts which are testimony to its power subtly to craft the individual to its requirements while giving the impression that the opposite process is occurring.

The novels in question demonstrate the extent to which a man, in his pursuit of prestige and power, is bound into the systems and cycles of patriarchal society, which function to monopolise power and eliminate male deviance from patriarchal imperatives. Processes of evaluation and competition and rites of passage create the world of men. Although inculcated with a belief in the desirability of independence and autonomy, the reality for most men is that participation in the modalities of "ideal" masculine behaviour results in a patterned and heavily constrained articulation of selfhood. As they grow to adulthood, and find employment, partners, and friends, men do not bond as much as they are bound by society's expectations of them. In fact, traditional modalities of masculine self-conception and masculine interaction often work against the interests of individual men as much as they do against the interest of other members of society. Donald J. Greiner has observed that "[v]alidation of the gender role is an arduous process for males...as literature has shown and social science confirmed."[1] He quotes Lione Tiger's and Robin Fox's The Imperial Animal in noting the existence of "a system of long-term oppression, one of the functions of which is to induce young males to spend a long time learning particular practices vaguely related to adult statuses, and committing themselves to the structures of the adult males from whom all blessings flow."[2] It is a recognition of the divided, competitive, exploitative nature of a patriarchal structure, which delimits even those it "tempts" with rewards, when Greiner concludes: "Ironically, what is perceived as male

freedom is really male oppression of males. The rigors of male bonding are so extreme that men finally persecute men. Canonical American novelists have generally illustrated this truth."[3]

Feminist myths of the patriarchy as "a monolithic unified totality that knows no contradictions"[4] intent on the suppression of women and designed to eliminate male deviance from patriarchal imperatives need to be seen in the light of the actual methods of functioning of hierarchical systems. Most men exist on the lower levels of the patriarchal power-prestige order. They are not successful, not wealthy, and are denied the scope for "heroic" action in a post-industrial society which has seen "traditional" "masculinity" progressively limited in prestige: " 'Men are supposed to be in power,' " comments James Sniechowski of the Menswork Centre. " 'Maybe 2 or 3 per cent of men are in power but the rest do what they're told.' "[5] Men's social organisations have never been designed to benefit all men, but to identify the most "powerful" men, and to create instrumentalities through which these men can operate. The most powerful men in western societies—those closest to meeting the heroic paradigm in its contemporary guise—are highly competitive, and aggressively disposed toward other men considered "rivals" or "threats," but, operating through their power relationships with other men, their instinct to "upward mobility" and self-improvement coincides with the domination of the principle of self-interest and calculation. Self-promotion and ambition work, at least in part, toward group advantage in a society as social as that of *Homo sapiens*. If, ultimately, males protect self and immediate kin group to the exclusion of other units, the tension between group interest and self-interest and the pull of economic and social ties keep men constrained, productive, and relatively ordered. "Prestige" structures of some kind, always hierarchical in their nature, are ubiquitous in the ordering of men in groups, and their characteristic forms ensure that the social organisation of "ideal" men is well described by the power-seeking, exclusivist and chauvinist notions associated with the term "patriarchal." The construction of an individual male's identity is intimately concerned with his sense of the other men around him: his relationship within his peer-group, which is age and later status defined; and with his superiors and his inferiors (also age and status defined).

The elements mentioned above were foregrounded in the novels on which I focused; they are, essentially, tales which focus on modern versions of masculine deeds of conquest, valour and success, and on reputation, prestige and power, especially their acquisition, exercise, loss and recovery.

288

The 1960s is remembered as fostering "radical" attitudes which aimed at provoking the revitalisation of a moribund and degenerate social order and attempting to influence the tenor of American social policy and political direction. I had expected, in keeping with this radicalism, to see the paradigm of ideal masculinity and American reliance on the stimulation to competition provided by the principle of the "zero-sum" game challenged in the novels of the 1960s. However, I believe that in America in the 1960s the paradigm of ideal masculinity was restated, recast, or rearticulated, but not redefined. The traditional, or conservative social forms in American society became more entrenched, as a culturally conditioned response to questions about their appropriateness. In terms of masculinity, in a time of social and moral uncertainty the stability of patriarchal solidities was the subject of superficial "new modelling," as vocabulary and symbolic fields were explored in the search for 'fresh" articulations of old certainties; also, the re-articulation of the expression of the paradigm of ideal masculinity was accompanied by a dialectic between "old" and "new"—the youth rebellion of the 1960s was part of that, as was the redefinition of gender roles and stereotypes which began to occur in that decade.

However, in the novels which comprised my study I found resurgent patriarchal modalities and evidence of entrenched hierarchical systems. Structures of power, particularly economic, and often based on age and social class as well as gender, were seen to be based on principles of "exclusion" from hegemonic structures. Women, for example, were usually depicted in these novels in incomplete characterisations which focused on women's physical appearances, o · value as status objects.

In the novels in question masculine hierarchical structures dominate men who respond or react—but who are systematically influenced by— "traditional" models of male interaction and traditional modalities of construction of male identity. Males in these novels were aware of conflicting expectations of them as men, but the paradigm of ideal masculinity occupies such a central place in American culture and the messages which reinforce traditional modalities of masculinity are so common, and have such authority, that the very "sense of self" which these men evidence, and the behaviours to which they are prone, show the extent to which they are affected by the vigorous and pervasive cultural and social patterns arising from the p-structures of ideal masculinity. The historically mutating, or developing, patterns of constriction of male behaviour seem designed to be "efficient," in a socially adaptive sense, which accounts for their origin and continuation in human societies. Certain males benefit

from the "dominance" or "the achievement of hegemony over power" which, if not the purpose, seems the most obvious manifestation of the s-structures which arise from the universal p-structure of masculinity.

A formal summary of the general results of my study of the fictional representation of male experience in novels of the 1960s is as follows:

1. Interactions between men concern power and prestige.

2. Men pursue power and prestige through hierarchical systems and institutions.[6] These systems and institutions are part of the "patriarchy," a hegemonic dominance of society based on gender.

3. All patriarchal systems and institutions are hierarchical.

4. Male participation in patriarchal forms is facilitated by the indoctrination of men and women with the belief that it is desirable that men conform to an archetype of 'ideal" masculinity.

From the analysis of selected American novels of the 1960s the following additional set of conclusions was derived, after it could be confirmed that conclusions concerning the five general propositions had not been invalidated by the case studies' findings, and that the hypostasis of American society was indeed an hierarchical paradigm ordering an obsession with power and prestige:

1. American literature of the 1960s reflects what seems to be a cultural belief, or national myth, of American society, which is that at need, and as a result of the action of "national character" and/or "the American way" there emerge strong, competent figures to lead, order, and inspire that society. This leadership and this ordering take place on all levels, from the familial to the national and are the result of culturally encoded imperatives.

2. The systems, structures, and institutions which have been sanctioned in the pursuit of the culturally encoded imperative are hierarchical and, for what seems a combination of historical and cultural reasons, patriarchal. The reasons for this are related to the observations made in the general propositions.

3. American literature appears to reflect the presence of a corollary of the national myth (or, rather, a way of turning it into what is known as a self-fulfilling prophecy), which is that in order to achieve its culturally encoded imperative American society has systematically valorised certain notions of masculinity, while institutions in American society seem to be directed to instilling them 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.

4. American literature provides ample evidence that male competitiveness has been formal sed in the intense, hierarchically-ordered inter-personal, inter-group and intra-group competition of American society and channelled into the production of a unique, culturally distinctive, ultra-competitive attitude toward life in which even recreation, the experience of pleasure and the quest for material security are part of a "zero-sum" game, i.e. a contest in which one can only win as another loses. While nominally supporting the corporate enterp ise, individuals in America are usually motivated by the opposite impulse, i.e. personal gain at the expense of others.

5. The result of the American valorisation of a certain set of masculine attributes is that the literature of the United States reflects an obsession with the heroic, or ideal, masculine archetype in operation in American society. All depictions of male protagonists in the works studied can be organised into a reductively restricted number of categories; minor characters, likewise, possess only a limited set of attributes, while antagonist characters are defined by the absence of the sanctioned traits, or by the possession of attitudes or characteristics inimical to them.

Notes:

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[1] Donald J. Greiner, *Women Enter the Wilderness: Male Bonding and the American Novel of the 1980s* (Columbia: U of South Carolina P, 1991) 38.
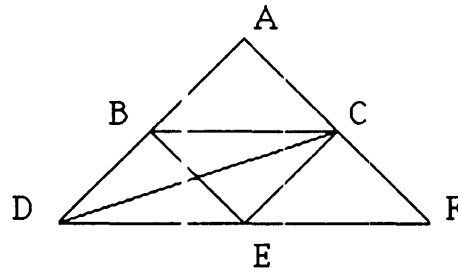[2] Greiner 38.
[3] Greiner 38.
[4] Toril Moi, *Sexual-Textual Politics: Femi iist Literary Theory* (London: Routledge,1985) 63.
[5] Robert Lusetich, "Men Under Fire," *The Australian* 30 Aug. 1993: 7.
[6] See Appendix, Fig. 1.

Appendix: Figures and Tables.

Figure 1. A model of hierarchical structures.

A= "Alpha," or dominant position.

B, D= Positions of advantage for access to next highest level (if the path of promotion is conceived of as being F to A through E, D, C, B)

B, C/D, E, F= *isotimoi*, those of equal prestige. Other relationships are between *anisotimoi*.

Examples of this structure at work in the novels in this study:

	A	B	C	D	E	F
Example	Alpha or Leader	Alpha Rival	2 Rank Prestige	Rising Prestige	Ordinary Prestige	Ordinary Prestige
Trad. Patriarchal Family	Father	Mother	Adult Kin	Children	Children	Children
Economic	"Boss"	"Middle M'ment"	"Middle M'ment"	"Staff"	"Staff"	"Staff"
Social	Social Leader	"Social Set."	"Social Set."	Social Aspirant	Social Aspirant	Social Aspirant
Physical	Alpha or Leader	Alpha Rival	Dom. Male	Rising Male	Ordinary Male	Weakest Male
Mailer *An AD.*	Devil	Moon Goddess	Kelly	Deborah	Ruta	Rojack
* See Table 2.	Kelly	Deborah	Bess (Wife 2)	Rojack	Ruta	Deirdre
Mailer *Viet.*	God					
	Devil	Corp. Leaders	Dept. Leaders	Aspiring Lackeys	Lackeys	Lackeys
	Rusty	Hall'jah	-	D.J.	-	-
	Luke	Easterly	—	Ollie	Staff	Staff
	Rusty	MA Pete	MA Bill	D.J.	—	Tex

Kesey *SAGN*						
(Stamper)	Old Henry/ Hank	Hank	Ben	Orland	Other cousins	Other cousins
(Non-Stamper)	Draeger	Floyd Evenwrite and Teddy	Wakonda Business	"Big" Newton	Wakonda workers	Les Gibbons
Roth *Portnoy*	God/Country/Ideology	Father	Mother	Sister		Alex
Roth *Zuckerman*	Victor	Selma	-	-	Nathan	Henry
	Lonoff	Abravanel	"Secular" artists	Nathan	Other writers NYT	young in the article
	God	Jewish fathers	Jewish mothers	"Good" sons	"Good" daughters	"Bad" children
	Israel	Leaders	Prom- inent Men.	Israelis	Diaspora Jews	Non- obs'v'nt Jews.

Table 1. Attributes of the "Ideal Male."

Male	(Female)
Strong	(Not-strong)
Tall	(Short)
Handsome	(Ugly)
Brave	(Cowardly)
Tough	(Weak)
Independent	(Dependent)
Silent (Reserved)	(Loquacious)

Table 2. Mailer's system of homologies aid oppositions:

a. An American Dream

MOON	(Sun)
THE PARAPET	(The Valley)
DEATH/THE DEAD	(Life)/(the living)
OTHER	SELF
NEGATIVE	POSITIVE
DEBORAH	ROJACK
FEMALE	MALE
BARNEY KELLY	KENNEDY
ANUS (Analingus/anal sex)	PENIS (Fellatio/heterosexual intercourse)
ANUS	VAGINA
SATAN	GOD/JESUS
POWER	WEAKNESS
DEBORAH	CHERRY
MURDER	(Restraint)
SELF-CONTROL	SELF-SURRENDER
ROJACK	THE POLICE
MASCULINE	FEMININE
MALE	FEMALE

b. Why Are We In Vietnam?

THE EMF (-ve.)	THE EMF (+ve.)
NIGHT	DAY
DEVIL	GOD
HOMOSEXUALITY	HETEROSEXUALITY
ANUS	PENIS
FEMALE	MALE
VAGINA	PENIS

294

OTHER	SELF
CORPORATION	INDIVIDUAL
POWER	WEAKNESS
FATHER	MOTHER
SILENCE	COMMUNICATION

Figure 2. The system of inverted/competng hierarchical structures posited in Mailer's novels of the 1960s.

a. *An American Dream*
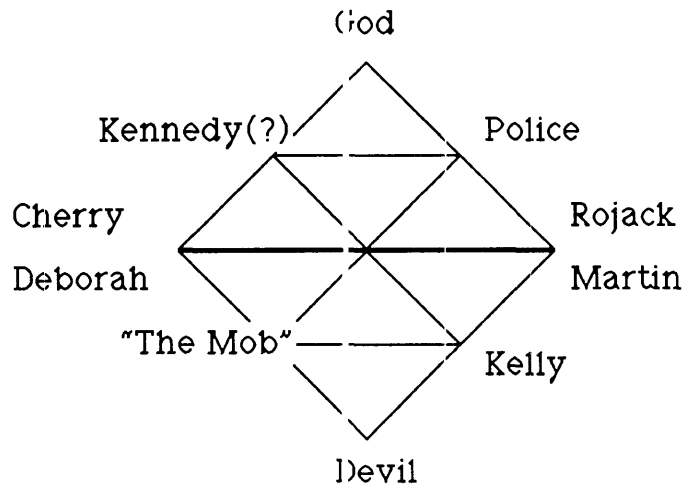
b. *Why Are We In Vietnam?*
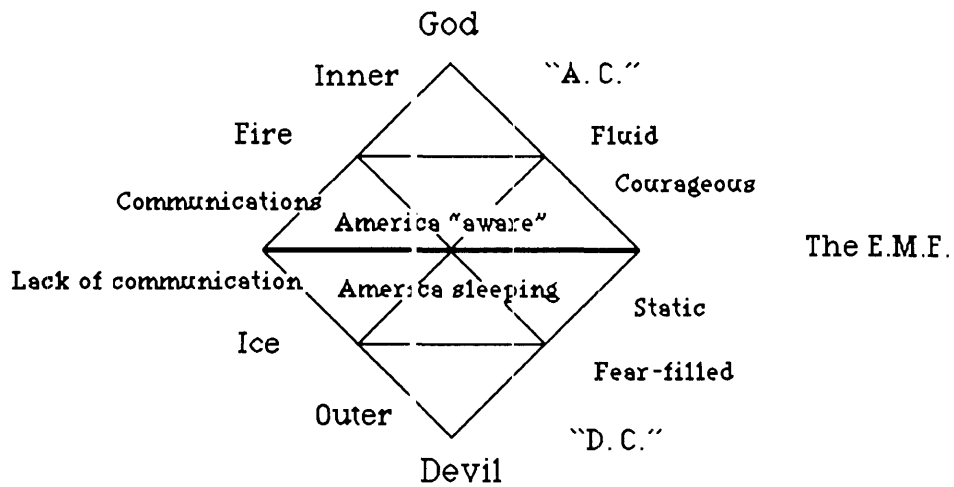
Table 3: Stamper versus non-Stamper values in Kesey's *Sometimes a Great Notion.*

NON-STAMPER	STAMPER
CORPORATION DRIVEN	UNIT DRIVEN
ROOT-BOUND	RESTLESS
EFFETE	RUGGED
CONSERVATIVE	ADVENTUROUS
CORPORATE	INDEPENDENT
UNCONFIDENT	CONFIDENT
GARRULOUS	SILENT
MODERN	TRADITIONAL
RIGID	ADAPTABLE
COWARDLY	COURAGEOUS
WEAK	STRONG
SOCIAL	SURLY

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300

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