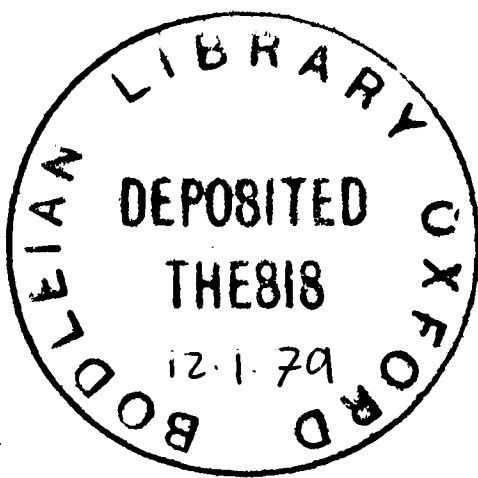


THESIS SUBMITTED FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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PROBLEMS OF THE DOCUMENTARY NOVEL:

THE TREATMENT OF THE CHACO WAR

IN BOLIVIAN FICTION

by

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The thesis examines Bolivian fiction written about the war with Paraguay (1932-35), known as the Chaco War. The study takes two different perspectives: the first considers the fiction as works of literature, and studies three major aspects of fictional writing: narrative organization, characterization and figurative language, in order to investigate the constraints imposed upon writers who produce fiction about an historical event, (in this instance a military conflict). The second perspective views the works of fiction as historical documents and assesses their informative value by comparing factual information supplied in the novels with that provided in historiographical accounts and also by examining the kind of information which is the peculiar contribution of fiction to the understanding of an historical event.

These two examinations are undertaken in Chapters V and VI respectively, and constitute the main body of the thesis. In order to place them in a wider context, the thesis considers previous critical studies of Chaco War fiction (in the Introduction). There follows a study of the relationship between the writing of contemporary history and documentary fiction (Chapter I), a brief summary of the Chaco War (Chapter II), an examination of some possible influences and precedents (Chapter III) and a survey of the writers and the works of Bolivian fiction of the Chaco War (Chapter IV). The conclusion suggests that the problems encountered by writers of documentary fiction are those faced by any naturalist writer, compounded here by the nature of the subject matter. If they cannot fully succeed on an artistic level, however, these works do provide a view of the historical facts of the war which is reasonably accurate. In addition they lead to a distinctive understanding of the war as an historical experience which no historiographical work can produce.

PROBLEMS OF THE DOCUMENTARY NOVEL:

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ABSTRACT

The nucleus of this thesis consists of a number of Bolivian novels and short stories written about the Chaco War, fought between Bolivia and Paraguay from 1932 to 1935. This study has two principal objectives. The first is to examine the relationship between works of history and works of fiction about an historical event, and on the basis of this examination to review and evaluate the particular contribution made by fiction towards an understanding of such an event. The second objective is to examine the artistic effects of writing about an historical event in a form (documentary fiction) in which the writer's principal purpose is to recreate as accurately as possible the reality of that historical experience. A résumé of previous studies of Chaco War fiction is provided in the Introduction, and as this indicates, neither of these two objectives has formed part of any earlier investigation.

Chapter I studies the relationship between historiography and fiction in broad terms, although the general observations made are related to the specific context of the Chaco War. Following a brief survey of the changing attitudes of historians towards "scientific" and "literary" and towards "past" and "contemporary" history, the chapter examines the documentary as an art form in general, and documentary fiction in particular. This examination reveals that although there is

a close affinity between documentary fiction and contemporary history, there are nevertheless significant differences, particularly those which are a consequence of the relative freedom enjoyed by the writer of fiction. The chapter concludes with a consideration of what the reader may expect from history and fiction written about an historical event.

Since the Chaco War took place in a remote area of a continent which has never stood at the centre of world power or conflict, it cannot be assumed that its causes, development and outcome will be familiar to the reader. Chapter II therefore provides a summary of these aspects of the war: Bolivia's concern to obtain an outlet to the Atlantic through a port on the River Paraguay; Paraguayan settlement of the Chaco region; the inevitable clashes as the distance between opposing military outposts diminished; the outbreak of hostilities and eventual commitment to full-scale war; the vain attempts to find a diplomatic solution; the superiority of Paraguayan leadership and strategy which, combined with easier access to the region in dispute, gave Paraguay an advantage that enabled her to obtain the lion's share of the Chaco Boreal as the spoils of victory.

Chapter III examines possible influences upon and precedents to Chaco War fiction. As this study explains, it was natural that the fiction written about a conflict in Latin America in the 1930's should take as its models works with an international reputation which dealt with the First World War. The works which are likely to have had the strongest influence upon Chaco War fiction are Henri Barbusse's Le feu and Erich Maria Remarque's Im Westen Nichts Neues, and an examination is made of the characteristics of these two novels in an attempt to

establish the extent and nature of their influence. In addition the influence of Barbusse is traced through the Peruvian José Carlos Mariátegui and the revolutionary ideas which he (and Bolivians such as Tristán Marof) introduced into Bolivia during the 1920's and 1930's.

The fourth chapter acts as a general introduction to the writers of Bolivian fiction and the works which they produced. It includes information concerning the non-literary activities of the writers, summaries of the contents of the works themselves, and an indication of the extent to which the writers formed a "generation." Chapter IV concludes by placing the Bolivian fiction of the Chaco War in its historical context, suggesting that the Chaco War novelists initiated the concern to establish Bolivian reality as the central focus of Bolivian fiction.

Chapter V examines the artistic problems of the documentary novel. In addition to four documentary novels, a study is made of three novels in which the documentary element is of significantly less importance, and also a collection of short stories. These are all assessed on the basis of three aspects of fiction which together form (or have traditionally formed) the essence of fictional writing: narrative organization, characterization and figurative language. In each of these three aspects it is found that there are inherent contradictions in documentary fiction which prevent it from functioning satisfactorily either as documentary or as fiction. Firstly, the restructuring of reality conventionally undertaken by the writer of fiction in order to impose his interpretation of that reality on the narrative would conflict with the documentary novelists' objective of capturing the unstructured and chaotic reality of their experience. Hence they avoid the restructuring of that reality,

but in so doing these writers produce narratives which are fragmentary, episodic and therefore unsatisfactory as fiction. Secondly, the writers accurately perceive man as a creature dehumanized by his participation in the war and dominated by his natural surroundings. Such a view of man is not restricted to the documentary writers, but is more in evidence in their works, and is largely responsible for the absence of identifiable, realistic, three-dimensional characters of substance in Chaco War fiction. Finally, whereas the language best suited to documentary fiction is non-figurative, factual and "accurate," the language actually used (even if not exclusively) by the writers of such fiction is an imaginative, metaphorical language. As far as the language is concerned, therefore, the writers choose not to adhere to their documentary objective. As a consequence their artistic achievement is more satisfactory with regard to language, since it is precisely the imaginative response reflected in a figurative language that distinguishes fiction from other forms of narrative. On the basis of the analysis of these eight works, it is suggested that a work of documentary fiction attains the most satisfactory level of artistic achievement if conceived as a collection of cuentos, since problems of narrative organization and characterization are of less significance. The question of harmonizing the language of fiction with the documentary objective remains unresolved.

The final major section of the thesis, Chapter VI, considers the fiction of the Chaco War from the point of view both of its historical accuracy and also of its unique contribution to an understanding of the experience of participating in the conflict. The chapter takes as a point of departure Jean Norton Cru's misguided view of the meaning of

"vérité," which he adopts in his study of French literature of the First World War. Although the novelists' purpose is not to write an accurate historical account (if it were then they would not be writing fiction), the Chaco War writers do nevertheless provide a record of actual events. The chapter examines the view of the war which the novelists convey under three main headings. The first of these, the social and national aspects, is to a considerable extent subject to verification in historiographical accounts. Hence comparisons are made between the interpretations of historians and novelists of various factors such as the conduct of the war and foreign intervention, and the siege at Boquerón is taken to illustrate their different views of an actual battle in the war. The other two headings, the physical and the personal aspects of the war, cannot be subjected to verification in the same way. The writers show, for example, from the point of view of an ordinary soldier or junior officer, the hostility of the Chaco and of Nature to the human invaders, the ways in which the soldier is dehumanized and the effect of participation in the war upon the soldiers' morality and personality. Since it is not the concern of the historian to examine these aspects of the war, the novelists' treatment of them constitutes the original contribution that the fiction makes to an understanding of the Chaco War. Chapter VI considers, in addition to these three main headings, the novelists' views of pre-war and post-war Bolivia, and also their vision of the nature of war itself.

The conclusion suggests that, accepting the limitations of the novelists' viewpoint and objectives, the picture of the war which they provide is reasonably accurate. However they are more concerned to convey accuracy of experience and an understanding of the human condition than to

provide accuracy of fact in the manner of an historian. With regard to the artistic evaluation of documentary fiction, the evidence provided by the Chaco War novels is that such fiction is subject to the same difficulties as any naturalist work in attempting to reconcile the conventions of fiction with the portrayal of reality in fiction. Whatever their artistic achievements, they are nevertheless highly successful collectively in communicating their view of war as futile, destructive and degrading.

I should like to express my thanks and appreciation to Professor Jean Franco of Stanford, California, who supervised this thesis in its early stages, and to my present supervisor, Dr John Rutherford of The Queen's College, Oxford.

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INTRODUCTION

The Chaco War was fought from 1932 to 1935 in a remote no-man's-land between Bolivia and Paraguay. Occurring as it did far from the centres of world power and influence, its consequences were minimal beyond the confines of the American continent. As the first international conflict of any duration after World War I, however, it attracted the attention of external interests, from international bodies such as the League of Nations to armaments manufacturers anxious to find clients for their latest equipment and weaponry. Nevertheless, it was inevitably overshadowed later in the decade in Western consciousness by the ideological conflict in Spain and the subsequent conflagration of World War II, and it has since been absorbed into history as a minor territorial dispute which flared into hostilities when diplomacy proved inadequate.

The term "minor" is, of course, a relative one. Both for the landlocked belligerents and for their neighbours who, with varying degrees of willingness, became involved in the conflict, the Chaco War was of more than minor significance. Within Bolivia and Paraguay themselves, the scourge of the war made its profound mark not only at a national level but also at a personal and psychological level upon those who participated, and upon those who watched and waited for news from the front.

Such a calamitous experience was bound to be reflected in all aspects of the nations' existence, not least in their respective literatures. A wide range of historiographical works have appeared since the end of the war, from well-documented "scientific" histories to biographies, memoirs and campaign diaries. At the same time a significant body of fiction has been produced, and it is this fiction which forms the

basis of the present study.¹

Several studies of this fiction have been produced in the past. The first was an article, "Literature of the Chaco War," published in Hispania in 1938 by Willis Knapp Jones in the form of a review and introduction to some of the fiction (Hispania, XXI [1938], 33-46). In the same year, a more suggestive and penetrating article, "La novela de la guerra chaqueña," by María de Villarino, appeared in the Buenos Aires review Sur (No. 41 [1938], pp. 58-66). Here was the first indication that the Chaco War had inspired a body of fiction which might lend itself to a study in depth. By the time that such a study appeared, there were several more Chaco War novels to be examined which had not been published when Jones and Villarino produced their articles.

The first major investigation was undertaken by Oswaldo Arana, whose doctoral dissertation "La novela de la guerra del Chaco: Bolivia y Paraguay" was written for the University of Colorado in 1963. The central parts of Arana's thesis examine the way in which the writers study Man, the war itself, and Nature, and he concludes with a section on aspects of protest. Although much of Arana's work is useful and perceptive, it suffers from several major deficiencies: collections of cuentos and some important novels by Bolivian writers (in particular a novel by

1. The terms "literature" and "fiction" are frequently used indiscriminately and synonymously. For the purpose of the present study, however, it is desirable to distinguish between them. Whereas fiction is always literature in its widest sense of "the body of books etc. that treat of a subject" (Shorter O.E.D.), literature is by no means always fiction. The term "literature" will thus be used in this study to denote written works in general (including, therefore, fiction and history), whereas "fiction" will be used for works which do not claim to be "true," and specifically for the novel. A discussion of what constitutes a work of fiction will of necessity be taken up later in this study: see below, pp. 15-19; 83-86.

Adolfo Costa du Rels)¹ are not included in the study; no artistic evaluation of the works is undertaken, and where artistic value judgments are made they are unsubstantiated;² and finally, no assessment is made of the value of these novels as historical documents.

The next important, though brief, study was an article published by Rubén Bareiro Saguier under the title "Documento y creación en las novelas de la guerra del Chaco" (in Aportes, No. 8 [April 1968], pp. 89-98). The writer suggests that the non-documentary works are more valuable than the documentary ones because the former seek out the essence of reality and treat reality as fluid, whereas the latter only examine the facade of reality, which they schematize and crystallize (Bareiro Saguier, p. 94). However, his argument is undermined by several factors. Firstly, Bareiro Saguier's concern is with what Chaco fiction tells us of Bolivian or Paraguayan society, whereas the documentary novels are primarily historical and not sociological in their conception (although they do inevitably make sociological observations also).³ He appears to ignore the fact that Chaco War fiction is a record, a distinctive one, of an historical event and only secondarily a denunciation of social injustices (pp. 90-91). Secondly, Bareiro Saguier's argument is entirely theoretical and devoid of precise illustrations of the differences

1. Although not published in Spanish until 1967, French versions of this novel had appeared in 1938 and 1944, the latter in Buenos Aires, with the title Lagune H.3. See below, pp. 101-02.

2. See for example Arana, p. 214, where he writes of the permanent place in the history of the Spanish American novel which will be accorded to four given novels, both for the universal value of their human content and the aesthetic value which gives them stature as works of art. But nowhere does he examine this aesthetic value and account for this stature.

3. See below, Chapter VI.

between "documento" and "creación" in Chaco fiction. Thirdly, of the three works that Bareiro Saguier mentions as examples of what he means by "creación," two (Cerruto's Aluvión de fuego and the Paraguayan Roa Bastos' Hijo de hombre) do not have the Chaco War itself as a central element, which suggests that the objective of those who wrote them was fundamentally different from that of the documentary writers; the third work mentioned, Céspedes' Sangre de mestizos, is a collection of relatos and cannot therefore be examined in the same way and according to the same criteria as a novel.¹ Moreover it is difficult to see how Bareiro Saguier can justify the coupling of Cerruto and Céspedes (who both wrote in the 1930's yet who wrote very differently from each other) with Roa Bastos (who wrote more than twenty years later in entirely different circumstances and literary climate).

Despite these problems, Bareiro Saguier's article is important for several reasons: he points to some of the weaknesses inherent in the documentary approach, he indicates the way in which Latin American fiction has evolved and he points to the different role that fiction now plays as a consequence of the development of other art forms and of other means of reporting reality (Bareiro Saguier, pp. 96-97).

The first study of any major length to be published in book form appeared in 1969 under the title La literatura boliviana de la guerra del Chaco,² by Jorge Siles Salinas. Siles Salinas looks only at the Bolivian novels, but although the Costa du Rels novel omitted by Arana is included

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1. Of these three works only Sangre de mestizos will be examined in depth in this study for reasons which will become apparent. Precisely because of the nature of Sangre de mestizos, it will be examined separately from the novels in Chapters V and VI below.
 2. Published in La Paz by the Editorial Don Bosco for the Universidad Católica Boliviana.

and is accorded an inflated significance on account of its Christian message (Siles Salinas, pp. 125-39), other works are strangely omitted (such as Landa Lyon's Mariano Choque Huanca or Otero's Horizontes incendiados). The two major considerations of artistic and documentary value which were not treated by Arana are left unexplored by Siles Salinas also.

The present study attempts to satisfy the major considerations which earlier studies have neglected. It will do so by examining only the Bolivian and not the Paraguayan works. Whilst such a restriction has allowed this study to retain manageable proportions, there are several other reasons to justify such an approach. Firstly there is not, as Arana makes plain, a great deal of thematic difference between Bolivian and Paraguayan Chaco fiction (pp. 1-2), and therefore on matters which pertain to war in general or the reality of the Chaco War in particular (rather than to specifically national issues), what is applicable to Bolivian fiction is applicable to Paraguayan fiction also. Secondly, such an approach is not without precedent, as Siles Salinas elected to examine only Bolivian works in his study and was able to produce an interpretation not substantially different from that of Arana. Finally, it is generally agreed that whereas Paraguay defeated Bolivia on the battlefield, Bolivian fiction on the war was clearly superior in quantity and quality. The only monograph devoted to the Paraguayan literature of the Chaco War (its uniqueness in itself an indication of the inferiority of the Paraguayan works) was published by Donald Fogelquist in 1949. In it he states categorically that "if the war had been a literary one, in which victory was determined by the superiority of the literature produced, Bolivia would have been the victor" ("Paraguayan Literature of the Chaco War," Modern Language Journal, XXXIII [1949], 604). The

Paraguayan critics, Josefina Pla and Hugo Rodríguez Alcalá in their respective studies of Paraguayan literature express disappointment at the paucity and quality of Paraguayan Chaco fiction and its timidity with regard to criticism and protest.¹ On these several grounds, therefore, a study of the Bolivian fiction can be justified.

The present study examines Bolivian Chaco War fiction from two different perspectives. Firstly it is examined as fiction, with the objective of discovering the artistic constraints upon fiction written about an historical event--documentary fiction, as some of it has been termed here. Secondly, the fiction is viewed as history (historical writing), with the objective of examining the historical (or documentary) value of the fiction. These two perspectives determine the nature of Chapters V and VI respectively. Prior to these, however, this study examines in Chapter I the relationship between history and fiction (especially contemporary history and documentary fiction) in broad terms. Chapter II provides a brief description of the Chaco War, and Chapter III sets the fiction in a wider context by examining possible precedents and influences. Chapter IV introduces the writers of Bolivian Chaco War fiction and the works which they produced, so that the reader may be familiar with those selected works which are examined in depth in the central parts of this study.

Oswaldo Arana stated at the beginning of his dissertation that "al estudiarlas [obras] presentaremos las ideas y opiniones que en ellas se exponen, sin intención de juzgarlas como acertadas o no; de esto se

1. Josefina Pla, "La narrativa en el Paraguay de 1900 a la fecha," Cuadernos hispanoamericanos, 231 (1969), 642-43; Hugo Rodríguez-Alcalá, Narrativa hispanoamericana, (Madrid: Gredos, 1973), pp. 194-95.

encargará la historia" (Arana, p. 2). The present study does attempt judgements of the Bolivian Chaco War fiction as seen from both perspectives: as works of fiction and as historical documents. The conclusions drawn may, it is hoped, prove useful in the evaluation of war fiction written about other international conflicts.

CHAPTER I

THE BOUNDARIES OF HISTORY AND FICTION

"Wars have in modern civilization been regarded as abnormal and catastrophic. Perhaps for that reason history has been particularly interested in them."¹

(i) History: Scientific and Literary; Past and Contemporary

It has been customary since the beginning of the age of modern historiography in the eighteenth century, and especially since the days of Leopold von Ranke, to distinguish between history and fiction as mutually exclusive forms of writing. More precisely, whilst fiction may be historical, history has been obliged to become increasingly scientific and less and less literary and imaginative, in order to be considered worthy of the name. The question whether history is fundamentally an art or a science has been debated by historians and others since the latter part of the nineteenth century and, despite an accepted compromise in many quarters, is still of concern to historians today. In contrast to N. Hampson in his inaugural address at the University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne in 1968, History as an Art, Geoffrey Barraclough asserted in his presidential address to the Diamond Jubilee Conference of the Historical Association in 1966, History and the Common Man, (London, 1967, p. 13), that "a more scientific attitude to history is on its way in. It is tentative and undogmatic, has nothing to do with prediction and determinism, and certainly does not mean the uncritical copying of the terminology and categories of sociology. But what it does mean is that

1. Quincey Wright, The Study of War, 2nd ed. (Chicago: Chicago U.P., 1965), p. 440.

historians, at last, are breaking away from their vain preoccupation with motives and causes and surmise, and getting down to facts."¹ According to the scientific school of historians, that which is not verifiable by documentary evidence or which is based upon imaginative speculation is not history but fiction. Against such a view of history Trevelyan, Wedgwood and other literary historians² have argued during this century in their own defence and in defence of their predecessors such as Macaulay, Carlyle and Froude. The dividing line between history and fiction has not always been so clearly drawn, however, as scientific historians would have it. Until the historical writings of the eighteenth century it was not required of works which laid claim to classification as history that myth, imagination, emotion, the art of narrative, the manipulation of fact for didactic purposes, and other qualities now associated with fiction, be absent. Consequently special attention has been drawn by scientific historians to those historians of the past who did aspire to factual accuracy and impartiality, or who achieved stylistic austerity and an absence of emotion in their work, since such works signify for the modern scientific historian the pinnacles of the past; they act as antecedents of his own method and thereby help to justify it. And yet for centuries such criteria as those admired by the scientific historian were subordinated to others of a more literary nature. The telling of a

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1. For contrasting earlier views, see George M. Trevelyan, "Clio, A Muse," in Clio, A Muse and Other Essays Literary and Pedestrian, (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1913), and J.B. Bury, "The Science of History," in Selected Essays, ed. Harold Temperley, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1930).
 2. Herbert Butterfield, in History and Human Relations, (New York: Macmillan, 1952), p. 231, defines "literary" history as that which narrates or "resurrects," as against that which "analyses and dissects."

readable and captivating story would formerly have rendered a work of history more admirable than would mere accuracy of fact based on documentary evidence. In addition it is worth noting that prior to Hume, Robertson and Gibbon in the eighteenth century, historians were less concerned with the distant past than with the age in which they lived. In other words history was once largely what is now termed contemporary history,¹ a genre condemned by some historians as being at worst journalism, propaganda or even fiction, at best undocumented observation lacking the perspective and objectivity essential to "real" history.² The historical writings about the Chaco War, most of them written within a few years of the conflict, constitute contemporary history by most standards, and would therefore be open to these very criticisms. Moreover, such writings are further distanced from the objective ideal of modern historiography by virtue of their being military history, which risks being distorted by a spirit of "patriotisme, gloriolle et tradition."³ If written by Bolivians themselves, they are inevitably lacking in detachment, for the events they describe are too relevant to the age in which

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1. See R.W. Seton-Watson, "Plea for the Study of Contemporary History," History, XIV (1929), 4; H.S. Hughes, "Is Contemporary History Real History?" American Scholar, XXXII (1963), 518; Trevelyan, Clio, A Muse, p. 36.
 2. For a debate as to the respectability of contemporary history, see a series of articles in History: Ernest Barker, "History and Philosophy," VII (1922), 81-91; A.F. Pollard, "An Apology for Historical Research," idem, 161-77; Seton-Watson, "A Plea for the Study of Contemporary History," XIV (1929), 1-18; Gavin B. Henderson, "A Plea for the Study of Contemporary History," XXVI (1941), 51-55; David Thomson, "The Historian's Contribution to Contemporary Thought," XXVIII (1943), 156-61; Max Beloff, "The Study of Contemporary History: Some Further Reflections," XXX (1945), 75-84; F.W. Pick, "Contemporary History: Method and Men," XXXI (1946), 25-55.
 3. Jean Norton Cru, Témoins: Essai d'Analyse et de Critique des Souvenirs de Combattants édités en Français de 1915 à 1928, (Paris: Les Etincelles, 1929), pp. 1-2.

the works were written. Charles W. Arnade writes: "The wars of the Pacific and the Chaco have yet failed to produce any impartial work by Bolivians" ("A selected bibliography of Bolivian Social Sciences," Inter-American Review of Bibliography, VIII [1958], 257). Pablo Max Ynsfran, the Paraguayan diplomat who edited in English the memoirs of the Paraguayan Commander-in-Chief, Mariscal Estigarribia, adds that "in general one must take with caution any history of the Chaco War written by nationals of the two former contenders,"¹ (including, presumably, Estigarribia's memoirs). Nothing has been published since 1958 to invalidate either assertion, with the possible exception of Roberto Querejazu Calvo's Masamaclay.²

In Bolivia the loss of the Chaco territory and the ignominy of defeat are issues which even today have not passed from the realm of current affairs into the history of past events. Bolivia's territorial losses have been accepted with reluctance, particularly that of her Pacific seaboard, which occurred almost a century ago but whose recovery is still a current aspiration. Under the heading "Bolivia" the Hispanic American Report, (XVII [1964], 253-54), refers to a march, led by the then President of Bolivia, Paz Estenssoro, of some 30,000 people to publicize Bolivia's demand for a Pacific port. This was an annual event during the "Semana del Mar" which commemorated the defence of Calama during the War of the Pacific.³ The continued publication of books on the Chaco bears

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1. In his Preface to David H. Zook Jr., The Conduct of the Chaco War, (New York: Bookman Associates, 1960), p. 10.
 2. Masamaclay: Historia política, diplomática y militar de la guerra del Chaco, (La Paz: Ed. "Los Amigos del Libro," 1965).
 3. See also J. Valerie Fifer, Bolivia: Land, Location and Politics Since 1825, (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1972), pp. 90-91 and Plate X. On the connection between the loss of her Pacific outlet and Bolivia's interest in the Chaco, see below, pp. 34, 36.

witness to the contemporaneity of that loss. But leaving this factor aside, one of the problems with Bolivian histories of the Chaco War is that some of them are, as is often the case with military history, what is frequently styled "official history," revealing a view of events which a particular government wished to be known (see Beloff in History, XXX [1945], 78-80).

The few histories by writers whose nations were not directly involved in the conflict are, understandably enough, least susceptible to this lack of detachment. As C.V. Wedgwood remarks in Truth and Opinion: "The history of a nation as told by a foreigner, and as told by a native are totally different things . . ."¹ But they, like most contemporary history, suffer from an absence of well-organized archives and repositories of documentary material and do not therefore contain all the evidence which will ultimately be at the disposal of future researchers.² They are still largely dependent for their primary materials upon conflicting

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1. Truth and Opinion: Historical Essays, (London: Collins, 1960), p. 43. The best objective works by non-Bolivians are by the American, Zook, The Conduct of the Chaco War, and Historia de la guerra del Chaco, 7 vols. (La Paz: Litografías e Imprentas Unidas, 1940-44), by Aquiles Vergara Vicuña, a Chilean colonel and military instructor contracted by the Bolivians in 1934.
 2. On some of the problems of research in contemporary history, see Beloff, History, XXX (1945), 78-83. On Bolivian history specifically, Abecia Baldivieso, Historiografía boliviana, (La Paz: Ed. "Letras," 1965), p. 447, writes: "Infelizmente, en Bolivia la acumulación de materiales y documentos se ha efectuado deficientemente . . . Enorme cantidad de papeles y documentos sin clasificar existen en lo que se llama archivos." Guillermo Bedregal, Los militares en Bolivia, (La Paz: "Los Amigos del Libro," 1971), p. 15, claims, however, that "en nuestro país el llamado secreto militar tiene tales celos que los documentos que configuran algún juicio severo en torno a las actuaciones militares, generalmente son escondidos celosamente y finalmente desaparecen de los archivos, como es el caso múltiple de la documentación militar vinculada a la Guerra del Chaco que ya no existe en la Cancillería."

eye-witness accounts, interviews or memoirs, with all the distortions, deliberate or otherwise, that these may contain.¹ And even though some of these problems beset any kind of historical writing, the assessment of contemporary historical events suffers, by definition, from a lack of distance and an absence of debate which, with "past" history, builds up over generations and brings to that history the different perspectives of changing social norms.

Thus the work of the historians of the Chaco War stands at a distant point from the modern ideal of accurate, scientific history. Abecia Baldivieso points out that Bolivian historians have not been interested in scientific history, and that in general they lack a proper critical method (Historiografía boliviana, pp. 432 and 434). The further historical writings stand from a scientific approach the more difficult does it become to distinguish between them and other forms of writing which lie on the periphery of established genres. Although there is a broad consensus about most works as to whether they are works of history or not, there are those which may be considered to be history by one reader but some other genre by another, especially in the area of memoirs, diaries or personal campaign reminiscences. This blurring of generic distinctions applies also to a certain category of works which describe historical events in novelized form. Some of these works (to borrow an historical

1. Although even documents, of course, are liable to suffer from the biases of those who write them: see Pardon E. Tillinghast, The Specious Past: Historians and Others, (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley Publishing Co., 1972), p. 34; E. H. Carr, What is History? (London: Macmillan, 1961), p. . On the dangers of interviews, see Daniel Aaron, "The Treachery of Recollection: The Inner and Outer History," in R.H. Bremner (ed.), Essays on History and Literature, (Columbus, Ohio: Ohio State U.P., 1966), p. 10.

term) are called documentary fiction, the very designation of which suggests an obscuring of the distinction between fictional and non-fictional forms of writing.

(ii) The Documentary as an Art Form

The documentary work is very much a twentieth century phenomenon and perhaps for this reason has received very little critical attention. One recent study which examines the documentary form has been made by William Stott, who deals specifically with the United States in the 1930's.¹ Nevertheless the origin and functions of the documentary as expounded by Stott can, with appropriate modification, be applied to other parts of the Western world.

According to Stott (p. 14), documentary is "the presentation of actual fact in a way that makes it credible and vivid to people at the time." In the America of the 1930's it was influenced both in themes (the worker, the peasantry, the land) and in artistic and reportorial techniques by examples from Russia and Germany (Stott, p. 53). One such technique in written documentary was reportage, defined by Joseph North at the 1935 American Writers' Congress as "three-dimensional reporting" that "helps the reader experience the event recorded" (Stott, p. 54). Stott mentions two ways in which documentary tries to influence its audience: the direct method, which is designed to make it feel implicated, to give it the experience which is being portrayed as forcefully as possible, and the vicarious method which gives the facts indirectly through an intermediary who provides not only the facts but also his

1. Documentary Expression and Thirties America, (New York: Oxford U.P., 1973).

reaction to the facts (Stott, pp. 27, 29, 33). In fiction these would usually correspond to first-person and third-person narrative respectively.

In the country and decade about which Stott writes, the main documentary media were no longer fiction, nor even the documentary narrative, but the photograph, the radio and (in a lesser role) the journalistic article. Stott suggests that although reporters were aware of the greater power of the photograph over the written word as a means of convincing their audience, photographs and films were used in documentary not because one photograph is worth a thousand words but "because machines communicate facts passively, transparently, with an almost pure impersonality" (p. 31). Yet he admits that "there is a bias in most photographs" (p. 32),¹ and the emotional content of words contained in fiction is to be found also in radio or film commentary which accompanies documentary pictures.

In truth the greater impact of visual presentation cannot be denied, and with the advent of pictorial and telegraphic forms of communicating events, fiction has ceased to be the most viable medium for documentary. But in the Bolivia of the 1930's, with cameras and reporters little in evidence and the radio in its infancy, fiction could still fulfil an important documentary function.

(iii) Documentary Fiction

A work of documentary fiction is a narrative portraying real contemporary events in which often the writer himself has participated.

1. See below, p. 18.

Its principal objective is to record the experience of those events as accurately as possible, but there is sufficient intervention on the writer's part to make it evident that the account of events in that narrative cannot be considered "factual" or "historical" in the generally accepted sense of the terms.¹ To illustrate this definition (taking works written on the subject of war), Barbusse's Le feu is documentary fiction,² but Graves' Goodbye to All That is not: it is documentary, but it is not fiction. Graves drew a distinction between history and fiction which suggests that for him the two genres are mutually exclusive, and that the category of documentary fiction is inadmissible. In Goodbye to All That he writes: "In 1916 when on leave in England after being wounded, I began an account of my first few months in France. Having stupidly written it as a novel, I have now to translate it into history."³ Later he adds: "I made several attempts during these years to rid myself of the poison of war memories by finishing my novel, but had to abandon it--ashamed at having distorted my material with a plot, and yet not sure enough of myself to turn it back into undisguised history, as here" (p. 284). This must be reconciled with Paul Fussell's view of Goodbye to All That⁴ that it is a fiction disguised as a memoir rather than a

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1. The ways in which the writer intervenes will be examined below in Chapter V.
 2. José Carlos Mariátegui was clearly aware of the unusual literary nature of Le feu, for he wrote in La escena contemporánea, 2nd ed., (Lima: Ed. Amauta, 1959), p. 160: "Le feu no es tampoco una novela. Es una crónica de las trincheras. Es un relato del horror bélico." See below, Chapter III, for an examination of Barbusse and Le feu in relation to Chaco War fiction.
 3. Goodbye to All That, 3rd ed., (London: Cassell, 1961), p. 80.
 4. The Great War and Modern Memory, (New York: Oxford U.P., 1975), pp. 203-20.

documentary autobiography. Fussell does not refer, however, to the two extracts quoted here. Perhaps it could at least be said, on the basis of Graves' own assertions, that the aspects dealing specifically with his participation in the war are intended to be factual and accurate. In contrast to Graves, Hemingway believes that actual events, if accurately reported, can be novelized without detriment. In his preface to the Spanish Civil War book, The Great Crusade by Gustave Regler, (London: Longmans, 1940), he writes: ". . . there are events which are so great that if a writer has participated in them his obligation is to try to write them truly rather than assume the presumption of altering them with invention" (p. xi). Yet he has no hesitation in calling Regler's work a novel.

Orwell's Homage to Catalonia falls into the same category as Graves' book: documentary but not fiction. Frederick R. Benson, in Writers in Arms, classifies Orwell's book, together with other similar books such as Georges Bernanos' Les grands cimetières sous la lune and Arthur Koestler's Spanish Testament, as a "personal narrative" rather than a novel.¹ Yet Regler's The Great Crusade "may justly be called a novel because it does not pretend to be a detailed history of the military events in which the International Brigades took part" (p. 116). Benson's classification of a work as a novel seems to be made on the basis of what it is not: a further illustration of the difficulty of the problem.

Remarque's Im Westen Nichts Neues is, however, documentary fiction: A.F. Bance asserts that "Im Westen is undeniably fiction,"² although

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1. Writers in Arms: The Literary Impact of the Spanish Civil War, (London: University of London Press, 1968), p. 43.
 2. "'Im Westen Nichts Neues': A Bestseller in Context," Modern Language Review, LXXII (1977), 361.

Mariátegui, in El alma matinal, writing of Arnold Zweig's Der Streit um den Sergeanten Grischa (1927), questions the classification of Remarque's work as a novel.¹ These two statements illustrate further the fact that the documentary aspect of a work produces problems of classification.²

It is not possible to point to a single characteristic as the factor which determines whether a work is fiction or not. The reader has to establish from the overall presentation of the material whether he is reading fiction or non-fiction, and it will not always be clear to him whether he is reading a fictional account of events which did not happen, a fictionalized account of events which may well have happened, or a factual account of events which did happen. Of these three approaches, which correspond broadly to fiction, documentary fiction and non-fiction respectively, it is the central approach--that of documentary fiction--which is most likely to confuse the reader regarding the factualness of the text.

Although the documentary form claims to be objective and "real," it is an objectivity and a reality shaped for the reader by the man who wields the pen (or the brush or the camera in other art forms). In relation to non-documentary artists he may be less conscious of selection on artistic grounds and have a more dispassionate attitude towards his material, and yet he still determines what to include and what to omit, what to emphasize and what to minimize. Moreover he can (sometimes deliberately) also distort and confuse (through hyperbole, for example), even while he portrays reality. The documentary form, more than any other, is one in which reality and art (or fact and fiction) can be confused, and when confronted by a documentary work, we must remember that the factualness of what we are told

1. El alma matinal y otras estaciones del hombre de hoy, 2nd ed., (Lima: Ed. Amauta, 1959), p. 194.

2. See below, Chapter III, for an examination of Remarque's novel in relation to Chaco War fiction.

(in respect of details, at least) is not guaranteed. Margaret Macdonald's remark is instructive here: "To convince is a merit in a work of fiction. To induce someone to accept a fiction, however, is not necessarily to seduce him into a belief that it is real. It is true that some people may be deceived by fiction. They fail to distinguish conviction from deception."¹

One further issue concerning documentary fiction which must be raised here is the question of perspective. Just as later history may give a more accurate picture of events than a contemporary historical account, so a fictional account written after the event may be more illuminating than a contemporary work. Hence Stephen Crane's The Red Badge of Courage is held up as one of the most authentic works of fiction on the American Civil War, even though Crane was too young to have served in the war himself. Crane's work also illustrates the fact that participation or personal experience is not essential for an impression of authenticity. He said of it: ". . . I have never been in battle, but I believe that I got my sense of the rage of conflict on the football field, or else fighting is a hereditary instinct, and I wrote intuitively."² Hemingway, in his preface to Regler's The Great Crusade (pp. x-xi), cites The Red Badge of Courage as an example of a "tour de force" which has not been created "from knowledge." He explains this rarity somewhat enigmatically by suggesting that "the authors of such books are usually poets who happen to be writing prose." Jean Norton Cru (Témoins, p. 6), does not accept the argument that non-witnesses can produce as valid a document as that written by a witness. Yet he admits that a skilled writer can lead him to believe that his account is an authentic one: "Parfois je lisais et annotais un volume en entier avant de me rendre compte

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1. In "The Language of Fiction," Perspectives on Fiction, eds Calderwood and Toliver, (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), p. 59.
 2. Quoted in Bernard Bergonzi, Heroes' Twilight: A Study of the Literature of the Great War, (London: Constable, 1965), p. 15.

que j'avais affaire aux pseudo-souvenirs d'un soldat fictif, écrits par un civil de 50 ans passés, littérateur habile et fort bien renseigné, ma foi." This undermines the distinction which he insists upon drawing between "témoignages" and "récits de seconde main."

Zola documented himself about the Franco-Prussian War and the Paris Commune some twenty years after those events with a success equal to that of Crane.¹ Whilst there may not be any "'law' of history [which] would seem to require that a considerable time elapse before a great event can be appropriated by the creative imagination,"² one great writer, Chekhov, felt insulted at being asked shortly before his death to write a play about the Russo-Japanese War (1904-05): "It is necessary that twenty years should pass. It is impossible to speak of it now. It is necessary that the soul should be in repose."³ And yet Hemingway would argue that for participants in a war the passage of time distorts the truth: "As they get further away from a war they have taken part in all men have a tendency to make it more as they wish it had been rather than how it really was."⁴ The only conclusion to be drawn is that a documentary work written close to an event is likely to provide the most authentic account of what that event was really like as an experience (although exceptions do occur), whereas a work written later

1. On Zola's documentary approach to La Débâcle, see Les Rougon-Macquart, (Paris: Gallimard, 1967), V, 1362-1469. Possible indirect influence by Zola's novel upon that of Crane is suggested by J.B. Colvert, "The Red Badge of Courage and a Review of Zola's La Débâcle," Modern Language Notes, LXXI (1956), 98-100.
2. Irving Howe, Politics and the Novel, (London: Stevens and Sons, 1961), p. 203.
3. Quoted by David Cate, The Illusion: An Essay on Politics, Theatre and the Novel, (London: Panther, 1972), p. 69.
4. Ernest Hemingway (ed.), Men at War: The Best War Stories of All Time, (New York: Crown, 1942), p. xvi. Cf. the comments by J.A.V. Chapple, Documentary and Imaginative Literature 1880-1920, (London: Blandford Press, 1970), p. 301, in connection with Wyndham Lewis' Blasting and Bombardiering (1937), in which the sections on the First World War are "so distanced and controlled in the telling."

will probably contain more balanced judgements, should judgements be attempted.

(iv) Contemporary History and Documentary Fiction: Their Relationship

The history and the fiction of the Chaco War are both written accounts based on reality. This is true of history and mimetic fiction in general, where one provides a reconstruction of reality, the other a representation of it. The distinction between the two is normally evident enough, although it is a commonplace that reality may appear to be stranger than fiction, or fiction more real than reality. But with contemporary history and documentary fiction the distinction is frequently obscured, and depends to a considerable extent upon the emotional attitude of the writer towards his subject matter. Much of the literature of the Chaco War is written with an emotional, sometimes passionate involvement, and one of the factors which distinguishes the attitude of the writer of history from that of the writer of fiction dealing with the same event or topic is the extent to which the emotion or passion is held in check. Where the writer of contemporary history attempts to suppress his emotional response to his subject matter, the writer of documentary fiction relies upon this emotion to interpret reality, to select from it those elements which will best convey his own reaction to experienced events. Whereas the historian should not restrict himself only to that evidence which supports his interpretation, the writer of documentary fiction may omit that which does not suit his purpose, providing that he does not thereby falsify reality; what he writes will have its origin in fact, but he may not include all the facts. He creates a kind of "living history," a narrative not designed to explain and describe what happened (although it may do so incidentally and unreliably), but to show "what it

was like." But because this fiction is based so closely on real happenings, because the writer has attempted to document himself in the manner of an historian, it is the least fictional of fictions, using "fictional" in the sense of imaginary, unreal or non-actual. At the same time the history which describes the same reality is the least historical of histories, because it is contemporary, therefore not "of the past," and as a consequence it is the least accurate, objective and "scientific" kind of history. To a degree, documentary fiction and contemporary history overlap; part of the spectrum of reality that they portray is identical. They are not unique in this relationship, for history of the distant past and the historical novel are similarly bound. Just as the documentary novelist can be selective, so the writer of historical fiction can "know or not know," he can use or disregard facts as he sees fit, with even greater freedom than the documentary novelist (whose readers are more knowledgeable about the events or people concerned). In this sense the historical novelist is less restricted; in another he is more so, for like the historian of past events he should attempt to forget all that has happened since the time in which his story is set. He must not "modernize," to use Lukács' term.¹

Yet clearly there is a difference between an historical and a fictional account of this reality. We have referred to the question of emotional involvement on the part of the writer; another aspect of this difference concerns the restrictions which are imposed upon the work which lays claim to classification as history. In relation to truth, history and fiction are complementary. Just as all literature, even pure fantasy, however tenuously, bears some relationship to reality, so all literature bears some relationship to truth, whether this be a universal human truth or in an Aristotelian sense of verisimilitude. Historical truth, if such

1. Georg Lukács, The Historical Novel, trans by H. and S. Mitchell, (London: Merlin, 1962), p. 60.

exists,¹ means as accurate a picture as possible, given all available evidence, of the course of past events, including their apparent causes and effects. It is a much more restrictive kind of truth than that demanded by realistic fiction,² which requires only that what is portrayed be "true to life" and internally consistent.³ Collingwood points out that the novelist only has to "construct a coherent picture, one that makes sense," whereas the historian has not only to do this but also "to construct a picture of things as they really were and of events as they really happened."⁴ In one sense, therefore, the writing of history is more difficult because more restricted than the writing of fiction; whereas in another sense it is easier, because the historian already has his raw materials: he does not have to rely on artistic inspiration for his plot nor for the creation of his characters. His prime duty is to relate his factual knowledge of factual events. It falls to the writer of fiction to illuminate or exemplify truths about human behaviour or personality: according to Butterfield " . . . history cannot come so near to human hearts and human passions as a good novel can; its very fidelity to facts makes it not perhaps less true to life, but farther away from the heart of things."⁵ Some historians have suggested that this illumination is, or could also be the task of the

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1. Butterfield, History and Human Relations, (New York: Macmillan, 1952), pp. 170-71, points out that conclusions about most historical events have to be revised within a generation, and suggests (p. 210) that this applies especially to contemporary history.
 2. This restriction in the writing of history applies to characters as well as to events and is, as Tillinghast remarks, in The Specious Past p. 18, one of the major difficulties in the writing of the historical novel.
 3. W.J. Harvey, Character and the Novel, (London: Chatto and Windus, 1965), p. 16.
 4. R.G. Collingwood, Historical Imagination, (London: Oxford University Press, 1935), p. 18.
 5. H. Butterfield, The Historical Novel, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1924), p. 18.

historian.¹

One of the reasons why the historian does not do this is because history is a narrative based upon the unique coincidence of certain people at certain times in certain places under certain conditions, whatever parallels one might draw with other occurrences. History may appear to repeat itself, but it never does precisely. Fiction, on the other hand, need not be bound by time, place or circumstance, and even if it is, it will tell a story which can be universally significant because human nature changes more slowly than a society or a civilization. Another reason for the capacity of fiction to illuminate is because the novelist does not hesitate to introduce morality into his narrative, whereas the historian, especially the contemporary historian, is no longer sure that it is his function to pass moral judgements.² Although the issue of moral judgement in fiction is debatable, it has conventionally been held that the creator of the work of fiction is in a position to pass judgement on any of his characters, leaving the reader free to agree or disagree with that judgement. Harvey, in Character and the Novel (p. 32), describes the relationship of author to characters as "god-like . . . the novelist is and must be both omnipotent and omniscient."³ But since history is, in its simplest terms, the story

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1. See, for example, Martin Duberman, "The Limitations of History," Antioch Review, XXV (1965-66), 283-96; Tillinghast, The Specious Past, p. 47, n. 6.
 2. On the question of moral judgements in history, see (for examples of the view which favours such judgements) Isaiah Berlin, Historical Inevitability, (London: Oxford University Press, 1954); C.V. Wedgwood, "The Historian and the World," Velvet Studies, (London: Jonathan Cape, 1946), pp. 154-59; the same writer's Truth and Opinion, pp. 47-54; A. Toynbee, "The Writing of Contemporary History for Chatham House," International Affairs, XXIX (1953), 137-40; Arthur Child, "Moral Judgement in History," Ethics, LXI (1951), 297-308. For opposing views see Butterfield, History and Human Relations, pp. 101-30; David Knowles, "The Historian and Character," The Historian and Character and Other Essays, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963), pp. 1-15; G. Barraclough, "History, Morals and Politics," International Affairs, XXXIV (1958), 1-15.
 3. For opposing views see Sartre, Literary and Philosophical Essays, trans. A. Michelson, (London: Rider, 1955), p. 14.

of real men, then it is even more questionable whether other men (i.e. historians) have the right to judge the actors in history since (say some who object to such practice) all men will ultimately be judged by their Creator, and in any case moral opinions of character and motive are out of place and unnecessary in an historical account (see, for example, Butterfield, History and Human Relations, pp. 103-04, 106). Butterfield points out that "those who do not recognise that the killing and torturing of human beings is barbarity will hardly be brought to that realisation by any labels and nicknames that historians may attach to these things." The historian should describe the massacre or the persecution, and thereby allow its perpetrators to condemn themselves, "but those who are unmoved by the historical description will not be stirred by any pontifical commentary that may be superadded" (p. 123). Others who believe in a deterministic theory of human behaviour are obliged to reject moral judgements as pointless since they are incompatible with that theory. Fiction can and does, implicitly or explicitly, praise or condemn, blame or vindicate; moreover it can do so not only in the context of the narrative itself, but also by implication in the context of real life.

An equally important function held by fiction in communicating an understanding of the human condition lies in its emphasis upon the common individual. Whereas only the famous characters, the actors in an historical event, belong to remembered history (see Butterfield, The Historical Novel, p. 65), fiction is principally concerned with ordinary men, the mass of people who follow the lead of others and whose lives are shaped by them. The reader can therefore more readily comprehend or even identify with such people, the more so because the character in fiction does not, or did not, exist in fact, and has, or had, no corporeal shape. The character is, in a sense, Everyman, and any reader can, as he

reads, assume the existence of this imaginary being. In so doing, the reader can also respond mentally in the same way as the character, the extent to which he does so depending largely on the ability of the writer to understand human psychology and communicate people's responses in a credible fashion. The modern historian may not approach events as his predecessors once did, describing the social pyramid as they saw it from their vantage point on high (from kings and generals downwards), but the historian has rarely considered events from the viewpoint of the common man looking upwards (except perhaps in a diary, and this is another point where contemporary history and documentary fiction almost coincide). Even the sociological approach to history tends to view the common man collectively, either as a social class or, on a wider scale, as "the masses." "La historia es un instrumento de generalización," writes one Bolivian historian,¹ and one of the consequences is that the ordinary individual in an historical situation is to be found in fiction rather than history.²

(v) History and fiction: Expectations and Lessons

Having surveyed the differing aims and nature of history and fiction, and specifically of contemporary history and documentary fiction, we may conclude by considering what the reader may seek from both history and fiction, and what sort of understanding of events and of human nature he may expect to obtain.

One quality which, in varying degrees, all readers demand is a

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1. Porfirio Díaz Machicao, Historia de Bolivia: Salamanca, La Guerra del Chaco, Tejada Sorzano; 1931-1936, (La Paz: Gisbert, 1955), p. 12.
 2. See Chapple, Documentary and Imaginative Literature, p. 18. Historical works about modern war are especially liable to overlook the individual. On the "absence of human beings" from modern war histories, see Gil Elliot, Twentieth Century Book of the Dead, (London: Allen Lane, 1972), p. 2.

satisfying narrative or, more simply, a good story. The survival of the epic and its transformation into the novel via history and romance¹ is a testimony to the basic human love of the telling of a good tale. Clearly the relative importance of the telling of the story differs from one kind of writing to another: its significance in a detective story, for example, is assumed in a scholarly historical work by discussion, explanation and analysis. But by and large a "good" story, which in the case of history is a "true" story, is an essential ingredient of both good history and good fiction.² What the reader must be able to do is to discern the difference between a "true" story and a fictional one, and to recognize that the latter "is not reality itself but that it has clear and effective relations with reality."³

The reader of documentary fiction can expect less in the way of a gripping story than the reader of other types of fiction, for the interplay of characters, the build-up of tensions, the resolution of conflicts and other qualities traditionally associated with fictional narrative are of secondary importance to the writer of documentary fiction, who is more concerned with the documentary aspect of his work.⁴ The reader of a documentary novel will find in it scant protection from the harshness of reality, except in so far as fiction offers "a simulacrum of life which enables an audience to participate in events without being involved in the consequences

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1. R.E. Scholes and R. Kellogg, The Nature of Narrative, (New York, Oxford University Press, 1966), p. 58.
 2. On the view of "history as a species of the genus Story," see W.B. Gallie, Philosophy and the Historical Understanding, (London: Chatto and Windus, 1964), Chapter 3, especially pp. 66-71.
 3. Lionel Trilling, "Art and Fortune," in J.W. Aldridge (ed.), Critiques and Essays on Modern Fiction 1920-51, (New York: Ronald Press, 1952), p. 536.
 4. For a full examination of the consequences of the different concerns of the documentary novelist, see below, Chapter V.

which events in the actual world inevitably carry with them" (Scholes and Kellogg, The Nature of Narrative, p. 241). Rather can such a reader expect a clear picture of events without any of the restrictions imposed upon history, whether popular or scholarly. He can learn truths about human nature and the human condition against a background of authentic reality: Hemingway provides an illuminating comment in his introduction to Men at War (p. xv): "A writer's job is to tell the truth. His standard of fidelity to the truth should be so high that his invention, out of his experience, should produce a truer account than anything factual can be. For facts can be observed badly; but when a good writer is creating something, he has time and scope to make of it an absolute truth."

In this sense, therefore, the documentary novel is a hybrid form of writing, a blend of history, fiction and reportage. Reportage, mentioned in connection with Stott's study (above, p. 14), makes no claims on posterity; once history is written, reportage becomes obsolete. There are two factors which undermine the value of reportage: it tries frequently to make instant historical judgements about events which are not yet history; it may contain fiction (in the form of rumour, gossip, exaggeration or misinformation) when its aim is to convey fact. Its essential value is to provide an interim picture of events as understood by an eye-witness. It relates both "what happened" and "what it was like," and thus temporarily plays the role of contemporary history and documentary fiction combined. This blend at its best may provide a view of life that no other kind of writing can achieve.

Professor Hugh Trevor-Roper maintains that it is the function of historical imagination to enable historians to understand "not what is in the documents of history but what lies behind them . . . to feel in our own minds that significant but elusive deposit which experience leaves in the minds of any particular generation , . . elusive to us because it is

taken for granted by contemporaries, who therefore seldom describe it."¹

It is just this elusive deposit which, although Trevor-Roper does not acknowledge this, the documentary novelist captures, but the deposit "does not get into the official documents, which are often the only records which survive, or at least the only records which historians use."² "The question is not," suggests Bremner, "whether historians ought to consult literary evidence but how they should employ it to discover and illumine the shape of the past."³ An attempt will be made in Chapter VI to answer this question in relation to the Chaco War.

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1. Hugh Trevor-Roper, "Historical Imagination," Listener, 27 February 1958, p. 357.
 2. Ibid. Trevelyan, by contrast, in Clio, A Muse, p. 24, asserts that "history and literature [=fiction] cannot be fully comprehended, still less fully enjoyed, except in connection with one another." See also Trevelyan, "History and Literature," History, IX (1924-25), 83.
 3. Bremner, Essays on History and Literature, p. ix. See also Chapple, Documentary and Imaginative Literature 1680-1920, p. 15; Bernard Devoto, "Interrelations of History and Literature," in W.E. Linglebach (ed.), Approaches to American Social History, (New York: Appleton-Century, 1937), pp. 34-56; and with reference to a Latin American context, Roberto Esquenazi-Mayo, "Social Aspects of the Contemporary Novel," in Edward D. Terry (ed.), Artists and Writers in the Evolution of Latin America, (University, Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 1969), p. 74: ". . . it does not alarm me that from [the] study [of a literary work] . . . some sound conclusions are derived that enhance our knowledge of a historical period."

CHAPTER II

A BRIEF OUTLINE OF THE CHACO WAR

"The most unfortunate thing about war is that it accomplishes nothing. All the effort that goes into it is wasted; all its sacrifices are vain. The issues between nations, over which they go to war, still remain when war is done; war does not settle anything. The diplomats at their conventional green tables come to the end of their arguments and their nations go to war. In the end the diplomats must take up again where they left off before, not exactly at the same place, of course, but with the arguments on both sides not very much changed."

Willard Waller (ed.), War in the Twentieth Century, (New York: Random House, 1940), pp. 31-32.

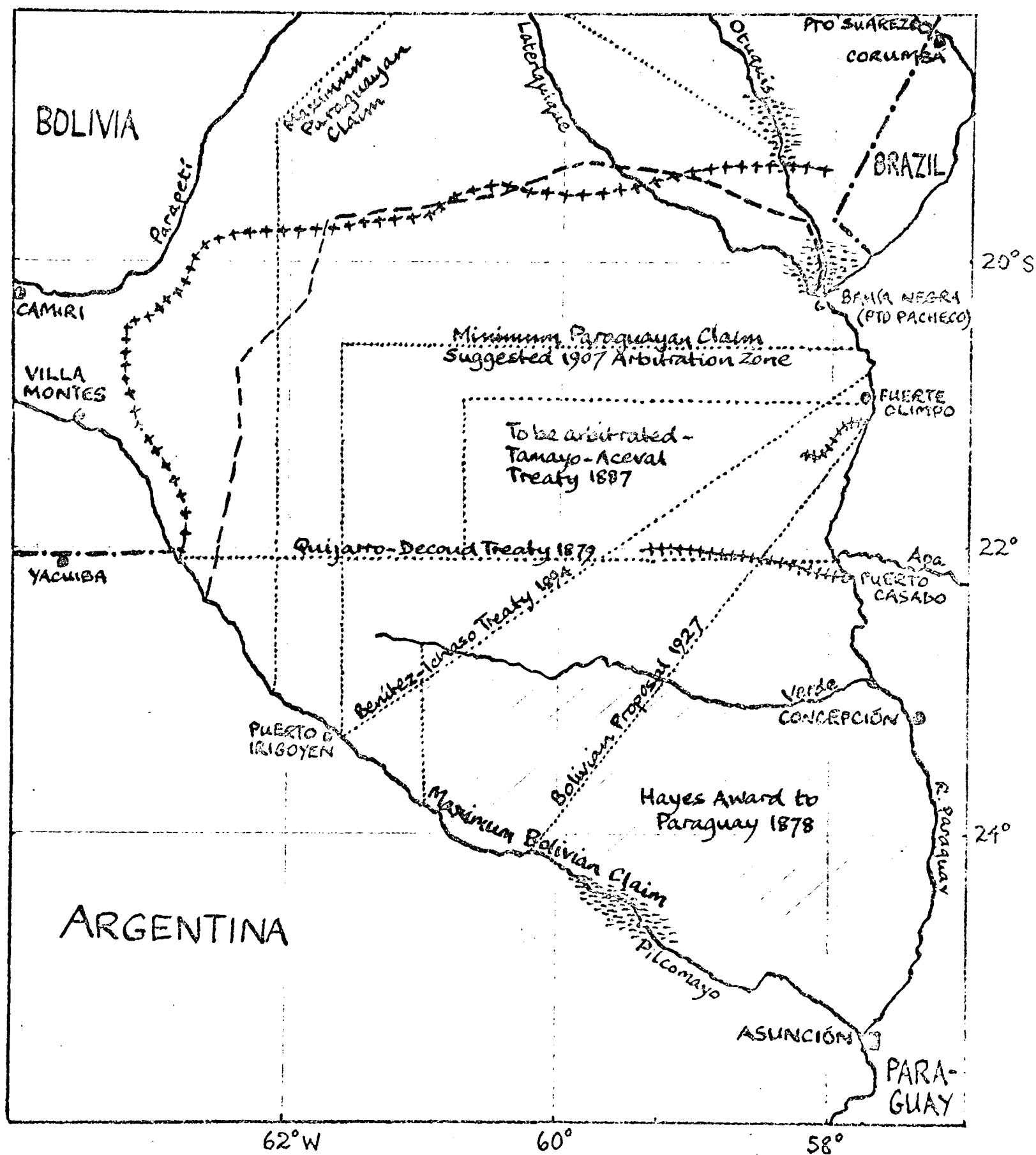
" . . . in this rare instance, the state whose arms had beaten the aggressor preserved the military triumph at the peace table."

Zook, The Conduct of the Chaco War, p. 24.

CHACO BOREAL

MAP I

CLAIMS, TREATY PROPOSALS AND BOUNDARIES



+++++ : Line of boundary posts, agreed May 1939.

---- : Arbitral award 10/10/1938

..... : Claims and Treaty Proposals

+++++ : Railway

--- : International Boundary

||||| : Unnavigable River and Swamp

CHACO BOREAL

MAP II

BOLIVIAN AND PARAGUAYAN MILITARY ENCAMPMENTS DURING THE CHACO WAR



- O Bolivian Fortines
- + Paraguayan Fortines

The region called the Chaco¹ over which Bolivia and Paraguay went to war is but one section of a vast alluvial plain called the Gran Chaco. This plain, part of the lowlands of central South America which include the pampas, stretches from the west bank of the Paraná-Paraguay river system to the foothills of the Bolivian Andes, and from 30°S in northern Argentina to the Amazon Basin in southern Brazil. The Gran Chaco is divided by rivers into three sections: the Chaco Austral, which lies south of the Bermejo river in Argentina; the Chaco Central, which lies between the Bermejo and the River Pilcomayo; and the Chaco Boreal, which lies north of the Pilcomayo.

It was this last section, the Chaco Boreal, over which Bolivia and Paraguay fought, an area of some 115,000 square miles consisting of dry scrub, with vast swamps in the north-east, north-west and south-west sectors, desert in the west, and jungle broken by flat savannah in the central and southern areas. Almost all of it lies below 1000 feet and since it is situated approximately between latitude 18°S and 25°S the climate is most inhospitable. The winter months (April to September) are characterized by severe drought, with an average temperature of about 60°F. (lower when the "surazo" is blowing). In summer the temperature averages above 80°F., with some of the highest South American recordings occurring there. In the same season tropical storms produce between 40 and 50 inches of rain, and create widespread flooding due to inadequate drainage. This results in mosquito-infested swamps which remain well into the dry season. Clearly there had to be compelling reasons for two poor countries with low population density to fight over such a hostile region, for as William Schurz put it: ". . . the intrinsic value of the area in dispute between Bolivia and Paraguay is not commensurate with the persistence of the controversy or the bitterness of

1. The name Chaco comes from the Quechua word "chacu" meaning hunting or chase.

feeling which it has engendered on both sides" (William L. Schurz, "The Chaco Dispute between Bolivia and Paraguay," Foreign Affairs, VII [1928-29], 650).

The origins of the dispute can be traced back to the last century when, as a result of the War of the Pacific which Bolivia fought against Chile between 1879 and 1883, Bolivia forfeited her outlet to the Pacific and hence found herself landlocked. Having lost the whole of her Pacific panhandle, and with it the valuable nitrate deposits, Bolivia pressed for a seaport as a minimum concession. Chile stated quite categorically, however, that there was no possibility of such compensation (Fifer, Bolivia: Land, Location and Politics, pp. 65-66). In seeking an alternative, Bolivia increasingly turned her attentions to the Chaco and in particular to the possibility of establishing a port on the River Paraguay, which would give her an outlet (albeit a distant one) to the Atlantic.¹

To this end Bolivia undertook to seek a settlement with Paraguay over the whole of the Chaco region (including the area awarded to Paraguay against Argentina by the American President Hayes in 1878 as a consequence of the War of the Triple Alliance),² on the grounds that before independence the Audiencia of Charcas had always exercised jurisdiction down to the west bank of the River Paraguay. Between 1879 and 1894 under a succession of Conservative presidents, various diplomatic approaches were made, and three treaties were signed but none was ratified. On a more practical plane Bolivia founded Puerto Pacheco (named after the President of the day) at Bahía Negra on the River Paraguay in 1885, thereby expressing her desires

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1. As Fifer points out, p. 28, nine tenths of Bolivia lies on the Atlantic side of the continental divide. It is only her proximity to the Pacific coast that causes her to be considered as a Pacific state.
 2. Zook, The Conduct of the Chaco War, p. 26, suggests that if Bolivia had been admitted to the diplomatic settlement of that war, the Chaco problem could readily have been solved.

in tangible form. Two years later the Paraguayans seized the port and as a consequence diplomatic relations were broken off for 18 months.

While further diplomatic approaches failed, civilian settlement slowly took place in peripheral regions. Later both sides stepped up the establishment of outposts or "fortines" in the disputed region. An attempt in 1907 to make use of Argentina as arbitrator came to nought, and an agreement signed in 1913 to negotiate a final treaty within two years was extended four times before being abandoned. The Liberals, who had held the presidency between 1899 and 1920, had been no more successful at finding a cure for this running sore than their predecessors. The new Republican government of Bautista Saavedra (1921-25) adopted a policy of consolidating and advancing military positions, but so too did the Paraguayans, who also encouraged civilian settlement¹ and capital investment by foreign concessionaires.² By 1923 the lines of occupation were only about 15 miles apart. Occasional talks took place in Montevideo or Buenos Aires, but neither side showed any eagerness to reach an agreement. From 1926 onwards Paraguay tried to consolidate her claims by promoting the settlement of some four thousand Mennonites over a six-year period (Fifer, p. 208). In February 1927 the first casualty was recorded when Lieutenant Rojas, leader of a Paraguayan patrol which fell into Bolivian hands at Fortín Sorpresa, was killed while trying to escape.³

Several important fortines were founded during the presidency of

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1. There were also disastrous attempts to colonize from the Bolivian side by means of foreign concessions. See Fifer, pp. 198-204.
 2. Leslie B. Rout Jr., Politics of the Chaco Peace Conference 1935-1939, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1970), pp. 20-21.
 3. For a summary of the background to the dispute, see Margaret La Foy, The Chaco Dispute and the League of Nations, (Ann Arbor, Michigan: Edwards Bros, 1946), pp. 1-14; Zook, pp. 25-38.

Hernando Siles (1926-30). One of these, Fortín Vanguardia, was seized and destroyed by Paraguayan troops on December 5th 1928 in territory claimed by both sides. The League of Nations tentatively intervened at this point, but the situation worsened when in reprisal the Bolivians captured Fortín Boquerón, diplomatic relations were severed, and on both sides there were pro-war demonstrations and calls for general mobilization. It was only because neither Bolivia nor Paraguay was militarily capable that war did not break out at this juncture (Zook, p. 51). However, the arrival of large shipments of arms to both sides from companies in the United States and Europe during the next two years made the outbreak of full-scale war much more likely.¹ In this dangerous situation other American powers began to show a concern. The International Conference of American States on Conciliation and Arbitration which began its meetings in Washington in that same month (December 1928) offered its good offices and appointed a mediation commission (known later as the Commission of Neutrals) to produce plans for conciliation.² Their unanimous resolution in September 1929 led to the restoration and return of the captured fortines. Meanwhile the Pacific littoral question was finally settled in July of that year between Chile and Peru, thereby ending any hopes that Bolivia might have entertained of regaining her seaboard by negotiation. The Atlantic outlet seemed even more necessary.

In January 1930, however, the two sides clashed again, this time at Isla Poy, and one Paraguayan was killed. Despite this, diplomatic

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1. For details of some of the arms supplied, see Zook, pp. 48, 67.
 2. The Commission's original brief was to settle the incidents of December 1928, but when, with the agreement of the two disputants, it attempted to examine the wider question of sovereignty in the Chaco, it found that the two sides were too far apart for any settlement to be achieved. See La Foy, The Chaco Dispute and the League of Nations, p. 26.

relations were restored in May and remained established until July the following year. The five Neutrals (Colombia, Cuba, Mexico, United States and Uruguay) together with Argentina tried to get the two belligerents to agree to a non-aggression pact in August 1931. But clashes near Fortines Murguía and Samaklay in September, with losses on both sides, followed by suggestions by the belligerents that the pact negotiations be postponed, indicated that neither Bolivia nor Paraguay had any intention of withdrawing from their aggressive postures. President Salamanca of Bolivia, who had come to power in March 1931, adopted a policy of containment and occupation by establishing Bolivian fortines to stand opposite those of Paraguay, and as a consequence clashes between the two sides were innumerable and inevitable.¹ Under Salamanca the armed forces continued to link the newly established fortines with a network of roads which would facilitate the mobility of the army divisions. The 4th Division was ordered to establish a road between Fortines Camacho and Baptista in April 1932, and in the process of exploring this region the Bolivians sighted from the air a stretch of water covered with vegetation, the only water within 75 kilometres. In the kind of terrain concerned this was of considerable strategic importance, both in the event of the two sides accepting a non-aggression pact drafted in May 1932 (according to which they would halt at their most advanced positions during subsequent negotiations) and in the event of full-scale war. The stretch of water, at first dubbed simply Gran Lago, and called Lago Pitiantuta by the Paraguayans, came to be known as Lago Chuquisaca, and it was here that the next fateful step towards full-scale war was taken on June 15th 1932.

1. In a report sent by the Chief of General Staff, Colonel Osorio, to the President, 21 incidents in the Chaco between January 1930 and October 1931 were listed. See Porfirio Díaz Machicao, Historia de Bolivia, 1931-36, pp. 53-54.

The Paraguayans had already discovered the lake and in July 1931 had established a small fortín on its eastern bank. The small Paraguayan squad stationed there fled when approached by a Bolivian detachment of 19 men, whereupon the Bolivians settled in at the Paraguayan fortín (called Mariscal Carlos Antonio López). Despite the fact that Salamanca had instructed the General Staff not to commit any act of aggression and even ordered the abandonment of the fortín, the acting commander of the 4th Division, Colonel Peñaranda, issued orders to dig in at Lake Chuquisaca. To conceal their contradiction of the President's orders, the local command fabricated a story to the effect that the Bolivian soldiers had found the Paraguayan fortín abandoned, and had stayed on the west bank of the lake. In fact the Bolivians were ensconced on the north-eastern part of the lake in Fortín Mariscal Santa Cruz, which they had built after firing the original Paraguayan one.¹

Although the Paraguayans failed in their first attempt to gain possession of the Bolivians' fortín at the lake, the second attack on July 15th was successful, and Paraguay no longer felt it necessary to threaten to leave the Non-Aggression Pact Conference in Washington. But since Bolivian national honour was now involved, President Salamanca, having weighed the balance between diplomacy (a course which he had followed thus far) and aggression, decided to adopt the latter policy and called for military reprisals.² He ordered the taking of Fortines Corrales and

1. Díaz Machicao, Historia de Bolivia, 1931-36, pp. 74-80. See also, Rout, Politics of the Chaco Peace Conference, pp. 219-21; Zook, pp. 69-73.

2. Querejazu Calvo, Masamaclay, pp. 96-97, suggests that Salamanca's decision relied upon international action (the League of Nations, the Pan-American Union), to bring about a settlement. But the strength of Paraguayan nationalism and public opinion which Salamanca under-estimated would not allow the Paraguayan government to leave any of their fortines in enemy hands. See also Vergara Vicuña, La guerra del Chaco, I, 86. David Alvéstegui's version, in Salamanca: su gravitación sobre el destino de Bolivia, (Cochabamba: Ed. Canelas, 1970), IV, 44-45, indicates that Salamanca was anxious to gain time for the Bolivian army to build up its manpower.

Toledo,¹ and despite objections from his generals that the army was unprepared for the total war which they saw was bound to follow, Salamanca insisted that the reprisal attack be carried out. This was the first of many disagreements and bitter exchanges between President Salamanca, Captain General of the army, and the officers of the High Command. Clearly such a rift could only work to Bolivia's disadvantage in the handling of war operations, and can be pointed to as a major cause of Bolivian inferiority throughout the war. On this particular occasion, however, the President's insistence proved justified, for with the Paraguayans clearly not prepared for reprisals, Bolivian forces took Corrales, Toledo and also Boquerón with relative ease at the end of July 1932.

A flurry of diplomatic activity ensued. The Pan-American Union called for a peaceful settlement; the belligerents met the five Neutrals in Washington in August; Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Peru (all neighbours of the belligerents and known as the ABCP powers), signed a neutrality agreement; Argentina withdrew her military mission from Paraguay; the Neutrals called for a sixty-day truce. But it all proved of no avail. Bolivia refused to relinquish the newly conquered posts, and Paraguay refused to consider any settlement which allowed Bolivia to retain them.² Consequently the Paraguayans launched the first major battle of the war in an attempt to regain Fortín Boquerón. Some 5000 Paraguayan soldiers began their advance upon the fortín, which was occupied by about 600 Bolivians,

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1. Querejazu Calvo, p. 54, asserts that the plan to take Corrales and Toledo dated from 1931, and that it had been postponed due to the state of the Washington Conference.
 2. Paraguay was afraid that the Bolivian army could, if allowed to penetrate deep into the Chaco, reach the River Paraguay and, by sailing down to the capital, conquer the whole country. Hence she felt the need to maintain strong defences in the Chaco. Bolivia faced no such threat; for her it was more of a colonial war over territory which she believed was hers de jure. See Querejazu Calvo, p. 60.

on September 9th 1932. The besieged Bolivians held on until September 29th, by which time the assault force had increased considerably. During the siege the Neutrals continued to make ceasefire and withdrawal proposals, and on September 28th the Bolivian generals dropped leaflets by air¹ into the fortín urging the men to hold on for a further ten days, during which time a diplomatic solution might emerge. But the leader of the exhausted soldiers, Colonel Marzana, had already decided to capitulate. Bolivia thus suffered her first defeat, a defeat which was most damaging to her morale, for great emphasis had been placed upon the outcome at Boquerón.²

The immediate consequence of this defeat was a reshuffle of the Bolivian High Command and a growing climate of hostility between leaders of the army and the government. In La Paz, the public called for the return of General Hans Kundt to lead the army, and after a close vote in Congress in favour of his recall, President Salamanca offered him the post of Commander-in-Chief.³ But while he was en route from Germany, the

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1. Little offensive use was made of Bolivia's air force during the war. Zook, pp. 92, 238, claims that it was excellently equipped and superior to that of Paraguay throughout the war. He argues, p. 99, that an intensive air attack could have radically altered the outcome at Boquerón, but that the Bolivian commanding general, Quintanilla, had no understanding of air power.
 2. For detailed accounts of the Boquerón siege, see Vergara Vicuña, La guerra del Chaco, I, 185-353, and Alberto Taborga T., Boquerón: Diario de campaña: Guerra del Chaco, (La Paz: Ed. Canata, 1956). A study of the way in which the Chaco war novelists dealt with Boquerón will be made below in Chapter VI, pp. 218-22.
 3. Born in 1869, Kundt headed a German military training mission in Bolivia from 1911 to 1914 and was made a colonel and Chief of General Staff of the Bolivian army. Having fought for Germany in the First World War, he returned to Bolivia in 1920 with the intention of leading a civilian life. But President Saavedra urged him to become his CGS, for which purpose Kundt was obliged (by stipulations in the Treaty of Versailles) to take out Bolivian citizenship. He held this post until 1926, but his appointment was strongly resented by the officer corps, who obliged President Siles to prevent Kundt's return to Bolivia after a period of leave in Europe. He was recalled after the Vanguardia incident in 1928, and became CGS again until June 1930. As a result of the army coup that month, Kundt (who had supported the government)

Paraguayans began an offensive which led to the fall of Fortín Arce in October. During October and November 1932 the Paraguayans took some thirty positions and pushed the Bolivian line back some eighty kilometres south and west. The Bolivian 4th Division dug in at Kilómetro 7, in front of Fortín Saavedra, and having failed to dislodge them the Paraguayan commander Estigarribia decided to revert to the defensive in mid-December. Kundt arrived to take over as Commander-in-Chief of the Bolivian army early that same month. Meanwhile arbitration proposals put forward from time to time by the Neutrals were rejected by either one side or the other or both. The Paraguayan government, anxious to capitalize on military advances and to avoid diplomatic pressures which might nullify them, recalled its delegate to the Commission in Washington, and he sailed for home at the end of December 1932.

Kundt immediately decided on an offensive policy in order to gain a good bargaining position for the diplomats. The offensive, aimed at capturing Fortines Nanawa, Corrales and Toledo,¹ was begun on December 27th 1932. Although Fortines Corrales and Mariscal López quickly fell, the Paraguayans had prepared a strong defence of Nanawa, knowing that the Bolivian objective to reach the River Paraguay at Concepción through Nanawa would prove impossible, and Kundt's defeat there would be an important psychological factor.² The offensive continued for over six months, but the Bolivian armies failed to take Toledo, sustaining heavy losses in the attempt, and

was forced to flee into exile. It was from this exile that he was now recalled in October 1932. See Julio Díaz Arguedas, Como fue derrocado el hombre símbolo (Salamanca): Un capítulo de la guerra con el Paraguay, (La Paz: Ed. "Universo," 1957), pp. 326-29.

1. The Bolivians had earlier evacuated Corrales and Toledo, the two fortines taken in reprisal in July.
2. See Estigarribia, The Epic of the Chaco: Marshal Estigarribia's Memoirs of the Chaco War, 1932-1935, ed. Ynsfran, (Austin: Texas University Press, 1950), pp. 64, 80.

were equally unsuccessful in their assaults on Nanawa. On July 4th 1933, in the largest frontal attack mounted by the Bolivians in the war, 2000 Bolivian soldiers were killed in a final attempt to take Nanawa, but the Paraguayan defences refused to yield. General Kundt's strategy had ended in failure.

On the diplomatic front, the ABCP powers produced a proposal called the Act of Mendoza in February 1933, which was rejected by Bolivia in April. As a consequence of this failure and the dissolution of the Commission of Neutrals, the dispute was passed to the League of Nations in May, a course which the United States (which was not a member) had hoped would be avoided since it meant European interference in affairs on the American continent.¹ In the same month Paraguay declared war on Bolivia, although this merely served to confirm officially what the world had witnessed since June 1932. The neighbours of the belligerents declared their neutrality, but Argentina closed her whole frontier with Bolivia along the River Pilcomayo (thereby assisting Paraguay), while Chile notified Bolivia that she could continue to use the port of Arica. The belligerents agreed to consider discussing arbitration at the request of the League of Nations, but argued throughout the month of June as to whether the cessation of hostilities and the agreement to discuss arbitration should be simultaneous or not. Peace proposals continued to be put forward by the ABCP powers until October, but were received without enthusiasm.

The Paraguayans began their second offensive in September 1933 and two Bolivian regiments were soon forced to surrender at Campo Grande and

1. Querejazu Calvo, Masamaclay, p. 151. See also Rout, Politics of the Chaco Peace Conference, p. 82; La Foy, The Chaco Dispute and the League of Nations, pp. 31-40. Zook, The Conduct of the Chaco War, p. 155, n. 39, quotes Roosevelt as saying that he was content to leave a settlement of the dispute to the League and to the South Americans. Later, however, the U.S. attitude towards the League's involvement was not so friendly (see Zook, p. 202).

Pozo Favorito. A major offensive begun on October 23rd pushed the Bolivian army back as far as Alihuatá by November 4th and in early December the Bolivian retreat southwards and eastwards ended in the surrender of some 8,000 men of the Bolivian 4th and 9th Divisions at Campo Via. As a result, the Paraguayan army acquired on this and other occasions, large quantities of weapons, ammunition and other matériel to supplement their own supplies. Colonel Peñaranda escaped the Paraguayan encirclement with 1500 men of the 4th Division and led them to Fortín Saavedra. The Bolivian retreat finally came to a halt when the Bolivian 7th Division, together with Peñaranda's men, withdrew to Fortín Muñoz, firing Saavedra as they left on December 13th. After these disastrous months of defeat and retreat General Kundt was forced by the government to resign as Commander-in-Chief and the command of the army was handed over to the hero of the hour, Peñaranda, who had been promoted to the rank of Brigadier General. In the year of Kundt's leadership, Bolivian losses had been staggering: 14,000 killed, 6,000 deserters, 10,000 captured, 32,000 sick or wounded. Of the 77,000 mobilized, only 7,000 remained fit for front-line service, the remaining 8,000 being in rearguard services (Díaz Machicao, Historia de Bolivia, 1931-36, p. 203).

In July 1933 the League of Nations had set up a Commission, with members from Spain, Britain, Italy, France and Mexico, to investigate the Chaco dispute. The Commission visited both Asunción in November and La Paz in December,¹ and a ten-day truce proposed to the Commission by Paraguay was eagerly accepted by the exhausted Bolivians. The truce was to last from

1. The reason for the delay between the setting up of the Commission and its visit to the belligerents was that, having agreed to the visit, both Bolivia and Paraguay requested that the ABCP powers be invited once again to mediate instead. The four powers failed to get the belligerents to agree to a prior delimitation of the arbitral zone, and so declined to mediate. The League plan to send a Commission then finally went ahead. See La Foy, pp. 66-70.

December 19th to 30th, but the Paraguayans, anxious to hold Fortín Muñoz if peace were agreed, seized it either just before or just after the hour which marked the beginning of the armistice (Estigarribia, The Epic of the Chaco, pp. 110-12). The truce was extended amid much diplomatic activity until January 6th 1934, but both sides had taken the opportunity to reconcentrate their forces and the Paraguayans quickly resumed their advance. The Bolivians continued to abandon fortines and retreat in an attempt to establish a firm line of defence. At the end of March the Paraguayans forced enemy troops to surrender at Cañada Tarija, only 186 kilometres east of Villa Montes. In May the Bolivians succeeded in frustrating Paraguayan plans to win the war with one final push, by capturing two Paraguayan regiments and a battalion, a total of some 1500 men, at Cañada Cochabamba (also known as Cañada Strongest, the name of one of Bolivia's top soccer teams which volunteered in a body). This was to be Bolivia's greatest victory throughout the whole war.

On the Ballivián front, where the Paraguayan advance had been blocked since early April, Estigarribia began to press hard again for a breakthrough during June and July. Peñaranda wanted to withdraw the troops holding Ballivián and use them in an offensive. Colonel Toro (who had become the de facto chief of the army) and President Salamanca insisted on holding Ballivián, and Peñaranda only belatedly got his way in August. This was partly because it was now clear that only in the north could Bolivia reach the River Paraguay, and also because the Paraguayans had switched their attack to the north-western sector, thereby necessitating Bolivian reinforcements to stem the enemy advance there. By August 27th the Paraguayan 6th Division had reached the foothills only five kilometres east of Carandaití and the natural limit of the Chaco.

Only the fact that their position was too advanced to be tenable obliged the Paraguayan troops slowly to withdraw in that sector. Toro attempted unsuccessfully to encircle the retreating Paraguayan 6th Division on several occasions throughout September and October, despite outnumbering them by more than two to one, while at El Carmen Bolivia's Reserve Division was trapped, and on November 15th 4,000 Bolivian troops were encircled and taken prisoner. On November 17th, as the Bolivians were forced to retreat or be trapped against the River Pilcomayo, the Paraguayans at last succeeded in taking Ballivián, which they had been attacking for six months. Bolivian forces thereby forfeited both a symbol of resistance and a foothold in the Chaco Boreal.

Salamanca flew to Villa Montes on November 25th with the intention of replacing Peñaranda. However, several of the Bolivian officers of the General Staff rebelled and instead seized President Salamanca, forcing him to resign (Díaz Arguedas, Como fue derrocado el hombre símbolo, pp. 153-204). The government was formally handed over to Vice-President Tejada Sorzano who, eager to extricate the country from the serious military straits in which she found herself, decreed general mobilization and expanded military spending in spite of a partially successful arms embargo against both sides since September.¹ The most urgent task was to defend Bolivia's last foothold in the Chaco, Villa Montes, which as 1934 drew to a close came under constant threat from the Paraguayans. But while

1. The embargo against both countries lasted until March 1935. It was then lifted from Bolivia, since she accepted a League of Nations proposal to bring about a solution to the conflict, whereas Paraguay did not--she in fact left the League in February. The embargo continued against Paraguay until the cessation of hostilities. There were, however, numerous violations of the embargoes, especially on account of the question of arms transit by neighbouring states. See La Foy, The Chaco Dispute and the League of Nations, pp. 81-104.

Paraguayan advances were made in the north-western sector, where her troops succeeded in capturing large numbers of prisoners and eventually in reaching the River Parapetí on January 16th 1935, Bolivia had managed to amass 17,000 troops on the western front in front of Villa Montes to oppose the 15,000 Paraguayans there, thus ensuring a stalemate in this sector. In the north-west where Bolivia was struggling to protect her oil-fields, a counter offensive launched in April succeeded in pushing the Paraguayans back into the Chaco and away from the River Parapetí.

With the stalemate at Villa Montes and the inability of the Paraguayans to seize the oil-fields in the Andean foothills, neither side could hope to gain much from prolonging the struggle. Consequently Bolivia and Paraguay--the latter understandably reluctant, until further gains were impossible, to accept peace proposals which would involve her withdrawal from advanced military positions--finally agreed to meet at a peace conference in Buenos Aires with representatives from Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Peru, Uruguay and the United States. The Bolivian representatives, led by Elío, arrived at the conference at the end of May 1935.¹ Bolivia wanted the ceasefire and the arbitration of the whole Chaco region to be dealt with simultaneously, whereas her opponents wanted the ceasefire to be established first, with the question of the boundary to be considered according to the positions of the two sides at the time of the ceasefire. However, before any agreement was reached news came on June 8th from the northern sector (which until April had been quiet throughout the war) that the Bolivian 6th Division had been

1. The League of Nations thankfully gave up its own attempts to mediate in the dispute in the same month. See Rout, Politics of the Chaco Peace Conference, p. 95; La Foy, p. 116.

forced to surrender at Ingavi. The following day Elío accepted the protocol on ceasefire and demobilization under neutral control, with the fundamental question to be discussed at a conference to be held in Buenos Aires until an agreement should be reached. The peace agreement was signed on June 12th and on the 14th, three years all but a day after the incident at Lake Chuquisaca, the ceasefire came into effect. As one Bolivian laconically wrote: "Había concluido la Guerra del Chaco. Con la pérdida del Chaco" (Díaz Machicao, Historia de Bolivia, 1931-36, p. 267). The two governments ratified the agreement within ten days, and demobilization began on July 3rd. The Peace Conference was convened in Buenos Aires on July 1st, but progress towards a definitive solution was slow. The exchange of prisoners (2,500 Paraguayans were repatriated and 17,000 Bolivians), did not begin until May 1936 and took until December to complete. Discussions concerning disarmament, war responsibilities and security, rivalry between Argentina and Brazil over the possible exploitation of the Bolivian Oriente, further rivalry between the United States and Argentina for prestige as peacemaker,¹ and finally domestic political upheavals on both sides,² meant that the settlement of the boundary issue dragged on until 1938 (Rout, Politics of the Chaco Peace Conference, pp. 111-209). A Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Boundaries was finally signed in Buenos Aires on July 21st 1938, more than three years after the ceasefire. On October 10th the Peace Conference handed down its verdict on the arbitration zone, thus fulfilling the formality that the dispute

1. W.R. Garner, The Chaco Dispute: A Study of Prestige Diplomacy, (Washington: Public Affairs Press, 1966), passim.

2. In Bolivia one military leader, Toro, who had come to power in May 1936, was replaced by another, Busch, as president in July 1937, whilst in Paraguay the presidency passed from Ayala to Colonel Rafael Franco in 1936 and to Paiva in 1937.

had been solved by arbitration.¹ The Peace Conference was finally dissolved on January 23rd 1939, although the Mixed Commission for the Demarcation of Boundaries (which began its work in May 1939) was still carrying out its task 30 years later (Rout, pp. 176-77).

In the final analysis, Bolivia had gained nothing and lost more than she could ever have imagined possible. She had lost all claim to the Chaco region itself, she had left some 56,000 dead in its jungles and deserts, she had revealed her political and military ineptitude, she had squandered millions of borrowed dollars and wasted her own precious resources, material and human. Her self-respect and her honour lay in ruins, and for many years afterwards the sick and wounded walked like ghosts through the streets to remind her of her folly and her shame.

1. The arbitration award included an article whereby Paraguay agreed to give Bolivia freedom of transit to Puerto Casado and to establish customs offices, depots and warehouses there. This, ironically, was the basis of Bolivia's interest in the Chaco region--a port on the navigable section of the River Paraguay. This concession has not, however, been taken up to this day. Instead, Bolivia has developed an eastward route to Brazil along the 625 km. Santa Cruz-Corumbá railway built in 1948-55. See Fifer, Bolivia: Land, Location and Politics, pp. 218-19, 229-30.

CHAPTER III

INFLUENCES AND PRECEDENTS

"Thus the drift of modern history domesticates the fantastic and normalizes the unspeakable. And the catastrophe that begins it is the Great War" (Fussell, The Great War and Modern Memory, p. 74).

(i) Introduction

Fiction written about war, whether documentary or not, is a relatively recent phenomenon in the history of the novel.¹ Until this century, with few exceptions, wars were fought by professional soldiers who, if they wrote about their experiences afterwards, produced memoirs about their campaign strategy. Such men were concerned with the war on a grand scale and were more likely to be generals than privates. During the nineteenth century fictional works began to appear which were written to show the reader what participation in a war was like for an ordinary soldier in the form of fictionalized, dramatic accounts. Such were Tolstoy's Sevastopol (1855) and Crane's Red Badge of Courage (1895),² although as was indicated earlier,³ the writer did not need to have participated in the war in order to produce an authentic account. But

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1. This includes historical novels written about war, of which Cru in Témoins, pp. 74-75, can muster only three examples, all written in the latter half of the nineteenth century: Tolstoy's War and Peace (1864-69), Zola's La débâcle (1892), and Paul et Victor Margueritte, Une époque (1898-1904). Had he been familiar with Spanish literature, Cru might have added some of the Episodios nacionales of Benito Pérez Galdós, such as Trafalgar (1873).
 2. Theodor Ropp, War in the Modern World, (1959), p. 162, says that the American Civil War was the first in which really large numbers of men fought as common soldiers. (Quoted in Fussell, p. 157).
 3. See Chapter I, p. 19-20.

these were the exceptions rather than the rule, and neither the Boer War nor the Russo-Japanese War produced anything more than "accounts written by non-combatant correspondents" (Charles Seymour, "Literature of the trenches: book reviews," Yale Review, VII [1918], 633). It was the First World War which in the realm of fiction--as in so many other things--proved to be the watershed. As a war of peoples rather than armies, it produced a veritable flood of literature of all categories, including fiction.¹ Edmund Gosse, writing in the Autumn of 1914, partly sensed this impending flood when he wrote in "War and Literature," The Edinburgh Review, CCXX (1914), 331: "The book which does not deal directly and crudely with the complexities of warfare and the various branches of strategy, will, from Christmas onwards, not be published at all." But significantly he does not foresee that writers of novels or poetry will turn to the subject of war, for he envisages (p. 332) that "those branches of literature which are most delicate, admirable and original will be attacked suddenly, and for the time being fatally." The fact that a body of war-fiction or war-poetry was not expected underscores the novelty of both as sub-genres. Since the Great War all international conflicts (as well as civil wars, most notably in Spain and Mexico) have produced a steady stream of novels, short stories, plays and poetry, written principally by participants.

In a Latin American context, a similar chronology can be detected. Luis Alberto Sánchez suggests that for historical reasons Latin American writers tended to play down the differences between their nations during

1. C. Falls, War Books: A Critical Guide, (London: Peter Davies, 1930), Preface.

their nineteenth- and early twentieth-century "adolescence."¹ To take Bolivia as an example, not a single novel was inspired either by the War of the Pacific against Chile (1879-83) or the war in Acre against Brazil (1902-03),² despite the fact that both wars resulted in national dishonour, in addition to the loss of important territory (including an outlet to the sea) in the first case and a substantial extent of territory in the second. But the Chaco War--the only significant international conflict in Latin America since the First World War--prompted a large number of works on both sides. Sánchez puts forward possible reasons why this war should have produced fiction when other Latin American conflicts did not: a greater maturity and a stronger sense of nationhood in Bolivia and Paraguay in the 1930's than had existed in countries involved in earlier Latin American wars, and an awareness of the social significance and economic origins of the conflict (Proceso y contenido, p. 404).

To these plausible explanations two others may be added. Firstly, as with the First World War, the Chaco conflict was the first occasion (this time in a Latin American context) when nations committed themselves to total war, thereby implicating the whole nation, its people and resources, in the war effort. Writers, both established and would-be, became involved like everyone else, some merely in an emotional sense as patriots or pacifists, others in a physical sense, either as eager volunteers, resigned conscripts or wretched "recomendados"--criminals or political undesirables who were sent to the front in the hope that they would there be eliminated by fair means or foul. An excellent

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1. L.A. Sánchez, Proceso y contenido de la novela hispanoamericana, (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1953), pp. 399-403.
 2. Augusto Guzmán, Panorama de la novela en Bolivia, (La Paz: Ed. "Juventud," 1973), p. 13.

example of this last kind of involvement is that of Porfirio Díaz Machicao. He began an anti-war novel in the late 1920's when the possibility of war in the Chaco arose, and in 1932 was arrested as a suspected communist. Not only was the manuscript of the novel confiscated, but he was deported to the Chaco as a "recomendado." He survived to tell the tale in his autobiography,¹ however, although he did not finally publish a Chaco War novel.²

The second additional explanation also stems from what happened in the First World War, or more precisely after it. Following in the Latin American tradition whereby writers emulated their European literary masters, the Chaco War novelists, unlike writers in times of earlier Latin American wars, found to hand a recently written body of war-fiction produced by Europeans--especially French and German--which indicated not only that the reality of war was a fit subject for fiction, but also indicated the manner in which such fiction could be written and the rewards, both financial and literary, which were to be gained. The two names most frequently mentioned when reference is made to the influence of war novelists upon the writers of Chaco War fiction are those of Henri Barbusse and Erich Maria Remarque. Indeed it became something of a cliché to suggest, as Luis Durand did in a review of Augusto Céspedes' Sangre de mestizos that "él ha hecho aquí en América lo que hicieron Remarque, . . . Barbusse y otros en Europa" (Atenea, 129 [1936], 414), with the occasional addition of other war novels or writers known to the

1. La bestia emocional, (La Paz: Ed. Juventud, 1955), especially pp. 93-184.

2. Jesús Lara, in Sujnapura, (La Paz: Los Amigos del Libro, 1971), also describes attitudes towards "recomendados," especially pp. 159-64.

critic.¹

It is always tempting, of course, to draw parallels and establish connections between works with a common subject, and in particular to select from the existing body of literature on that subject the best known work or works to provide the main example for comparison. Le feu, first published in 1916,² certainly acquired the widest fame and achieved the greatest success amongst those works written by anti-war novelists in France, and it is today more readily remembered than, for example, Raymond Lefebvre and Paul Vaillant-Couturier's La guerre des soldats (1919), Ernest Florian-Farmentier's L'ouragan (1921), or Le valet de la gloire (1923) by Joseph Jolinon, all of which echoed Barbusse's message. Im Westen Nichts Neues, which first appeared in Germany as a serial during 1928 and as a book early in 1929, received both extensive publicity from Ullstein, the leading publishing house which produced 600,000 copies for the first edition, and also great acclaim from literary critics throughout the world.³ It would be easy to assume, because these novels

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1. Durand mentions also Ernest Glaesser, who wrote Jahrgang 1902, known in Spanish as Los que teníamos doce años. The influence of Remarque, at least, was also mentioned in connection with Paraguayan Chaco War fiction, e.g. Fogelquist, Modern Language Journal, XXXIII (1949), 607, 609.
 2. According to Jacques Duclos and Jean Fréville, Henri Barbusse, (Paris: Ed. Sociales, 1946), p. 11, Le feu was first published in instalments in L'Oeuvre between August and November 1916, and in book form at the beginning of 1917. The Flammarion edition consulted is dated 1916 and it is from this that quotations have been taken.
 3. For details of the rapid success of Remarque's novel, see A.F. Bance, Modern Language Review, LXXII (1977), 359. Pfeiler, War and the German Mind: The Testimony of Men of Fiction Who Fought at the Front, (New York: Columbia U.P., 1941), p. 141, n. 1, points out that the appearance of Im Westen Nichts Neues followed closely on the heels of the Kellogg-Briand Peace Pact of 1928, a manifestation of a universal anti-war sentiment which Remarque's novel accurately captured.

(irrespective of the artistic criticisms that may be levelled against them) are held up as the anti-war novels par excellence and because much of the Chaco War fiction also opposes war, that they must necessarily be models for the Chaco War novels. Many critics have made this assumption without examining the areas in which some similarity can be traced.

Direct, formal influence was certainly made possible by the existence of translations of the novels in Spanish. Remarque's novel appeared in Madrid in 1929 (the same year as that of its original publication) through a translation by Benjamín Jarnés and Eduardo Foertsch called Sin novedad en el frente. Le feu appeared in Spanish as early as 1917, and a second edition of Antonio Buendía Aragón's version, published by the Editorial Cenit in Madrid with the title El fuego (diario de una escuadra), appeared in 1934, a time when it would be most likely to influence any Bolivian writer contemplating or engaged in the composition of a work on the Chaco conflict. Indeed one Bolivian critic and himself a contributor to Chaco War fiction, Augusto Guzmán, states that Remarque's novel was widely distributed throughout Latin America, and that when the Chaco War broke out the influence of both Le feu and Im Westen Nichts Neues (especially the latter) was very strong (Panorama de la novela en Bolivia, pp. 89-90). Díaz Machicao (La bestia emocional, p. 28), claims to have read Barbusse as early as 1925, although he does not specify which of Barbusse's works he encountered. He also admired Remarque's novel for its defence of the conscript (p. 31). Another Chaco novelist, Daza Valverde, pays tribute to Remarque's novel by writing that the manner in which his heroes carried out the theft of some food was "digno de un Katczinsky y su pandilla en 'Sin novedad en el frente'."¹

1. José Daza Valverde, ¡Guerra a la guerra! (La Paz: Talleres Gráficos A. Gamarra, 1945), p. 148.

But apart from the possibility of a formal influence through reading which, as Guzmán and others make plain, did actually occur, there are other factors which suggest some similarity between the European and South American works under discussion. To deny, as does Siles Salinas, any valuable or significant connection between European war novelists (he names Barbusse, Remarque and Blasco Ibáñez) and the Chaco War writers on the grounds that the Chaco War itself was unique and that the European writers "pertenecen a una esfera literaria tan ajena a la singular angustia, al incomparable dramatismo que se vivió en el Chaco" (La literatura boliviana de la guerra del Chaco, p. 24), is not only to exaggerate the Bolivian case but also--in literary terms a more serious charge--to deny the possibility of a universal human reaction to the events of war. Inevitably, and with good reason, the writers of Chaco War fiction bring out the peculiarities of the Chaco conflict and thereby locate the works temporally and spatially. But many writers were clearly intent upon going beyond this restricted aim, as Barbusse in particular had succeeded in doing, in order to suggest that, irrespective of time and place, war is war and war is futile and wasteful of human lives. In this regard the Bolivians were clearly following the example set by their European models, and it is quite evident that the anguish or the drama of the Chaco conflict did not differ, on a personal and human level at least, from the anguish and drama in Europe twenty years earlier to such a degree that the fiction based on the two wars cannot bear comparison. On the contrary an examination of the fiction of the Chaco War reveals that many of the observations to be found in it are similar to those which emerge from Le feu and Im Westen Nichts Neues. Notwithstanding the differences in the theatre of war, war fiction can reveal, beyond its physical and

temporal setting, the common denominators of all wars.

(ii) Barbusse and Le feu

Whereas in Im Westen Nichts Neues little mention is made of dates or places, it is quite clear that Le feu is set on the Western front in First World War France. The place names, the detailed descriptions of the soldiers' appearance, the language they use, the manner in which the war is fought, all serve to fix the setting of the novel in a specific time and place. Yet it is equally clear that the two most significant aspects of the work, and which give the novel a meaning and relevance beyond the confines of the narrative, are those which reveal the emotions and reactions common to most men turned soldiers (particularly in a state of total war), and also those which show the effects of war upon society as a whole.

Barbusse's sympathetic portrayal of the common soldier was a reflection of his concern at the abuse of the masses in both peace and war, a concern which led him to enlist at the age of forty-one and so participate in the events which he narrates in Le feu, and later to become an ardent communist.¹ When he writes of the men in the trenches, he does so from personal experience and observation. What strikes him most clearly is the fact that the soldiers are fundamentally just ordinary men: "Ce ne sont pas des aventuriers, des guerriers, faits pour la boucherie humaine-- bouchers ou bétail. Ce sont des civils déracinés."² Barbusse's view of

1. Barbusse did not actually join the French Communist Party until 1923. See Jean Touchard, "Le Parti Communiste Français et les Intellectuels (1920-39)," Revue Française de Science Politique, XVII (1967), 475.

2. Henri Barbusse, Le feu: Journal d'une escouade, (Paris: Flammarion, 1916), p. 263.

them is, perhaps, tinged with a sense of his superiority as a writer and intellectual, but it is nonetheless an intensely warm and human view:

Ils sont des hommes, des bonshommes quelconques arrachés brusquement à la vie. Comme des hommes quelconques pris dans la masse, ils sont ignorants, peu emballés, à vue bornée, pleins d'un gros bon sens, qui, parfois, déraile; enclins à se laisser conduire et à faire ce qu'on leur dit de faire, résistants à la peine, capables de souffrir longtemps.

Ce sont de simples hommes qu'on a simplifiés encore, et dont, par la force des choses, les seuls instincts primordiaux s'accroissent: instinct de la conservation, égoïsme, espoir tenace de survivre toujours, joie de manger, de boire et de dormir.

Par intermittences, des cris d'humanité, des frissons profonds, sortent du noir et du silence de leurs grandes âmes humaines (Le feu, p. 49).

The simplicity of their souls, which Barbusse underscores, is, one is made to feel, an admirable quality. That Biquet can remark: "On a eu des misères, mais on est bien maintenant" (p. 91), merely because he has felt the warmth of the sun and has a roof over his head, is for the writer both moving and revealing. The soldiers' needs are simple and easily satisfied: mere survival is in itself a joy, and the constant proximity of death encourages a childlike philosophy of living from day to day (p. 55). War for them has nothing to do with "gloire," which is an illusion (p. 376), nor with patriotic zeal nor hatred of the enemy. What is uppermost in the minds of the soldiers in the trenches is "la faim, la soif, les poux dont l'écrasement ensanglante tous les ongles, et la grande fatigue par laquelle nous sommes tous minés" (p. 252). Paradis, having served in the trenches, has no illusions about the true nature of war, and he gives as clear a statement of the "war-as-hell" view as is to be found anywhere in the novel:

Plus que les charges qui ressemblent à des revues, plus que les batailles visibles déployées comme des oriflammes, plus même que les corps à corps où l'on se démène en criant, cette guerre, c'est la fatigue épouvantable, surnaturelle, et l'eau jusqu'au ventre, et la boue et l'ordure et l'infâme saleté. C'est les faces moisies et les chairs en loques et les cadavres qui ne ressemblent même plus à des cadavres, surnageant sur la terre

vorace. C'est cela, cette monotonie infinie de misères, interrompue par des drames aigus, c'est cela, et non pas la baïonnette qui étincelle comme de l'argent, ni le chant de coq du clairon au soleil! (p. 357).

Barbusse's view of the soldier as a temporarily transformed working-class civilian whose basic concerns have little to do with the aims or ideals of the military is also reflected in the way in which he shows the effects of war upon society. War disrupts the lives of the conscripts not only as civilians, but also as family men: as Poterloo remarks, after a while one's presence at home ceases to matter:

Il suffit qu'on soit pas là pendant un temps pour qu'on ne compte plus. Tu fous le camp de chez toi pour aller à la guerre, et tout a l'air cassé; et pendant que tu l'crois, on se fait à ton absence, vu qu'on s'passe de toi pour être heureuse comme avant et pour sourire (p. 171).

But more serious in Barbusse's eyes, and central to the message of Le feu, is the treatment of the enlisted men as a class, for clearly class distinctions do not vanish in time of war. Of those who receive the writer's censure, the men who enjoy themselves in the rear and then claim, in Volpatte's words, "J'suis t'été à la guerre" (p. 121), are not the worst sinners. The real oppressors and exploiters are the war-profiteers, such as the father of the child questioned by Cocon (p. 81), and in particular the warmongers--businessmen, lovers of things military and of the past, priests, lawyers, economists, historians (pp. 373-74). These are the men who claim to have something to lose if war is not waged; the men whom Barbusse describes in the trenches can lose only their families or their lives. Not that the enlisted men are paragons of virtue, for war has encouraged all their worst instincts, "la méchanceté jusqu'au sadisme, l'égoïsme jusqu'à la férocité, le besoin de jouir jusqu'à la folie" (p. 363). The moral corruption of the common soldier is thus also one of the effects of war, but for Barbusse it is insignificant beside the social

inequalities that war reveals. Men are divided into "ceux qui profitent et ceux qui peinent," and these two groups correspond, in Volpatte's view, to the rear, "où il y a trop d'heureux," and the front, "où il y a trop de malheureux" (p. 328). The front itself renders all men equal (p. 19), and nothing is more equalizing than death, especially when mud makes identification of the casualty impossible (p. 353). But between the rear and the front there is a vast distance, a void between Them and Us:

On se demandera, dit l'un: 'Après tout, pourquoi faire la guerre?' Pourquoi, on n'en sait rien; mais pour qui, on peut le dire. On sera bien forcé de voir que si chaque nation apporte à l'Idole de la guerre la chair fraîche de quinze cents jeunes gens à égorger chaque jour, c'est pour le plaisir de quelques meneurs qu'on pourrait compter; que les peuples entiers vont à la boucherie, rangés en troupeaux d'armées, pour qu'une caste galonnée d'or écrive ses noms de princes dans l'histoire, pour que des gens dorés aussi, qui font partie de la même gradaille, brassent plus d'affaires--pour des questions de personnes et des questions de boutiques. -Et on verra, dès qu'on ouvrira les yeux, que les séparations qui sont entre les hommes ne sont pas celles qu'on croit, et que celles qu'on croit ne sont pas (p. 371).

What emerges, therefore, as the main hope from Le feu is that out of the death and destruction of war will arise a new society, or at least a new consciousness by the proletariat of the injustices and inequalities to which they have been subjected. To put it more symbolically, as indeed Barbusse does himself, there is the hope that out of the darkness will come light (pp. 202, 378). And perhaps just as important, there is the confidence that the experience of war will bring an awareness of the truth:

Ces hommes en débris, ces vaincus isolés et épars dans la victoire, ont un commencement de révélation. Il y a, dans la tragédie des événements, des minutes où les hommes sont non seulement sincères, mais véridiques, et où on voit la vérité sur eux, face à face (p. 310).

Some sixty years after the first publication of Le feu, and with another world war and its fiction already part of history, we might feel

inclined to agree to some extent with Hemingway's comment on Barbusse's novel that "its greatest quality was his courage in writing it when he did. But the writers who came after him wrote better and truer than he did. They had learned to tell the truth without screaming. Screaming, necessary though it may be to attract attention at the time, reads badly in later years" (Introduction to Men at War, p. xvi). It would be unjust to Barbusse not to comment here on Hemingway's own approach to the writing of war fiction, as exemplified in A Farewell to Arms (1929). Hemingway's fascination with war is part of his fascination with death (see John Atkins, The Art of Ernest Hemingway, [London: Spring Books, 1952], pp. 124-25). His first-person narrator clearly enjoys the adventure of war (as an American he is not obliged to join the Italian army) but opts out when the Italian carabinieri break the rules of the game. He can do so because he has luck, money and an American passport. The war itself serves as a backdrop to the narrator's love affair with the English nurse, which can be seen to provide the underlying theme: a search for universal meaning through personal relationships, although unsuccessful, is valuable in itself and leads to reliance upon one's own inner strength (see R.P. Warren, "Ernest Hemingway," in Critiques and Essays on Modern Fiction 1920-1951, ed. J.W. Aldridge, pp. 447-73). As a consequence of this emphasis--and by stark contrast to Barbusse--Hemingway denies his work any sense of commitment about war. He may not scream, but he does not even appear to raise his voice.

However, even if we accept the validity of Hemingway's comment, this would not exclude recognition that "as a socialist epic Le feu was, without doubt, a tour de force."¹ What caused Barbusse to scream was

1. David Caute, Communism and the French Intellectuals, 1914-60, (London: Deutsch, 1964), p. 320.

the very fact of writing his novel in the heat of the events he describes.¹ Yet in spite or because of its screams, the influence of such a powerful work upon other anti-war novels was inevitable, and its significance was certainly given weight both by the combining of the anti-war message with the class struggle and also by the stature of its creator in left-wing circles. What is undeniable is that most of the writers of Chaco War fiction would subscribe to the principal observations, values and messages of Le feu mentioned briefly here.

(iii) Barbusse and Mariátegui

A second, less clearly defined path along which Barbusse's influence may be traced involves a more general influence upon Latin American ideas through the message of the Clarté movement founded by Barbusse in 1919.

According to Annette Vidal, Barbusse's private secretary from 1920 until his death in 1935, Barbusse's works were widely known and read throughout Latin America. All of his books had been translated into Spanish and Portuguese, and many of the translations appeared in editions published in Latin American countries. Barbusse also wrote regularly for Latin American journals and corresponded with a number of intellectuals in that continent. Although he doubtless knew many Latin Americans personally, he never visited Latin America, and he died on August 30th 1935, some three weeks before he was due to set sail for a tour there.²

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1. Barbusse was on active service between September 1914 and June 1917. Le feu was begun at the end of 1915 and completed in six months. See Jacques Duclos and Jean Fréville, Henri Barbusse, pp. 10-11.
 2. Annette Vidal, Henri Barbusse: Soldat de la Paix, (Paris: Les Editeurs Français Réunis, 1953), p. 350.

One indication of the recognition of Barbusse in Bolivia is suggested by the existence of a left-wing group called "Henry [sic] Barbusse," formed just after the Chaco War.¹ Barbusse's strongest influence, however, upon Bolivians and other Latin Americans was largely exercised through the written word. One Latin American intellectual whom he definitely did influence through both personal and written contact was the Peruvian José Carlos Mariátegui, and it is likely that whatever influence Barbusse had in Bolivia and on the Chaco War writers (beyond a reading of Le feu and other works) came via Mariátegui and his influence upon his Bolivian comrades.

Mariátegui met Barbusse in Paris in 1919 during the Peruvian's "exile" in Europe. Both, it would seem, were highly impressed with one another: Barbusse saw in Mariátegui a new kind of American man, whilst Mariátegui admired the Frenchman's dedication, asceticism and concern for all mankind.² "Ningún literato de Occidente," wrote Mariátegui in 1925, "manifiesta en su arte, la misma ternura por el hombre, la misma pasión por la muchedumbre."³ Moreover he was impressed by Le feu not so much for its literary qualities as for the accuracy and truth of Barbusse's observations: Barbusse was a chronicler rather than a novelist (Mariátegui

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1. Miguel Bonifaz, Bolivia, frustración y destino, (Sucre: Imprenta Universitaria de Sucre, 1965), p. 128. See also Klein, Parties and Political Change in Bolivia 1880-1952, (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1969), p. 204, who refers to it as the Grupo Henri Barbusse.
 2. John M. Baines, Revolution in Peru: Mariátegui and the Myth, (University, Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 1972), p. 31.
 3. Mariátegui, La escena contemporánea, p. 161. According to the list of books owned by Mariátegui, to be found in Harry E. Vanden, Mariátegui: influencias en su formación ideológica, (Lima: Ed. Amauta, 1975), pp. 105-44, his library contained more books by Barbusse than any other writer save Freud and Lenin. Although Le feu was not amongst them, Mariátegui had clearly read it (see above, Chapter I, p. 16, n. 2).

(La escena contemporánea, pp. 153, 160). Ideologically they found themselves to be very close, although it was perhaps Barbusse's way of viewing and interpreting the world rather than his ideas which most impressed Mariátegui and which reinforced his own view of Peru and the world (Baines, Revolution in Peru, pp. 31-32).

The year of Mariátegui's arrival in France coincided with the founding of the Clarté movement, the 'Internationale des intellectuels.' Initially it grouped together a number of French intellectuals who had in common an inclination towards progressivism and a feeling of revulsion from the effects of the First World War (Caute, Communism and the French Intellectuals, pp. 42, 59). Although centred in Paris, the movement's influence spread internationally and some of the branches outside France undoubtedly became more significant within their own national spheres than the parent French movement whose influence in France, according to one student of the period, is open to doubt (Caute, p. 43). Mariátegui was in no small measure responsible for making known the work of Barbusse and the Clarté movement throughout Latin America.¹ The French movement

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1. See three short essays in Mariátegui's La escena contemporánea: "El grupo Clarté," pp. 152-56; "Barbusse," pp. 156-58; "Les enchaînements," pp. 158-64. See also articles in Variedades (Lima): "El grupo suprarrealista y Clarté" (June 24th 1926); "Monde" (November 24th 1926); "Jésus de Henri Barbusse" (June 25th 1927). These Variedades articles are reprinted in Mariátegui's Crítica literaria, (Buenos Aires: Ed. Jorge Alvarez, 1969), pp. 159-62, 173-76, 177-79. The first mentioned is also to be found in Mariátegui's El artista y la época, (Lima: Ed. Amauta, 1959), pp. 42-45; the article on "Monde" (Barbusse's weekly paper published between 1928 and 1935, and doubtless the inspiration for the title of the Peruvian paper Mundial) in Signos y obras, (Lima: Ed. Amauta, 1959). Mariátegui also introduced a Peruvian edition of a translation by Manuel Beltroy of Barbusse's Le couteau entre les dents, published in Lima by the Editorial "Renovación" in 1924 as Con el cuchillo entre los dientes. For a full résumé of Mariátegui's articles on Barbusse, see Vanden, Mariátegui: influencias en su formación ideológica, pp. 28, 30. Barbusse had earlier been introduced to the Hispanic world by the Ecuadorean Gonzalo Zaldumbide in the review Cervantes in 1919; his article was published separately in Madrid in the same year with the title En elogio de Henri Barbusse. However, Mariátegui's articles would probably have had greater diffusion in Latin America.

produced its own journal, Clarté (1921-28),¹ and this was clearly the inspiration for the Peruvian journal Claridad (at least in name), founded by Haya de la Torre and Mariátegui in 1923² shortly after the latter's return from Europe. Mariátegui, with newspaper experience behind him, became editor and remained in that capacity throughout the short existence of the journal until it was replaced by Mariátegui himself with his own journal Amauta,³ to which Barbusse was one of many distinguished contributors.⁴ There was also a strong Claridad movement both in Argentina, where a journal of that name flourished in Buenos Aires from 1926 to 1941,⁵ and in Chile, where Claridad was edited by Pablo Neruda

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1. For a study of the journal see Nicole Racine, "Une revue d'intellectuels communistes dans les années vingt: 'Clarté' (1921-1928)," Revue Française de Science Politique, XVII (1967), 484-519.
 2. Ironically May 1923 saw the rupture between Barbusse and the editorial committee of Clarté. From the outset Barbusse was not happy about the function accorded to the review (see Nicole Racine, p. 488).
 3. The name "Claridad" was also considered for the new journal, but was rejected in favour of the Amerindian word which reflected the indigenista concerns of the new publication. Amauta, without doubt the most influential left-wing journal of the period in Latin America, appeared in thirty-two issues from September 1926 to May 1927 and December 1927 to July 1930. Although the review had folded before the Chaco War began, five articles appeared in Amauta during 1929 on the Chaco dispute, plus another in her sister paper Labor. See Alberto Tauro, Amauta y su influencia, (Lima: Biblioteca Amauta, 1960), p. 102.
 4. Barbusse's contributions were an important article in April 1927 entitled "El presente y el porvenir," which included an exposé of the Clarté movement; a letter written to General Sandino following U.S. intervention in Nicaragua, in the issue of July 1928; and in May 1929, Barbusse's opening speech at the Anti-fascist Congress held in Berlin in March of that year. In addition I.V. Ansimov wrote a long study of Barbusse as a writer in July 1928 and Mariátegui himself published in Labor an article entitled "Prensa de doctrina y prensa de información" which compared Barbusse's Clarté and Monde with Amauta and Labor respectively. Two smaller reviews of Barbusse's work appeared in other issues of Amauta.
 5. Martin S. Stabb, In Quest of Identity: Patterns in the Spanish American Essay of Ideas, 1890-1960, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1967), p. 108, n. 14.

from 1920 to 1926.¹

There is no doubt that Mariátegui's own thought was determined to a great extent by his visit to Europe and the contact he established with European intellectuals. Indeed this would explain an apparent preoccupation with contemporary European thought in his essays which led him, according to some critics, occasionally to err in his understanding of Latin American reality (Stabb, In Quest of Identity, p. 113). Despite these errors his best known work, Siete ensayos de interpretación de la realidad peruana, published in 1928, remains "the most serious attempt to understand a Latin American national problem from a Marxist standpoint."² Mariátegui himself has been described as "the only important Marxist theoretician to arise in Latin America,"³ although most commentators, including the writer of the foregoing statement, concur that he deviated in his ideology from "official" communism.⁴ Rather than a criticism, such deviation is seen by non-Marxist students of political ideas as a commendable mark of originality. It has been a criticism of Latin American political ideologies that they have frequently been little more

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1. Lucía Guerra-Cunningham, "El realismo socialista en la novela chilena de la generación de 1938," Cuadernos americanos, CCIX, No. 6 (1976), 191.
 2. Luis E. Aguilar (ed.), Marxism in Latin America, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1968), p. 12.
 3. Rollie Poppino, International Communism in Latin America: A History of the Movement 1917-1963, (London: Free Press of Glencoe, 1964), p. 83.
 4. See Poppino, p. 83; Stabb, In Quest of Identity, p. 113; Robert J. Alexander, Communism in Latin America, (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1957), p. 223; Eugenio Chang-Rodríguez, La literatura política de González Prada, Mariátegui y Haya de la Torre, (Mexico: Studium, 1957), pp. 197-98, 164-65; Augusto Salazar Bondy, Historia de las ideas en el Perú contemporáneo, (Lima: Moncloa, 1965), II, 330; Vanden, Mariátegui: influencias en su formación ideológica, pp. 101-02.

than attempts to graft imported, usually European ideas upon a Latin American reality which is invariably different from the reality of the country where the ideas originated. One of the major innovations of Mariátegui's thought was his indigenista approach to the solution of his country's problems, in which he examined the historical and social background of the Indians of Peru and attempted to relate this background to the present and future. Perhaps equally significant is what Stabb calls Mariátegui's personal radicalism or radical humanism, whereby commitment is given not only to the revolutionary resolution of social, economic and political problems, but also to an inner revolt so that man can "be liberated from material needs, from considering himself as a pawn, from viewing himself and others as 'objects'" (In Quest of Identity, p. 142).

It was above all these two elements of Mariátegui's thinking--indigenismo and opposition to exploitation--which appealed to the writers of Chaco War fiction, rather than the overall attraction of Marxist ideology. For the neglect of the Indian and the exploitation of Bolivians as individuals and as a nation came to be seen as essential causes of Bolivia's misfortunes in the Chaco¹ and the resolution of these questions came to be viewed as essential factors in the reconstruction of post-war Bolivian society.

However, Mariátegui's influence extended beyond the Chaco War writers to other spheres, especially in the formation of political groups. In neighbouring Bolivia, where no thinker of comparable stature had emerged² and where similar political problems had to be faced, he was

1. See below, Chapter VI, pp. 222-24, 226-30; 231-39.

2. With the possible exception of Gustavo A. Navarro, known as Tristán Marof--see below, pp. 67-69.

adopted as one of their own by like-minded radicals. Consequently in 1927 a chapter of the Peruvian APRA party (with which Mariátegui was closely associated in its early years) was temporarily established in Bolivia, an indication of the close political affinity between the two countries (Klein, Parties and Political Change in Bolivia, p. 101, n. 3). Francovich notes the important influence of Mariátegui's Siete ensayos, "que fueron acogidos con el más vivo interés en Bolivia."¹ As far as the diffusion of Marxist ideas was concerned, Mariátegui's influence was more decisive than that of Ingenieros' Sociología argentina, because the Peruvian's work "estaba más cerca de la conciencia boliviana."² One of the first Bolivians to recognize the importance of Mariátegui, according to Abecia Baldivieso (Historiografía boliviana, p. 421), was the writer Carlos Medinaceli who, although not himself a contributor to the fiction of the Chaco War, certainly moved in the same circles and was of the same generation as those who were.³ The most important early Marxist writers in Bolivia were Tristán Marof and José Antonio Arze (Francovich, La filosofía en Bolivia, p. 238). Arze, leader of the Partido de la Izquierda Revolucionaria which he helped to found in 1940,⁴ "reconoce la influencia que tuvo en su formación José

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1. Guillermo Francovich, El pensamiento boliviano en el siglo XX, (Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1956), p. 104.
 2. Francovich, La filosofía en Bolivia, 2nd ed., (La Paz: Ed. Juventud, 1966), p. 237. See also Alipio Valencia Vega, Desarrollo del pensamiento político en Bolivia, (La Paz: Ed. Trabajo, 1953), p. 92. For an affirmation of the influence of Ingenieros, however, see Raúl Abadie-Aicardi, Economía y sociedad de Bolivia en el siglo XX, (Montevideo: Ed. del Río de la Plata, 1966), p. 92.
 3. Medinaceli was later, in 1934, to act as adviser to the Bolivian Chancellery on the question of the border with Paraguay. See Diccionario de la literatura latinoamericana: Bolivia, (Washington, D.C.: Unión Panamericana, [1958]), p. 56.
 4. Jesús Lara, author of Repete, (see below, Chapter IV, p. 85) was also a founder of the PIR. For the historical background to the PIR and the party's political programme, see Alberto Cornejo S.,

Carlos Mariátegui" (Abecia Baldivieso, p. 486), whilst Marof was clearly familiar with Mariátegui's work,¹ and during consular service in Europe absorbed socialist ideas "como las defendidas por escritores como Anatole France y Henri Barbusse" (José Ortega, "La preocupación nacionalista en el ensayo y la novela bolivianos," Cuadernos hispanoamericanos, 246 [1970], 667).

Whilst in exile in Argentina, having escaped from prison in 1927, Marof continued with the revolutionary activities which had led to his imprisonment and after the outbreak of the Chaco War he moved to the north of Argentina in order to propagate his anti-war ideas. He encouraged desertions and inspired (if he did not actually write) the manifesto of the Grupo Tupac Amaru (a revolutionary group in exile in Argentina) which echoed the principal ideas expressed by Marof in his book La tragedia del altiplano. Amongst the calls made by the manifesto, which was distributed to the soldiers in the Chaco, was the immediate end to the war, the nationalization of the mines, agrarian reform, recognition of all trade unions and soldiers' councils, and the formation of a Socialist Workers' Republic (Klein, Parties and Political Change in Bolivia, p. 195). Other exile groups in Chile and Peru joined the Argentinian group in Córdoba in 1934 to form a united party, the Partido Obrero Revolucionario, of which Marof became the leader and most prominent spokesman. This remained a

Programas políticos de Bolivia, (Cochabamba: Imprenta Universitaria, 1949), pp. 179-294. It was from amongst members of the PIR that the Partido Comunista de Bolivia (PCB) was later formed.

1. See Tristán Marof, La tragedia del altiplano, (Buenos Aires: Claridad, [1934]), p. 46. Mariátegui also knew Marof's writings, and it is no surprise to find that the Bolivian was the contributor of eight articles to Amauta. According to Guillermo Lora, A History of the Bolivian Labour Movement 1848-1971, ed. L. Whitehead, trans. C. Whitehead, (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1977), p. 165, Marof visited Mariátegui in 1927 just after the Bolivian had gone into exile.

loose federation until after the war (when Marof broke with the POR anyway), and its main activities after the Córdoba convention involved the dissemination of anti-war and revolutionary ideas amongst the troops in the Chaco during the last months of the war (Klein, pp. 195-96; see also, Lora, A History of the Bolivian Labour Movement, pp. 165-66).

Thus the ideas sown by Mariátegui and by the books, pamphlets and political activities of men like Marof (Abadie-Aicardi, Economía y sociedad de Bolivia, p. 95, n. 94), germinated during the Chaco War and in the years immediately following, and came to fruition in the form of specific political organization and activity in the late 1930's and early 1940's.

Leaving aside, therefore, the very plausible connection between Le feu and the fiction of the Chaco War, there is also a connection between Barbusse and Bolivian intellectuals which can be traced via Mariátegui. Had Barbusse undertaken his voyage to Latin America in 1935, it is quite possible that the connection between Barbusse and Bolivia would have become even more direct and significant, precisely on account of the Chaco conflict. Barbusse had been asked in a letter from Luis Carlos Prestes in July 1934 for "l'envoi d'une délégation du Comité mondial dans les pays de l'Amérique du Sud et notamment en Bolivie et au Paraguay, en vue d'une enquête sur la situation des masses travailleuses et tout particulièrement au sujet de la situation sur le front" (Vidal, Henri Barbusse, p. 351). But according to his secretary, Barbusse had even been approached in connection with the arbitrament of the Chaco dispute (Vidal, p. 350). It would have been ironical if the author of Le feu, participant in and observer of a senseless war in Europe, had taken part nearly twenty years later in the settlement of an equally senseless conflict and one which, no doubt, Le feu, the Clarté movement and his other anti-war activities had been designed to prevent.

(iv) Remarque

The influence of Erich Maria Remarque upon Bolivian intellectual activity is neither as extensive nor as well documented as that of Barbusse. However, an examination of Im Westen Nichts Neues indicates that if in Barbusse the Chaco writers found a model for their general message, Remarque provided a model for the approach to their task and the form that their works were to take. To say this is not to deny that Remarque's message is forcefully stated. His fundamental attitude, like that of Barbusse, is that war is futile and wasteful and not only destroys individuals but ruins a whole generation of young men who, even though they may survive physically, are rendered useless as members of society after their war-time experiences:

Ich bin jung, ich bin zwanzig Jahre alt; aber ich kenne vom Leben nichts anderes als die Verzweiflung, den Tod, die Angst und die Verkettung sinnlosester Oberflächlichkeit mit einem Abgrund des Leidens. Ich sehe, dass Völker gegeneinandergetrieben werden und sich schweigend, unwissend, töricht, gehorsam, unschuldig töten. Ich sehe, dass die klügsten Gehirne der Welt Waffen und Worte erfinden, um das alles noch raffinierter und längerdauernd zu machen. Und mit mir sehen das alle Menschen meines Alters hier und drüben, in der ganzen Welt, mit mir erlebt das meine Generation. Was werden unsere Väter tun, wenn wir einmal aufstehen und vor sie hintreten und Rechenschaft fordern? Was erwarten sie von uns, wenn eine Zeit kommt, wo kein Krieg ist? Jahre hindurch war unsere Beschäftigung Töten--es war unser erster Beruf im Dasein. Unser Wissen vom Leben beschränkt sich auf den Tod. Was soll danach noch geschehen? Und was soll aus uns werden?

These words and rhetorical questions are addressed to Remarque's readers by the first-person narrator Paul Bäumer. Whereas Barbusse's narrator is an undisguised autobiographical 'I' (he speaks for Barbusse because he is Barbusse), Remarque's voice is filtered through that of the inexperienced

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1. Erich Maria Remarque, Im Western Nichts Neues, (Frankfurt and Berlin: Ullstein, 1969), pp. 164-65. Remarque pursues this idea in a later novel, Der Weg Zurück, translated as The Road Back (1931), set in post-war Germany.

youth Paul who, although identifiable with the author himself, is only vaguely aware of the notions of social injustice and the antagonism between social classes that loom so large in Barbusse's message. Hence not only is Remarque's message more individualized, it is put across in a less direct--Hemingway would no doubt say a less strident--manner.

The element of Le feu's message which appealed to many of the writers of Chaco War fiction was, as has been suggested, the fact that the ordinary soldier on both sides was an exploited victim of inept leaders and capitalist interests. Remarque also saw that the enemy soldiers, both Russian and French, were victims (pp. 138, 146), yet he does not make propagandistic capital out of such observations. He is concerned to depict this fratricide on an individual, human level rather than a social one: the fact that in war everyone loses is well illustrated in Im Westen Nichts Neues by Paul's poignant monologue to the French soldier whom he kills when the latter stumbles into Paul's shell-hole:

Heute du, morgen ich. Aber wenn ich davonkomme, Kamerad, will ich kämpfen gegen dieses, das uns beide zerschlug: dir das Leben--und mir--? Auch das Leben. Ich verspreche es dir Kamerad. Es darf nie wieder geschehen (p. 160).

The sensibility which Paul demonstrates in the whole of this episode is nowhere to be found in Barbusse's novel, nor is it echoed in the fiction of the Chaco War.

Yet it was neither the message nor the tone for which Im Westen Nichts Neues seems to have provided an example for the Bolivian writers. Rather does his influence appear to have been a formal one. Firstly the narrative structure of Remarque's novel is characterized by the same kind of fragmentation which was to be adopted by many of those who wrote Chaco War fiction. Episodes are juxtaposed without justification in terms of story or plot and chapters are divided into several sections, each independent in scene and subject from the one preceding. The narrative

is determined by the logic--or rather the illogicality--of war as seen by the ordinary soldier: the order in which events occur is irrelevant to the single objective of survival. Hence the narrative does not demand any kind of organization or pattern.¹

The characters in Im Westen Nichts Neues are in general more clearly depicted than most of the characters who populate the novels of the Chaco War fiction, but there are two aspects of Remarque's characterization which do typify that of the Bolivians. Firstly--with the notable exception of the narrator Paul, who is far more introspective and self-analytical than any first-person narrator to be found in the Chaco War novels--the characters are not fully drawn personalities. They are mostly identified by one significant characteristic: Kaczinsky's resourcefulness, Müller's forthrightness, Tjaden's easy-going nature or Haie's sense of humour. Secondly, both Remarque and the Chaco War writers after him are aware of the dehumanizing effect of war upon the human personality. Remarque's characters are obsessed by their basic needs: their first thought in any new situation is the acquisition of food, which provides them with an animal-like, physical satisfaction. When the young soldiers return from front-line duty, they are content with two things, food and rest. Remarque explains the philosophy behind this:

Aber unsere Kameraden sind tot, wir können ihnen nicht helfen, sie haben Ruhe--wer weiss, was uns noch bevorsteht; wir wollen uns hinhauen und schlafen oder fressen, so viel wir in den Magen kriegen, und saufen und rauchen, damit die Stunden nicht öde sind. Das Leben ist kurz (p. 102).

Remarque's apparent obsession with the consumption and excretion of food--an obsession which brought forth the remark from one critic that "if [the novel] is unnecessarily coarse, we must recall that the latrine always had a fascination for the German soldier" (Falls, War Books, p. 294)--is also justified by his assertion that "dem Soldaten ist sein Magen und

1. For further discussion of this, see below, Chapter V, pp. 110-40.

seine Verdauung ein vertrauterer Gebiet als jedem anderen Menschen"

(Remarque, p. 12). In general war turns men into "Menschentiere,"

"gefährliche Tiere," "Wilden" (pp. 45, 85, 190). This dehumanization of men is reinforced by the loss of individuality which participation in military activity implies. Men marching become a column:

Die Kolonne marschiert, geradeaus, die Gestalten schliessen sich zu einem Keil, man erkennt die einzelnen nicht mehr, nur ein dunkler Keil schiebt sich nach vorn, sonderbar ergänzt aus den im Nebelteich heranschwimmenden Köpfen und Gewehren. Eine Kolonne--keine Menschen (p. 46).

These two factors make it logically difficult for Remarque to produce well-drawn figures in a novel which aims to suppress the human qualities of the participants in it. As will be seen, the Chaco War writers in general encounter the same problem.¹

The third element of Im Westen Nichts Neues, after narrative structure and characterization, which is paralleled in the fiction of the Chaco War is the kind of language used in the narrative. The main characteristic of Remarque's language is the direct, matter-of-fact reportage which the narrator uses in order to describe what are in some cases potentially emotional, spectacular or horrific situations.² Many such descriptions involve death or wounding, for these are the situations in which the stark reality of war is made fully apparent. Whilst such scenes could produce highly coloured prose full of suggestive imagery, Remarque prefers a plain, direct language which creates no distance between the

1. See below, Chapter V, pp. 141-54.

2. A similar characteristic can be noted in the writing of Barbusse, who asserted that "l'écriture est devenue une peau plutôt qu'un habillement." (Quoted in Duclos and Fréville, Henri Barbusse, p. 42). But perhaps because he wrote Le feu more than a decade earlier than Remarque's novel, and because he began his literary career as a poet, Barbusse does not abandon an 'imaginative' language to the same degree as the author of Im Westen Nichts Neues.

observer and the thing observed. Notable examples of this type of prose are to be found in descriptions of the effects of artillery fire, of the different kinds of horrific wounds, of men blown out of their clothes by the force of the blast from trench mortars, of the examination of a wounded recruit, in which the brief, terse sentences are typical of this approach:

Wir legen die Hüfte bloss. Sie ist ein einziger Fleischbrei mit Knochen splintern. Das Gelenk ist getroffen. Dieser Junge wird nie mehr gehen können (Remarque, p. 56; other references are to pp. 95, 99, 147-48).

Such an approach to language is characteristic of a view of the novel as a document. And yet there are occasions when suddenly this unemotional reportage will gather momentum and reach a level of language which is above the prosaic. It is a language which reflects those moments of heightened awareness which suddenly penetrate the hardened sensibilities of the youths turned soldiers. An excellent example of this is the narrator's explosion of feeling after witnessing the death of Franz Kemmerer in hospital:

Vor der Tür fühle ich wie eine Erlösung das Dunkel und den Wind. Ich atme, so sehr ich es vermag, und spüre die Luft warm und weich wie nie in meinem Gesicht. Gedanken an Mädchen, an blühende Wiesen, an weisse Wolken fliegen mir plötzlich durch den Kopf. Meine Füße bewegen sich in den Stiefeln vorwärts, ich gehe schneller, ich laufe. Soldaten kommen an mir vorüber, ihre Gespräche erregen mich, ohne dass ich sie verstehe. Die Erde ist von Kräften durchflossen, die durch meine Fusssohlen in mich überströmen. Die Nacht knistert elektrisch, die Front gewittert dumpf wie ein Trommelkonzert. Meine Glieder bewegen sich geschmeidig, ich fühle meine Gelenke stark, ich schnaube und schnaube. Die Nacht lebt, ich lebe. Ich spüre Hunger, einen grösseren als nur vom Magen.¹

Almost all of the Chaco War writers adopt the reportage technique used by Remarque, and the language of at least two writers (Toro Ramallo and

1. Remarque, Im Westen Nichts Neues, p. 30. See also the narrator's description of fear on his first patrol after returning from leave, pp. 149-50.

Guzmán) is characterized by the duality of language levels which Remarque employs.

Terseness and brevity are, as has been suggested, the essence of the language of reportage. This applies not only to descriptive passages, but particularly at tense moments in the action. Sentences are short and concise in the following scene when the men are under fire on wiring duty:

Schon geht es los. Wir kriechen weg, so gut es geht in der Eile. Der nächste Schuss sitzt bereits zwischen uns. Ein paar Leute schreien. Am Horizont steigen grüne Raketen auf. Der Dreck fliegt hoch, Splitter surren (p. 48).

Terseness is also evident in almost all of the dialogues, where scarcely anyone says more than two or three sentences, and it is also characteristic of those instances in which the narrator is forced to speak or to think of emotionally painful experiences, as in the following thoughts after his stay in hospital:

Ich bekomme Erholungsurlaub.

Meine Mutter will mich nicht mehr fortlassen. Sie ist so schwach. Es ist alles noch schlimmer als das letztemal.

Danach werde ich vom Regiment angefordert und fahre wieder ins Feld.

Der Abschied von meinem Freunde Albert Kropp ist schwer. Aber man lernt das beim Kommis mit der Zeit (p. 188).¹

It is, of course, extremely difficult to prove the direct influence of one writer upon another, and such an influence can only be surmised without written evidence. It is hard to prove precise textual influences because so much of what is common to all wars is liable to be described in a broadly similar way. But it would appear that with regard to the three aspects of Remarque's approach mentioned here--narrative organization, characterization and language--the writers of Chaco War fiction, in particular those who adopted a documentary approach, employed the same techniques as those which characterize Remarque's best-selling novel.

It is of interest to note that the best known German novel of World

1. See below, Chapter V, pp. 155-61; 166-73.

War I was published some thirteen years later than its French counterpart. The fact is that most war novels written on the German side appeared much later than those of other countries (Bance in Modern Language Review, LXXII [1977], 360). Various reasons were put forward by German writers to explain this, and these are summarized, interestingly enough, by José Carlos Mariátegui: the need felt by Germans for time and distance to focus events; the possibility of a new war in the late 1920's which made the subject topical; the interest in adventure held by both the young and by war-veterans; the aesthetic enjoyment to be gained from war which can only emerge when the fear of the war is over; the need to await a period of stability (i.e. after post-war inflation) before peoples' memories could safely look back on war.¹ Mariátegui suggests that German writers like Leonhard Frank and Andreas Latzko² whose war novels appeared in 1917 and 1918, published their works before the German public was ready for the truth about the war, and that "a Alemania vencida le era menos fácil que a Francia victoriosa aceptar una versión verídica de la guerra en las trincheras" (El alma matinal, p. 176). But despite the fact that after the Chaco War Bolivia found herself in a position similar to that of Germany in 1918, it is certainly not the case that the Bolivian novelists withheld their accounts, nor that the country found their accounts hard to accept. Whereas the German novels did not begin to appear with regularity until eleven years after the end of the war, in Bolivia (and Paraguay) most of the novels about the Chaco conflict had appeared within five years

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1. Mariátegui, El alma matinal y otras estaciones del hombre de hoy, pp. 173-74. In another article (pp. 175-79) on Sin novedad en el frente, originally published in Variedades in October 1929, Mariátegui clearly recognized the significance of Remarque's novel, even though he was critical of it.
 2. Frank, Der Mensch ist Gut; Latzko, Friedensgericht and Menschen im Krieg.

of the ceasefire. The absence of delay in Bolivia's case does not invalidate the explanations for the delay in Germany, but it would support the idea that the Bolivian writers, with examples of novels written about war ready to hand, were directly influenced by the best-known European models and turned their hand to emulating them without delay.

The influence of First World War fiction, as exemplified by the two novels examined in this chapter, is, therefore, as important in explaining the reasons for the volume, the message and the form of Chaco War fiction as those causes mentioned earlier which were suggested by Luis Alberto Sánchez.

It is perhaps surprising that there appears to be no connection or influence between the fiction written about other Hispanic wars and Chaco War fiction; certainly none is acknowledged by critics nor by the writers themselves. The two most obvious possibilities are the Mexican Revolution of 1910-17 (especially Mariano Azuela's Los de abajo, which enjoyed wide acclaim in the late 1920's and the 1930's) and the Spanish Civil War (which had already prompted some fiction by the time that the later Chaco War novels were written). The reasons why the novelists of the Chaco War felt a greater affinity for the First World War novels are complex but attributable to the fact that neither the same emotions nor the same political or cultural conflicts were involved in the other two Hispanic struggles as were involved in the Chaco War. For although everything that took place between Bolivia and Paraguay was on a smaller scale than the confrontation between France and Germany (the principal First World War belligerents, in the view of South Americans), the alienation of the two neighbours was as significant. In spite of protestations of fraternity and of common cause against imperialist interests, the Bolivians felt

themselves to be as different from the Paraguayans as the French did from the Teutonic Germans. In Mexico the differences were between supporters and followers of caudillos: the porfiristas or carrancistas, the huertistas or villistas, whilst in Spain the conflict was an ideological one between Nationalists and Republicans in which many if not most Spaniards felt a strong commitment to one of the political movements embraced by the two sides. In the Chaco conflict it was Bolivians against Paraguayans, bolis against pilas,¹ a difference not of allegiance to a group, a class, a leader or a cause, but of race and culture. Historically it reflected a rivalry between Upper Peru and La Plata, between La Paz and Asunción, and by extension from a pre-Hispanic age, between Aymará and Guaraní.

One of the Chaco War writers, Rafael Ulises Peláez, succinctly illustrates the notion that whereas the war should have suggested affinities with the Mexican Revolution, the dominant influence upon the men involved was that of Viennese waltzes, Marlene Dietrich and the film "Fatalidad." He describes a troop train with soldiers on the roof: "Semejaba el tren militar un remedo de esos transportes revolucionarios de Méjico con sus 'cristeros' armados cantando coplas populares . . . Pero los nuestros tarareaban el 'Danubio Azul'."²

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1. The nicknames used by troops to describe the enemy. "Pila" is an abbreviated corruption of "pata pelada," used to describe the Paraguayan troops who frequently fought barefoot.
 2. Rafael Ulises Peláez, Cuando el viento agita las banderas, (La Paz: Ed. Universo, 1950), II, 25.

CHAPTER IV

THE WRITERS OF CHACO WAR FICTION AND THEIR WORKS

"La guerra del Chaco provocó una inmensa ola de protestas que se reflejó inmediatamente en la literatura. Fue la reacción del boliviano ante el fracaso del Sudeste. Y como el fracaso fue estrepitoso, la reacción fue correlativamente, de crecidas proporciones."¹

(i) War fiction: Definitions

Having attempted a definition of documentary fiction in Chapter I, we must here determine what constitutes war fiction, so that we can delimit the works to be analyzed in Chapter V. To say that works of war fiction are "works of fiction about war" is not sufficiently precise. Anthony Burgess in The Novel Now suggests that "all British novels with a 1939-45 setting were, in one sense or another, novels about the war."² This implies that a work set in a particular society in time of war is almost inevitably "about the war." But what does that mean? For whereas such a work may reflect the war in its narrative or be conditioned by the war, it may not strictly be "about the war" in the sense either that its characters actually fight in the war or that the action of the war dominates the story. What Burgess says is rather a reflection of the fact that an author writing a work of fiction of which the action takes place during the war years could scarcely avoid writing about the war, for whatever the central aspect of his story might be, his characters and their actions would in some way or another be involved in or affected by

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1. Castañón Barrientos, Sobre literatura, (La Paz: Universo, 1971), p. 57.
 2. Anthony Burgess, The Novel Now, (London: Faber and Faber, 1971), p. 50.

the war. "War fiction" or "fiction about war" is thus not easily defined and what may be classified as such is largely open to individual interpretation. Mariátegui, in El alma matinal, suggests that Leonhard Frank's novel Carl und Anna (1926) could be included amongst German novels of the First World War since, although it is not "un libro de guerra" (a concept which Mariátegui does not define, but by which he presumably means such works as Le feu or Im Westen Nichts Neues), it could not have been written without the war.¹ Similarly in Proceso y contenido Sánchez argues that Remarque's Drei Kameraden (1937) is more of a "novela de guerra" than Hemingway's A Farewell to Arms because of the difference in their tone and purpose (pp. 394-95). William Pfeiler (in War and the German Mind, p. 309, n. 7), mainly limits the term 'war novel' in his study of German fiction of World War I to "works on the experience of the front in various forms." Albert Schinz (French Literature of the Great War, [New York and London: D. Appleton, 1920], p. 28), makes a distinction between "the War-Novel proper, in which the authors work up documents or personal experiences in order to make us see more deeply the significance of the war" and the "War-Time-Novel . . . in which the war has been used merely as a background for some story not necessarily connected with it." Although the latter "offers better opportunities to the real artist in so far as it allows more play to the individuality of the writer" (p. 363), he feels constrained only to devote a short chapter to it.

In determining what to include within Chaco War fiction we may then adopt either a narrow definition of a work of war fiction as one which

1. Mariátegui, pp. 179-80. Carl und Anna, trans. Cyrus Brooks, (London: Peter Davies, 1929), is the moving story of a returned soldier who goes to live with the wife of a former comrade, Richard, and usurps Richard's place in her life. Burgess would have described such a work as being "about the war."

describes participation in the war by its main characters and which narrates action and events at the war-front, or on the other hand we may adopt (as would Burgess or Mariátegui) a wider definition of a work of war fiction as one which does not necessarily possess the characteristics mentioned above, but rather is conditioned by the war and would not or could not have been written in the same way if the war had not taken place.

The narrower definition has been adopted for the present study. There are two reasons for this: firstly, the works which satisfy the criteria of the narrower definition form a homogeneous group and provide sufficient and suitable material for detailed examination. Secondly, works which correspond to the narrower definition of war fiction constitute documentary fiction about the Chaco War, and one of the primary concerns in the following chapter will be to examine the effects of the documentary approach upon narrative organization, characterization and language: to examine how far the writers of Chaco War fiction succeeded in overcoming the problems presented by the documentary approach to fiction and to compare these aspects of the documentary works with those non-documentary works which also deal principally with the war-front.

On the basis of these definitions, we shall not be concerned with Oscar Cerruto's Aluvión de fuego, (Santiago de Chile: Ed. Ercilla, 1935), which corresponds to the wider definition of Chaco War fiction. Its narrative deals only marginally, briefly and indirectly with the action of the war in the form of a letter covering twelve pages written by the protagonist's friend Sergio Benavente.¹ It is curious that Cerruto's novel is

1. Cerruto's treatment of the war in this letter will, however, be considered in Chapter VI, as will other works which correspond to a wider definition of "war fiction."

pointed to as the Bolivian novel of the Chaco War, although its connection with events in the Chaco is tenuous.¹ The protagonist, Mauricio Santa Cruz, enlists in the army but instead of being despatched to the war-front he is sent to persecute the Indians in the altiplano, and as a result becomes first a deserter, then a revolutionary leader. Not only does Santa Cruz not participate in the war, but it is not true to claim, as Torres-Rioseco does in La novela en la América hispana (quoted in Arana, "La novela de la guerra del Chaco," pp. 23-24), that Cerruto shows a soldier converted into a revolutionary activist as a consequence of his participation in the war. Had this been so, the book would have had much greater significance in the context of the Bolivian Revolution, since it would have anticipated the claim often made that the events of 1952 occurred largely as a result of the disillusionment or conversely enlightenment experienced by combatants in the Chaco. Moreover Cerruto did not write of the Chaco from personal experience, for he refused to do military service, and instead of going to the Chaco he went into exile in Chile and Argentina. Aluvión de fuego is, as Luis Alberto Sánchez puts it, Cerruto's explanation and justification for his action (Proceso y contenido, p. 407). As a consequence, Cerruto's novel is more of an indigenista work or a "novela de las minas" (since Santa Cruz goes to a mining community in order to lead his new life as a revolutionary) than a novel of the Chaco War.²

1. For this reason Hugo Vilela, Alcides Arguedas y otros nombres en la literatura de Bolivia, (Buenos Aires: Kier, 1945), p. 69, is right to refute Luis Alberto Sánchez' suggestion that Cerruto's novel is an amalgam of La Vóragine, Don Segundo Sombra and Sin novedad en el frente, since there is in Aluvión de fuego "una absoluta falta de escenas propiamente guerreras."

2. Cf. Lautaro Yankas, in a review of Aluvión de fuego, in Atenea, 127 (1936), p. 105; Augusto Céspedes, idem, p. 104.

Nor are we concerned here with works which cannot on balance be considered works of fiction. To say this is to return to the question discussed earlier of how to distinguish fiction from non-fiction. The problem is particularly acute with regard to autobiographical narratives, and an excellent illustration of this from the First World War is provided by Siegfried Sassoon's The Complete Memoirs of George Sherston (1928-36). Paul Fussell, contemplating the ending of the trilogy, feels that "we must wonder how much of it is fiction" (The Great War and Modern Memory, p. 102). He notes that some autobiographical elements are clearly missing from the novel, in particular references to Sassoon's poetry, since the author denied his first-person character "the complex advantage of being a soldier poet" (Sassoon, Siegfried's Journey, [London, 1945], p. 69, quoted in Fussell, p. 103). Fussell concludes, therefore, that Sassoon's trilogy "is in every way fictional and that it would be impossible to specify how it differs from any other novel written in the first person and based on the author's own experiences"--characteristics, as Fussell sees it, of all first novels (p. 104). By contrast Arthur Lane (in An Adequate Response [1972], p. 92, quoted in Fussell, p. 104), argues that "The Memoirs of George Sherston is in no way fictional, unless one balks at the use of pseudonyms such as Thornton Tyrrell (for Bertrand Russell) and David Cromlech (for Robert Graves)." However, even Fussell has his doubts, for he notes that the third volume of the trilogy, Sherston's Progress, shows "signs of impatience and fatigue": one sign is authorial intrusion, and another is "Sassoon's leaving seventy-three pages in something close to their original form as diary, without troubling to transmute them into something closer to fiction" (p. 100).

Clearly the question is one of degree and emphasis rather than exclusiveness. It is not necessarily the inclusion or exclusion, the explicitness or implicitness of autobiographical material which determines

whether a work is fiction or not; it has more to do with the way in which the material is presented, as Fussell indirectly indicates later when he notes that "what is presiding throughout is not fidelity to fact but workmanship" (p. 104). Professor Bergonzi points out that the difference between autobiography and autobiographical fiction is often one of degree: the degree of freedom enjoyed by the writer of fiction to select from and to rearrange his experiences. In addition the novelist can go beyond his own experience through an imaginative excursion into that of others (Heroes' Twilight, pp. 171-72).¹ Professor Stern makes the interesting point that even if a writer puts an actual conversation into his narrative, he is still being creative, because he has chosen that conversation and the place in which to make use of it, and his purpose in using it is to achieve something that that conversation represents and illuminates.² Stern's point may be extended to apply to any element taken from real life and incorporated into a fiction. In his War Books Cyril Falls, another student of writings on the First World War and himself a participant in it, is prepared to admit as fiction a novel based on personal experiences (p. 294), although throughout his book he admits to difficulty in distinguishing between his three categories of history, reminiscence and fiction. He too, therefore, finds the dividing line between autobiography and autobiographical fiction to be a narrow one, and J. Norton Cru, who includes in his study only those novels based on personal experiences, cannot always tell until he has read a work whether it is autobiography or fiction.³

If we are to exclude works from this study it will not simply be

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1. Northrop Frye, The Anatomy of Criticism, (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton U.P., 1957), p. 307, maintains that the autobiographer enjoys the same selective freedom.
 2. J.P. Stern, On Realism, (London and Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973), p. 72.
 3. See above, Chapter I, pp. 19-20.

on the grounds that the writer has not attempted to select and rearrange his experiences, for--as will be shown in Chapter V--it is possible to argue from the point of view of authenticity that there may be valid reasons for not selecting and rearranging material in novels about war. Works will not be examined in detail here if the writer has deliberately set out to avoid the use of "workmanship," to use Fussell's term. Hence we are not concerned with Jesús Lara's Repete, for the writer specifically rejects the notion that his work is a novel: "la imaginación y el cálculo del efecto no tuvieron cabida en sus escenas," he writes.¹ Thus two of the fundamental ingredients of fiction are deliberately excluded from his work: they may not be exclusive to fiction, but their absence is decisive in determining what is not fiction. Repete is a campaign diary, detailed, evocative of life at the front, accurate as Lara saw it, but it is not fiction.

The problem is compounded by works such as Porfirio Díaz Machicao's La bestia emocional which the author refers to as "esta novela," but which in fact is an autobiography. What Díaz Machicao means is that fact can sometimes be read as fiction, and also that this is the "novel" of his life: "Hemos seres que no vivimos una biografía, sino una novela."² Since it is clearly the story of the writer's life, before, during and after the Chaco War, it does not fall into the category of fiction and will not be included for detailed study here.

On the other hand Augusto Guzmán's Prisionero de guerra does merit

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1. Jesús Lara, Repete (Diario de un hombre que fue a la Guerra del Chaco), 2nd ed., (Cochabamba: Ed. Carlos Canelas, 1938), p. 8.
 2. Díaz Machicao, La bestia emocional, p. 191. Juan Quirós, La raíz y las Hojas, (La Paz: Ed. Buri-ball, 1956), p. 74, agrees with this interpretation of what the writer means.

inclusion, although Guzmán's own assertion: "Este libro es mi novela, la que me ha sucedido y ha sucedido a muchos hombres de mi tiempo"¹ might, at first glance, appear to be the same sort of statement as that made by Díaz Machicao. However, Guzmán does call his book a "compendio de experiencias personales" based upon memories of his life, a life which is perhaps more interesting than this "historia," which is an "evocación ordenada" of what happened (Prisionero de guerra, p. 5). There does seem to be enough evidence to suggest that there is sufficient "workmanship" in Prisionero de guerra to justify its inclusion in the present study, and certainly the author himself thought of his work as a novel.² A detailed study of it does throw some interesting light upon the nature of documentary fiction.

(ii) The writers

Since the Chaco War produced a significant amount of writing in various genres, the designation of "Generación del Chaco" has been applied to those writers who contributed to it. It is a convenient way of dividing the body of twentieth-century Bolivian literature and its creators both chronologically and thematically into homogeneous groups. More often than not, however, such "generations" are established for ease of reference and do not correspond to a narrower definition of the word "generation" as suggested by Ortega: they are, in other words, usually "contemporáneos" rather than the more restricted "coetáneos." But in the case of the "Generación del Chaco" it is clearly a generation in the chronologically more restricted

1. Quoted in Enrique Finot, Historia de la literatura boliviana, 3rd ed., (La Paz: Gisbert, 1964), p. 369.

2. In an entry on two of his own works in his Panorama de la novela en Bolivia, p. 93, he wrote of Prisionero de guerra: "Como relato particular y literario es novelesco."

sense and not just a label of convenience. Of the fifteen writers whose works constitute the main body of Chaco War fiction in Bolivia, it has been possible to establish the date of birth of all but two. These thirteen writers were born between 1896 and 1906; they were, therefore, aged between 26 and 36 when the war began,¹ and they were all between 30 and 48 when their works were published. Such ages correspond, no doubt, to what might be expected of the writers of fiction about the war. The actual fighting in war is essentially the task of young men sent to fight by their elders, and these works were written by young men who were of fighting age in 1932, men who would largely have dissociated themselves from (or at least would not have identified with) the generation to which the political and military leaders of the country belonged. They still constituted part of the "younger generation" when they wrote (their average age was 38)² but their experience of living through the war itself and the passage of several years between the outbreak of the war and the publication of their work--six years on average--produced a blend of disillusionment and an awareness of their duty to record their experience as a testament and as a salutary lesson for future generations. In the decades following the war, in particular the 1940's, the men of the "Generación del Chaco," now mostly in their forties, were of the age to take leading roles in the political changes which the country was undergoing, and a number of them were actively engaged in political affairs.

1. Cf. the average age of 30-31 of 210 French writers of World War I literature in 1914 given by J.N. Cru, Témoins, p. 665. The average age at the outbreak of the Chaco War of the seven Paraguayan Chaco novelists mentioned by Centurión, Historia de las letras paraguayas, (Buenos Aires: Ed. Ayacucho, 1951), III, 313-33, was 30.

2. The average age of the seven Paraguayan novelists was 34.

Of all the Chaco War writers, Augusto Céspedes (b. 1904) is the one who was most actively involved in politics and is certainly the one who has left the most explicit testimony of his involvement. Born in Cochabamba, he went to La Paz in 1919, and became involved in demonstrations against President Saavedra in 1926.¹ When President Hernando Siles came to power later that year, Céspedes was one of the young intellectuals whom Siles invited to help him build a "new era" in Bolivian politics (Céspedes, p. 83). The ideology of this new political movement (part of a general movement against all the traditional parties) was influenced by the writing and speeches of the Peruvian Apristas, figures of the Mexican Revolution such as Obregón, President Calles and Vasconcelos, but above all by Ortega y Gasset, who gave these young men the idea that Bolivia's younger generation had to "recreate" the country.² However, when the movement formally established itself as a party (the Partido Nacionalista) in January 1927, the programme which it adopted was far more "Liberal" than Céspedes would have wished (El Dictator suicida, p. 84).

Between 1927 and 1930 Céspedes was editor of the newspaper El Comercio and later head of a section of the Chancellery (Céspedes, pp. 85, 88). In 1930 he was to have been a delegate at the Constitutional Convention which was planned by the leaders of the Nacionalista party as a means of keeping Siles in power beyond his constitutional term of office,

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1. Augusto Céspedes, El Dictator suicida (40 años de historia de Bolivia), (Santiago de Chile: Ed. Universitaria, 1956), p. 74.
 2. Céspedes, pp. 82-84. Ortega was to reappear as an influential figure a decade later when yet another younger generation felt itself to have an important role to play in post-war Bolivia. El tema de nuestro tiempo was Ortega's most widely read work. See Abadie-Aicardi, Economía y sociedad de Bolivia, p. 94.

which was nearing its end, but the Siles government was brought down by riots and demonstrations in June 1930 and the convention did not take place. As a consequence of the antisilista backlash Céspedes played little further part in pre-war politics. Once President Salamanca was established in power in 1931, Céspedes and other silistas were considered to be relatively harmless and reformable, and he was taken on as a stenographer in parliament for La Razón, later becoming the paper's editor (Céspedes, p. 118).

Céspedes' political activities prior to the outbreak of the Chaco War were clearly of a radical nature, although at no time did he adopt an extreme position. After the war, in which he participated as a reserve officer, he returned to journalism on demobilization and founded La Calle in June 1936, which acted as the voice of the Partido Socialista (until the party folded in August) and thereafter of other socialist parties (Klein, Parties and Political Change in Bolivia, p. 239). Céspedes became strongly opposed to the so-called Rosca, the name given to the upper-class oligarchy and all those who acted as administrators for them. When an anti-Rosca faction of the Partido Socialista led by José Tamayo formed the Partido Socialista Independiente in 1938, Céspedes became a member. It promoted national socialism and used La Calle to air its views. In 1938 Céspedes was elected as Cochabamba representative to the Constituent Assembly, and there made a speech of major importance (see Klein, "Social Constitutionalism in Latin America: the Bolivian Experience of 1938," The Americas, XII [1966], 266-67). It was at this assembly that the leading national socialists, including Paz Estenssoro, formed the nucleus from which was to emerge the Movimiento Nacional Revolucionario--the party which ultimately led the revolution in 1952.

During the Second World War Céspedes and La Calle supported

the Axis powers and opposed what they saw as Anglo-American-Jewish imperialism, as did the MNR when it was officially formed in January 1941. Céspedes was a founder member and co-author with Carlos Montenegro of its political programme, promulgated in June 1942. When Villarroel became President in December 1943 with MNR collaboration, Céspedes, Paz Estenssoro and Carlos Montenegro (also of La Calle) were given Cabinet appointments. However, the two journalists, who represented the right-wing of the MNR, had to resign in February 1944, since the presence of fascist elements in the government was preventing it from being recognized abroad (Klein, p. 372). Later during the Villarroel administration Céspedes became Ambassador to Paraguay. He continued to be politically active with the MNR when it came to power, firstly as Ambassador in Rome and then as party leader in the Lower House.

As can be seen from this survey of Céspedes' political involvement, the part played by the Chaco War was not so much to inspire it--since he was politically active already--but rather to direct it towards national socialism. He was against the Rosca and the military, including the military socialists who took power after the Chaco War, and this anti-establishment position is clearly reflected in some of his short stories written about the war which will be examined later. But seeing many of his country's ills as the consequences of foreign exploitation--particularly by the United States--he moved politically to the right during World War II under the influence of the ideological struggle which lay at its centre and which for much of the war Latin Americans could view with the objectivity afforded by non-involvement.

Augusto Guzmán (b. 1903) was another writer who was active politically. Like Céspedes he was a native of Cochabamba, but instead of moving to La Paz he remained in the provincial town of his birth. He was

of exactly the same generation as Céspedes and of similar political leanings so it is no surprise to find that Céspedes enlisted his support for the new movement when travelling the country in 1927. Not only was Guzmán a leading silista and nacionalista in Cochabamba (Céspedes, El Dictador suicida, p. 84; Klein, p. 92), but he was also to have been a member of the Constitutional Convention of 1930,¹ and attended the Convention of 1938 as a socialist member (Céspedes, pp. 167, 169, 170). In June of the previous year he helped to form the Frente Institucional Socialista under Mendoza López (Klein, p. 264).

By contrast to Céspedes and Guzmán whose political activity involved attacking the status quo, three of the writers of Chaco War fiction were diplomats and were therefore politically active in defending it. Gustavo Adolfo Otero (1896-1958) began as an antisaavedrista and was accused, together with Céspedes, of leading the riots against Saavedra in October 1926 (Céspedes, p. 84). But President Siles appointed him to the post of Consul General of Bolivia in Spain in 1927, and when the Chaco War began he was prominent in defending the justice of Bolivia's position, being one of those who signed an international appeal in July 1932 absolving Bolivia and blaming Paraguay (Klein, p. 154). He remained in Spain throughout the war, and on his return to Bolivia became an independent member of Congress. He was the leader of the independent members by the time that the Alianza Nacional Democrática coalition was formed in 1941 (Klein, p. 349).

The second diplomat was Adolfo Costa du Rels (b. 1897--not 1891, as

1. Céspedes, p. 99. Another writer mentioned by Céspedes as a nominated delegate to the Convention was Saturnino Rodrigo, author of En la céd, a minor Chaco War novel (see below, pp. 100-01).

is frequently suggested),¹ who, as the Bolivian-born son of French-speaking Corsican parents, was brought up to be bilingual and was therefore ideally suited to a diplomatic career. This began in 1919 in Chile and led him to France and Switzerland, where he became permanent delegate to the League of Nations in 1928² and President of its Council from 1939 to 1945. During the Second World War he became Bolivian Ambassador to Argentina, entered the political arena for a brief period in 1948 as President Hertzog's Minister for Foreign Affairs, before returning to diplomatic service as Ambassador to France and then to UNESCO. Augusto Céspedes later attacked him for being part of the diplomatic Rosca (El Dictador suicida, pp. 150-51). Another writer of Chaco War fiction who was sneered at in the same way by Céspedes was Eduardo Anze Matienzo (1902-72), a career diplomat who was President Peñaranda's Foreign Minister in 1942, and completed Bolivia's settlement with Standard Oil before being forced out by Congress (Klein, pp. 350-51, 354).

Thus five of the writers of Chaco War fiction were politically active, and all but Costa du Rels reveal some political awareness in their works on the Chaco. In addition, Noel Mariaca (1906-51) was a trade union leader; he is referred to by Céspedes as one of the "communist masons" of the railway union during the government of Villarroel (1943-46) who "desviaron el sindicato ferroviario hacia la vía muerta del roscopirismo" (p. 252). Several of the writers were journalists:

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1. E.g. Guzmán, Panorama de la novela en Bolivia, p. 119.
 2. He was, therefore, Bolivia's delegate to the League during the Chaco War, and was described by F.P. Walters, A History of the League of Nations, (London: Oxford University Press, 1960), p. 525, as "clever and eloquent but unconciliatory and prone to indulge in sarcasm." See also La Foy, The Chaco Dispute and the League of Nations, pp. 42, 59-60, 63-64, 86, 89-91, 93.

apart from Céspedes, Otero was also a journalist, and so too were Rafael Ulises Peláez (1902-73), Saturnino Rodrigo (b. 1896) and Luis Toro Ramallo (1898-1946).¹ This generally indicates a degree of political awareness, and also tends to have an effect upon the writers' stylistic approach to their material.²

It is not surprising to find that many of the Chaco War writers were engaged in political or at least quasi-political activities. The war as a subject attracted in particular those writers who saw its political implications, both internal and international. What is perhaps surprising is that nearly all the writers of Chaco War fiction were established writers or later became established, and very few can be described as literary opportunists. As far as it has been possible to determine, the only Chaco novels which constitute an author's total literary output are those of Anze Matienzo, Landa Lyon and Rodrigo. All of the others published other works, some novels, some works in other genres, either before or after their Chaco War fiction. Costa du Rels, Guzmán, Leitón, Otero and Toro Ramallo had already published novels beforehand, and in addition Céspedes, Cortez, Leytón and Pacheco published novels subsequently, so that the majority of the writers established themselves in the genre.

(iii) The works

Fiction about the Chaco War began to appear on the Bolivian side before the end of 1933, that is, before the three-year war had even run

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1. Toro Ramallo was a cousin of Colonel (later General) David Toro, a leading figure in the Chaco conflict (see above, Chapter II, p. 44) who later became President of Bolivia (1936-37).
 2. Other writers whose works will be included in this study are Claudio Cortez A., José Daza Valverde (b. 1905), Luis Landa Lyon (b. 1892), Raúl Leytón Z., Roberto Leitón (b. 1903) and Gastón Pacheco.

half its course. The first novel published was the most overtly propagandist work produced during the war: Horizontes incendiados, by Gustavo Adolfo Otero.¹ It appeared in Barcelona, published by the Imprenta Layetana, under a pseudonym, Nolo Beaz (a corruption of "no lo veas," which doubtless refers to the use of a pseudonym itself and the fact that he was absent from Bolivia at the time). That Otero should feel the need to use a pseudonym was probably determined more by the fact that he was in the consular service and therefore in a delicate diplomatic position, than the desire to conceal the authorial identity of such an openly propagandist work. This conjecture is supported by his use on other occasions of another pseudonym, Repórter Pérez.

The novel Horizontes incendiados begins in Paris in 1904 and is the only work which extends so far back prior to the beginning of the war (Toro Ramallo's Chaco, which starts in 1926, and Peláez' Cuando el viento agita las banderas, opening in 1928, are the only other novels to begin in the pre-war period). This extension back into the past is determined more by the story, concerning the marriage and divorce of a Bolivian mining engineer and the daughter of a Paraguayan diplomat, which provides Otero's framework, than by anything connected with the war itself. Of the two children of the marriage, one goes with the mother to Asunción, while the father takes the other to La Paz. As the war threatens, Padillita, the Bolivian son, having advocated pacifism at first, becomes militantly in favour of the war, and the novel follows his journey to the Chaco and his adventures at the front. Whereas Andrés, who joins the Paraguayan army, had grown up as a violent, uncontrollable adolescent, Padillita was

1. The first Paraguayan novel, Bajo las botas de una bestia rubia (Asunción: S. Puigbonet), by Arnaldo Valdovinos, also appeared in 1933. Although from its title, which refers to General Kundt, it appears to be a work of propaganda against Bolivia, it is in fact an anti-war novel.

sensitive, intelligent and brave. The two meet in the Chaco, once when Padillita is captured and again at the novel's end when both are wounded. Padillita nobly gives up his place on the evacuation plane to his undeserving brother.¹ Clearly the book was designed in blatantly biased terms to persuade its readers--mostly uncommitted Europeans in the first instance--of the differences between the two warring nations and the justness of Bolivia's claims in the Chaco.

Otero's novel was the only Bolivian work in circulation whilst the war was at its height, and its diffusion in Bolivia was probably minimal. The next works to be published did not appear until 1935.² One was a collection of short stories, Gastón Pacheco's Cuentos chaqueños, the first book of fiction on the war to be published in Bolivia, albeit in a limited edition in the provincial town of Potosí.³ The other was Eduardo Anze Matienzo's El martirio de un civilizado, produced by the Editorial

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1. There is some resemblance between the situation in Horizontes incendiados and a British novel on the First World War by Douglas Pulleyne, This, My Son (1927), in which a twin takes his brother's place as a captured spy condemned to be shot and saves his brother's life at the expense of his own.
 2. Four works by Paraguayans appeared, however, in 1934: José S. Villarejo, Ocho hombres, (Buenos Aires: Atlántida), which tells the story of the members of a patrol killed on a mission into Bolivian-held territory; Arnaldo Valdovinos, Cruces de quebracho, (Buenos Aires: Claridad), an anti-war story of three pacifist students who go to fight in the Chaco; José D. Molas, Polvareda de bronce, (Asunción: S. Puigbonet) (the title may be a reference to Alcides Arguedas' Raza de bronce [1919]), which follows several students, the son of a wealthy ranch owner and a young priest (like Molas himself, who acted as chaplain in the war) during a period of eight months of fighting; and Justo Pastor Benítez, Bajo el signo de Marte, (Montevideo: Impresora Uruguaya), which relates events leading up to the war as well as various scenes in the war itself up to September 1933. Benítez was Paraguayan Foreign Minister during the war.
 3. So limited was the edition that it has not been possible to locate a copy of this work.

Tor in Buenos Aires. The narrative covers the period from the end of 1933 until early 1935, and follows the fortunes of one man, Mario Orgaz, from his pre-war life in Buenos Aires, his journey to the war-front from Buenos Aires via La Paz, Cochabamba, Villazón and Villa Montes (more than half the novel is taken up with Mario's travels to the front), and his participation as a soldier in various encounters with the enemy, ending with his evacuation to Cochabamba after contracting dysentery. In the process of telling Mario's story, Anze Matienzo tries to show the de-civilizing process which his protagonist has undergone since his pre-war existence in Argentina.¹

In 1936, the first year after the end of the hostilities, three Bolivian works were published.² One of these, Los avitaminosos, (Tip. La Prensa), was written by Claudio Cortez A., who fought in the war, and it was the first novel on the war to be published in La Paz. It is, however, a slim contribution of minor importance, dealing with the plight and bravery of those men who became sick through vitamin deficiency. A group of them are sent back to the front from hospital, but all eventually

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1. As for works on the Paraguayan side in 1935, D.F. Fogelquist, Modern Language Journal, XXXIII (1949), 607-08, mentions an anonymous satire published in 1935 under the name of Ivanhoe entitled El "Iris" de la paz o Los mercaderes de Ginebra en el Chaco Boreal, which ridicules the League of Nations Commission sent to arbitrate the Chaco dispute. If, as it would appear, this work was written by a Paraguayan, it was the only one on the war to be published in that year, other than a collection of four cuentos, two of which were set at the front, called Hooohh lo saiyoby, by José Villarejo, who wrote Ocho hombres. Jones, Hispania, XXI (1938), 44, says the Guaraní title could be rendered as "Whiz go the bullets."
 2. One Paraguayan work appeared in this year: Silvio Macías' La selva, la metralla y la sed, (Asunción: Editorial "La Tribuna"). Macías was a doctor who fought for the French in World War I before fighting in the Chaco, and the book recounts some of his experiences.

perish when they get lost in the selva. More substantial are two works published by Editorial Nascimento in Santiago de Chile: Chaco, by Luis Toro Ramallo, and Augusto Céspedes' short stories, Sangre de mestizos. Chaco is written in the first person and purports to be the notes of a dying soldier who handed them to the writer. The narrative covers the period 1926 to early 1935, and the first part, entitled "Paz" shows the Chaco as experienced before the war by a soldier sent there on military service. In the second, longer part covering the period of the war, the story follows the narrator from his journey to the war-front, through his experiences in combat and in hospital, until he is wounded for the second time near Ballivián and evacuated to Tarija. Toro Ramallo's novel is written with much the same objective as that of Anze Matienzo: to provide a picture of what it was like to participate as a soldier in the Chaco.

What is so remarkable about Toro's picture of the Chaco, the authenticity of which has never been questioned, is that Toro may not have been to the Chaco, either in peace time or during the war. There seems to be little agreement by critics as to whether he did go: Bolivians suggest that he did not,¹ whilst others (including those from Chile, where he lived and published his two books on the Chaco War) state categorically that he fought at the front.² If the Bolivians are correct, then the

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1. Siles Salinas, La literatura boliviana de la guerra del Chaco, p. 16; Guzmán, Panorama de la novela en Bolivia, p. 102; Juan Quirós, La raíz y las hojas, p. 215; E. Finot, Historia de la literatura boliviana, p. 366.
 2. Milton Rossel, in a review of Chaco in Atenea, 144 (1937), p. 418; Luis Durand, in a review of Toro's Cutimuncu in Atenea, 183 (1940), p. 521; Victor Castro, writing on Toro's death in Atenea, 251 (1946), p. 260, does not know the truth of the matter; the Peruvian, L.A. Sánchez, Proceso y contenido, p. 409, states that he did fight in the war.

conviction by the others that he did go to the Chaco is itself a tribute to the authenticity that Toro achieves.

The third book to be published in 1936, Sangre de mestizos, was written by Augusto Céspedes, who was the only writer who fought in the war to write a book of short stories on the conflict at this period.¹ His book--one of the few works of Chaco fiction to achieve more than one edition²--contains eight cuentos all on different aspects of the war, which together form a composite picture of it. The best known, "El Pozo," is set between January and December 1933 and tells the story in diary form of a patrol which spends months digging in vain for water. The patrol is eventually decimated as it tenaciously but vainly defends the well from the enemy.³ "La Coronela," the longest story in the collection, describes the effect of the war on the relationship of an officer and his wife. "Seis muertos en campaña" deals with the treatment of Bolivian prisoners-of-war, while "El milagro" is Céspedes' contribution to the numerous tales of men lost in the selva. "Humo de petróleo" is the story of a lorry-driver and "Las ratas" is set in the world of the 'draft-

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1. Guzmán, "Actuales tendencias de la literatura boliviana," Inter-American Review of Bibliography, XVI (1966), 168. Botelho Gosálvez, "La novela en Bolivia," Cuadernos americanos, CXII (1960), 277, calls the stories "novelas cortas, nouvelles."
 2. Sangre de mestizos is now in its fourth edition and Guzmán's Prisionero de guerra (see below, pp. 99-100) in its third (see Jorge Siles Guevara, Las cien obras capitales de la literatura boliviana [La Paz: Ed. Los Amigos del Libro, 1975], pp. 141, 250). Six of the stories also appeared in a "Populibros peruanos" edition published in Lima (n.d.) under the title Relatos de la guerra del Chaco. Lara's Repete (see above, p. 85) also achieved a second edition, but this is not a work of fiction as we have defined it.
 3. "El Pozo" has since appeared in five anthologies of Bolivian short stories and is one of the most frequently reprinted cuentos in Bolivia. See María Teresa Medeiros Anaya, "El cuento en Bolivia," Mundo Nuevo, 55 (1971), p. 37.

evaders.' "La Paraguaya" involves a photograph which changes hands, and is a great contrast to the last story in the collection, "Opiniones de dos descabezados," a surrealistic discussion of those responsible for the war. As an ensemble, the stories examine a variety of aspects of the war in the more succinct manner of the cuento. It is significant that despite Céspedes' political commitment elaborated upon earlier in this chapter, he succeeded for the most part in Sangre de mestizos in suppressing his political persona and in concentrating upon the essential artistic qualities of the short story.¹

Of the Chaco War fiction that had been published by 1937, the impact made by Bolivian Chaco War writers had clearly been greater than that made by Paraguayans, for Milton Rossel, in a review of Augusto Guzmán's Prisionero de guerra, (Santiago de Chile: Ed. Nacimiento), confessed that he had not encountered any novels by Paraguayans on the war.² In fact six had already appeared, and one at least had been reviewed in the same review for which Rossel was writing.³ With regard to Guzmán's novel, Rossel is glad to note that only the first part of it deals with fighting in the war, since he felt that this had already been thoroughly dealt with (Atenea, 148 [1937], p. 172), and as the title suggests Guzmán's main concern was to write about his period of captivity in a prisoner-of-war camp until his release in mid-1936.

1. See below, Chapter V, pp. 131-38; 181-86.

2. M. Rossel in Atenea, 148 (1937), p. 171. It must be remembered, however, that Rossel was writing for a Chilean review in Chile, a country on the whole more sympathetic to the Bolivians in the war.

3. Ocho hombres by José Villarejo, reviewed in Atenea, 128 (1936), p. 248. Mariano Latorre, another Chilean, made the same confession as Rossel in the introduction to the 1st edition of Céspedes' Sangre de mestizos.

By the year of publication of Prisionero de guerra, the peak of interest in the war as a topic for the novel had already passed, although works continued to appear sporadically for many years. But if one includes works by non-Bolivian and non-Paraguayan writers (such as the Argentinian Raúl Fernández de la Puente's En la hoguera chaqueña, published in Buenos Aires in 1934, the Spaniard Ciro Bayo's La reina del Chaco, which appeared in Madrid, published by Caro Raggio, in 1935, and the Costa Rican José Marín Cañas' El infierno verde, which was published by Espasa-Calpe, also in Madrid in the same year), then the years 1933-1936 saw the appearance of more novels on the Chaco War than those published in all the years that have elapsed since.

In 1938, the year in which the boundary issue was formally resolved, two works were written, although neither of them became known to the Bolivian public until much later. Saturnino Rodrigo's Fue la sed was, according to the foreword, ready for publication in 1938, but the writer's travels and prolonged stay abroad prevented this from taking place, and the work did not see the light of day until 1959. Rodrigo's work belongs, therefore, to the early period of Chaco War fiction in its conception, for it was written, according to the author's foreword, "en medio mismo de la tormenta del Chaco." Gustavo Adolfo Otero, author of Horizontes incendiados and a long-standing journalist colleague of Rodrigo, wrote the prologue, which was dated 1938. In it Otero reveals the same admiration for the aesthetic aspects of war which could be detected in his own novel, and indicates with a note of disappointment that the Chaco War was the antithesis of the heroic wars of bygone ages.¹ What he

1. Otero, in Rodrigo, Fue la sed, (La Paz: Lib. "Juventud," 1959), pp. xiv-xvi.

admires about Rodrigo's novel is the inclusion of a romantic element which recalls the chivalresque novels of earlier times.¹ The romantic element referred to is the love of the protagonist, Lieutenant Aparicio, for a Chulupi Indian girl, whose background enables the writer to indulge in a certain amount of costumbrista detail. Rodrigo's novel is one of the few which include a romantic sub-plot whilst concentrating upon a description of the war through one man's experience of it.

It is interesting to note that one of La Paz's leading publishing houses was still prepared to publish Fue la sed more than thirty years after the end of the war, despite the fact that (in the absence of evidence to the contrary) this was Rodrigo's only work of fiction and he was therefore unknown as a novelist. Such a phenomenon is an indication of the way in which the Chaco question continued to figure as an important issue long after the end of hostilities.²

Another novel written in 1938 and not published in Bolivia until even later than Fue la sed was La Laguna H.3. by Adolfo Costa du Rels, which first appeared in Spanish in 1967 (published in La Paz by Los Amigos del Libro). Unlike Rodrigo, however, Costa du Rels was an established writer and diplomat, and La Laguna H.3. had appeared in print before, although not in such an extensive version as that of 1967. The original text had appeared in 1938 in French (the Spanish version was in

1. Otero, in Rodrigo, Fue la sed, p. xvi. Otero also acknowledges the influence on Chaco War novelists of First World War writers (p. xvi: "sopla . . . como un vientecillo de familia.") Amongst the writers he mentions as being influential are Barbusse, Remarque, Latzko, Frank, Lefebvre and Vaillant-Couturier (see above, Chapter III, pp. 53, 76). It is likely, however, that Otero, with his European experience, was more familiar with the works of the writers mentioned than were most other Chaco War novelists.

2. See above, Chapter I, pp. 11-12.

fact a translation by Nicolás Fernández Naranjo) in the weekly Parisian review La Petite Illustration and a second version in French was published in book form in Buenos Aires by Viau in 1944 while Costa du Rels was Ambassador to Argentina.

The differences between the three editions are striking, although those between the 1944 version in French and the 1967 Spanish text are of greater significance. Fundamental to all three is the basic story, the familiar one of a group of soldiers lost in the selva. The group, under the leadership of two officers of contrasting characters, goes in fruitless search of the pool of the title, and it is only saved from total annihilation by a miraculous downpour. In the Spanish version, greater emphasis is placed upon the relationships between the members of the group, in particular between the two officers, and upon what the younger officer Contreras learns about himself. Moreover the Spanish version is almost one half as long again as the French texts, since between 1944 and 1967 Costa du Rels expanded the story to investigate the effects of Contreras' experience upon his personality. In all three editions Contreras returns to the Chaco after his ordeal and dies in an attempt to rescue a fellow soldier. As this summary indicates, although the actual events of the narrative are not original, the emphasis upon character rather than events places Costa du Rels' novel in a different category from most of the other works of Chaco War fiction.

The next work of fiction to appear was Claudio Cortez' second Chaco novel, Esclavos y vencidos, published in La Paz in 1939. Describing the fate of an Indian who is taken from the altiplano to fight in the Chaco, the work is the first of the novels which is indigenista as well as chaqueña, although many novels touch upon the indigenista aspects of the war. Cortez does not, however, develop the indigenista question as fully

as Luis Landa Lyon, who in La Paz in 1940 published Mariano Choque Huanca, the principal indigenista Chaco novel. Like Cortez, Landa Lyon describes the fortunes of an Indian in the war, but at the same time he follows the fortunes of the Indian's family, left to be exploited by the emboscados. The second novel published (in Santiago de Chile) in 1940, and Toro Ramallo's second to have been inspired by the war, was Cutimuncu (a Quechua word meaning "They have come back"), a work often compared in its theme to Remarque's Der Weg Zurück since both deal with the demobilization of soldiers, their reception by society and the adjustments which they are required to make. However, Toro's weak novel lacks the skill of that of the German writer, and degenerates into a strange kind of inkaismo in which the writer exalts the past glories of the Incas.¹

After 1940 the publication of newly composed novels on the Chaco War was a rarity. Noel Mariaca's Los sacrificados appeared in Oruro in 1941, but has proved impossible to obtain.² José Daza Valverde's ¡Guerra a la guerra! (La Paz: Talleres Gráficos A. Gamarra) was written in 1939 but not published until 1945. It follows a group of educated young men from enlistment in April 1933 to the ceasefire in June 1935 when the central character, Edmundo Blanco, becomes the last fatal casualty of the war. Publication of La punta de los cuatro degollados, (Potosí: Universidad Tomás Frías) by Roberto Leitón was delayed even longer than Daza Valverde's novel: although it had been written as early as 1933, it

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1. The first Paraguayan work of Chaco fiction to appear since 1936 was Arma al brazo (Asunción: Imp. Cándido Zamphirópolis, 1940), by César Gagliardone, a doctor who published it under the pseudonym of Lherý Mirror: it is a fairly conventional series of sketches on experiences at the front.
 2. Both Arana in his dissertation (p. 7, n. 6), and Siles Salinas in his study (p. 72, n. 1), admitted to the same difficulty.

did not appear in print until 1946. Leitón's work is the most committed to a documentary approach, in that it consists of episodic tableaux depicting a group of soldiers at the front, and it ends with the implied death of a patrol in the bosque. Its most original aspect, as will be shown later, lies in the concordance of language and narrative structure.

Apart from the fact that its narrative ends in September 1933, there is no indication that Cuando el viento agita las banderas (La Paz: Universo) by Rafael Ulises Peláez had been composed much earlier than its publication date of 1950. Peláez' work was the last major original Chaco War novel to appear in Bolivia. It is also the longest and was published in two volumes, although there is a clear division in subject matter between the two: the first volume studies a group of young intellectuals in a provincial town before the war, whereas the second follows the members of the group to the Chaco, where the majority of them perish. The only "event" in the novel is the outbreak of war: the story consists of an evocation of the life-styles of the group on either side of that event.

Two further contributions of recent decades are Carlos Montaña Daza's El mal natural (Montevideo: Ed. Ciudadela, 1966) and Jesús Lara's Sujnapura (La Paz: Los Amigos del Libro, 1971), the second half of which is set in the Chaco War. But given that the war affected the country's destiny so dramatically and so profoundly, it is perhaps surprising that since 1950 so little fiction about it has appeared. Collections of short stories published in recent decades tend to have been written over a number of years prior to their publication. Such is clearly the case with Raúl Leytón's Placer (La Paz and Cochabamba: Ed. Canata, 1955), the second part of which is subtitled "Episodios de la Guerra del Chaco" and contains eight stories, some (such as "¡Indio bruto!" and "La carpa de los

aislados") written as early as 1936. Similarly Alberto Saavedra Nogales' Dimensiones de la angustia, (Potosí: Ed. Universitaria, 1964), a collection of eight short stories of which four are on the Chaco, appears to consist of previously written but unpublished material.

The likely explanation for the disappearance of the Chaco War as a subject for fictional works is that the 1952 Revolution replaced the war as a more recent and even more profoundly traumatic experience in the collective consciousness of the nation.¹ It could be mere coincidence that the subject ceased to appeal to writers around the time of the revolution, but it may well be that had the revolution not occurred, the subject of the Chaco War might have continued to attract writers of fiction (as has been shown, it continued to appeal to publishers), although with diminishing frequency.

(iv) The contribution of the 'Generación del Chaco' to Bolivian fiction

There can be no doubt that the Bolivian fiction of the Chaco War marked a watershed in the history of Bolivian literature. Although the novel which exposed social problems and injustices--such as Jaime Mendoza's En las tierras de Potosí (1911) or Raza de bronce (1919) by Alcides Arguedas--had begun to appear in Bolivia as elsewhere in Latin

1. It is interesting to compare the period during which fiction in English on the First World War continued to be written. Most major British fiction on the subject had been published by the mid-1930's, although whether more would have continued to appear had the Second World War not occurred is open to conjecture. However, as Fussell demonstrates throughout The Great War and Modern Memory, the First World War made such an impact upon British society that many modern young novelists writing in the 1960's and 1970's (Fussell mentions John Harris, William Leonard Marshall, Derek Robinson and Anthony Burgess, p. 322), have eschewed World War II and set their works in or drawn considerable information from the Great War instead.

America early in the century, the move towards a literature of national identity and of critical disillusionment about the country's leaders and the status quo was given great impetus by the fiction which emerged as a consequence of the Chaco War. The fiction written about the war itself inevitably brought in its wake a heightened consciousness on the part of writers and intellectuals in general of the ills which lay behind Bolivia's military defeat: the weakness of her political leadership; the moral bankruptcy of the upper social strata and others with vested interests; the injustices perpetrated against the ignorant and subjugated Indian masses; the colonial status of the nation in matters of capital investment and the exploitation of natural resources.

The cultural consequence of this greater awareness of nationhood and national problems was that a concern for these factors became an essential part of much of the literary activity of Bolivian writers. Just as the confiscation of Standard Oil's petroleum deposits in 1937 was one of the first acts of post-war government, symbolizing the desire to put an end to economic dependence and exploitation and to initiate national self-determination, so the literature of the post-Chaco period manifested the same kind of awareness and the same concern to establish a national identity. In fiction this was reflected in an increased concern with national issues, rather than with the creation of clearly identifiable non-European or non-North American novelistic ideas. Such independence in literary conception was not to come to Latin American writing until the 1950's and 1960's, when writers looked back into their cultural and psychic past to produce that unique blend of myth and realism which has come to characterize Latin American fiction. Bolivia has its contributors but has not been at the forefront of this new Latin American movement.

Bolivian novels which owed an early debt to the Chaco War writers --a debt which emanated from their concern with national reality--include Coca (1941) and Altiplano (1945) by Raúl Botelho Gosálvez, Jesús Lara's Surumi (1943), La Chaskañawi (1947) by Carlos Medinaceli and Fernando Ramírez Velarde's Socavones de angustia (1947). In addition Chaco War writers themselves produced further novels which owed their existence and their orientation to the novelists' experience of having written a Chaco War novel: such were Costa du Rels' Tierras hechizadas (1940) which was set in the region of the Chaco, and Augusto Céspedes' Metal del diablo (1946), which was set in the mines. More recently the subject of armed struggle has reappeared, firstly following the 1952 Revolution in novels such as Jesús Lara's trilogy Yawarninchij (1959), Sinchikay (1962) and Llalliypacha (1965), and later as a reflection of the guerrilla warfare which came to Bolivia in the late 1960's, in novels such as Renato Prada Oropeza's Los fundadores del alba (1969). Whilst the Bolivian novel of the 1960's and 1970's is, in its execution, far different from the documentary Chaco War novel of the 1930's and 1940's, the concern to reflect Bolivian reality and to define Bolivia's identity is common to both. It was the 'Generación del Chaco' who made that concern central to Bolivian fiction.

CHAPTER V

AN ARTISTIC ASSESSMENT: NARRATIVE ORGANIZATION, CHARACTER AND LANGUAGE IN
CHACO WAR FICTION

"... when I begin what I think is a novel, I expect to read a novel throughout, unless the author can ... transform my idea of what a novel can be."¹

(i) Introduction

A novel, according to the Shorter Oxford English Dictionary, is a "fictitious prose narrative of considerable length, in which characters and actions representative of real life are portrayed in a plot of more or less complexity." Some modern literary theorists would wish either to extend or to reject such a definition, but it is nevertheless one which the majority of critics would accept as adequate, given the fact that of all modern forms of literary art the novel is perhaps the most difficult to delimit. Such a definition indicates that there are, in addition to its fictitiousness (which has already been discussed), two essential characteristics of a novel which involve the quality of "workmanship" referred to earlier.²

Firstly the definition indicates that the novel contains a plot, that is "a plan or scheme," "a certain connexion of events," (according to the definitions of the term given in the Shorter OED). This means that some form of narrative organization is essential to a novel as part of the writer's artistic purpose. The presence of an element called "plot" implies that the writer tries to order his material so as to extract a meaning from the disorder of reality. Within the framework of his objective he determines

1. Wayne Booth, The Rhetoric of Fiction, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), p. 127.

2. See above, Chapter I, pp. 15-19 and Chapter IV, pp. 83-86.

what to include and how and when it will be incorporated. Since it is considered to be of the essence of a novel we shall therefore discuss plot, or narrative organisation, in Chaco War fiction and examine the extent to which the writers were able to concern themselves with this aspect of their work.

The second of the characteristics of a novel involving "workmanship" given in the QED definition is that it contains characters who are representative of real life (and it follows that their actions are similarly representative). It is therefore not just the presence of characters in a novel which helps to define it (it would be difficult to conceive of a novel without them), nor just the actions of these characters (for such actions inevitably create and propel the plot). What we look for are credible figures who could be real people and who do things that real people do in order that we may understand them and perhaps, by extension, reach greater awareness of ourselves. Since character is essential to the progress of plot in most fiction (though not in all), we have two forceful reasons to examine characterization as the second element in an artistic evaluation of Chaco War fiction.

To these two we shall add a third: that of language. Although not part of our dictionary definition of a novel, the kind of language normally used in fiction may be considered to be a characteristic of the genre. Because it involves an element of "workmanship," fiction--even documentary fiction closely related to reality--is an invention; if there is no invention, the work is not fiction. Invention is the child of imagination, which, in all aspects of a work of fiction, is fundamental. In language, this manifests itself through imagery, and it is this aspect of the language of fiction to which we shall give particular consideration.

Through an examination of these three characteristics of the novel, we shall be able to indicate the effects of a documentary approach to fiction upon essential features of that art form. Omitting minor works to which

reference was made in the previous chapter and will also be made where appropriate in Chapter VI, the following selected works will be studied in the present chapter: Toro Ramallo, Chaco (1936); Anze Matienzo, El martirio de un civilizado, (1935); Leitón, La punta de los cuatro degollados, (1946); Guzmán, Prisionero de guerra, (1937); Landa Lyon, Mariano Choque Huanca (1940); Peláez, Cuando el viento agita las banderas (1950); Costa du Rels, La Laguna H.3. (French version 1938, Spanish version 1967); Céspedes, Sangre de mestizos, (1936). These works illustrate different degrees of documentation: the first four can be considered to be works of documentary fiction: the primary aim of the writers appears to have been to provide an accurate description of "what it was like in the Chaco War" in fictional form. In the works of Landa Lyon and Peláez, the documentary aspect is present but is not a primary concern, whilst in Costa du Rels' novel it plays an insignificant role. Céspedes' work, although documentary in many respects, is a collection of short stories involving different techniques from those used for the novels, and will therefore be considered separately.¹

(ii.) Narrative Organization

(a) The documentary approach

Toro Ramallo's Chaco serves as an excellent example of the way in which narrative organization is dealt with in a work of documentary fiction. In the first two pages of the book, before the narrative itself begins, Toro Ramallo explains how he came to acquire the text. He claims, using a well-established device, that it consists of the notes of an anonymous NCO (including some notes from the NCO's dead comrade) who was dying from wounds in hospital, and that the wounded soldier has asked Toro to publish them if he could. Toro insists that by publishing them he is merely fulfilling

1. Since character development has a relatively minor function in the short story (see Marvin Mudrick, "Character and Event in Fiction," Yale Review, L [1961], 214-15), this aspect of Sangre de mestizos has been omitted.

the wishes of a dead man (p. 6). However, the title page contradicts this claim to some extent, for the work is subtitled firstly "Novela" and then, in parenthesis, "Del cuaderno de un sargento," (thus overlooking the fact that the sergeant explains to Toro: "Uno de esos cuadernos pertenece a un compañero que tuvo la suerte de morir allí, en el campo de batalla" [p. 6].)

This would suggest that Chaco is in fact Toro's own work and that the explanation that it is based upon a sergeant's notes is a device to give authenticity to the writer's account,¹ especially in view of the possibility that Toro did not actually visit the Chaco.² Here we see at once the duality of the documentary novel: it claims to be both fiction ("novela") and fact ("del cuaderno de un sargento"). Yet the reader can never be certain which it is, or whether it is a fusion of both. Did the NCO or his notes really exist or not? Is Toro's device itself fact or fiction?³ Whatever the answers to such questions may be, the device serves the useful purpose of accounting for elements of the work's structure. For although Chaco is not presented as notes but is conventionally divided into chapters, the unrelated episodes, scenes, anecdotes and comments into which most of the chapters are divided, can be explained by means of the narrative device: the fragmentation can be seen as a consequence of the fact that these are (purportedly) novelized notes.

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1. Mary McCarthy, "The Fact in Fiction," Partisan Review, XXVII (1960), 451-52, suggests that writers frequently use a first-person narrator "on the periphery of the novel, on the borderline of the tale or the adventure story," in order to give the impression of an eye-witness account.
 2. See above, Chapter IV, pp. 97-98.
 3. A similar device is used by the Costa Rican José Marín Cañas, who claims that his novel on the Chaco War, El infierno verde (1935), is the manuscript which a friend had obtained in Paraguay, and also by Lherý Mirror (alias César Cagliardone), a Paraguayan who claims that the first part of his Arma al brazo (1940) was taken from a note-book given to him by a Bolivian NCO before he died. Both devices, if that is what they are, are intended to give the works a foundation of authenticity.

Even though the episodic and fragmentary structure may be accounted for, however, this does not necessarily justify the structure in artistic terms. Toro's Chaco provides a clear example of the structural weakness of the documentary novel. There is no plot in the conventional sense; the work describes the narrator's experience of the war from its outbreak to the time when he is awaiting evacuation from hospital.¹ Since there is no plot, there is no propulsion for the narrative other than the passage of time, no motivating force behind the description of events other than the concern to provide a documentary picture. Consequently there is rarely any cause from within the narrative for one event to follow another. There is no "careful disposition of the material,"² there is little cause and effect, no climaxes, no suspense and no urge on the reader's part to discover what the course of events will be or what a particular action will lead to. Much use is made by the author of anecdotes, and sometimes he uses them successfully to illustrate a particular comment or event, as, for example, in the anecdote illustrating ignorance of the Chaco before the war (pp. 21-23); the stoicism of the Indians (pp. 100-01); the folly and the fear which lead to heroism (p. 142). But the fact that he includes several which appear to be there for their own sake as interludes in the main narrative--for example, the legends and stories about Ortiz, Ayapó and others (pp. 26-36); Benítez and Cruz (pp. 157-60); La Chabela, Zaldívar and Sandoval (pp. 172-75)--is

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1. The first quarter of the novel concerns the narrator's experiences in the Chaco prior to the outbreak of war, including anecdotes, tales and legends. This can also be accounted for in terms of the narrative device (these experiences in pre-war Chaco may also form part of the notes), but it may also be, as the novel's title (Chaco rather than "La guerra del Chaco") suggests, that the work is meant to be as much about the region as about the war.
 2. H.W. Leggett, The Idea in Fiction, (London: Allen and Unwin, 1934), p. 28.

indicative of his approach to the question of narrative structure. Chaco and other documentary novels like it are structured to a degree sufficient to distinguish them from non-fictional works (although the structuring is minimal by comparison with non-documentary works of fiction), but insufficient to give them coherence and inner propulsion. Because the events are not rearranged into a plot, they lack the quality of defamiliarization which, as the formalist Shklovsky saw, opens events to perception.¹ Structurally they fall between two stools: on the one hand their documentary aspect produces incoherence, reflecting the incoherence of reality and the chaos of war (the events of life itself and especially one's reflections on it are largely incoherent and fragmented, and this condition is likely to be aggravated in wartime). On the other hand, the fictional aspect makes the reader demand the kind of coherence and organization of events which is the recognised hallmark of the fictional narrative as proposed both in Flaubert's remark: "Il ne s'agit pas seulement de voir, il faut arranger et fondre ce que l'on a vu,"² and in Scholes' summary of the formalists' view that "the art of fiction is . . . most apparent in the artificial rearrangement of chronology which makes a story into a plot" (Structuralism in Literature, p. 80).

An indication of a writer's concern with narrative structure on a more detailed level is the manner in which he handles criticisms or comments about some factual aspect of the war.³ An attempt to integrate such comments into the narrative, usually by putting them into the mouths of one or more characters, rather than leaving them as the intrusion of the author himself,

1. Robert Scholes, Structuralism in Literature: An Introduction, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1974), p. 84.

2. Gustave Flaubert, letter to Tourgeniev, 8th December 1877, Lettres inédites à Tourgueneff, (Monaco: Editions du Rocher, 1946), p. 154.

3. Such comments will not be examined here regarding their veracity or accuracy. This will be undertaken in Chapter VI.

suggests a concern by the writer to give a coherence and unity to his narrative viewpoint.¹ The integration of comments also indicates the degree to which the writer is engaged with his story or concerned to use the narrative partially as a means of expressing his views about the war in an explicit way. Whilst it is true, as Booth writes of authorial comment in general in The Rhetoric of Fiction (p. 17), that even if all explicit commentary and personal intrusions by the writers are erased from a work of fiction, "the author's presence will be obvious on every occasion when he moves into or out of a character's mind," this does not justify such commentary and intrusions, especially in works of documentary fiction in which a principal object is to minimize the fact that the narrative is fictional and subject to authorial control.

A good illustration of the problem of integrating comment into the narrative is provided by the way in which Toro deals with the pre-war attitude of the military to the defence of the Chaco. He writes by way of direct criticism:

Los oficiales que iban al Chaco, eran generalmente muy jóvenes y solían ser de aquéllos que no contaban con el apoyo de las autoridades militares o eran de los que el Gobierno deseaba alejar por alguna causa. Y allí permanecían muchas veces años y años, olvidados casi totalmente y recibiendo órdenes emanadas de superiores que no conocían ni el terreno, ni las modalidades del clima (Chaco, p. 13).

Yet he achieves precisely the same effect, in a more integrated manner, through the two anecdotes told at the expense of Teniente Borja and a major concerning their ignorance of the local names of certain fauna (Chaco, pp. 22-23). The reaction of the reader is different in the two instances.

1. The danger from the writer's point of view in putting criticisms or comments into the mouths of characters is that the remark might not be taken seriously, since a character does not always speak unequivocally for the writer. Conversely the writer may conceal his own views, if he has them, by expressing them through a dialogue in which no character can be identified with the writer.

In the first he cannot but wonder about the factualness of the writer's assertion, for it is presented as fact, and he may perhaps be convinced as a consequence that this really was the situation in pre-war Bolivia, although it may actually only be Toro's interpretation (or even the NCO's interpretation) of the situation. It may not even be a "true" statement at all. In the second instance, however, it matters little whether or not the anecdotes are true; the point that according to this writer the future theatre of war was a neglected region and unknown to those who were responsible for defending it is well taken.

Less successful are comments made by Teniente Llanos in Villa Montes, whose views are clearly meant to be taken seriously, for we are told that he is an educated, responsible man (pp. 169-70). Yet there is no discussion in this instance, so that the reader has the impression that Teniente Llanos was introduced solely in order to perform this critical function. These comments are cut short artificially, as if the writer were struggling to find a means of terminating Llanos' monologue. A more successful integration of comments of a similar kind on the handling of the war and on President Salamanca is achieved by using Tenientes Hurtado and Paz (the latter, we are told, was politically active) in discussion (pp. 138-41).

An example of more subtle criticism of Argentinian involvement in the war and of her assistance to Paraguay is to be found in a description of a Bolivian patrol advancing along a path cut by Paraguayans: we are told that they found "etiquetas de cigarillos argentinos[y] cajas vacías de conservas de Buenos Aires"(p. 88). No comment is made, and none is needed for the criticism to be understood. A less subtle technique is used to criticise the emboscados. Gómez remarks that water "es casi mejor que el alcohol en lata, que nos manda el Comando y que lo fabrica quién sabe qué carajo emboscado" (p. 94, see also p. 102). An attempt is made to introduce comments on Boquerón with the words: "Van llegando detalles del sitio y

captura de Boquerón" (p. 76), but the report has nothing to do with the actual events of the narrative at that point. But other comments are included which Toro does not attempt to integrate into the narrative and which stand, therefore, as the extraneous, extempore remarks of the author himself. Comments on lorry-drivers, Indians and the early war leaders, the handling of the war, the way in which men glorify war, and criticism of politicians (especially President Salamanca), are clearly those of the author (pp. 133, 182-84, 188, 189-90, 190). It could, of course, be argued that since the narrative is in the first person these comments are really those of the narrator. There is, however, nothing to suggest that the author does not share his narrator's views. Where a writer does not attempt to incorporate criticism or comment into the essence of the narrative, the reader is inevitably inclined to feel that the narrative is being used as a vehicle for propaganda. At the same time, by denying his characters the opportunity to expound ideas through discussion, argument or even monologue if necessary, the author weakens the individuality of his characters and diminishes a fictional role which is legitimately theirs. Finally, the undisguised intrusion of the writer himself into the narrative is an obvious contradiction of the attempt--implicit in the documentary approach--to achieve a highly objective representation of reality.

As Fussell pointed out in his study of the First World War, The Great War and Modern Memory (p. 130), accounts of the experience of war share something with the traditional literary romance in their three stages of perilous journey, struggle and exaltation of the hero. Although in most Chaco War fiction there is some doubt about the third element, the work which best fits the comparison with the romance is Anze Matienzo's El martirio de un civilizado, for about one half of the work is taken up with the journey by Mario Orgaz, the central figure, from Buenos Aires to La Paz

and then from La Paz to the war-front. But beyond this, the course of the narrative also represents a metaphorical journey for Mario, a spiritual voyage from a "civilizado" to a man brutalized by the harsh reality of war (hence the significance of the title). Mario is thus the figure through whom the narrative evolves, and he is prominent throughout with one short interlude (pp. 153-75). The narrative consists of a chronological collection of episodic scenes (the subtitle of the work is "Episodios de la guerra del Chaco") which are only connected for the most part by Mario's presence. Once the detachment to which Mario belongs reaches the front, there is no longer any factor to determine the organization of the episodes into any kind of sequence (save the chronology of those events of the War to which specific reference is made--for example, the fighting at Carandaití, Algodonal and Irendagüe, pp. 179-86), and hence the impression is that most of the episodes are juxtaposed at random. Consequently there is no coherence to the events described, and the absence of plot is underlined. The novels of Toro Ramallo and Anze Matienzo closely resemble each other in this respect.

Another of the problems related to the absence of plot is that of bringing the work to a conclusion. Anze Matienzo does so by evacuating the dysenteric Mario from hospital to Cochabamba by plane, thus giving himself the opportunity of moving the narrative away from the scene at the front. To this he adds one more episode, an old woman's personal tragedy, as part of the balance sheet of war. Thus the ending is artificial in the sense that it is not a consequence of what precedes. However, within the terms of an episodic framework and a plotless narrative, this needs no justification. It is just one more "episodio," and the weakness lies not in the ending but in the whole narrative organization.

Illustrative of the weakness of the form are the sudden changes of direction which the narrative takes without apparent reason. One example is the abrupt introduction of the character Juan Rod, who assumes a

temporarily central role in the narrative without having been mentioned previously (pp. 109-13). In another more significant example the writer suddenly becomes an anthropologist and describes at length the nomadic Indian tribe, the Chulupis (pp. 162-68). It is only subsequently that the description is justified in the context of the novel, since Ojé, a Chulupi girl with whom the Bolivian officer, Teniente Carranza, had been living, runs after Carranza and is shot down. Carranza dies, bullet-ridden, over her body, and their corpses fuse in a deathly embrace (pp. 171-72). Only then can it be seen that Carranza is meant to be, even more literally than Mario, "un civilizado martirizado." But even this does not justify the length of the anthropological intrusion.

One particularly successful aspect of the narrative organization of El martirio de un civilizado is the way in which Anze Matienzo incorporates into it his comments upon the war. For the most part he attributes his comments to his characters: it is Mario who muses upon the inevitability of war and upon the nature of war (pp. 14-15, 19, 20, 53); Mario discusses heroism with Aidita, and Bolivia's romantic approach to war with his father (pp. 37-38, 43-44); El Bala, viewing men from the air, remarks on the futility of war (pp. 106-07), and the emboscados are criticised by three characters at different points in the novel (pp. 60-61, 101, 141-42). The author's own voice is not always silent, however, for the criticisms of the luxuries to be found at Division HQ or of so-called "war-tourists" are not those of Mario (p. 148), and the remarks on the submissiveness of Indians are clearly those of the author, who makes no attempt to integrate them into the narrative (pp. 102-03).

A particularly effective means of a purely narrative kind of commenting on the war is used by the writer on one occasion. Following a graphic description of wounds inflicted in hand-to-hand fighting, we are given the result of the battle in a laconic statement: "Las tropas atacantes quedaron

en poder del desierto de Algodonal" (p. 184). The question whether the victory was worth the sacrifices described is implicit in this brief, dry, almost bitter comment.

Notably absent from El martirio de un civilizado are specific references to political or military leaders, which suggests that the narrative is intended principally to record the experience of the war for the soldier, rather than for use as a vehicle for criticism. Nor is it intended to record the progress or tactics of the war, for although places are mentioned, the actual setting of the various episodes is incidental and there is only one real description of troop manoeuvres (pp. 180-81). In general, Anze Matienzo is less obviously present in the narrative than Toro, but he is no more successful than the author of Chaco in reconciling the documentary approach to some form of narrative organization.

Like the works of Toro and Anze Matienzo, Leitón's La punta de los cuatro degollados¹ has little that can be called a plot. The narrative begins at an indeterminate time and place in the war and ends in the war, with the implied annihilation of the group of soldiers whose fortunes have been followed through the novel. The work is conventionally divided into chapters, although frequently there is no evident reason for the placing of the divisions, and each chapter is also divided into episodic sections, most of which are descriptive, with some consisting of dialogue between the soldiers. Consequently the narrative is, like the novels already examined,

1. Céspedes, in his story "La coronela," Sangre de mestizos, p. 94, n. 20, explains the origin of the place-name that Leitón took as his macabre title: "Se llamó así a ese lugar, porque el 22 de enero de 1933 los paraguayos atacados, antes de retirarse, cortaron las cabezas de cuatro prisioneros bolivianos, dejándolas como humorístico recuerdo, simétricamente distribuidas en un claro del monte." (All textual references to Sangre de mestizos are to the 2nd edition unless otherwise indicated). See also Daza Valverde, ¡Guerra a la guerra! p. 58.

aimless and fragmented.

The narrative structure in La punta de los cuatro decollados is built firstly upon the repetition of descriptions of the soldiers' thoughts (their memories, fears and hopes) and feelings (of thirst, heat, fatigue, etc.), and secondly upon descriptions of the Chaco and of the warfare. It is not even enlivened, as Toro's novel is, by the inclusion of apposite anecdotes (with the exception of that which relates the death of Vitorio [pp. 56-58]), and it does not have any kind of narrative device to account for its structure. Leitón's purpose is firstly to recreate the ambiente of participation in the Chaco War, and at the same time to criticise those responsible for the war. That these criticisms, which are largely of an anti-imperialist nature, constitute a fundamental aim of the narrative is shown by the fact that there is little attempt to integrate them into the narrative. Although some comments are contained in the dialogues between Caso and Cáceres (pp. 8-10, 51), most remain clearly the undisguised views of the author himself (pp. 23, 26, 36, 46, 105, 109).

As the title of Augusto Guzmán's Prisionero de guerra suggests, the novel differs from other narratives in that the fortunes of the central figure (in this case the first-person narrator, who is a thinly veiled autobiographical figure called Doctor Villafuerte) are followed not only in the war itself but also in his experiences as a prisoner of war. Apart from the division into two unequal parts--"La campaña" and the longer "El cautiverio"--the narrative structure is similar to other narratives dealt with thus far and subject to similar problems. The first part of the narrative gives an effective description of the narrator's participation at or near the front (although as he is a non-combatant for most of the time it lacks some elements of other works) and builds up to a climax at the point where he and several fellow-soldiers are captured. The second

part of the novel deals with the narrator's experiences in various prison camps and hospitals.

Despite the fact that the focus of the narrative undergoes a marked shift from the narrator's active participation in the war to his passive subjection as a prisoner, the narrative of Guzmán's novel is in parts as episodic as the other works examined. The episodic quality is largely due to the nature of the story, particularly in the second part of the work: the monotonous background routine of prison camps, interspersed with catalogues of punishments and acts of cruelty perpetrated on the prisoners. The reader knows that this must continue until peace is declared and prisoners are exchanged. Once the narrator has been captured, the narrative structure is imprisoned by the inevitability of the outcome. The reader is placed in a position where, like the narrator himself, he must await the release of prisoners in an atmosphere of tedium and frustration. This applies particularly to the last two chapters, following the onset of the narrator's illness. The illness itself has a certain significance since it changes the course of the narrative to some extent, but thereafter the narrative is played out in a minor key until the desired release is achieved on the final page.

Guzmán found himself, therefore, in the difficult position of trying to build a narrative upon a totally predictable outcome, prior to which the keynote (in the second part at least) is one of boredom, monotony and depressing oppression. Perhaps the author was aware of this problem as the remarks he makes in his foreword indicate.¹ There seems to be an awareness on the author's part that the writing down of actual (or even invented) experiences in a novelized form inevitably produces a less vital impression than the experiences themselves. Words, here in the form of a

1. See above, Chapter IV, p. 86.

kind of novelized personal history, are a poor substitute for actual experience, and any attempt to recreate that experience is destined to fall short of reality. This notion is particularly important with regard to a work of documentary fiction, the impact of which depends almost solely upon a convincing recreation of experiences.

Guzmán takes advantage of the fact that, like Toro in Chaco, he is using a first-person narrative, particularly with regard to the integration of comments about the war. In some instances he does integrate them by the use of dialogue between the characters (Prisionero de guerra, pp. 17, 38, for example), and the two figures Ramírez and Echenique are introduced as the narrator's assistants in order to present contrasting right- and left-wing views of the war (pp. 40-43). Moreover they are not incidental characters, but remain (particularly Ramírez), close to the central figure. But the need for comment to be integrated, it may be argued, is less important for structural cohesiveness in a first-person narrative, since the narrator as protagonist is at liberty to express his own views. Any comment made by the narrator can be seen as integrated since it is made by a character and not by an extraneous author (even though in this case they are almost identical). Thus the writer can stand back from the narrative--as Guzmán does--and perorate on the folly and the disillusionment of war (p. 132, for example). Yet the initial impression gained by the reader is similar to that which he feels when reading the unintegrated comments of writers using a third-person narrative. The "advantage" to the writer of a first-person narrative is, in this respect, illusory, for the comments read as if they were those of the author, with whom we have identified the protagonist.

(b) The non-documentary approach

Landa Lyon's central figure is an Indian recruit, Mariano Choque

Huanca, and in this respect his work differs from most other Chaco War novels. In addition to being a work of Chaco War fiction, Mariano Choque Huanca is an indigenista novel, and one of Landa Lyon's main concerns is to expose the injustices to which the Bolivian Indian is subjected. Much attention in the novel is paid, therefore, to the Indians and their way of life, and this leads to a number of anthropological intrusions into the narrative, such as the Indians' moral superiority, their stoicism as casualties, and the medical reasons for their unsuitability as combatants in the Chaco (pp. 81, 214-15, 93-94). This indigenista concern also leads to what could be seen as structural disunity, for the scene of the novel shifts back and forth five times from Pucarani to the war-front and from the personal problems of secondary Indian figures to the fighting in the trenches. In addition, one third of the narrative is concerned with the exploitation of the Indians in Pucarani before Mariano is introduced, while the war-front itself does not appear until over half-way through the novel. The author compensates for this disunity by combining his two concerns thematically. Although exactly one half of the narrative is situated in Pucarani or has to do with events away from the front, while the other half concerns Mariano himself and events at or near the front, Landa Lyon does not divide his indigenista and Chaco concerns in this geographical manner, but integrates them to show the Indians and the treatment they receive at home and at the front, and the war and its effects both at the front and away from it.

This duality can, from a different point of view, be seen as a positive attribute. Firstly, by following what is happening to characters away from the front, the author reminds his reader that other lives continue while the war is being fought and by so doing puts the war in a wider national and social context. At the same time, indigenismo is given an added dimension by the exposition of the way in which further means of

exploitation, both at home and at the front, are added in wartime to those already perpetrated before the outbreak of war. In the third place, the events concerning the Indians in Pucarani, in particular the members of Mariano's family, together with the indigenista questions raised at the war-front, do provide the work with a narrative framework which is more flexible than the documentary approach of a chronological exposition of a soldier's experiences from recruitment to death in action, which is what Mariano Choque Huanca might otherwise have been. On balance the gains achieved by the duality of structure outweigh the losses, and this suggests that a non-linear narrative, or any other kind of fragmentation, requires internal justification.

Landa Lyon is one of the most outspokenly critical of the Chaco War writers. His criticisms are mainly directed at the government for their handling of the war, but they extend beyond the events of the war to such things as the inferiority of Bolivian universities by comparison with those of Chile or Argentina (pp. 123-24). Although the author's position on war is equivocal --it is not always clear whether he condemns the follies of war or admires men's blind courage (for example, pp. 235-36)--he is quite clear in his views on General Kundt or the mismanagement of the war.¹ In many instances Landa Lyon successfully incorporates his criticisms into the narrative: those on the war leaders, for example, are made through a discussion by students and an officer (pp. 125-31), and although they are sometimes brought to an abrupt end (for example, p. 146), Landa Lyon's discussions are, unlike Toro's, fully developed. The criticisms of war-profiteers such as Don Agapito or the letter-writers are even more thoroughly integrated, since they are not stated criticisms but episodes which in themselves condemn the figures concerned (pp. 35-71, 81-88).

1. See below, Chapter VI, pp. 206-15.

Not all of the criticisms stem from the narrative, however, for there are several which are merely the impromptu remarks of the author, such as those on the treatment of the Indians, on Boquerón, or on the bankruptcy of Bolivian leadership (pp. 27-28, 102, 120-22). The author's voice does not only intrude with criticisms, for he also sings the praises of medical personnel (pp. 168-71) in whom, as an ophthalmologist, he has a professional interest. It is apparent from those instances where the attempt to incorporate criticisms into the narrative is somewhat crude that the author was aware of the desirability of incorporating them, otherwise he would not go to such lengths as he does--for example, the criticisms of lorry-drivers, the treatment of vehicles and the lack of organisation in the transport section are put into the mouths of foreign representatives of General Motors, who fall into discussion with their driver (pp. 208-11), but who do not subsequently reappear in the narrative. In whichever manner the criticisms by Landa Lyon are made, it must be said that he does provide us with some of the most clearly stated attitudes about the mismanagement of the war to be found in the fiction. Whether or not his criticisms are accurate or well-founded is a different matter, and this aspect of them will be examined in the following chapter.

Mariano Choque Huanca comes closest to the sentiment of the message of Le feu, for like Barbusse, Landa Lyon makes it clear that the oppressed, in this case the Indians, are the victims of the war and are being used by other classes to fight for ends whose fruits they are not intended to enjoy (for example, pp. 224, 226). Landa Lyon shows that the Chaco War highlighted the injustices suffered by the Indians of Bolivia. He implies, therefore, that the advent of the war marked an important development in the treatment of the Indian, and in this sense his coupling of indigenismo and the Chaco War is of great significance. In order to achieve this, a dual narrative structure had to be attempted.

In the second volume of Cuando el viento agita las banderas, Rafael Ulises Peláez traces the fortunes of a group of intellectuals at the war-front. However, as has already been suggested, Peláez also attempts to view the war in a wider context by describing in the first volume of the work the lives of the members of this group, so that taking the two volumes together the change operated on their lives by the war may clearly be seen. The title of the work suggests that this is the writer's purpose, for he sees war as the bearer of "winds of change," winds which "agitan las banderas" and from which no-one can escape (II, 3-5).

The first volume of the novel paints a picture of the pre-war lives of a small, atypical group of young middle-class Bolivian "intellectuals" who form a society called "La Tabla Redonda" (thus the novel looks at a different end of the social scale from Mariano Choque Huanca). Although the possibility of war is first hinted at in the second half of Volume I (I, 170), and serious discussion of it occurs later in the same volume (I, 188-90), it is not until the second volume (which begins with the departure of the central figures for the war-front) that the novel seriously becomes a work of Chaco War fiction. Augusto Guzmán, in Panorama de la novela en Bolivia (p. 150), goes so far as to suggest that the two volumes should be considered as separate works, and yet, if the writer's aim is to show the great changes which war brings to the lives of his protagonists, then it is important to establish the nature of these lives. This Peláez does at length in the first volume, but at the same time Volume I is important beyond the context of the narrative in that it provides a picture of certain aspects of provincial Bolivian society and culture in the 1920's, notably the kind of concerns with which such a group as "La Tabla Redonda" was

involved.¹ Peláez paints the literary background of Bolivia in that decade, showing the development of a concern for such subjects as national themes and the documentation of reality (I, 241-42, 243-47). Similarly in Volume II, the author takes pains to provide period details of a cultural nature, such as the songs sung by Libert, or the popularity of Aldous Huxley (II, 14, 25; II, 158-60). Peláez notes that at the beginning of the century "el hombre-crónica, el arte al servicio de los sucesos, el poeta cantor de glorias o miserias no se hacía presente" (I, 125), and he is clearly as interested as his character, the would-be novelist, Santos Palma, in becoming that chronicler. Yet Peláez is more than a chronicler, for as he describes the fortunes of his characters in the war in Volume II, he remains as interested in his characters (especially the minor figures) as he is in documenting the events of the war through which they live.²

There is as little plot in Quando el viento agita las banderas as in the other novels examined thus far; instead, the narrative is structured around the central figures: Juan Carlos, Rafael Santos Palma and (in the second part) Eduardo Campos.³ They and the variety of minor figures remain throughout more important than the documentary aspects of the work. This is not to say that the work does not document what life at the war-front was like, but rather does it supply much of the documentation as part of the lives of the protagonists: for example, in describing the experiences of combat (II, 97-115). The fact that the novel is centred around its characters explains why there is relatively little comment or criticism in

1. Arana, "La novela de la guerra del Chaco," p. 37, suggests that the town in which the action of Volume I takes place is probably Oruro. Botelho Gosálvez, Cuadernos americanos, CXII (1960), 280, concurs.
2. On Peláez' treatment of characterization, see below, pp. 146-49.
3. It is possible that Campos is modelled upon an orureño, Eduardo Campo Moscoso, mentioned by Porfirio Díaz Machicao in la bestia emocional, pp. 46-47, who (p. 48) was a friend of the author of Quando el viento.

this work about the wider issues of the war, for such issues do not seem to affect or concern them. It also explains why such comment as there is stems from the narrative itself--for example, criticism of profiteers by Campos (II, 147-48), of the Paraguayan claim to the Chaco (II, 164), of the Indians as soldiers (II, 181-83). Only one comment, on Argentinian "neutrality," is made extempore by the author rather than by a character (II, 179). Otherwise Peláez leaves the events which befall his characters as comments on the war in themselves.

Having said that the narrative is built around the central characters, we must add that at times Peláez hides behind them and uses them, notably Campos, to air his own erudition. This involves sometimes lengthy interruptions in the flow of the narrative. One outstanding example of this is Campos' fund of facts about the Chaco region, and another is provided by the same character's recounting of Cunningham Grahame's Portrait of a Dictator (II, 46-53, 161-76). Having put into Campos' mouth a reference to William Hudson, Peláez self-consciously rounds on him: "Campos monologaba a propósito de cualquier motivo teniendo siempre, en la punta de la lengua, un nombre ilustre o una cita famosa" (II, 65). Peláez suggests by this that Campos is merely being true to himself, and that the author cannot be held responsible for the idiosyncracies of his characters. When these begin to affect the narrative structure, however, the author is guilty of neglecting his responsibilities as creator and craftsman.

Peláez is clearly not interested in providing a complete picture of the Chaco War, for the characters he portrays represent but a small minority of the Bolivian forces. Nor is he concerned with social injustices in the manner of Landa Lyon, for example, and his main characters are themselves out of sympathy with the Indian recruits with whom they are obliged to mix (II, 83). Like Anze Matienzo's Mario, although for different reasons, the protagonists of Peláez' work are "hombres civilizados." But in El

martirio de un civilizado we do at least acquire some idea of the writer's views on the war and its concomitant issues. The reticence of both the author and the characters of Quando el viento agita las banderas on such matters leaves us disconcertingly uncertain about Peláez' moral position towards his subject matter.

The narrative of Costa du Rels' La Laguna H.3. concentrates more than any other Chaco War novel upon its characters: the exposition, development and transformation of its central figure, Raúl Contreras, and also upon the relationship between Contreras and Bórlagui until the latter's death some three-quarters of the way through the novel. The effect upon the structure of this emphasis on the characters is threefold. It makes La Laguna H.3. a novel which treats the subject of the war from an essentially dramatic (as distinct from documentary) and psychological (as distinct from eventual) standpoint. Secondly, it enables the writer to extend what would otherwise be a thin narrative (a group of men thrown together by the chaos of war get lost in the selva and perish one by one as they search in vain for the pool of the title), and one which would perhaps be more suited to a cuento than to a full-length "novela de tesis." Without this emphasis upon character Céspedes' cuento, "El milagro," or "Perdidos" by Leytón, both of which deal with a situation similar to that of La Laguna H.3., would be as effective (in documentary terms) as Costa du Rels' novel in describing the struggle by a group of men against thirst and the selva. Most significantly, it gives the work a coherent plot, for the structure in La Laguna H.3. is built upon the development and resolution of the dramatic internal conflict undergone by Contreras.

In addition to its structural coherence, Costa du Rels' novel contains four effectively placed dramatic climaxes which serve to recharge the impetus of the narrative. The first of these occurs at the moment when

Bórlagui confesses to Contreras that he does not possess a compass (p. 65), for this threatens the progress of the group and their chances of survival, and also causes the reader to anticipate the future discovery of the myth about the compass, a myth which the two officers intend to perpetuate as far as the rest of the group is concerned.

The second climax consists of Contreras' madness with the toboroichi tree, his restoration to sanity and the consequent change in his outlook (pp. 119-30). Its weakness is that this transformation in Contreras coincidentally and fortuitously occurs just when he will be needed to take over from the wounded Bórlagui. From a dramatic point of view it might have been more effective if our knowledge of Bórlagui's wound had been postponed until after Contreras' recovery. The author seemingly tries to justify this apparent coincidence by calling what happens to Contreras an act of providence (p. 129).

The third climax occurs with the sudden outbreak of violence between the surviving members of the group, in which Moro shoots Monroy as the latter investigates their position from the heights of a tree-top and Contreras summarily executes Moro, both in self-defence and in reprisal, as a demonstration of his authority (pp. 148-49). The unexpectedness of this violence leaves the reader, like the other members of the group, "como fascinados por el repentino despertar del teniente" (p. 149).

Finally the hail-storm which enables the remaining men in the group to survive is introduced at an opportune moment in the narrative (p. 192), when the characters themselves are on the point either of self-destruction (Contreras), destruction of each other (El Chekka and Ekiz attack Kakumini) or death (Malduz), and when the story has reached the point where it requires some intervention to divert it from an apparent impasse: the decline and annihilation of the remaining soldiers.

Before Contreras returns to the front for his act of heroism and

self-abnegation, there is an effective and brusque change from the selva to the hospital to which Contreras has been taken (pp. 199-200). The fact that no mention is made of what fate befell the other survivors from the group underlines the centrality of Contreras and his transformation to the author's purpose. So, too, does the fact that throughout the novel, apart from the ending, there is a total absence of mention of the Paraguayans.

La Laguna H.3. clearly constitutes a different kind of fictional approach to the Chaco War from that of the other works which have been examined. Costa du Rels is not interested in documenting the war nor in using fiction to air his views about it, but in studying the effect of an isolated phenomenon which the war has caused. By following the fortunes of a group of soldiers, the narrative structure has a framework similar to that of the other works, but otherwise it is markedly different. For it follows them in a single episode rather than through the whole war, and it derives its drama from the interplay of its characters and the transformation of its central figure. Although its physical setting is clearly and specifically that of the Chaco Boreal, Costa du Rels' novel transcends this limitation and operates on a universal human plane.

(c) Sangre de mestizos: the structure of short stories

Three of the eight stories of Sangre de mestizos use a contrived device which the author explains before the story begins. A fourth story also depends on a device (a dialogue between the narrator and the ghost of a dead soldier), and in all of them the device has an overriding influence upon the narrative structure. The structural aspect of short-story writing is clearly one of which Céspedes was highly conscious.

The first story in the collection, "El Pozo," has as its device the proposition that what follows is the diary of an NCO, Miguel Navajas (a device similar to that which Toro uses in his novel Chaco). Accordingly

Céspedes divides his narrative into diary entries with dates covering the period January to December 1933. The effect of this is to give the story, in its structural aspect at least, a highly documentary character, for the "facts" related are given authenticity by mention of the date and by the setting out of the narrative in diary form. The diary narrative is enlivened by the inclusion of "live" dialogue within entries (rather than reported speech), and the diary structure also means that the weight of the passage of time on the soldiers (which is an essential element of the story) is effectively embodied into the framework, without the need for repetition or extending the length of the story. At the same time Céspedes controls his structure by restricting diary entries to one every ten days or more. The diary structure has the added advantage of justifying the disjointed nature of the narrative flow.

Although Céspedes says in the introductory paragraph that the story is dramatically divided into two acts ("la perforación y . . . la sima" ["El Pozo," Sangre de mestizos, p. 17]), it is structurally divided into three: firstly the introduction to the situation and the establishment of the ambiente, secondly the digging of the well of the title, and thirdly the brief defence of the well under enemy attack. The second and third parts constitute the main core of the story's purpose, which is to underscore the absurdity of the war. This absurdity is exemplified by the activities of the men in "El Pozo," who spend seven months digging a well (for water which is not there), at the end of which thirteen men die pointlessly defending and attacking it.

Most of the narrative in "El Pozo" occurs with the war itself very much in the background. For the sappers who are digging for water, the real war and the real enemy is the well, until ironically Paraguayan soldiers try to capture it only three days after the order to abandon the digging is received. Thus the war between the two nations re-emerges in the final

section, to remind us of the context in which the events occur. The story ends with the well turned into the deepest grave in the Chaco, as the bodies of the soldiers killed in the attack are thrown into its depths. United in death, they are covered with some of the earth excavated from the symbol of futility which the well has become.

What Céspedes achieves in "El Pozo" is the narration of a single, relatively minor episode within the context of the war, the resonances of which extend to encompass considerations of the very nature of the Chaco War itself. He does so in a structure which is admirably suited to the essential elements of the story.

The device used in the second story, "La Coronela," is, like that of "El Pozo," introduced by Céspedes in a preliminary paragraph. He explains that he and a fellow soldier referred to as 'E' once talked about Teniente Coronel Santiago Sirpa. Later the writer reconstructs the conversation in a hybrid narrative form built around a dramatic dialogue between 'E' (called El Testigo) and the writer (El Autor). The dramatic dialogue is not strictly adhered to, for in addition we find dialogue between other characters (such dialogue would be reported speech if the dramatic dialogue technique were being followed rigidly), ordinary narrative description (including structural divisions into "chapters"), military reports, letters, telegraphic messages, and even footnotes by the writer of a factual and sometimes critical nature (as well as explanations of unusual words).¹ Yet theoretically the whole story is a dialogic reconstruction of a conversation between 'E' and the writer. Clearly the structure is experimental and is not fully successful, for the narrative device does not add anything to the story.

1. The criticisms contained in the footnotes (e.g. Céspedes, "La Coronela," Sangre de mestizos, pp. 73, 78, 87) are clearly the least integrated of all such criticisms to be found in Chaco War fiction. They do have the merit of avoiding digressions in the text, although it is questionable whether they are appropriate to this particular story at all.

The dialogue, the main structural element, eventually becomes an encumbrance which, in the second half of the narrative, appears to have been abandoned. Luis Durand, in *Atenea*, 129 (1936), p. 413, calls the dialogue a "cerco sin objeto." Only on one occasion does Céspedes really make dramatic use of the device, when El Autor addresses Sirpa as if they were both figures in a play (pp. 65-67). Otherwise, apart from the opening pages, El Autor and El Testigo indulge in a series of monologues, the last of which extends for twenty-eight of the story's sixty-four pages.

Céspedes spends much time at the beginning of the story on the development of the relationship between Sirpa and Bara and also painting quite a clear picture of their characters. Consequently the story becomes a "novela corta," not only as far as its length is concerned, but with regard to the relative emphasis given to characterization and descriptive background rather than to narrative action or, as in "El Pozo," to the relation only of the essence of an event or situation. Clearly what Céspedes aims to do in "La Coronela" is not merely to describe an event in the war (the war only enters the narrative two-thirds of the way through it), but to relate the life of Sirpa both before the war and during it, showing the changes in that life which the advent of the war causes. The central theme of the story is the disruption that war causes in personal relationships, and Céspedes uses the absence or presence of the figure of Sirpa's wife Bara to convey that disruption in a structural way. Bara plays a central role in the first part of the narrative. But just as she fades from Sirpa's memory, so Céspedes eliminates her from the story, until it seems that both reader and character have forgotten her. She is replaced in the minds of both by the Chaco and the war (p. 88). The writer unexpectedly brings her back into the narrative on two occasions to provide two important and dramatic moments: Sirpa finds Bara's photograph in the wallet of his dead fellow-officer, Hinojosa (p. 93), (thus bringing her sharply back to Sirpa's

mind, and in an ill light, at a moment when she was far from his thoughts), and her name is on Sirpa's lips as he dies at the end of the story, by which time the reader has been led to think that she has been cast completely from Sirpa's mind. The title of the story is thus justified by the centrality of Bara's role in dramatic rather than in narrative terms, (since she is deliberately eliminated from the later part of the story).¹

The third of the stories which uses a structural device is the third story in the collection, "Seis muertos en campaña."² In this story the author claims to be putting together in story form the papers (sent to him by a member of the Medical Corps returning from a POW camp) of Sergeant Cruz Vargas, a prisoner who died in the camp hospital. The effect of the device upon the structure is less evident than that of the two previous stories, although as with "El Pozo" and Toro's Chaco, the fact that the narrative is supposedly based upon notes produces a deliberately episodic and fragmentary narrative which, because the purported writer is dying, is disjointed and sometimes incoherent. In spite of the fragmentation (upon which Céspedes imposes some order by dividing the narrative into sections or "chapters") the device achieves the effect of an authentic account of "what it was like as a prisoner of war."

The fourth story to use a structural device is the last in the collection, "Opiniones de dos descabezados." It consists of a dialogue between the author (Yo) and the headless ghost of a dead soldier (El) who is seeking revenge. Through the dialogue Céspedes is able to discuss the subtitle of the story, "Las responsabilidades de la guerra," and hence the criticisms he makes of Paraguayan power seekers, Bolivia's political leaders,

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1. Perhaps "Bara" would have been a better title, since that is how she is almost always referred to, and since "La Coronela" gives her a status belied by her background and her infidelities.
 2. In the 1st edition (1936), "Seis muertos en campaña" was the fourth story, whilst "El milagro" (see below, p.136) was the third.

Argentinian statesmen, Standard Oil and Royal Dutch Shell are all integral parts of the narrative structure of the piece, artificial though that structure might be--the artificiality of the structure is acknowledged by Céspedes himself, since (as in "La Coronela") he uses footnotes to make further comments. Strictly speaking, it is a political dialogue rather than a short story, and as such stands apart from the rest of the collection.

The remaining four stories have a more conventional structure, without the use of any structural device. "El milagro," the only story which Céspedes rewrote for the second edition (although he left the structure intact), is a straightforward narrative dealing with an event common to almost all Chaco War fiction: a group of soldiers (usually a patrol, but here an assorted collection of men fleeing from the enemy after their divisions had been cut off), who get lost in the bosque. In this case, as in La Laguna H.3., a downpour occurs just in time to save the soldiers. As a documentary of the struggle against the bosque and against thirst, "El milagro" achieves, in its brevity, as much as a longer work like Costa du Rels' novel, without, of course, the personal conflicts and the characterization of the novel. The writer neatly rounds off the story by reporting that the camba who leads the men out of the bosque is, by a cruel stroke of fate, killed soon afterwards.

"Humo de petróleo" is the only cuento which consists of the telling of the story of a single central figure, a lorry driver known as El Pampino. It concerns not simply his experiences in the war, for one third of the story's length deals with his life before he enlists, so that the story is that of El Pampino rather than that of a lorry driver in the Chaco. Consequently El Pampino emerges as the most clearly drawn character in Sangre de mestizos. The narrative is divided into four "chapters," with the events being divided into three periods: the pre-war period, the beginning of the war, and mid-1934. The third and fourth "chapters"

contain the drama of the story, and Céspedes builds up to a tragic yet spectacular climax, in which El Pampino's lorry explodes after he had been shot on a lone, desperate rescue mission. The weird sound of the horn which preceded the explosion, caused by El Pampino having slumped over the horn, hauntingly resonates in the reader's mind.

Whereas El Pampino is an ordinary, credible character, Niqui and the other figures in "Las Ratas" are deliberate caricatures in a story which is designed to illustrate the manoeuvres and manipulations of an emboscado (a draft-evader) and war-profiteer. An interesting structural technique used in "Las Ratas," and one which is not to be found elsewhere in the collection, is the temporal arrangement of the narrative. Like most of the other stories, "Las Ratas" is divided into "chapters," and in the first two of them the narrative begins at a given point, goes back in time to events prior to that point and gradually brings the reader back to it before proceeding beyond it in the next "chapter."¹ This is a further illustration of Céspedes' concern with the structure of his stories.

Finally, "La Paraguaya," the penultimate story in the collection, is perhaps the most succinct and simply constructed of Céspedes' stories. It has two of the hallmarks of the good short story. Firstly it has an unexpected ironical twist at the end (the picture which the Paraguayans acquire from the dead Bolivian officer, Teniente Paucara, is of a "paraguaya," not a "boliviana" as they believe). Secondly and more importantly, "La Paraguaya" is both a "slice of warlife"--an episode which is used creatively to produce a captivating story--and also a story beneath the surface of which deeper implications are to be found, in particular the fact that soldiers on both sides are, in other circumstances, ordinary men with a capacity for loving

1. Cf. the similar technique used by Céspedes in his novel Metal del diablo (1946).

and being loved. It has something to say on two different levels: the events of the story itself and the implications of those events.

In general Céspedes' stories show the writer's interest and skill in developing narrative structures suitable for his subject matter and aims. Although perhaps none of his structures is entirely original, he does combine a variety of narrative forms, from the conventional to the experimental,¹ and succeeds in creating what Luis Durand appropriately called "un documento vivo [de la] realidad de la guerra" (Atenea, 129 [1936], p. 412). To compare his achievements with those of the novelists is difficult, for their narrative tools and their aims are different. It can at least be said that Céspedes' cuentos illustrate many different and unrelated facets of the Chaco War in a justifiably disjointed manner, since no demand is made of a collection of cuentos that the subject matter be unified.² Several novels, as we have seen, attempt to cover as many aspects of the war as Sangre de mestizos, with the consequence that they appear fragmented, disjointed and lacking in narrative unity. What they can and do achieve, by way of contrast, is an approximation to the romance which is beyond the scope of a collection of cuentos.

(d) Summary

The works of war fiction examined here attempt to recapture a reality which is not only destructive and chaotic, but also alien and extraordinary for the protagonists and the reader alike. Accurately to reflect this reality in structural form is to impose upon the work a narrative which is

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1. F. O'Connor, The Lonely Voice: A Study of the Short Story, (London: Macmillan, 1963), p. 21, writes: "For the short-story writer there is no such thing as essential form."
 2. In two other collections of cuentos not dealt with here, stories of the Chaco War are included with others on completely different subjects. Of the 14 stories in Raúl Leytón's Placer, six have nothing to do with the Chaco, and the same applies to four of the eight stories in Céspedes' Narraciones.

aimless, fragmented and episodic, and this is what we have found in those works which have been classified here as documentary fiction. Yet if any meaning is to be extracted from reality, then reality must be shaped into a work of art through some kind of organizational framework. In the making of documentary fiction, however, the craftsman does not attempt to intervene between his material and the form of its presentation to any significant degree. By refraining from doing so, he is of course obeying the dictate of his objective, which is to create a resemblance to reality which can be confused with reality itself. To structure reality in written form is not to document it, for a truly documentary picture would reflect the unstructured nature of reality. Not to structure reality is to produce an unsatisfactory work of fiction, for as Tomashevsky put it, "the formation of an artistic structure requires that reality be reconstructed according to esthetic laws" (in his essay "Thematics," quoted in Scholes, Structuralism in Literature, p. 78). Moreover, a work which lacks narrative organization deprives the reader of any insights the writer may have had into the deeper significance of the events he describes.¹

The works of Chaco War fiction which have a discernible narrative structure are precisely those which do not aim to document reality, but which attempt to impose a narrative framework upon some aspect of the war. As will be seen in Chapter VI, these non-documentary works are nonetheless informative and critical about the reality of the war. They are works of fiction which, if they do not fully succeed as such, do not owe their shortcomings to a lack of narrative organization. Our study of Sangre de mestizos suggests that if the chaotic reality of war is faithfully to be

1. An example of the way in which an overall formal organization can compensate for an episodic narrative is Mariano Azuela's Los de abajo which, whilst dealing with social upheaval and chaos, nevertheless has a cyclical framework to suggest that the Mexican Revolution is making no real progress.

represented in fiction, then it is perhaps best done in formal terms as a collection of short stories, which can justifiably be a disjointed presentation of various aspects of that reality.

(iii) Character

Critics and writers since Aristotle have disagreed as to the primacy of structure (plot) or character in a work of fiction. Aristotle himself stressed plot, but in modern times character has often been accorded the central role. Henry James' assertion that plot is character is echoed by Northrup Frye, who classifies plots by examining their heroes (thereby making character central to plot), by Harvey, who writes that "most great novels exist to reveal and explore character," and by Ortega y Gasset.¹ Documentary fiction, we have seen, clearly does not place any emphasis upon plot. Whether or not character (rather than plot) is central to fiction, it can at least become central in the absence of plot. The development of a character or characters into credible, clearly-drawn, "three-dimensional" figures with an "inward life" (Scholes and Kellogg, The Nature of Narrative, p. 171), may provide a coherence and a continuity even if the events of the narrative cannot do so. We shall examine here the degree to which the writers attempt to develop the characters of their novels, what we learn of them, and the role played by them in the overall effect of the works.

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1. Henry James, "The Art of Fiction" in The House of Fiction, ed. L. Edel, (London: Hart-Davis, 1957), pp. 34-35; Frye, Anatomy of Criticism, pp. 33-34; Harvey, Character and the Novel, p. 23; J. Ortega y Gasset, Notes on the Novel, in The Dehumanization of Art and Other Writings, (New York: Doubleday, 1956), pp. 61-62. For modern views which support Aristotle's emphasis, see Edwin Muir, The Structure of the Novel, (London: The Hogarth Press, 1928); R.S. Crane, "The Concept of Plot and the Plot of Tom Jones," in J.L. Calderwood and H.E. Toliver (eds), Perspectives in Fiction, (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), pp. 303-18. Alberto Moravia, "The Man and the Character," Man as an End, (London: Secker and Warburg, 1965), p. 67, accepts the 'novel as character' definition, but fears that in modern fiction the character is threatened with elimination.

(a) The documentary approach

As the title of Anze Natienco's novel suggests, Mario Orgaz, the central figure and the only one whose character is developed, is "un hombre civilizado." By "civilizado" the writer means a man who enjoys the pleasures of city life rather than the spiritual values of culture and thought:

Pensó en las grandes ciudades del mundo; en los placeres; en las luces de las calles; en las pieles de las mujeres; en las muecas de los actores; en los ritmos de mil danzas y . . . en Betty, la mujer que nunca creyó amar, pero que en ese momento amaba dolorosa y tiernamente (El martirio de un civilizado, p. 17).

It will be correctly assumed from this that Mario was a womanizer (p. 41), and popular with women (p. 11). Despite, or perhaps because of the circumstances of war, Mario retains this inclination towards them, for he feels uncomfortable in all-male company (p. 66), dreams of women (pp. 69, 81-82), and seeks to establish a liaison with the first woman he sees in Villa Montes (pp. 83-84). His serious thoughts of an amorous nature are directed towards Betty for a good part of the narrative. But his feelings towards her (and hence towards "civilization," for that is what she has come to represent), do undergo a change, to the point where he feels that he detests her. He turns instead to Justina, the woman he sees in Villa Montes, and thereby attempts to come to terms with his present reality, a reality by comparison with which Betty and what she represents seem and are unreal. But his reaction to the state in which he finds Justina when he returns to see her suggests that the reality of Mario's situation is too harsh for him to face (pp. 175-78).

Mario feels very strongly the pull towards the "civilized" life, and early in the novel, having decided to go to the Chaco to fight, his resolve is put to the test by his friend Joyce but is not found wanting (pp. 18-19). Mario represents the kind of Bolivian whose sense of patriotism and

duty (p. 16) compels him to forsake pleasure for sacrifice and the narrative follows the "decivilizing" process of war as it affects him. During the course of the narrative we learn something of his character, although not enough to feel that the picture we have of him is complete. This is perhaps due to the fact that the author depicts him as a rather solitary, introverted man. A profoundly thoughtful figure, who daydreams to escape from reality (pp. 54-55, 91), Mario feels out of step from his fellow Bolivians due to his fifteen-year absence in Argentina (pp. 55-56), and this contributes largely to his feeling of isolation. It is also due to his sense of superiority over other soldiers in the ranks who, being Indians, are his social and intellectual inferiors (p. 81). As a result of his sense of superiority, we begin to feel somewhat antagonistic towards him because of the way in which he treats the Indians (pp. 79, 80), until he takes the Indian Liquitay under his wing (p. 85).

El martirio de un civilizado is an example of the kind of novel in which a central character, whose fortunes we follow and whose presence in the narrative is almost uninterrupted, acts as a unifying factor and compensates to some degree for the absence of a coherent narrative structure. Yet it cannot be said that Mario Orgaz emerges as a well-drawn character of substance. The fact that one of Anze Matienzo's aims is to show the de-civilizing or dehumanizing effects of war may well partly explain this.¹

As was suggested earlier, Leitón is not concerned in La punta de los cuatro degollados with the development of characters. The group under Sergeant Fernando Caso serves merely to exemplify the soldier's experiences in the Chaco, with only Ricardo Román Cáceres and Caso himself acquiring any kind of personality or individuality. Of Cáceres we learn at the beginning

1. See below, p. 153-54; 267-80.

of the novel that his life has changed considerably because of the war and that he came to fight under social pressures. We learn of him also that he is ill-tempered, stubborn, anti-social and that he is aware of his social superiority over his fellow soldiers (pp. 5-10). But we learn scarcely anything more of his character from the rest of the narrative despite his presence throughout it, and he is never given the chance by his creator to come alive. Fernando Caso does so to a greater extent, but throughout he remains stiff and basically inhuman. Caso is intended to act as a contrast to Cáceres, who finds it hard to adjust to soldiering. Caso is sensible, practical and realistic (see p. 114, for example), and has acquired a good reputation with Paraguayan and Bolivian soldiers alike (pp. 75, 124). But these characteristics do not make him appear more human, nor does his sententiousness, whether he is talking of the patria, fear, the burial of soldiers, the inescapable effects of war, initiative or money (pp. 13, 46, 47, 73, 119, 126). It is not clear what he thinks of war, for although he is said by one soldier to believe in the good of war (p. 52), he later seems to contradict this himself (pp. 68, 114). Perhaps his most human aspect is that he is a pessimist (p. 126), and to judge by his implied fate at the novel's end he would appear to be justified.

Clearly these two characters, together with others of whom we know little more than the name, are not substantial enough to compensate for the absence of plot. Leitón's attitude to his characters is exemplified by the fact that it is not always clear who is speaking in his dialogues and to whom.

The similarities noted between Toro's Chaco and Guzmán's Prisionero de guerra in connection with narrative structure extend to the characterization. This would suggest that, since they are the only two first-person narratives amongst those works of Chaco War fiction under discussion, the

characteristics of the works are to a large extent determined by this fact. Certainly there is a much greater concentration in both novels upon the narrative as documentary than as a vehicle for the development or interplay of characters, although this trait is present in third-person narratives also. But in these two works the first-person narrative does lead to a narrator-centred view of events which inevitably forces other characters into the background. At the same time, the writers have not chosen to define clearly the character of the narrator, despite his omnipresence, for there is no objective examination of his personality, so that what we know of the narrator we glean incidentally.

In Toro's Chaco there is no character development at all. Perhaps the narrative device precludes the development of the character of the narrator (the writer of the notes) but no attempt is made to develop other characters, such as Gómez, Salinas or Santa Cruz, the narrator's inseparable friends.¹

Toro's overriding concern was clearly to convey what it was like in the Chaco in both peace-time (in Part I of the novel), and in war. His aim was to document the Chaco in fiction. Partly because of this aim and partly because of his adherence to his narrative device, both narrative organization and characterization are minimised in his work. The strongest "personality" to emerge from the novel is not a human figure, but the Chaco itself.

In Prisionero de guerra we know of the narrator, Doctor Villafuerte, that he does not claim to be a born soldier, for he feels himself to be "eminente civil" and his uniform looks wrong (p. 9). He admits that he does not like hard work and is honest about the amount he does (p. 63). Moreover he clearly enjoys the privileges and special treatment accorded to

1. Toro, Chaco, p. 102. Gómez' story (pp. 103-04) gives him a past and an added dimension, but is not sufficient to make him a fully developed character.

him as a secretary without officer status both by his own commanders and by his captors (pp. 10-11, 30, 124). He is prepared to make fun of himself by showing his unfamiliarity with military ways (p. 69), and almost ridicules his doctor-like appearance (p. 122), although later he is aware that it makes him a "víctima más fácil y más divertida" (p. 181). He makes it clear that he does not enjoy participating in a war which he considers to be a folly (pp. 76-77). In captivity, and particularly during his illness, we learn of his strong will to live and his desire to return home. But this is the sum total of what we know of his personality. He stands apart from all other characters except Ramírez (and to a lesser extent Echenique) and we are told that Ramírez was his only close friend (p. 258). Yet there is no interplay between them to reveal either their personalities or that of the narrator. Like Toro, Guzmán is not concerned with characterization and does not, therefore, use it to solve the difficulties of his narrative structure.

(b) The non-documentary approach

Most of the figures who participate to any extent in Landa Lyon's novel Mariano Choque Huanca are Indians. The writer does not possess the ability, however, to penetrate the Indians' mentality and portray them from within, as but few indigenista writers were able to do. What he does instead is to portray them with characteristics which, in his view, typify those of the Indian race, and he does the same with those characters whose function it is to illustrate the ways in which the Indians are exploited. Consequently both major and minor figures emerge as stereotypes. Mariano's father, Manuel, is a subservient, gullible, stoical older Indian who is duped by Don Agapito out of paternal love and who later turns bitter at his ill-fortune and vanishes. Manuel thus typifies the oppressed, exploited, hard-working members of the Bolivian peasant masses, while Don Agapito,

the wily, evil, hard-drinking clerk, represents the exploiting class.

Mariano's novia, Lucía, is the naive, tender yet ardent young india who is exploited by the letter-writers and by other emboscados, in particular by Eugenio, who typifies them and whose greatest gain at the expense of those absent is Lucía herself.

The stereotyped nature of the central figure, Mariano, is indicated by the novel's subtitle "El repete." He is evidently meant to be seen as a representative of the Indian recruits in the war, but also as the anonymous, ordinary soldier, the unsung hero.¹ He is scarcely mentioned in the early part of the novel and even when he does appear in the first part we learn little about him. Later he emerges as the idealistic, optimistic Indian recruit to whom war brings enlightenment (p. 132) and admiration from his comrades (pp. 148, 178). Not until his first taste of fire does he really come alive and reveal human weaknesses: his first instinct is to escape (pp. 157, 161). But he reverts to a stereotype once more by being wounded and covered in glory, surviving after getting lost in the bosque, being cited in battle, and finally being killed refusing to surrender whilst those about him do so. Landa Lyon attempts to portray an individual hero whose fortunes may be followed through the war, but his hero has no individuality because he is representative of a type.

There are undoubtedly more characters in Cuando el viento agita las banderas with identifiable personalities than in any other work of Chaco War fiction and, as has been suggested earlier, the writer is as much concerned with these characters as with any other element of his work. Like several of the other novels the structure of that of Peláez is built upon

1. Cf. Daza Valverde's description in ¡Guerra a la guerra!, p. 35, of Condori, the novel's principal Indian figure, "auténtico soldado desconocido y prototipo genuino de la raza de bronce." See also idem, pp. 225, 231.

tracing the fortunes of a group of characters through the war. The essential difference in this instance is that the development of the characters' personalities occurs separately from, rather than simultaneously with, the narrative which describes their careers as soldiers, for most of what we learn of the major figures is to be found in the first volume of the novel.

The work has as its protagonists the members of the intellectual group "La Tabla Redonda." In the first volume the two central figures are Juan Carlos and, to a lesser extent, Rafael Santos Palma. Both are thirty years of age and both have literary aspirations, although Juan Carlos, who is described as being lazy and "un soñador, un fugado de la realidad" (I, 4), does not appear actually to produce anything, whereas Santos Palma seems constantly to be writing and subjecting this to the scrutiny of his highly critical friend, Juan Carlos. Their personalities as writers are reflected in their jobs: Santos Palma is an active columnist for "La Nación," whereas Juan Carlos is a municipal librarian, a passive custodian of culture, and therefore aptly known as "El filósofo." Santos Palma becomes known to us mainly through his writings as a sensitive figure with a sense of mission that he must enlighten the following generations about the past (I, 77). Juan Carlos, on the other hand, is hyper-critical of Santos Palma's writing because of his own failures as a would-be man of letters, and is forced to admit to these failures as war approaches:

La edad lo había domado quitándole sus impulsos; vivía en perenne lasitud cavilando en la cultura abstracta, sujeto a la modorra literaria en la cual los fastos épicos se le presentaban como colgandijos descoloridos de los festejos cívicos (I, 218).

Peláez does not suggest that his life has been wasted, but there is a hint that the war could rescue Juan Carlos from himself and his circumstances:

Juan Carlos, aterido, melancólico, con la resignación de los enfermos crónicos comparaba mentalmente la ondulosa línea de los

valles perfumados con este paisaje rudo e inclemente donde viniera al mundo a vegetar y, donde acaso moriría si la suerte no diera un vuelco portentoso (I, 219).

If Santos Palma shows more promise as a writer than Juan Carlos, the latter appears to have more success with women.¹ But even here Juan Carlos is indecisive and inconstant, for having wooed Norah and finally won her, only his timidity prevents him from being unfaithful with Carolina, and he forgets them both when they are out of sight (I, 242). Nevertheless, it does come as something of a surprise to learn at the end of Volume I that Pepe Urquiza's Chicho has turned her attentions to Juan Carlos instead (I, 261). We learn much of what we know of Juan Carlos' character through his amorous affairs and this would seem to be the main justification for the amount of the narrative that is devoted to them in the first part of the work. But with the change in Juan Carlos' life brought about by the war, Peláez seems to find it difficult to tell us much more about him in the second volume. Whilst both he and Santos Palma remain central figures in the second part (the latter at least until the middle of Volume II) in the sense that the narrative continues to be built around their particular fortunes, they now serve largely as focal points with whom other members of "La Tabla Redonda" and also new companions-in-arms can be depicted. Consequently we learn more about the other minor figures than we do about the central characters--as, for example, in Santos Palma's conversation with Urquiza (II, 31-34) or Juan Carlos and Cortez Ochoa (II, 59-60). Peláez' attempt to portray a group as protagonists involves our learning less about the central figures than might otherwise have occurred. There is only one passage in Volume II that tells us more

1. See Peláez, Cuando el viento, I, 23 for Santos Palma's failures with women.

about Juan Carlos' personality, and that is the only occasion in this part of the work where he indulges in some brief self-analysis. Significantly the analysis is largely concerned with memories and evocations of the past and has little to do with Juan Carlos as he is in the present (II, 215).

The character Eduardo Campos largely replaces Santos Palma as a central figure with Juan Carlos in the second part of Volume II, since they find themselves together in the "Isla Trebol" near Nanawa. But as we have seen elsewhere Peláez uses Campos as a means to air his own knowledge and to express himself in a rather precious manner. Even as a personality, Campos seems to be a means to an end: he is used to show the effects of war on an intelligent, sensitive person (II, 200, 204-05). Having placed Campos in a central position for a good deal of the last quarter of the narrative, Peláez leaves us at the end of it knowing very little about him, and his resigned, uncommitted attitude to the war as the novel closes underlines the shallowness of his personality as Peláez portrays him.

Of the two central figures in La Laguna H.3. Bórlagui is developed only in order to act as a model with whom Contreras may be compared and whom Contreras can attempt to emulate after his transformation.

Obstinate, taciturn and strict (pp. 24, 59), Bórlagui has led a kind of monastic military life in sparsely populated areas of the Chaco prior to the war as a protection against the stigma of illegitimacy which made him feel socially inferior (pp. 59-60). His style of soldiering is in keeping with his temperament: he does not believe that spectacular heroics are a necessary or even desirable aspect of military activity, and no doubt as a consequence of his own chosen mode of existence he feels that being a soldier should be like being a monk (p. 30). He derives the strength required for survival, both in the war and in the plight in which

he finds himself in the novel, from a belief in the value of faith, prayer and Providence (pp. 26, 31, 68, 157), but it is not this belief nor any aspect of his personality which gives him authority over the other members of the group. His authority is dependent upon the compass which the others believe him to possess (it is in fact a pedometer) and this authority is preserved only as long as none of the others (with the exception of Contreras) knows of the subterfuge. Bórlagui is deliberately portrayed as a rather flat, straight but admirably Christian figure,¹ in order to act as a contrast against the flamboyant, volatile, agnostic Contreras.

The career of Contreras prior to the action of the novel had been the antithesis of everything that Bórlagui felt was fitting for the professional soldier. Contreras had been brought up to believe that heroism was the path to greatness (p. 71). Consequently he was eager for adventure and the chance to act heroically (pp. 29, 71), and this eagerness found an admirable opportunity for expression in the Chaco War, in which he quickly earned a reputation for bravery (p. 29), although his bravery was at times closer to foolhardiness (pp. 18, 72). It is not surprising to find him described as a haughty man (p. 28) concerned with his own superiority and personal success (p. 71), whose jawlines, gaze and even hair reflect his personality (pp. 28-29). It is also in keeping with all this that Contreras is disturbed at the prospect of an obscure, unheroic death in the selva (p. 69).

Bórlagui assesses Contreras' weakness as a lack of spiritual strength (p. 58), and it is this aspect of his character that the author

1. Costa du Rels does perhaps exaggerate the role that Bórlagui is made to play by turning him into a Christ figure who offers his suffering to God so that the others might be saved (La Laguna N.3., p. 150).

exploits to show the transformation which Contreras undergoes in the course of the narrative, thereby conveying the novel's message that love of one's fellow men is a greater good than personal glory, bravery or heroism. Contreras initially rejects religion as a superstition and God as a myth, an "especie de Cruz Roja celestial llamada a socorrer a los desamparados" (pp. 181, 26, 46). Yet myth and superstition do touch him and make him feel afraid: he senses eyes watching him through the undergrowth at night, and at one point feels himself to be possessed by mysterious and malefic powers of the selva (pp. 70, 78-80, and also p. 108). Here the accuracy of Bórlagui's assessment of him is revealed: Contreras lives for glory, but glory depends for its nourishment upon admiration from others, and without it he feels humiliated and humbled (pp. 72-74). Without any other source of spiritual strength upon which to call, he has no means of protecting himself from his own fears and nothing to encourage him to struggle on. So he abandons hope and urges death to come (pp. 74, 84, 117). Even after the episode with the toboroichi tree (pp. 121-30), in which he is transformed by a kind of exorcism of the evil spirit of pride and becomes gentle, reserved and "más humano" (pp. 127, 142), he is still tempted to surrender to hopelessness (pp. 177-78, 182) and contemplates shooting himself as a last act of free-will so that through self-destruction he may avoid the humiliation of being destroyed (pp. 185-86). Thus his transformation is only partial. Although he feels he has been saved by a mysterious power (pp. 129-30), he still depends on the faith of the innocent Kakumini to prevent him from giving up (pp. 179, 182), and also upon the thought that to do so would represent a betrayal of Bórlagui (pp. 170, 187). His ability to go on is thus derived from the strength of others. In order to show Contreras' complete transformation, the author adds the episode in which Contreras, having turned against soldiering as folly (pp. 206, 207,

209),¹ returns to the front where he ensures his salvation in a Christian sense through his self-sacrifice (p. 219).

In the context of a body of works which in general do not concentrate upon the development of characters, La laguna H.3. stands out with two clearly depicted figures. Bórlagui is clearly subordinate to Contreras, and does not fully come alive for he serves mainly to illustrate an ideal. Contreras, however, is a highly credible figure who retains the reader's sympathy because he shows himself to be a hero with human foibles. In spite of his reputation, his bravado and his intellectual arrogance,² he ultimately comes to recognize the value of the standards by which Bórlagui lived, even if he cannot find the faith which inspired those standards in his mentor.

(c) Summary

One of the most salient weaknesses of Chaco War fiction is that, with the possible exception of Costa du Rels' character Contreras, it failed to produce well-drawn characters of substance. Had the writers chosen to portray the war by depicting vast bodies of troops, without identifying individuals to any extent, the absence of such figures would be acceptable. Indeed, since war involves the mass disruption of society, with the wholesale movement of large numbers of people and sweeping events which swamp the lives of individuals, it could logically follow that the absence of individual characterization would reflect this sense of

1. His argument against soldiering is weakened, however, because as a consequence of his ordeal he suffers a kind of insanity and it is under the influence of this that he rejects the military ethic.

2. See in particular his taunting of Moro about God, pp. 44-49.

historical trauma and the total dislocation of 'normal' life caused by the war.¹ But significantly the writers of Great War fiction chose not to do this. All of the works examined here, documentary and non-documentary alike, follow the lives of one or two soldiers, or at most a group of them, as they pass through the machine of war. Hence the reason for the absence of well-drawn characters does not lie in the absence of identifiable individuals.

Given that the novels are developed through groups or individual characters, it may then be argued by way of explanation for their shallowness, that in several of the works examined the characters are merely a means to an end, used to embody an idea or exemplify an ideal. This is true of Anze Batienzo's Mario Orguz, Lance Lyon's Mariano Choque huanca, Leitón's Fernando Caso, and even Costa du Rels' Raúl Contreras. In one sense all characters are a means to an end: they all serve to illustrate a particular kind of human being reacting in a particular kind of situation. Hence the fact that they are being used for a purpose does not in itself explain why they should not be clearly drawn and fully rounded. It is still possible for characters to illustrate an idea and yet display an individuality, as Costa du Rels demonstrates.

The principal explanation for the general absence of characterization is a consequence of the writers' concern to show the dehumanizing process of war. As will be seen in the following chapter, all of the works emphasize the way in which war compels men to live and behave as sub-human creatures.² Hence the writers are in general intent upon destroying

1. This is not inevitable, however, as Zola admirably demonstrates in La Débâcle, in which the portrayal of 'full' characters runs parallel with the depiction of mass upheaval.

2. See below, Chapter VI, pp. 267-80.

character rather than constructing it, upon stripping the men of their humanity rather than revealing their human qualities. The revelation and exploration of the more human aspects of man are inappropriate in works which show him as a participant in an activity which contradicts man's claims to be a rational, civilized, superior species. And since the actions of soldiers at war are largely unthinking and determined by the commands of others, there is little for the writer to tell or the reader to learn of what normally interests them both: the motives behind a character's actions (see Leggett, The Idea in Fiction, p. 91).

This explains why Peláez ceases to develop his principal characters once they become involved in the war, and why the most clearly depicted character in the Chaco War fiction, Costa da Isla's Centeno, is to be found in the novel which, as previously indicated, is least concerned with the action of the war.

(iv) Language

David Lodge makes out a convincing case for the same kind of "close and sensitive engagement with language" in criticism of the novel as that which we expect from the critic of poetry.¹ However, we shall restrict ourselves here in our study of the language of Chaco War fiction principally to an examination of the use of imagery. There are two sound reasons for doing this: firstly, an essential and distinctive feature of fictional writing is the role of the imagination in the creative process, a role which manifests itself in language primarily in the form of imagery

1. David Lodge, Language of Fiction: Essays in Criticism and Verbal Analysis of the English Novel, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966), p. 47. Dissenting views are put forward by Martin Armstrong, Yale Review, I (1961), 205-10; Malcolm Bradbury, "Towards a Poetics of Fiction: 1) An Approach through Structure," Novel, I (1967), 45-52.

through metaphor, simile and other tropes. In a study which concerns itself with the fundamental question of the characteristics of fiction and its relationship to other genres, it is therefore appropriate to deal with that aspect of language which is central to the identity of fictional writing.¹ Secondly, it is part of our task here to study the problem inherent in using the kind of language which is characteristic of fiction--essentially a metaphorical language--in a kind of fiction which in its conception attempts to recreate the experience of reality in a direct, non-metaphorical way. In addition to the study of the use of imagery, however, other aspects which serve to illustrate a particular writer's regard for or neglect of language have been included where appropriate.

(a) The documentary approach

A fundamental problem concerning language in a work of documentary fiction arises from the fact that such fiction can be viewed from two different perspectives. It can be looked on both as a fictional account based upon events which actually occurred, and as an account of actual events transformed into fiction. More succinctly, it can be seen both as a portrayal of reality and as a fiction. In visual terms the first view considers reality through plain glass,² the second sees it through the mirror of the writer's interpretative vision, and the two images merge to produce

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1. Cf. Mark Schorer, "Fiction and the 'Analogical Matrix,'" Critiques and Essays on Modern Fiction 1920-1951, ed. J.W. Aldridge, pp. 83-98, whose attitude to language is similar to Lodge's, but who in this essay examines three works on the basis of their "metaphorical quality."
 2. Cf. Zola's "écran réaliste" which he describes as "un simple verre à vitre, très mince, très clair, et qui a la prétention d'être si parfaitement transparent que les images le traversent et se reproduisent ensuite dans leur réalité . . ." Quoted in Grant, Realism, (London: Methuen, 1970), p. 28.

the hybrid form of documentary fiction. The problem confronting a writer is to find a language which reflects this duality, whilst at the same time aiming to achieve a coherence and evenness, and it is a problem which is difficult to resolve. For the view of a work of documentary fiction as one of fiction portraying reality demands a language in which the objective description of what is observed is paramount. Although "the nature of language is such that there can be no such thing as a neutral transcription of an object into words,"¹ nevertheless, according to this view the writer's task is to approximate as closely as possible to such a transcription and so record what he sees, not to express his imaginative response to it. By contrast documentary fiction seen as reality turned into fiction involves a greater emphasis upon an imaginative response to events and experiences, a response which is verbally expressed by means of such characteristics of fictional writing as imagery and metaphor. The first view puts an emphasis upon "realness," the second upon a more interpretative quality of language. Toro Ramallo's language in particular demonstrates the duality inherent in the nature of documentary fiction and the problem involved in trying to reflect both aspects of this duality in the language whilst at the same time attempting to achieve balance and unity.

Much of Toro's Chaco is written in a language with little imagery or metaphor. In the description of the soldiers' departure and journey to the front, for example, or of a column of lorries (pp. 60-61, 133), the writer seems to be aiming principally at accuracy rather than seeking

1. Winifred Proust, The Language Poets Use, (London: The Athlone Press, 1962), p. 45.

imaginative metaphorical parallels or resonances. The appearance of lorry drivers is described in carefully observed detail:

Brillan de sudor y el polvo pone en sus rostros y en sus torsos desmenuados, manchas grises, que se agolotan en los vellos. Pantalones llenos de aceite, botas torcidas, cubiertas de costras de lodo, cabezas hirsutas que sudan a chorros y olor a animal, a bestia, a orines y alcohol (Chaco, p. 65).

The documentary purpose seems to be of prime importance in the description of the ambushing of a Paraguayan patrol (pp. 69-73). The language describes clearly the experience of the exercise and the manner in which it is executed, but involves little figurative response:

Al amanecer, nos hemos escondido en una isla, de matorrales espesos, donde pasamos todo el día. Abundan las serpientes y los insectos voraces nos torturan constantemente. Mirándonos unos a otros, apenas nos reconocemos. Estamos desfigurados por los mosquitos, por las aspiras que se añan y añan, añan que envenenan la piel, produciendo heridas que escuecen constantemente. . . .

Al cerrar la noche un grito de zorro. De soldado a soldado, ha pasado la orden de tenderse y ocupar posiciones. Tengo recelo del suelo. ¡He visto tantas serpientes! Pero hay que obedecer y me tiendo. Otros gritos de zorro en medio del silencio espeso de la noche (p. 69).

Apart from the mild image in the last line, Toro's aim seems to be to recreate the experience as accurately as possible and so he restricts himself to the use of non-figurative language.

This kind of language could be explained in this particular work in terms of the narrative device which Toro uses of the dying soldier's notes, for the non-metaphorical language would be in keeping with that of a soldier's observations. There are, however, other reasons for this characteristic. Firstly, it reflects the view of documentary fiction as a transcription of reality, in which the aim is to describe scenes in objective terms. Secondly, it is part of the author's design, in a restricted number of instances, to shock the reader through literal, detailed and horrific description of what is observed by means of a tremendista effect. One example is the picture of mutilated corpses:

Otros conservan en los ojos abiertos, una expresión de espanto, mientras sus cuerpos se han retorcido quien sabe en qué angustias. A otros les han metido la bayoneta por la boca, al mismo tiempo que les han disparado, haciéndoles volar la parte posterior del cráneo que ha quedado vacío.¹

To elaborate upon such descriptions through imagery or metaphor would arguably diminish the effect that the description undoubtedly achieves of impressing the horror of the scene upon the reader. Metaphorical description inevitably moves the scene one step away from reality, thereby distancing both writer and reader from involvement in the events. Metaphorical description does not represent an immediate visual impact, but a thoughtful, calculated response. As such it acts as a kind of protection from the scene described, by distracting the reader away from the scene itself to notions of what that scene suggests.

The use of non-metaphorical language is, of course, uncharacteristic of the language that is generally associated with fictional writing. Writers of fiction normally try to use a figurative language as a means of extending the range of their own and their readers' understanding. Such language corresponds to the view of documentary fiction as reality turned into fiction. Toro's writing is not lacking in these figurative elements, but he seems to use them as the exception rather than the rule. One excellent example of Toro's perceptive and imaginative descriptions is that of Villa Montes. He notes the significance of the town as far as the war is concerned, for he writes that "en sus flancos, sangra la guerra y parece que eso la vivificara" (p. 166). Villa Montes is thus seen as part of the body of the nation, from which the life-blood of the nation flows in the shape of dead and wounded soldiers, but at the same time life is

1. Toro Ramallo, Chaco, p. 126. See also pp. 118-19, 121, 126-27, 143, 144-47, 178. Toro actually uses the word "tremendo" in some of his descriptions, notably on pp. 147, 148.

paradoxically brought to the town because of the war. Toro proceeds to mention the surrounding region and then the streets of the town itself:

Se presienten cerca, el tuscal hirsuto y la crin brava del pajonal, azotados por el sol. En las calles, el polvo es como ceniza candente y brillan los rostros aceitados de sudor (pp. 166).

Each qualified noun here is described in a metaphorical way: the "tuscal" is "hirsute," the "pajonal" is a "wild zone" and both are "lashed" by the sun, while the dust is seen as "white-hot ash" and the faces are "greased" with sweat. Each adjectival quality is thus not merely descriptive of the noun but is the result of an imaginative projection by the writer. Moreover the qualities with which the nouns are endowed can be seen to be connected in some way with the Chaco or the war itself: the hairyness of the unshaven soldiers, for example, the ash from burning, the grease from machines. This can be seen also in the description of liquor as "un poco de sol diluido" (pp. 166-67), and in that of the eyes of a mestiza which "tienen la sombra del tuscal y la profundidad de la noche chaqueña" (p. 167). In this way the writer manages most successfully to convey that everything in Villa Montes is infected by the war and the Chaco, and he does so not through accurate and non-metaphorical description but through the skilful use of imagery.

There are many other instances to illustrate this aspect of Toro's writing, in which his perceptiveness often adds a special significance to what he observes. He likens a smile in the midst of the hell of war to "esas flores que he visto abrirse entre los amontonamientos de los cadáveres, que el fuego impide recoger" (p. 107). He thus juxtaposes beauty and death in simple but effective fashion, and at the same time shows the persistence of life in the shape of flowers, despite the horrors of war. The concept to which he likens the smile becomes even more significant than the smile itself. It is an undeniably imaginative response by Toro which

produces the description of the sensations and thoughts of the narrator after he is wounded (p. 144 and see also p. 162), or the extended images describing the Chaco or its trees (pp. 150, 154). Finally it can be said that the comparatively infrequent use of metaphorical language in Chaco (infrequent by comparison with El martirio de un civilizado, for example) makes its presence all the more striking when it does occur. This is especially true of the use of similes, which in Anze Matienzo's work at times appear forced and used to excess, but which in Chaco are the more effective because of their rarity. Consequently descriptions such as "el aire se rasga como un trapo mojado," the faces of convalescents "como tunas verdes y flácidas" and heavy guns which "semejan vagamente perros monstruosos y enloquecidos, que ladraran al cielo" (pp. 143, 150-51, 161), assume a striking significance in the context of the novel in which they appear.

Thus Toro does to some degree succeed in reflecting in Chaco the duality of a work of documentary fiction by using two levels of language, but in consequence the novel lacks consistency and unity. The precise, non-metaphorical, literal descriptions appear flat and dull beside the figurative ones, for we readily seek in the language of a work of fiction precisely this figurative quality. Yet of the two kinds of description (the non-metaphorical and the figurative) it is the figurative language which is really less suitable for a reflection of the aims of the documentary approach. Just as the structural weakness of Chaco can be traced to an attempt to reflect the incoherence of reality, so the lack of a consistent level of language can also be seen to be a result of the attempt to give a clear picture of reality by suppressing or denying a figurative response to a large degree. The duality of a work of documentary fiction, if accurately reflected in its language, leads to a lack of

uniformity.¹

As has just been suggested, one of the most notable features of Anze Matienzo's style is a constant preoccupation to find apposite similes. They may be brief, striking comparisons executed with a single stroke, such as palm trees seen as "jirafas husmeando el cielo" (p. 106), or the Chaco which, seen from the air, "presentaba, por trechos, un monte bajo de un crespito menudo tan perfecto que parecían legiones de cabezas de negro, apiñadas" (p. 106). They may by contrast be sustained and developed, such as the description of an upturned lorry as

una tortuga enorme volteada por un huracán; una tortuga con su coraza de consistencia pétrea, que aprisionaba el reptil en la impotencia, con las patas al aire y la boca desdentada y córnica husmeando en el vacío (p. 67).

The writer uses the similes to convert the intangible into the tangible: moonlight is seen as "una pomada blanca extendida en las grietas de la piel de un rostro enfermo" (p. 119). Or he turns men into puppets through simile, as part of his vision of the dehumanizing process of war:² exhausted soldiers "se pusieron a cabecear como esos muñecos que tienen el pescuezo de resorte y que balancean la cabeza con ritmo entrecortado y trunco" (p. 171). There is, of course, always the danger when seeking originality in similes of producing inapposite or even incongruous

1. That a uniformity of language should be the objective in a work of documentary fiction is implied by Leonard Lutwack's remark concerning style in "Mixed and Uniform Prose Styles in the Novel," Perspectives in Fiction (eds. Calderwood and Toliver), p. 37: "In so far as style is a means of shutting out many possible views on a subject and directing attention to a few selected views, a uniform style has the effect of better narrowing the scope to a single, unified view of reality." Yet the result of this uniformity of style in the naturalistic novel is "a monolithic dullness of language" (p. 35).

2. See below, Chapter VI, pp. 274-77.

effects. This is usually due to the conceptual distance between the two parts of the simile. One such image likens gunfire to a mince-meat filling, but does nothing to enhance our understanding of what the bursts of fire in the midst of silence were like: "Esa algazara parecía un relleno de picadillo para los intermedios de silencio que se abrían entre una y otra detonación de cañón" (p. 116). In another instance the writer mixes his similes, describing men "con la música de las balas silbando como reptiles que pasaban raspándoles el cráneo" (p. 183). Such cases are rare, however, for the majority of Anze Matienzo's similes are based upon a viable relationship between the two parts.

The writer uses metaphor much less freely than simile and does so for the most part with less success. There is an evident unevenness about the juxtaposition of the commonplace description of the departing Mario as "el pájaro que abría las alas en el espacio" with the more imaginative picture of his father as "la planta vieja que quedaba allí para confiar sus congojas a la tierra" (p. 47). The writer resorts to the dead metaphors of cliché towards the end of the narrative, where the Paraguayans become "hordas borrachas de sangre," their firing is described as "lenguas de fuego" and the sector under fire prior to an assault becomes "el horno . . . calentado al rojo" (pp. 180, 183). The Bolivian soldiers, although in a wretched condition, "eran leones hambrientos, pero aún les quedaban las garras y los colmillos, y los hocicos abiertos con sed de sangre" (p. 187), and, as a final example, the plane which evacuates Mario is described as "el ave metálica" (p. 203).

These lapses do not detract, however, from the overall impression of awareness and sensitivity to things perceived which Anze Matienzo brings to his narrative. There is a lyrical quality about some of his imagery, as in the description of the girls of Cochabamba whose lips "en lugar de besos

tenían prendidos en su superficie carnosa, lánguidas flores de consuelo" (p. 40), and the description of water at Irendagüe becomes almost a poetic hymn of praise to this prized commodity. The jet of water falls,

tejiendo encajes que formaban arabescos de espuma, en medio de música de mujeres, de coros de ángeles, que cantaban aleluyas, chorros que hilvanaban coplas alegres, canciones húmedas, versos pulidos con rocío, y manjares adornados con diamantes . . . (p. 186).

As can be seen from this sentence, Anze Matienzo occasionally adds to this imagery a rhythm which together create a kind of prose poem. He uses a heavy, ponderous yet balanced rhythm to describe Mario's father: "En el hueco de sus ojos fatigados, se fundió el cristal de sus lágrimas" (p. 47), to project a sense of resignation and philosophical acceptance by the old man of his son's departure. But to describe a lorry descending a ravine he appropriately uses a long, flowing sentence which mirrors the serpentine path of the lorry itself:

El vehículo, mientras tanto, descendió a una hondanada risueña, abierta en el pliegue de una montaña, donde dormitaban casas cónicas, con los techos de paja dorada, en medio de la tierra negruzca, salpicada por los reflejos áureos de los montones de trigo segados, que esperaban el viento para echar los granos de las espigas prietas.

The writer's descriptions of scenery are always vivid, energetic and full of movement, particularly of those parts of the country through which Mario travels on his journey to the front:

De improviso, la cuesta del Sama puso delante de sus ojos la recia contextura del revoltijo de montañas apretujadas con furia. Una vegetación tumultuosa se encaramaba sobre los lomos graníticos, y por las grietas de esa especie de enorme fósil, se escurrían plantas rastreras, como pequeños reptiles babosos, trenzados por las manos del diablo (p. 62).

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1. Anze Matienzo, El martirio de un civilizado, p. 58. See also p. 72, where a similar technique is used to describe a mountain pass. Rhythm is again used effectively to convey the desperation of drowning men floundering in the Pilcomayo (p. 199).

The effect of such forceful, almost hyperbolic vocabulary as "revoltijo," "apretujadas con furia," "tumul tuosa," "se encaramaba," "se escurrían," is to make the description both three-dimensional and impressionistic, as in a Van Gogh painting.

Anze Matienzo does not only excel in descriptions of concrete objects, but also gives a deeper significance to descriptions of such intangibles as the passage of time. As Mario travels to Division HQ from his unit, he recalls his journey to the front. The author does not merely make the obvious remark: "Le pareció que había transcurrido un siglo desde entonces," but adds "un siglo en que fue sembrando partículas de espíritu y las células de sus tejidos orgánicos a lo largo de una interminable ruta estéril" (p. 147). Time as experience becomes part of the process of "decivilization" which Mario is undergoing, a process which, through the words "partículas" and "células," is shown to occur slowly, almost imperceptibly. It is also a sterile, interminable process which destroys its victim mentally ("partículas de espíritu") and physically ("células de sus tejidos orgánicos"). Thus the description of the passage of time is turned into a condemnation of the destructive process of war.

Criticism has here been made of some of Anze Matienzo's imagery, and there are other aspects of his language which may also be criticised. The writer at times makes excessive and rigid use of the noun-adjective combination to reinforce an idea. One obvious example of this is to be found in the description of the sordidness of Villa Montes:

En el centro de la población había uno que otro fondín lúgubre, animado por la cadencia impenitente de gramófonos desvencijados, sobre los que giraban, cabeceando, discos rayados, de los que se desprendían sonos metálicos y voces gangosas (p. 75).

It does, however, give the sentence a heavy, monotone rhythm which may have been intentional. Another factor is that in several instances images

or descriptions are carelessly repeated: as an example, we find:

Los huesos de los soldados golpeados los unos contra los otros, semejaban marimbas centroamericanas construidas con palos tiesos, que chillaban y aullaban cuando se las agarraba a golpes.

Mario siguió oyendo la música producida por las marimbas de huesos golpeadas por la ruta.¹

In view of the description in the first sentence, the second sentence is rendered superfluous and may well have been an original or alternative description which should have been discarded. Finally it must be said that the overall effect of the stylistic structure in this novel produces an uneven, jerky narrative due to the short paragraphs and the isolated, often unintegrated ideas which these contain, (for example, pp. 180-81).

Looking at Anze Matienzo's language in general, we find that it largely reflects the view of documentary fiction as reality turned into fiction. An imaginative response is an essential and constant characteristic of his writing, and by discounting the opposite perspective of documentary fiction as fiction portraying reality, he maintains a consistent level of language which Toro does not achieve. But as a consequence, the picture of reality in El martirio de un civilizado is less precise because the reader sees superimposed upon that reality the imagery with which the writer's imaginative response has infused it, and what resonates in the reader's mind is not the original object but the image through which that object was interpreted. We remember not the lorry but the lorry as tortoise, not the soldier but the soldier as puppet. We see not reality itself, but a new reality created by metaphor.²

Such an effect is not, of course, to be despised. Indeed it is

1. Anze Matienzo, El martirio de un civilizado, p. 105. See also the same page for repetition of "pieza metálica y suelta detrás del camión," and pp. 193-94 for repetition of "los ojos inyectados en sangre que se le salían de las órbitas."

2. Terence Hawkes, Metaphor, (London: Methuen, 1972), p. 63.

precisely this expanding of our vision which fiction, as distinct from other forms of writing, can and does achieve through the imaginative response of the writer and his use of a figurative language. The problem here is that the language does not synthesise with the objective of the documentary approach, which is to present reality itself, not a reality transmuted by the imaginative responses of the writer. Anze Matienzo's work does not lack a consistent level of language, but it uses a highly metaphorical language in a narrative whose aims are not concordant with it.

Leitón's writing in La punta de los cuatro degollados is perhaps more idiosyncratic and original than that of any of his fellow writers on the Chaco War. It is characterized by short, staccato sentences, sometimes of no more than two words, and often unconnected in sense with what precedes or what follows. Descriptions and statements are therefore terse, with the significance of each word seemingly more forceful as a consequence. The aim is to catch the essence of things, and as a result there is in general a clarity and firmness about Leitón's descriptions. Dawn, for example, is described thus:

Radiante se presenta un amplio pajonal con diadema de oro y luz. Con gradación de tonos y firmeza de movimiento se diseñan las siluetas de los soldados. Esplendoroso llega el nuevo día. Aire fresco que vivifica los pulmones. Clarea y triunfa la luz solar sobre la penumbra. Atmósfera transparente color verde botella (p. 15).

The strokes of Leitón's pen are equally bold and confident when describing dusk:

Manchas de sombras que lamen y acarician el bosque. Las nubes viajeras se apresuran hacia el sud. Parece que se aproxima una tormenta sureña. Efectivamente, la selva se convulsiona frenética y enloquecida. El viento comienza a desgrenar las cabelleras de la arboleda. Arrasa todo a su paso. En los troncos rugosos se adhieren

y se incrustan los últimos rayos solares. Las hormigas afanosas concluyen su tarea del día. Hay perfiles de perenne agonía. Luz mortecina con olor a cirios (p. 87).

As may be seen from these quotations, the picture he paints is full of impressionistic imagery. He selects certain elements of the scene he is describing and concentrates his eye minutely upon each one. Having captured the essence of that element, he passes without pause or connection to the next.¹

This concentration upon the essence of things produces some striking images. Trees in the rain "peinan sus ralas cabelleras con cristiana resignación," a line of men is seen as a tight-rope, time is seen to place "su enorme parche de olvido" upon the region, trenches are like "saurios en agonía letal," stars are compared to "lágrimas de niña huraña" as they twinkle through the foliage, tense nerves resemble "varillas de acero al rojo candente" (pp. 14, 18, 22, 59, 60, 61). By contrast, Leitón also uses image-less, accurate description to produce a tremendista effect, although with far less frequency than Toro. One example is his description of human remains:

Muy próximo a la zanja, un esqueleto en la posición de tendido. El zapato chamuscado por el calor, parece dar movimiento al pie derecho. La gorra prendida al cuero cabelludo, se mueve ligeramente. Manchas de sangre terrosa, huesos calcinados y residuos de carnes putrefactas. Espectáculo macabro. Las moscas zumban, un enjambre de avispas salen de las cuencas cavernosas. Crujen las articulaciones secas (p. 25).

There is scarcely any imagery here at all; the horror of the scene is expressed through an uninterpreted description of reality in Leitón's

1. It is interesting to note the importance accorded to skylscapes in the terrain of the Chaco, in which the sky offered the only alternative--and changing--vista to that of the monte or pajonal. It was equally significant in World War I for the men in the trenches, as Fussell, The Great War and Modern Memory, p. 52, indicates.

characteristically staccato stylistic structure.

Where Leitón's language may be criticised, however, is in his use of clichés, such as "la venganza es dulce," "se apresura la noche a hilvanar su manto de sueño," or the picture of the freedom of birds flying in the sky (pp. 25, 49, 84). We may criticise also his occasional outbursts of sentimentality (for example pp. 31, 76), or left-wing rhetoric.¹ But these are not so serious as to detract from the fact that Leitón, to a degree greater than other Chaco War writers, has forged a stylistic form which is not only singular but which in its fragmentation and disconnection reflects most aptly the episodic and disjointed nature of the narrative organization.² To suggest, as we have, that such a fragmentary narrative organization, especially when it lacks the compensating factors of an unfolding plot or developing characters, is scarcely a viable vehicle for a work of fiction, does not negate the achievement of producing a style which, in its formal aspect, harmonizes with that structure. Considered from the point of view of imaginative response and the duality of documentary fiction, however, Leitón's work faces the same insoluble problem as that of Toro.

Like Toro in Chaco, Guzmán seems to employ two different levels of language in Prisionero de guerra. One corresponds to his narrator's role

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1. See, for example, pp. 22, 36, 109. It is interesting to note that the scene quoted above describing human remains is converted in what follows into a propagandist vision of figures clamouring for justice and revenge.
 2. Leitón's revolutionary left-wing position and the originality of his writing are not unconnected, for "as Camus observed in L'Homme révolté, the more the artist feels at one with his society the less he troubles to distort his material stylistically. . . ." (Geoffrey Wagner, "Sociology and Fiction," Twentieth Century, [CLXVII] Feb. 1960, p. 109).

as a secretary in the war, for the language used to describe many scenes is detailed, ordered and unemotional, in the form of a secretarial report. It is to be found, for example, in the description of life in the prison camp Cambio Grande, the wounds and scars of prisoners as they bathe, the sick in the hospital in Asunción, or the dying in Sapucay (pp. 140-41, 203, 242-43, 251). It is a language designed to conceal the presence of the author/narrator from the narrative, and to allow the scenes described to achieve an impact upon the reader through simple yet detailed prose. Guzmán describes the prisoners in transit at Puerto Casado:

Hace tres días que los de tropa se mantienen con dos o tres galletas por día y se suceden las bajas por hambre. Los oficiales recibimos cinco galletas para este viaje que dura todo el día y gran parte de la noche. Dormimos sobre las plataformas ya estacionadas en Puerto Casado. Lluve copiosamente en las primeras horas del día a plena oscuridad. Aguantamos la lluvia sin violencia. . . . Después del almuerzo--locro de maíz con un buen pedazo de carne vacuna--nos embarcamos en el "Holanda," un barco de mil toneladas fabricado en 1907. Jefes y oficiales nos instalamos en la pequeña cubierta y la tropa del Carmen, en número de 1,200, llena todo el barco (p. 131).

The information the writer provides here can be seen to correspond to a kind of secretarial mentality. It is, of course, a language which is fully compatible with the view of the documentary work as fiction portraying reality. At the same time this kind of language, if used exclusively, moves the novel a step away from fiction towards other genres such as memoirs or the diary.¹

However, Guzmán counterbalances this language elsewhere in the narrative with one which is much more sensitive and personalized. It can be seen when the author becomes contemplative or tries to evoke a mood, rather than in descriptions of scenes or events. A good example of this

1. It also anticipates the attitude to language of the creators of the so-called 'nouveau roman': e.g. A. Robbe-Grillet: "Our books are written with everybody's everyday words and sentences," in Snapshots and Towards a New Novel, (trans. B. Wright), (London: Calder and Boyars, 1965), p. 140.

is his evocation of the mood felt at night after the noise of battle has ceased:

El ruido de la batalla ha cesado y reina en la noche la calma muda de los muertos. De aquel silencio sugerente levanta la imaginación las figuras sangrantes de los cadáveres y de los heridos. Es más grave que al comienzo, en la ruptura del fuego, cuando uno se pregunta "¿qué es?" y la realidad le responde velozmente: "es la batalla, la batalla preparada." Ahora la angustia punzante de esta calma póstuma clava su cuchillo en mitad del corazón, interrogando otra vez: "¿qué es, qué ha sucedido o qué va a suceder?" y la realidad estupefacta cobijada por la sombra y aplastada por el silencio, no responde, gustando de hacerse más elocuente al mostrarse así, enigmática y severa, imagen nocturna del mundo henchido de presagios (pp. 59-60).

Here there is feeling and response to sensations, and even though it is put in impersonal terms, the passage expresses very intimate concerns. Elsewhere Guzmán's flair and imaginative response to experiences provide even stronger evidence of the duality of language to be found in his work. The description of his attempt to ward off the encroaching desire to sleep whilst on telephone duty is masterly:

Mis párpados luchan en un constante esfuerzo muscular contra esa maravillosa sensación de peso que siento en ellos poderosamente. . . . La idea del deber todavía enhiesta en la conciencia vigilante, naufraga suavemente en la páfida invasión que anega mis sentidos como una esencia sutil escapada del jardín de los ensueños . . . el sueño, este sueño brujo, me va hundiendo sin yo poder resistir como un gigante de manos blandas que me ahogase cautelosamente en un piélago sedoso (pp. 64-65).

The effectiveness of this description is not produced by the author's awareness of the sensation but by his imaginative response to it and the imagery he uses to convey that response. Thus although it succeeds at the level of accuracy, the description is heightened by the writer's metaphorical interpretation.

What inspires Guzmán to his most lyrical writing is the thought of freedom and his return to Bolivia. Perhaps surprisingly, full vent is not given to this desire until near the end of the work, but when it is released the feeling expressed is intense. Guzmán uses as his inspiration

for the thought of freedom the time-honoured one of flowing water, and at the same time he employs repetition and catalogue to achieve a rhythm which corresponds to the movement suggested by the water:

Paraguay, río Paraguay, anchurosa corriente hacia Asunción, glaucos parajes sonriendo sobre el cristal de los remansos, barca triste, barca sola, barca pobre de dos remos y un timón, cargada de prisioneros. Mi angustia se trenza entre las aguas que se juntan. Choza, albergue, morada solitaria de Arecutacúa, con los naranjos en flor. Patria ausente, ilusión que no cansas, obsesión que no enloqueces, agonioso deseo de volar, de pasar al otro lado, subir, bajar, despistar, entrar al fondo, cruzar el Chaco, patria distante alcanzada por el pensamiento. . . . Pasa el agua, pasan los pájaros, las horas pasan, pasan las nubes, la vida pasa, el mundo gira sobre su propio eje. . . (pp. 231-32).

Guzmán therefore seems to achieve a more lyrical mode in his emotional response to experiences and sensations, and uses a stiffer, less imaginative one in his descriptions and observations. Sometimes the choice of metaphors removes any emotional content from the scene or event described, distancing both the author and the reader from it:

El frente se puso en actividad general, todo el sector en su extensión de varias leguas, es una serpiente sonora de fuegos homicidas que se cruzan en pugna titánica (p. 96).

The words used produce commonplace concepts devoid of immediate effect, and the absence of emotional content is underlined by the stiff and formal sentence structure of noun-adjective combinations. In an attempt to describe things on a grand scale, Guzmán occasionally falls into the same kind of bombastic language:

El frente fantástico en sus millares de kilómetros de extensión, se pone en unánime actividad desde Villa Montes hasta Bahía Negra, por iniciativa boliviana, o sea, que se traba la batalla titánica de los Andes con el Trópico, en el límite de sus jurisdicciones geográficas, cavando dos líneas que cruzan el Chaco Boreal cual si formasen sólo un cauce de fuego y sangre que se vierte en las aguas del Paraguay y el Pilcomayo, ante la expectación del Continente.¹

Yet, as we have seen, the emotional content is not absent when Guzmán is dealing with more personal feelings. His evocation of thoughts and memories

1. Prisionero de guerra, pp. 157-58. See also the passage on Christmas and prisoners, p. 247.

of his wife is as moving as any passage written on this aspect of the war and, as with the passage dealing with the desire to sleep which was quoted earlier, the effectiveness of the description stems from the writer's imaginative response:

. . . mi pena se prolonga en la noche como un camino salido de mi corazón hacia la lejanía en que por añoranza forzosa, dibújense los semblantes familiares entristecidos por mi obscura suerte. Entre ellos, más vivamente, los ojos tristísimos de mi mujer, tales como los vi luchando con la emoción contenida, la inolvidable mañana del adiós. Ojos cargados de penosa dulzura miranme ahora tenebrosos, fijos, como dos gotas floridas de un llanto nocturno, en la soledad dilatada por la ausencia misteriosa. . . .¹

What makes this description particularly effective in conveying the writer's feelings is not just the sentiment, but the image of his anguish extending like a path from his heart, and that of his wife's eyes as "dos gotas floridas de un llanto nocturno," in which her lament can be heard to echo through the assonance. It is the sensitive use of such imagery and effects that reflect the perspective of reality turned into fiction in Prisionero de guerra.

Guzmán's two levels of language are thus separate and complementary. The first is used largely in descriptions of scenes and events and provides the vehicle by which the narrative proceeds. It is a language which is highly suited to the documentary reporting of experiences, whether in fictional or other form. The second level is much more personal and intimate and is used on those occasions when the writer aims at describing his feelings or his emotional responses. Thus whilst Guzmán's language, like that of Toro, lacks consistency because it incorporates two different modes which correspond to the dual perspective of documentary fiction, the

1. Guzmán, Prisionero de guerra, pp. 120-21. See also the description of prisoners watching and listening to a fellow prisoner being whipped, p. 178.

writer does in general separate the two to correspond to different aspects of his narrative. The writer as observer and chronicler is represented by the documentary language, the writer aware of his inner self responds to it in a more personal, lyrical way.

(b) The non-documentary approach

The works which cannot claim to be documentary fiction clearly do not face the problem of incorporating or integrating the duality of the documentary approach. From the point of view of language, therefore, they may each be examined purely for their characteristics and, where appropriate, the degree to which the language is concordant with the kind of narrative that the writer has chosen to employ.

There is little that is distinctive about Landa Lyon's language in Mariano Choque Huanca. His descriptions, for example, are in general flat and unimaginative. Whereas the setting sun often excites the imagination of other Chaco War writers, Landa Lyon writes a straightforward description:

La tarde era hermosa. El sol se ponía en el ocaso e iba tiñendo las nubes de un púrpura encendido. Ni una rama de los árboles se movía y sobre la corteza reseca, los pájaros entonaban su canción de gracias al Dios Naturaleza (p. 139).

Similarly his description of the soldiers' first taste of battle--another event which in other writers brings out their descriptive powers--is uninspired and such vocabulary as "vomitar fuego," "ruido ensordecedor" and "rugido infernal" gives some indication of the lack of originality in his vision (pp. 156-57). When he does attempt to be original, he destroys the effect of a helpful image used elsewhere. In the opening description of Pucarani, in which the sky is like an enormous mirror reflecting the sea and the wind is a sharp blade, these acceptable if

unoriginal images are spoiled by the pedantic picture of the sun's rays "cargados de ozono y ultravioleta" (pp. 1-2). There is often a gauche-ness about Landa Lyon's imagery, such as the picture of the train heading for the front and for an appointment with death:

Pesadamente arrancó el tren, pero luego fue tomando una exhalación de flecha. El tren parecía un convidado al banquete de la muerte que teme llegar atrasado. En sus hombros llevaba el material para la hoguera, pólvora y hombres (pp. 91-92).

The picture of the soldiers lost in the bosque and being drowned by its foliage would have been successful without the laboured sea image which precedes it:

Esos hombres se ahogan como en un gran mar en donde las olas del calor los van cubriendo lentamente, porque los van matando de sed y los oleajes del follaje del bosque lujuriente y fuerte los va cubriendo con la perversa suavidad de un lado [sic] maligno que mata acariciando (p. 251).

By way of compensation for his descriptive failings, the author does demonstrate on occasion a careful eye for detail. One particularly good example is to be found in the description of the men in the thick of battle:

Todos tenían la misma máscara de barro que los cubría por completo. Máscara macabra de barro y de sudor en donde lo único que se distinguía era los dientes blancos y la córnea azulada de los ojos que brillaban y se apagaban al unísono con el rictus que producía en las facciones del combatiente el culatazo del fusil al salir del proyectil (pp. 158-59).

What Landa Lyon lacks in imaginativeness he replaces with perception.

This lack of originality noted in his descriptions produces a number of clichés, as might be expected. The figure of Mariano's novia, Lucía, is described in terms which make her seem like Hebe (p. 77); shells are "mensajeros del odio y de la muerte" (p. 159); while men are "desafiando la muerte," the enemy's guns "no cesaban de vomitar fuego vivo" (p. 233); and man's struggle with Nature is seen in the following stereotyped terms:

Adelante se decían los unos a los otros para infundirse valor, para tomar ánimo y de sus labios secos por la sed y el calor sólo salía esta palabra: ADELANTE. Lo decían con fe y ánimo que lo arrancaban de lo más hondo de su espíritu para renovar sus fuerzas gastadas en esa lucha titánica y desesperada del hombre contra el medio (p. 252).

If descriptive originality is not this writer's forte, he produces some mordant remarks in his criticisms. A good example of these are his comments on the priest who informs the inhabitants of Pucarani that the war is a punishment for their sins:

No conoció más escuela que la miseria y el fanatismo y fue arrastrando su humanidad por pueblos chicos y miserables como el de Pucarani en donde por única compañera tenía una chola que le daba un hijo cada año. Aprendió a leer para decir misa. Y decía misa para ganarse el sustento, sin más ambición que pasar la vida en la mejor forma posible y sobre todo con el menor esfuerzo (p. 8).

He is equally scathing about the military police (pp. 22-23), and about politicians (p. 141). But such sarcasm is not the hall-mark of a successful fictional style. The importance of Mariano Choque Huanca to the author clearly lies in what he says and this order of priorities is evident also to the reader.

A distinctive feature of Peláez' writing in Cuando el viento agita las banderas is that it is fully in keeping with the intellectual level of both the author's conception of the work and the thinking of his characters. The fact that his work is structured around the lives of young intellectuals with literary or intellectual pretensions allows Peláez to use a somewhat eccentric style, especially when one of his characters is speaking. Part of Juan Carlos' apostrophe to the palosanto tree serves as a particularly good example:

Tu existencia en la selva hostil es señal de la gracia de Dios. Conformas el sentido del oasis acogedor: eres amparo del viajero, bálsamo de los sufrimientos, noble remanso de hojas frescas en el oleaje ardiente que bate las selva. . . .

Tu madera, como el sandalo de la cruz de Cristo, da su aroma significando con ello el concepto cristiano de devolver el bien por el mal. . . (II, 140).

Whilst in this and other instances the language can be attributed to the natural inclinations of the characters whom the author has created, it is also to be found in several descriptive passages and produces rather precious imagery:

Los mosquitos, avanzadas de la selva, zumbaban en los oídos nuevos su trompeteo aleccionador. La cañada oscura de bosques se hundía más al sur en laberinto de geología dislocada (II, 30).

Peláez can be seen, therefore, using the eccentricities of his characters as a means of justifying the eccentricities of his style (in the same way that he uses his characters to excuse elements of the narrative structure). Once again in matters of language he criticises his characters in order to protect himself from anticipated criticism. From the outset he makes fun of the intellectuals of "La Tabla Redonda:"

Para ser componente de la élite, tildada con el remoquete de intelectual, no se requería mayor valimiento que ser amigo de los amigos; lo de "intelectual" no pasaba de ser simple rótulo ya que no siempre se exigía condiciones especiales, ni prestigio ganado en el cultivo de la inteligencia (I, 38).

The topics of their conversations, we are told, included speculative, socio-political and scientific issues, "predominando, claro está el devaneo como nota primordial, a veces único en las largas veladas" (I, 40). Peláez continues throughout to jibe at them, calling them "'leídos,'" "'académicos'" and members of the "aristocracia del talento (sic)" (II, 133-34). Just as Campos was blamed for the presence of names or quotations, so he is made responsible for stylistic factors which Peláez suspects might otherwise attract criticism, and twice he calls him a "cazador de metáforas" (II, 39, 69).

These remarks made by Peláez at the expense of his characters suggest that he does not take them too seriously. Indeed, although each of the principal figures appears to take himself seriously, he is always

liable to be subjected to the jibes or ridicule of his fellows. This element of flippancy is reflected stylistically by a wry humour which is a rare feature in Chaco War fiction. One example is to be found in an exchange between Víctor Bardia and an officer on the troop train:

--Disculparán ustedes, señores jefes, la confianza que nos tomamos; pero se trata de despedirnos de las montañas.
--No tema nada--cortó la disculpa uno de ellos--. Nos despedimos todos... Si no me equivoco seguimos el mismo camino (II, 17).

Cortez Ochoa, illustrating what the Chaco is like in the rain and mud, tells the following story:

. . . un "repete" molido de haber caminado todo el día metiendo y sacando los pies del barro, hambriento e irritado hasta el paroxismo, se expresaba casi llorando: "Ca... hay que pisar fuerte en el Chaco... en el Chaco barrial!" (II, 63).

This makes fun of Salamanca's well-known remark about taking a firm stand in the Chaco, and also puns on the name of the region of the Chaco Boreal. Samuelillo's remarks about the timing of the move forward, concluding with "me gustaría que todos Uds. fuesen conmigo," elicit the response from Sergeant Navarro: "Gracias por tu gentileza. . . . Eres muy amable al invitarnos... Desde luego yo no acepto tu honrosa proposición" (II, 77).

Humour is not only to be found in remarks made by characters or in stories told by them (II, 184-88), but also in some comments made by the author himself. Peláez ridicules with humour and sarcasm the attempts of other American nations to prevent the outbreak of war:

Por primera vez la palabra Panamericanismo apareció ligada al documental de un "casus-belli" asombrando a los funcionarios diplomáticos por su extensión y contenido. Bajo la férula de este vocablo debía funcionar el proceso intervencionista; a su tutela estaba confiada la esperanza de restablecer la paz. La interdependencia, otro término novísimo, y tan largo como el otro, lucía su significación en todos los papeles oficiales. La guerra no tenía la venia de los mayores y, por consiguiente, debía ser proscrita del continente (I, 219-20).

General Kundt, the subject of much comment and criticism by other writers, is instead made fun of by Peláez, who remarks:

"Mañana quiero 'almogzag' en Nanawa" había dicho el General Kundt a esos soldados al despedirlos. E iban, hambrientos y resignados, en pos del almuerzo del jefe supremo de la guerra (II, 93).

Whilst the presence of such humorous elements is not in itself sufficient to categorize the author's attitude to his subject matter, it does at least indicate a somewhat lighter attitude to the war and its tragedies than that which most of the writers demonstrate. Other factors not concerned with style can be mentioned to support this: the narrative elements which do not actually depict the horrors or injustices of war, but simply describe incidents in the lives of the protagonists, in a manner similar to the body of Volume I; or the philosophical lack of regret at his experiences expressed by Campos at the novel's end, leaving the reader with the impression that perhaps war and its adventures are, for Campos, preferable to growing bored and old at home, as Víctor Bardia had suggested (II, 243).

Humour does, however, play only a minor role in Peláez' writing. Rather is it characterized by a sense of firmness and a command of language, especially in his descriptions, which may be exemplified by that of a tropical storm:

. . . primero fue brisa leve la que se levantó en rachas amontonando nubes plúmbeas ribeteadas de bordes carmesíes en el horizonte; latigazos de viento bravío encrespaban la selva elevando cendales de polvo. De improviso la lluvia copiosa se precipitó a raudales imponiendo su rumor de tambores batidos; centellas fulmíneas rasgaban el nublado ofreciendo la visión grandiosa de una naturaleza elemental irritada (II, 68-69).

Peláez' descriptions of combat (II, 97-110, for example), are as good as any of those which try to convey the atmosphere of what it was like at the war-front. The reason for their effectiveness lies in the fact that they are not just descriptive in terms of visual or aural effects, but are also informative and explanatory in military terms (without being over-technical or complicated), and are interspersed with realistic dialogue between

officers. The writer manages to create a sense of excitement and suspense by concentrating, unusually, upon a single, small-scale objective, such as saving a gun, rather than extending his description over a wider area of activity.

However, those who doubt Peláez' seriousness towards his subject may find further support in the account, which follows the episode of the saving of the gun, given by Corporal Jiménez of his participation in the battle. It is a lively description seen through Jiménez' own unsophisticated eyes, the language of which is interspersed with diminutives, mispronunciations and colloquialisms (II, 111-15). The only unrealistic element in the account would seem to be that he survived to tell the tale, and the writer does not make it clear whether the scenes which Jiménez describes actually occurred or are a tall story told by a soldier anxious for some lime-light (none of the other writers would leave us in such doubt). Peláez here seems to be more interested in the literary game of leaving his reader in doubt as to the veracity of the story, rather than in simple documentation of events.

The language of Costa du Rels in La Laguna H.3.¹ reflects the fact that his concern is for character and ideas, for he does not appear to devote much attention to the use of an imaginative language. When it does find its way into the narrative, however, it is often suggestive and original. One good example is the description of sleep as "el grande, inviolable refugio que permitía hallar de nuevo, en el fondo de sí, los

1. It must be borne in mind that La Laguna H.3. is a version of Costa du Rels' novel translated from the original French, but not translated by the author himself (see above, Chapter IV, pp. 101-02). However, the general remarks regarding the language of the novel are not invalidated by this fact, since a close reading of the French versions has also been made.

astros de remotas navidades que llenaron de embeleso los benditos días de la niñez" (p. 38), in which the writer conveys a strong sense of security to be found in sleep by relating it to childhood and thereby making the men in the bosque that much more vulnerable. But there is a certain unevenness about the description of awakening, wherein the commonplace image of the first of the following two sentences detracts from the imaginative effect of the second: "Despertar, retorno penoso de un hermoso viaje. Abordaje de una costa escarpada donde el pie resbala y los dedos despellejan" (p. 96). There are also a number of infelicitous images in which the writer seems insensitive to the inappropriateness of a particular image in the context in which it is being used. Malamina is described putting away his coca leaves "con un cuidado digno de un documento que interesara a la defensa nacional" (p. 56); Contreras, about to undergo his exorcism with the toborochi tree, "crispa la mano derecha sobre su brazo izquierdo, como un policía que se arrestara a sí mismo" (p. 124); Moro, at a tense moment when several of the group think they have heard the sound of water, is pictured "bien plantado sobre sus piernas arqueadas como paréntesis" (p. 132). In none of these instances is the image successful because, as was suggested in our examination of El martirio de un civilizado,¹ the conceptual distance between the object and the image used to describe it is too great.

Where Costa du Rels is particularly successful, however, is in descriptions of dawns and dusks: his perception is acute and his images subtle and delicate. One dawn is described thus:

Un alba blanquecina se desliza a través de las frondas, diseña la curva de la rama, aumenta el brillo de una hoja nueva y libera las enramadas de las últimas sombras de la noche (p. 123).

1. See above, pp. 161-62.

In another description, dawn "se despliega sobre la cima de los árboles, desciende a lo largo de las ramas, como una muselina dorada que se desliza hasta el suelo" (p. 170). They are both shown in movement, with a strong impression of unfolding and developing, essential characteristics of the event being described. He is also skilful at evoking the ambiente, and the following description, with its initial bald statement followed by two entirely different elaborations upon it, is a good example of how this skill can be almost lyrical in its vision and succinctness: "El calor era sofocante. Algunos racimos de mosquitos colgaban de un rayo de sol. La tierra, al infinito, sumida estaba en la modorra y la desolación" (p. 121). But such a delicate stylistic touch is not characteristic of the writing of La Laguna H.3.. In general it is flat and banal, without the justification of a documentary approach to support this.

(c) Language in Sangre de mestizos

One of the qualities which makes "El Pozo" the most outstanding of the cuentos in Céspedes' Sangre de mestizos is the quality of its language. It is immediately evident that Céspedes does not allow the diary device to impose itself upon the language of the narrative. Although some of the entries give a very matter-of-fact tone to events which must have aroused more emotion than the tone conveys,¹ the language in many instances is on a plane higher than that which one might expect to find in a diary. It is the language of passages such as the following which gives the story a heightened, "literary" quality. Instead of writing, in the manner of a

1. For example, the entry for February 10th reads simply: "Nos trasladan 20 kilómetros más adelante. La picada que trabajamos ya no será utilizada, pero abriremos otra." (Céspedes, "El Pozo," Sangre de mestizos, p. 23). Yet the actual response to the knowledge that their work had been wasted would not have been as unemotional as this suggests.

diarist, "Al atardecer llegó el camión aguatero," he writes:

Al atardecer, entre nubes de polvo que perforan los elásticos caminos aéreos que confluyen hasta la pulpa del sol naranja, sobredorando el contorno del ramaje anémico, llega el camión aguatero (p. 18).

Yet he also strikes a contrast between the "literary" imagery of the diarist's comments and the colloquial speech of the soldiers by juxtaposing the two:

--De hambre no se muere. De sed sí que se muere. Yo he visto en el pajonal del Siete a los nuestros chupando el barro la tarde del 10 de noviembre.

Hechos y palabras se amontonan sin huella. Pasan como una brisa sobre el pajonal sin siquiera estremecerlo (p. 22).

A further feature is Céspedes' perception of detail which reflects the concern with minutiae that the soldiers' situation enforces. In one instance, in which the sappers are described at work, Céspedes uses a kind of zoom-lens technique to convey more immediately the reality of what he is describing. The reader is made to feel the effort of the sappers' work by seeing their naked torsos shining like fish, and then the detail of "víboras de sudor con cabecitas de tierra" which run down their bodies. Then the lens withdraws again to show us the men flinging their picks into the sand, before bringing up the loosened earth (p. 25). The diarist, with nothing to observe but the details of the activities going on at the well, sees them with great clarity, and consequently so too does the reader.

The most significant feature, however, is the way in which elements such as air or space or darkness are seen in terms of other elements. Beyond the obvious example of the transferred epithet of "el color optimista" describing the earth (p. 25), Céspedes turns the air in the well above the men into "una masa," and the darkness solidifies into a "columna" (p. 29). Later "la honda obscuridad" (another transferred

epithet) is seen as a solid object which can be "descolgada con peso de plomo," whilst the air itself is a "cilindro . . . cálido y descompuesto" (p. 32).

Space and time become confused: the sappers are buried by darkness like a worm "escondido en una edad geológica, distante muchos siglos de la superficie terrestre" (p. 29). Through their digging they are going downwards and backwards in space and time, "al fondo del planeta, a una época geológica donde anida la sombra" (p. 31), so that a soldier emerging from the depths of the well "llega desde un remoto país plutoniano, semeja un monstruo prehistórico, surgido de un aluvión" (p. 33).

The men appear to dig not only the earth, but the air, and even life itself (p. 31). Thirst becomes "sed negra," endowed with the quality of the blackness of the well (p. 29). And darkness, which is total at the bottom of the well, is seen as a tree, with the shaft of the well as its roots, thereby producing a kind of primitive vision of darkness literally growing out of the ground and extinguishing the sky (pp. 29-30).

These striking images reflect the fact that the sappers are striving after a life-giving force (water), but they are doing so towards darkness and away from light, the traditional source of life and symbol of hope. The earth and darkness signify death, and there is therefore irony in the fact that, in seeking "life," several of the men were instead inviting death and digging their own grave. The confusion of elements expressed through the imagery aptly conveys the futility and irony inherent in the sappers' activities.

One further use of imagery should be mentioned: it is the more obvious one of the use of words associated with water, to reflect a kind of wish-fulfilment on the part of the diarist. It is most evident in the

description of the writer's descent into the well, in which the words "sumergir," "bañar," "tubo," "chorrear" and "rebalse" are used (p. 25). Later water-imagery insinuates itself into other entries: "El agua, que todos ansiamos en una concentración mental de enajenados que se vierte por ese agujero sordo y mudo," and "el tiempo se estanca en el subsuelo" (p. 29--my italics).

Using the very prosaic form of a diary, Céspedes combined it with a very imaginative, polished language which is interspersed with realistic dialogue to lend a documentary authenticity to the narrative, although the dialogue diminishes once the description of the actual digging is under way in the second "chapter." The story suffers, therefore from two kinds of duality. Firstly there is the duality of levels of language mentioned in connection with Toro's Chaco, although "El Pozo" is closer to Prisionero de guerra in that each level is used under different circumstances. Secondly, and more significantly as far as this story is concerned, there is clearly a tension between structure and language. Whilst Céspedes' narrative and stylistic achievements in "El Pozo" are indisputable, they are achievements which are independent of each other. The diary form is clearly designed to give authenticity to the narrative, to give it documentary status. The predominant features of the language, however, are clearly intended to raise the narrative above that of diary prose to a more imaginative level.

In none of the remaining stories of the collection are the qualities of language particularly outstanding. Céspedes does produce some vivid and memorable images: Bara's boredom in "La Coronela" "goteaba en sus días con el monótono ruido del agua que caía en el oscuro patio por una canaleta carcomida sobre una plancha de zinc" (p. 63); the monte and the pajonal strewn with fallen men seen, simply and strikingly, as "un otoño" (p. 96); the head-light beams of El Pampino's lorry are "unos troncos

blancos [que] hendieron la sombra, como los huesos de la noche" ("Humo de petróleo," p. 166). Céspedes' use of imagery and metaphor is at its most successful when he employs elements of nature, perhaps because nature plays such an important role in the stories. For this reason, the descriptions of Bara as a "pararrayos" with "electricidad negativa" ("La Coronela," p. 39), the mountain Illimani rubbing itself with towels of clouds before sun-bathing (p. 50), or rain which sounded like "una celestial ametralladora cristalina" ("El milagro," p. 146), appear both as forced and inapposite.

Céspedes shows his range of stylistic abilities in these stories, employing satire¹ and a certain amount of cynical humour in "Las ratas,"² and by contrast, in "Seis muertos en campaña," an almost surrealistic description, rare in Chaco War fiction, of Cruz Vargas' obsession with eyes (p. 103). Whereas "El milagro" contains highly stylised, almost hyperbolic descriptions of nature as seen by the agonized lost soldiers (see especially pp. 141-42), when describing Sirpa's involvement in combat at Toledo Céspedes restricts himself to a minimum of imagery and provides a maximum of documentary detail to produce a dramatic and exciting narrative ("La Coronela," pp. 80-86). There are weaknesses, such as the pomposity of tone which results from Céspedes' attempt to evoke a dramatic atmosphere in "Humo de petróleo:"

Sólo el camión perforaba con su túnel de estruendo la quietud mortal, inmensamente solitaria y plana que se hacía más tétrica con la vaguedad de las sombras crepusculares (p. 165).

But more typical of his writing are the images of "El Pozo," or bold, graphic metaphors such as the description of a humid day in February, "cuyo

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1. See the descriptions of the Secretario de Negocios del Exterior, "Las ratas," p. 174; 'Canciller' Dollfus, p. 194; the 'Canciller' and Quiroga, p. 195.
 2. See the actions of the soldiers who accost Niqui, p. 170; the difference between private companies and the treasury, p. 172; Niqui's 'taquicardia,' p. 173.

atardecer se incineró entre nubes de ceniza como un cadáver cerrado en ánfora de plomo" ("Opiniones de dos descabezados," p. 216). Although none of his stories is as well written as "El Pozo," Céspedes shows as wide a range of skills in matters of language as he does in finding narrative structures for his stories.

(d) Summary

As we have seen in this examination of the language of works of Chaco war fiction, there is in the documentary approach a contradiction between, on the one hand, an attempt to present an accurate, "photographic" picture of reality, and on the other the use of what we have called a creative language which reflects an imaginative response to that reality. Fiction by definition implies an imaginative response and yet, as we have suggested, such a response inevitably moves the reader one step further away from reality; it is an escape by metaphor from the cliché of reality.¹ To the contradiction between the normal structuring of reality in fiction and the unstructured nature of reality faithfully reflected by the documentary approach, we must add, therefore, the contradiction between the creative quality of "fictional" language and the need for an objective, non-metaphorical language in a documentary work.

These two contradictions, it will be noted, together form a paradox. For whereas in the organization of their narrative the writers of documentary Chaco War fiction seem to be trying to reflect the unstructured nature of reality, as far as language is concerned they seem as intent upon achieving an imaginative, "fictional" language as they are upon reflecting an accurate picture of reality. A documentary work should aim at being

1. Wallace Stevens, Opus Posthumous, (London: Faber & Faber, 1957), p. 179.

minimally structured and should be written in an objective, non-imaginative language. But such a work would lack two of the quintessential elements of fiction. The concept of documentary fiction contains, therefore, inherent contradictions.

By contrast to the works which adopt a documentary approach, the language of the other three novels examined, with the exception of that of Peláez in parts, is disappointingly undistinguished. Costa du Rels, whose novel on the grounds of structure and characterization stands out above the others, fails to attain a level of language to correspond to these other achievements.

There is, of course, a second way in which the writing of a work may be judged: not in terms of language, but in terms of stylistic self-consistency, of truth to itself. In this respect, as we have suggested, the staccato sentence structure of Leitón's novel and the essential imagery of Céspedes' "El Pozo" must be seen as appropriate stylistic reflections of the particular approach adopted by these two writers in their narratives.

CHAPTER VI

FICTION AS HISTORY: THE INFORMATIVE VALUE OF CHACO WAR FICTION

"If there is any truth in a work of art it is not generally to be found in its correspondence with or imitation of actual fact."

J.W. Purser, "The Artistic Approach to Truth," British Journal of Aesthetics, III (1963), 99, quoted in Grant, Realism, p. 16.

"We can not learn very much about war by studying battles. If we would really understand war we must know how its roots spread through the whole of . . . society, we must know what dislocations it produces in every social institution, and we must try to conceive of the changes which it works in the lives of every adult and every child of the warring nation; by comparison with such things, battles are insignificant."

W. Waller (ed.), War in the Twentieth Century, p. xi.

"Mañana cuando el historiador o el sociólogo quieran referirse a este cruento pasaje de la historia de América, por fuerza deberán acudir a la fuente de la novela boliviana, pues en ella hay una amplia descripción de las grandezas y pequeñeces de esa guerra que nunca debió estallar."

Botelho Gosálvez, Cuadernos americanos, CXII (1960), 277.

(i) Introduction

Jean Norton Cru, in his study of the French literature of the First World War to which reference has already been made, undertook a thorough examination of the works of some 246 writers, including 48 novelists, all of whom were participants at the front at some point during the war. At the end of the book, Cru offers a table (Témoins, pp. 661-63) in which he classifies the works according to their value, a value which he finds it difficult to define but which is primarily concerned with

la valeur de vérité, non pas vérité dogmatique, absolue ou transcendente, mais vérité tout humaine, vérité du témoin sincère qui dit ce qu'il a fait, vu et senti, vérité accessible à tout homme intelligent qui sait voir, réfléchir, et sentir. C'est la vérité que l'historien, le psychologue, le sociologue, présentent dans un témoignage (Cru, p. 661).

The five categories of works--journals, memoirs, letters, reflexions and novels--are divided into six classes, with the most accurate works being placed in the first class and the least accurate in the sixth. It is scarcely surprising to find that 80% of the novels are placed in Classes IV, V and VI, that only one novel (Jean Barbier's autobiographical work La Percée) is placed in Class I, and that 17 of the 29 works placed in the first class are journals, since these are subject to the precision and the discipline of dates (p. 85). Nor is it surprising that Cru attacks war fiction for the distorted picture that it gives of the events of war, according to his definition of "la vérité":

Ceux qui souhaitent que la vérité de la guerre se fasse jour regretteront qu'on ait écrit des romans de guerre, genre faux, mi-littéraire, mi-documentaire, où la liberté d'invention, légitime en littérature, joue un rôle néfaste dans ce qui prétend être un témoignage. Tous les auteurs de romans de guerre se targuent de parler en témoins, de faire une déposition devant l'histoire. Comment concilier cette prétention avec la liberté d'invention? En fait ces romans ont semé plus d'erreurs qu'ils n'ont proclamé de vérités, ce qui était à prévoir (p. 553).

Cru's concern was clearly not about the artistic hybridity of these

novels, which was examined in our previous chapter, although he does refer to it when he describes them as half-literary and half-documentary. What troubled him were the inaccuracies presented in this fiction, a concern which no doubt stemmed from the dramatic successes of works like Le feu, Dorgelès' Les croix de bois,¹ and Im Westen Nichts Neues (to which he also referred).² But Cru also held other objections to the fictional treatment of the events of the war. In an examination of Georges Duhamel's Vie des martyrs (1917), Cru gives voice to these:

Ces faits qui sont si près de nous ne devraient pas servir de thèmes: qu'on les raconte exactement ou qu'on les taise. La souffrance physique des blessés est sacrée comme la souffrance morale des poilus de la Tranchée des Baïonnettes dont je déteste la légende parce qu'elle est un mensonge, un mythe flatteur et grandiose. Thèmes littéraires, légendes ou mythes fondés sur notre vie souffrante de poilus sont une impiété, un anachronisme, une pratique dangereuse puisque le seul espoir en une humanité moins féroce est de faire une humanité curieuse de vérités et à qui l'on dira le maximum de précisions sur la guerre (p. 595).

These remarks throw interesting light upon two important facts. Firstly Cru himself still appears to be sensitive about his own participation at the front, and this probably determined the attitudes which he adopted in his mammoth study; secondly, in the latter part of this statement, he appears to deny an instructive or didactic function for art, a position which it is difficult to sustain.

Since it was suggested in Chapter III that the novels of Remarque and Barbusse had some influence upon the writers of Chaco War fiction, it is instructive to examine briefly Cru's judgement of them. On Im Westen Nichts Neues he is of necessity brief since the novel had appeared only just in time for Cru to insert a critical remark about it in his book as

1. Cru, p. 593: "Le succès étourdissant des Croix de bois m'attriste et m'inquiète."

2. See below p. 193.

an addendum to his bibliography of "Souvenirs de combattants étrangers de 1866 à 1918." He describes it as a pacifist novel, full of all manner of inaccuracies, distortions and errors which belie the fact that Remarque was actually a combatant, and he laments that "aux yeux de la critique la thèse pacifiste et le sensationnel purement littéraire excusent toutes les inventions gratuites et saugrenues: la fin justifie les moyens" (p. 80). Consequently he calls for the emergence of a new, serious, critical approach to the literature of the front,¹ implicitly an approach which he proceeds to illustrate in the rest of his book.

As for Le feu, Cru's criticism is both trenchant and detailed. He accuses Barbusse of using only that material which serves his prejudices and his preconceived opinions, of reducing everything to abstractions which he then distorts (p. 557). Barbusse's characters have no soul, for he saw only their "vie matérielle" (Cru, p. 558). As for facts, Barbusse distorts them and promotes the same legends as those which abound in the rear (p. 564). Cru asks whether it is naïveté, ignorance or presumptuousness that caused people to accept Barbusse's own pronouncement that he was the champion of the truth and that he alone had had the boldness to be sincere (p. 557). Precisely because of the enormous success of Le feu, Cru invariably turns to it as a bad example. Indeed it is referred to more often than any other work in the book.

Pfeiler, in his study of German fiction of the First World War, appeared to have improved upon the criterion adopted by Cru (and also by C.W. Falls in War Books) when trying to establish the excellence of war

1. Cru, p. 80. See also his remarks at the end of his examination of Florian-Parmentier's novel (p. 602), in which he calls for judgement to be based solely on a work's "valeur documentaire."

novels. Pfeiler used four criteria: "Is the novel essentially truthful? Does the author shape his material appropriately? Does he present the vision of his experience? To what degree of power and art is he able to make the reader participate in the experience?" (War and the German Mind, p. 319). It is not clear what he meant by the third criterion, but the other three suggest a reasonable basis upon which to make an assessment: the first and fourth will be used in the present study as criteria in this chapter, whilst the second of Pfeiler's criteria is one of those considered in Chapter V (to which we have added others).

Pfeiler's four criteria are set out in order of importance, as he explains: "Of these the criterion of essential truth is in other fiction of secondary importance, but I am inclined to place it first in war literature" (p. 319). The problem is to determine what precisely Pfeiler means by "essential truth." From an examination of his study it would appear that he means something different from historical accuracy in Cru's sense, for his work is very different in its conception and execution from that of the Frenchman. Pfeiler even includes two comments on Cru's work: one by Hans Kriesi who wrote (in "Der Weltkrieg in Belletristik und Fachliteratur" in Festschrift für Emil Ermatinger, 1933), that Cru's work was "the most critical and masterly discussion of war literature, a truly excellent school for young historians;" the other by Lührke, who wrote (in the introduction to his anthology Armageddon: The World War in Literature, 1930) that Cru "missed entirely the point of war literature, which . . . is sincerity and power first, and only secondarily photographic accuracy" (Pfeiler, pp. 319-20). That Pfeiler should include both these comments without indicating which seems to him more apt is a sign of the fact that he was no more certain about the value of Cru's study than he was about the meaning of his own phrase "essentially truthful." For in his

assessment of Im Westen Nichts Neues (to take again the example of a work examined in some detail in the present study) his judgement as to its value seems ultimately to be determined by the fact that he believes "many of his [Remarque's] situations are fictitious" (p. 142), and this statement is made as a negative criticism. On the one hand the general approach in his study seems to concur with Lührke's judgement on Cru; on the other, he makes an evaluation of Remarque's novel--a work which is "undeniably fiction"¹--which could have come from the pen of Cru himself.² In the final analysis Pfeiler's standards for judgement are as questionable as those of the French critic.

Cru's fundamental error was to assume that what a novelist means by "vérité" and what writers in other genres (and indeed Cru himself) mean are the same thing. There must be some important reason that makes a writer decide to turn his lived-through experience into fiction rather than to write it in any other form. That the result, and therefore the approach, are different is borne out by Robert Graves' decision to change his fiction to history, because fiction "distorts" (to use Graves' own word),³ in the sense that the writer intercedes between reality and the description of it on paper. That this intercession has unresolvable consequences of an

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1. Bance in Modern Language Review, LXXII (1977), 361.
 2. Pfeiler's judgement of Im Westen Nichts Neues appears to have been clouded in other respects also: he quotes Remarque's claim in the foreword to the novel that the book will "über eine Generation zu berichten, die vom Kriege zerstört wurde--auch wenn sie seinen Granaten entkam," but then he asserts that this is not a justifiable claim since "the heroes of Remarque are not representative of a whole generation but only of a certain type," and that other evidence contradicts Remarque's claim "to speak for a whole generation" (War and the German Mind, pp. 142, 144). In fact Remarque did not say that his heroes are representative of a whole generation, nor did he claim to speak for such a generation. What Remarque claims his novel is about is that a generation of men were destroyed physically or mentally by the war, and such a claim is irrefutable.
 3. See above, Chapter I, p. 16.

artistic nature has, it is hoped, been amply demonstrated in the previous chapter. But it will also follow that what a novelist has to say (as distinct from the way in which he says it) will be different from the content of a work which does not claim to be fiction. It is here that the "vérité" of a novelist, even though he may have been a participant in the events which he describes, may not coincide with that of a writer who chooses another genre.¹ This is not to say that it is out of place to examine the accuracy of the facts presented in a work of fiction--above all in a work of documentary fiction--but it is both unjust and misleading to criticize a novelist for the inaccuracies of his factual material, and on the strength of these inaccuracies to assess the value of a novel.²

Eugene Iñhrke was quite right to claim that Cru had missed entirely the point of war literature. For the value of a novel is clearly something more than photographic accuracy. Cru himself came close to it when he talked of the "vérité tout humaine," but he failed to perceive the real meaning of this phrase. It is this kind of human truth (as this chapter will demonstrate in connection with the Chaco War) which is the peculiar contribution of fiction to an understanding of an historical event.

Having said that, there is clearly some validity in undertaking the kind of exercise in relation to certain aspects of Chaco War fiction that Cru's study illustrates, although it would be impossible to do so on the same scale or with the same rigour, since Cru was able to bring his own experience as a combatant to bear on the material he examined. But if Cru's conclusions about the general lack of factual accuracy in First

1. See above, Chapter I, pp. 22-23.

2. Schinz, French Literature of the Great War, p. 30, even goes so far as to state that "whatever actual fiction there is in war-novels may be legitimately disregarded in estimating their value."

World War French fiction are paralleled in Bolivia, then clearly it would be unwise for readers to base their view of an historical event upon a work (or even a body of works)¹ which claims or appears to be fiction. Yet the ready accessibility, the availability and the "readability" of fiction encourage the reading public to turn to such works rather than to other genres for factual information, as Cru was only too painfully aware. To examine the level of accuracy is therefore important. But what is more important is to discover what information is better or even solely imparted through the medium of fiction. The aim in this chapter is to examine the content of Chaco War fiction on these two levels.

(ii) Pre-war Bolivia

Most of the historians who examined the Chaco War² were obliged to recount the events which led up to the outbreak of hostilities in order to place the war in its proper historical context. This invariably assumes the form of a summary of the diplomatic, political and military steps which were taken (or not taken) during the years preceding 1932, with a concentration upon the years between 1928 and 1932 when military clashes and diplomatic initiatives increased. Such a background helps to clarify the historical causes of the war. Some of the writers of fiction also attempt

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1. However, one must allow the accumulation of statements in fiction as some kind of evidence, as Rockwell argues in Fact and Fiction (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974), p. 122.
 2. Following the remarks made by Arnade and Ynsfran (see above, Chapter I, p. 11) regarding histories of the Chaco, and the reminder by Wedgwood (see above, p. 12), about the difference between foreign and native histories, an attempt has been made in this study to use a balanced selection of historiographical works for the verification of historical material included in the fiction. The works principally referred to are those by Zook and Rout (United States), Vergara Vicuña (Chile) and Querejazu Calvo (Bolivia). References to other accounts have been made where appropriate.

to explain these causes: Toro Ramallo blames the principle of uti possidetis applied at the time of independence,¹ whilst elsewhere his character Montero suggests that there are deeper historical reasons for the war, which can be traced to the Inca conquest (Cutimuncu, p. 142: Montero is, however, clearly not quite sane). Otero, through Doctor Mendieta, merely argues that the Chaco is Bolivian by law and according to history, and that Paraguayan claims are based on their expansionist ambitions (Horizontes incendiados, pp. 168-73). Most writers, however, are content to leave such considerations to the historians, and few would argue that they themselves are the appropriate examiners of such questions.

What the novelist could more profitably do regarding pre-war Bolivia was to attempt to recapture the ambiente of the years which immediately preceded the outbreak of war: to describe what might be termed the "atmospheric" history of the pre-war period. This was a difficult task and one shunned by novelists and historians alike because the writer had to look back with the experience of having lived through the war inevitably affecting his vision. Peláez is the only writer who attempts to capture that atmosphere, and the picture which emerges is that of the lull before the storm, reminiscent of the years before 1914 in pre-war Europe. Whilst it provides an interesting contrast to events which followed, the

1. Toro Ramallo, Cutimuncu, p. 138. This doctrine, known as the doctrine of uti possidetis of 1810 and proclaimed in the Congress of Lima in 1848, states that the boundaries between the South American republics should ordinarily coincide with the boundaries of the preceding Spanish viceroyalties, audiencias and captaincies-general. It was not, however, incorporated into any of the early treaties between the new nations of South America, but merely invoked as a guiding principle. Toro is right to blame the principle as a cause of the war, since before any settlement can be reached on the basis of uti possidetis, it is usually necessary to establish the difference between de jure and de facto possession, and then to decide which is to be given greater weight. This the Bolivians and Paraguayans were incapable of doing. See Ireland, Boundaries, Possessions and Conflicts in South America, pp. 327, 329.

description of it now has the ring of a cliché:

Pasaban los días románticos de la segunda década del siglo. Se vegetaba sin preocupaciones graves. Unos jóvenes matizaban la monotonía del rutinarismo sentando la nueva modalidad de la literatura nacional: no ahondaban mucho en el análisis. Los más, seres normales avivados por la juventud, gastaban sus horas en el amor o el deporte. Nadie pensaba en el futuro, preocupación tonta de los mediocres. Aquel cielo rojizo de los augures crepúsculos, horóscopo de destinos colectivos les tenía ajenos a lo que el buen pueblo adivinaba (Cuando el viento, I, 247-48).

This view is inevitably one coloured by hindsight, making the unpleasant aspects of pre-war life fade into oblivion, whereas the more pleasant aspects are transformed by the memory into characteristics. Peláez calls them "días románticos," by which he means days remote from more immediate experiences. The romantic quality with which he endows those times is accorded not during the days themselves but as they appear from the present, and everything that follows is painted in the same rosy hue.

Despite this many must have been aware at the time that such days would never return and that the advent of the war would mark the end of an era. Peláez' Juan Carlos senses that "vamos tocando el punto donde se pierde la ruta" (Cuando el viento, II, 80). Whilst Doña Flora in Aluvión de fuego accepts the inevitability of war as the will of God (Cerruto, pp. 60-61), Peláez' character Campos reviews the likelihood of war according to the evidence:

Nos hallamos armados hasta los dientes y lo están también nuestros vecinos; tenemos petróleo y minerales y no lo tienen nuestros colindantes; carecemos de puertos sobre el mar y los 'hermanos' de allende la frontera, poseen extensas costas de litoral. Todo nos indica que llegada es la hora de andar a tiros por montes y montañas. . . .¹

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1. Cuando el viento, I, 251-52. It would be difficult to say that both sides were well-armed at this stage. A.J.English, "The Chaco War," An Cosantóir (May 1974), p. 139, gives figures for mid-1932 as follows: Bolivia had available some 100,000 rifles, 1200 automatic weapons, 120 pieces of artillery (some of it very old), a dozen tanks and 60 aircraft; Paraguay had about 24,000 rifles, 400 automatic weapons, 50 pieces of artillery (most of them modern), eight armed boats, about six float-planes and a dozen aircraft. Clearly Bolivia had a numerical superiority, but given the numbers of men

Yet the approach of war was not as unemotional as that analysis would suggest. Peláez notes the effect that was exercised upon normal, everyday life, an effect which is as elusive to recapture as the apparently halcyon pre-war days, but perhaps more accurately described because less pleasant:

Flotaba en el ambiente social del pueblo un desasosiego inexplicable que venía a coincidir con las demostraciones populacheras; el nerviosismo de los habitantes eclosionaba en diversos modos: penden-
cias, robos, disipación, desidia y desmoralización colectiva. Con cualquier motivo, dígase un grito en la noche, un silbido estridente, un ruido de pasos atropellados sobresaltaban los nervios de las gentes, daban motivo a formarse corrillos ansiosos por coger la primacia de algún suceso (Cuando el viento, I, 237).

Both novelists and historians are agreed that with every pre-war military skirmish the popular clamour for war became increasingly vociferous. This eagerness for war was no doubt encouraged by the assertions made by political and military leaders to the effect that right was on Bolivia's side and that the war would last for only a short time before an inevitable Bolivian victory. The following description by Peláez may be full of hyperbole but would seem to capture the general attitude;

El imperativo del momento es marchar al Chaco. Cada ciudadano se arma como puede y exige ser acuartelado: se siente apto para luchar gloriosamente en las marismas de los esteros de Patiño o en las landas de la selva, allá donde los bañados del río Paraguay forman el territorio misterioso. Los cuarteles se han llenado, han sido invadidos por legiones de civiles apremiados por uniformarse; espontáneamente han organizado grupos, compañías, batallones y ahí están marcha que marcha por calles y plazas.¹

who were to be mobilized (although neither side was aware of it at this stage), such provisions were grossly inadequate, and in addition the supply of ammunition was insufficient to service the weapons available. On the question of whether Bolivia possessed covetable subterranean resources, see below, pp. 226-29. The fact that Bolivia was seeking an outlet to the sea was indisputable.

1. Cuando el viento, I, 211-12. See also I, 194; Otero, Horizontes incendiados, p. 216; Lara, Sujnapura, p. 96. Cf. Vergara Vicuña, La guerra del Chaco, I, 44.

The eagerness to enlist before the war has properly begun continues once it is under way (Cuando el viento, II, 189), although some reluctant recruits were no doubt subjected to social pressures, as one writer illustrates:

Ustedes han venido por sentirse patriotas. Yo . . . [Román Cáceres] porque no murmuren los de la "sociedad." Les diré con franqueza, mi novia me regaló una pluma de gallina y no quise saber más de cobardías y vine por esta causa (Leytón, La punta de los cuatro degollados, p. 9).

Some of the novelists examine this enthusiasm for war, for it conceals a number of illusions about the nature of war and what it can do to a man's character. Anze Matienzo in particular exploits this. Mario, the principal character in his work, senses both "una ilusión de gloria" in which he sees himself as a hero, admired by women and acclaimed by crowds, and also the possible reality of "la muerte oscura" (El martirio de un civilizado, p. 17). Yet the latter image does not deter him from enlisting, for it is outweighed by the attractions of war: the solidarity that soldiering can bring, together with a sense of sacrifice and selflessness (p. 18). He looks to war to bring him fulfilment, emancipation and a purpose (p. 41). As the narrative progresses, Mario learns the harsh realities of war, and has his illusions dispelled. One of Peláez' characters, Víctor Bardia, looks to war for excitement and adventure:

¡Qué más da ir a veranear al Chaco! . . . ¡A quedarse en el pueblo del bostezo con miras a morirse de puro viejo y aburrido, prefiero las aventuras incitantes! No protestemos contra el destino. Pensemos un momento en lo que sería de nosotros si nos quedamos a vegetar en la aldea tranquila esperando la dispepsia, el reumatismo, la calvicie o la diabetis. . . . Tiene, la guerra, su lado romántico. . . . (Cuando el viento, II, 13).

Such a view of war was doubtless in the minds of many who expressed such an enthusiasm for it. The only sector of the population which did not share the general enthusiasm were the mothers (Peláez, Cuando el viento, I, 220; Leytón, "Mutilados," Placer, p. 181), although Toro maintains not

merely that women also were enthusiastic, but that they were even more so than the men (Chaco, pp. 57, 59, and see also Anze Matienzo, El martirio de un civilizado, p. 20). Nevertheless the overall impression given by the writers is one of enthusiastic support for the war by all sectors of the population, an impression with which the historians would concur.¹

Somewhat surprisingly the historians do not make mention of the minority who opposed the general clamour for war. That such people existed is confirmed by such accounts as Porfirio Díaz Machicao's autobiography, La bestia emocional. It is left to a few of the novelists to depict characters who adopted an anti-war stance in the pre-war days. In Landa Lyon's work such a position is taken by a young man who asserts that he will refuse to fight:

Debemos predicar con el ejemplo. La guerra es un postulado biológico, pero es un absurdo sociológico. Ella se lleva lo mejor de una nación, lo útil, lo fuerte, la juventud y deja a las mujeres y a los viejos, a los enfermos y los inútiles (Mariano Choque Huanca, p. 12).

But his is clearly an unusual position, for he is described as "uno de los jovencitos partidarios de la nueva ideología" (p. 12); he is therefore just an anonymous representative of a minority opinion. In Jesús Lara's Sujnapura two central figures, Lorenzo de Aldana and Francisco Chuki, are both left-wing antiguerristas who do not hide their views and are lucky to escape the fate of many recomendados (pp. 96-100). Otero's central figure, Padillita, makes a speech in 1928 against the war to a crowd outside the Federación de Estudiantes. The speech is received with hostility and Padillita himself is dismissed as "un loquito, un poeta, un revolucionario" (Horizontes incendiados, p. 103). Even taking into account Otero's pro-war position, the paucity of such figures in Chaco War fiction would suggest that those who did oppose the war openly prior to its outbreak

1. Cf. Vergara Vicuña, La guerra del Chaco, I, 44.

were considered to be not a little strange. And Padillita, of course, later changes his attitude, becoming an ardent advocate of the war, so that his earlier position is shown in Otero's opinion to have been wrong (pp. 209-13). Even Cerruto's main character, Mauricio, who enlists but later deserts, is shown initially to be indifferent to the clamour for war (Aluvión de fuego, p. 45).

There are sound artistic reasons for the general absence from the fiction of figures who oppose war. Much of the fiction is a literature of disillusionment, of enlightenment about the war, and the writers allow their narrative to stand in itself as a condemnation of the war.¹ To introduce the narrative by an explicit expression of opposition to the war would considerably weaken the effective process of enlightenment. But also important is the fact that people who voiced opposition to the war were rare, and were shouted down by the popular enthusiasm for the war which has already been illustrated.

Given such enthusiasm, it follows that descriptions of the actual departure of troops for the war should be full of a sense of excitement and jubilation, although once again it is "atmospheric" history and therefore left to the novelists. The scene in Peláez' novel is typical:

—Mostrábase la estación repleta de gente. Los niños del pueblo, colgados de las rejas del patio de embarque, hacían señas entusiastas, reían contagiados por la ansiedad colectiva, por el desbordante espíritu cívico.²

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1. Otero's novel is a notable exception. Padillita's enlightenment is towards the rightfulness of the war (see especially Horizontes incendiados, pp. 354-66).
 2. Peláez, Cuando el viento, II, 7. See also Rodrigo, Fue la sed, pp. 22-23; Céspedes, "Humo de petróleo," Sangre de mestizos, p. 153; Toro Ramallo, Chaco, p. 59.

Landa Lyon, however, is more mindful of the destiny which awaits most of the troops: "Despedir al que va a la guerra es ya como enterrarlo en vida, entregarlo a las garras de la muerte con la etiqueta del patriotismo y el cartel de héroe" (Mariano Choque Huanca, p. 89), and his description of the departure contradicts the mood created by others. What Landa Lyon describes are views of those who will be staying behind. The emotions of the soldiers themselves are less clearly defined, and several writers perceptively record the mixture of feelings which the soldiers' uncertain future arouses. Guzmán writes of the "carne atormentada por el miedo, la protesta, la espera, la pena, la impaciencia y hasta por el placer heroico de darse en sacrificio" (Guzmán, Prisionero de guerra, p. 12), thereby capturing that blend of anxiety and eager anticipation which is felt in the face of adventure. Peláez examines the very act of bidding farewell. He sees it both as a cathartic necessity for the soldier, so vital that the soldier may even have to contrive it (Cuando el viento, II, 21), and also as a moment of strong emotion, difficult to control and equally difficult to describe (II, 8-9). Anze Matienzo succeeds in describing it by considering not only the mixed feelings of pride and fear felt by Mario's father, but also the significance for Bolivian society at large of the soldiers' departure: the rupture of the bond between one generation and the next (El martirio de un civilizado, pp. 46-47).

Descriptions of the long journey to the front, which more naturally form part of the narrative of a novel than of a history, show a striking similarity. It is a journey which, as Otero notes, introduces the soldier to many of the sufferings and hardships which he will encounter at the front itself, in particular the heat, the dust, fatigue and thirst (Horizontes incendiados, p. 236, and see also Guzmán, Prisionero de guerra, pp. 15, 16). All that is left for the soldier to experience is the fighting

itself, and that, many writers claim, is not the worst of the evils that the Chaco holds in store. It is not only an arduous journey, however, but one which leads him to an existence so different from his pre-war life, that memories of it are hard to believe, so unreal does that former life seem (Toro Ramallo, Chaco, p. 199).

In addition to personal lives, the lives of whole towns are irrevocably altered by the effects of war upon them. The character of Tarija is transformed into a "hormiguero humano" (Peláez, Cuando el viento, II, 26), and the erstwhile peaceful town "despertaba gradualmente de su letargo metamorfoseándose en gran campamento."¹ The atmosphere in Cochabamba, where once the war is under way the girls wander about the hospitals instead of the squares and where smiles are tinged with sorrow (Anze Matienzo, El martirio de un civilizado, p. 40), is also changed by the war. But most affected is Villa Montes, prior to the war the last recognized outpost of civilization before the emptiness of the Chaco (Toro Ramallo, Chaco, p. 12). At that time it was nothing more than "un poblacho sin importancia" (p. 12); in the war it becomes half town, half gypsy camp, which grows like a mushroom and is feverish with activity.² Toro aptly describes Villa Montes as "la cita de Bolivia" (Chaco, p. 62), for not only is it a meeting-place for all those who are en route to or from the front, it is also the place from which Bolivians set out to decide their own and their country's fate.

Many of the principal observations and comments of the writers about the war itself are thus anticipated in their treatment of events and circumstances prior to its outbreak or prior to the arrival of the troops at

1. II, 27. See also Anze Matienzo, El martirio de un civilizado, pp. 75-76; Landa Lyon, Mariano Choque Huanca, p. 101.

2. Pp. 175, 166, 63. See also Anze Matienzo, El martirio de un civilizado, pp. 75-76; Landa Lyon, Mariano Choque Huanca, p. 101

the war-front. The unrealistic attitude to the war of both Bolivian leaders and the Bolivian people, an occasional hint of the realities which await the Bolivian troops in the Chaco, the disruption of personal lives: these epitomize the three different levels--the social and national, the physical, and the personal--on which the effects of the war were felt by Bolivians and Bolivia as individual combatants and as a nation. What historians and novelists tell us about participation in the Chaco War can now be examined on these three different levels.

(iii) The social and national aspects of the war

(a) General features

Most of the Chaco War novelists find it difficult to refrain from making comments and criticisms on the wider issues of the war at a social and national level, and it is these remarks which can most readily be subjected to scrutiny for their accuracy, since they are the very stuff of which the historiographical works are made. It is an interesting feature of these criticisms and comments that they emphasize national issues rather than either anti-Paraguayan attitudes or the injustices of the class struggle. Inequalities of the class system are, of course, dealt with in the fiction, in particular those which enable conscription to be avoided or profit to be made from the war. But the major criticisms are reserved for the ineptitude of the leadership in its handling of the war and the role of foreign intervention and foreign interests in the course of events. In general the writers adopt not so much a pro-working class position, as a two-sided nationalist stance. One side includes the anti-imperialist attitude towards Argentina and the oil companies, and also explains the concern about the mismanagement of the war as a cause of national humiliation and ignominy. It is also bound up with the concern for national

integrity in the light of territorial losses incurred in Bolivia's defeat in the War of the Pacific some sixty years earlier, final settlement of which only took place in 1929 (Zook, The Conduct of the Chaco War, p. 53). The other side of the writers' nationalist stance leads them to adopt an indigenista position as a substitute for the defence of the working class, which in the sense of urban proletariat constituted a relatively minor proportion of the population at that time. In one sense of course indigenismo can be seen as part of the class struggle, for the Indian sector of the population certainly represented the lowest class in the social stratum; in another sense it is part of the search for national identity, for distinctive Bolivian values and qualities, and in this way can be seen as part of a wider nationalism. Indeed the strongest political movement to emerge from the social upheaval caused by the Chaco War, the Movimiento Nacional Revolucionario (MNR) combined in its fundamental philosophy precisely these two concerns: a desire for a clearly delineated national identity and autonomy, and the emancipation of the Indian population of the country. The one logically went hand in hand with the other, and both can be seen as part of the ideology of a kind of national socialism which came to dominate Bolivian politics after the war, although indigenismo was, of course, also part of the philosophy of the more radical left-wing parties which were also emergent at this period.

(b) The conduct of the war

It is most likely that the criticisms of the Bolivian government and military leaders in Chaco War fiction are due as much to the fact of Bolivia's defeat in the war as to the anti-war stance which most of the writers adopted and to the political ideals which they upheld. Although the war and the Paraguayan political situation are also criticized by

writers from Paraguay (Arana, "La novela de la guerra del Chaco," pp. 177-91), most of the criticism of leadership is to be found on the Bolivian side. It is, after all, relatively easy to attack the leaders of a country defeated in war, since the loss invariably occurs at the level of national civilian or military leadership rather than through innate weakness of national fibre.¹

However, several writers do see the causes for defeat in Bolivian attitudes and conduct on a more general scale. Landa Lyon, for example, notes the political strife and hatred in the rear which characterizes the nation and prevents the achievement of national unity (Mariano Choque Huanca, p. 138). Politicians of both sides, Republicans and opposition Liberals, are accused of continuing to play political games during the war (Cortez A., Esclavos y vencidos, p. 109), and of losing no opportunity to make political capital out of the situation (Toro Ramallo, Chaco, p. 190). Gallardo, in Landa Lyon's novel, who finds himself to be a "political atheist," speaks for all those who feel totally disillusioned with the political parties and their politicians (Mariano Choque Huanca, pp. 140-41). Céspedes' cuento "Las ratas" criticises government figures in a more stylized manner through satire and ridicule. Government ministers are shown chasing a rat:

Todos, menos el Canciller y Quiroga, se dedicaron a la cacería con estrépito de voces y gritos. El 'Canciller' se levantó del lecho y subió a la misma silla en que Quiroga estaba en equilibrio, abrazándole por la cintura.²

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1. This certainly seems to have been the case in the Chaco. See Zook, The Conduct of the Chaco War, p. 24; Vergara Vicuña, La guerra del Chaco, I, 73.
 2. Sangre de mestizos, p. 195. Yet the real "rat" is amongst them without their being aware of it: Niqui, the emboscado and war-profiteer who is made to observe, with heavy irony on the part of the author, that the rodents they are chasing "son los bichos más perjudiciales que hay en la campaña" (p. 197).

In addition to just accusations against politicians (verified by Herbert Klein who concerns himself with the political background during the war as well as with the war itself [Parties and Political Change, pp. 169-71, 172, 176-77, 179-80, 183-84]), there are other more general criticisms levelled at the nation as a whole, but these are less susceptible to verification. Landa Lyon's Teniente Gallardo senses a lack of "fervor cívico" for the war effort from the nation at large, and this, he says, is far more important than any contribution from the munitions factory (Mariano Choque Huanca, p. 143). The war is fought not by soldiers eager for combat and enthusiastic for the cause, but by men who find it tiring and tedious, "sin odio, sin cólera, sin placer; en una palabra, sin ganas."¹ Bolivia's problems stem from the fact that no-one feels responsible for anything: "Nadie sabía nada porque parecía que nadie fuera boliviano. Bolivia era la tierra de nadie" (Landa Lyon, Mariano Choque Huanca, p. 211).

These criticisms of the country at large are, however, relatively few, and are far outweighed by those levelled at Bolivian political and military leaders. Indeed, even the apathy and discontent noted above can be looked upon as a consequence of the ineptitude which the writers see in the ministries and operations rooms. They can also be looked upon, however, as part of the disillusionment with the war felt by the Bolivian population, once the initial enthusiasm has passed and the promised easy victory has failed to materialize. One writer suggests that the ordinary disillusioned soldier, Bolivian or Paraguayan, would willingly opt out of further participation in the war and, if it were possible, leave it to the leaders to settle the dispute themselves on the battle-field (Guzmán,

1. Guzmán, Prisionero de guerra, p. 32. There are some remarks which contradict this view, e.g. Cortez A., Esclavos y vencidos, pp. 33, 67, 127.

Prisionero de guerra, p. 117). But the conclusion to be drawn from the historians is that the military and the government are obliged to pursue their bellicose policy to the bitter end, if only out of self-interest, for defeat or surrender in the Chaco as in any war inevitably brings discredit and dismissal to those responsible. By prolonging the war, therefore, in the hope of ultimate victory or at least honourable settlement, the political and military leaders have nothing to lose. But in the case of the Bolivian leaders, the further they prolong the war, the more apparent do their inadequacies and errors become, and the more open are they to the criticisms levelled against them. These criticisms made in the fiction do not compare the tactics and strategy of the Bolivian and Paraguayan leadership, showing the superiority of the latter, since the novelist--unlike the military historian--was not in a position to demonstrate this (see, for example, Vergara Vicuña, La guerra del Chaco, I, 79-82, 143-44). The novelist saw the weakness of Bolivian leadership in absolute, not relative terms.

Anze Matienzo describes the Bolivian attitude as the country embarked upon war as "romántico, confiado en las fuerzas subjetivas y eternas" (El martirio de un civilizado, p. 15). This is a novelist's way of saying that there was a general ignorance of the Chaco not only on the part of the ordinary soldier, but more seriously that of his military superiors and his government, a view confirmed by historians (see, for example, Vergara Vicuña, I, 128, 314). Perhaps Peláez' Campos is expecting too much of the country's leaders in suggesting that they should have read works of exploration in the Chaco (Cuando el viento, II, 46), or Cunningham Graham's portrait of the Paraguayan dictator Solano López,¹ but it is

1. Cuando el viento, II, 161. The Scotsman's work, entitled Portrait of a Dictator, was not published until 1933.

incontestable that greater knowledge of the region by the government and army leaders would have assisted the country's performance in the war. It is doubtful even whether the Bolivian leaders actually visited the Chaco during the period when the likelihood of war was growing: General Kundt, for example, who became Commander-in-Chief late in 1932, is said by one of the novelists only to have flown over the region before the war, a criticism corroborated by historians.¹ It is possible that, had some of the leaders gone there and seen the nature of the terrain and the problems which would face the Bolivian army, they would not have spoken in terms of the war lasting only two months (Toro Ramallo, Chaco, p. 58), and greater consideration might have been given to a diplomatic solution to the boundary question before the impetus toward full-scale war became uncontrollable. Some of the writers suggest that certain fundamental considerations were ignored or discounted, such as the unsuitability of the Indians to the Chaco,² or the kind of tactics most suited to the terrain and conditions.³

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1. Landa Lyon, Mariano Choque Huanca, pp. 127-28. Cf. Vergara Vicuña, La guerra del Chaco, I, 423; Ayala Moreira, Por qué no ganamos la guerra del Chaco, (La Paz: Talleras Gráficas Bolivianas, 1959), pp. 69-70. By contrast, the Paraguayan military commander Estigarribia was thoroughly familiar with the Chaco before the outbreak of hostilities. See his The Epic of the Chaco, p. 6.
 2. Anze Matienzo, El martirio de un civilizado, p. 15; Landa Lyon, Mariano Choque Huanca, pp. 93-94. M. McLeod, "Bolivia and its Social Literature before and after the Chaco War: A Historical Study of Social and Literary Revolution," Diss. Florida 1962, p. 11, does not give credence to the physiological inability of the altiplano Indians to adjust to lower elevation, and suggests that it is "probably more a question of traditional attachment to the altiplano as well as lack of immunity to lowland diseases." However, he does not substantiate this refutation, which contradicts claims made by Bolivian writers and which are supported by Zook, The Conduct of the Chaco War, p. 149.
 3. See below, pp. 217-18.

One criticism that does seem justified is that the Bolivian army was totally unprepared for the scale of mobilization which became necessary (see Vergara Vicuña, La guerra del Chaco, I, 41). Whether Kundt said "Con dos mil hombres, armados de látigos, llegaremos a la Asunción" (Toro Ramallo, Chaco, p. 140), or "Con tres mil hombres de Bolivia me comprometo tomar Asunción,"¹ we have at least a clear indication of the attitude which led to such unreadiness. All writers appear to agree that there was little foresight or planning, although there is no confirmation amongst historians of Landa Lyon's claim that fortines were established without roads and roads were built without fortines.² When the clamour for war grew so loud that no other course was left open, those counsels (some of them from the military) which warned that the country was unprepared went unheeded.³ Once they were committed to war, neither political nor military leaders seemed to have a plan of action.⁴ Guzmán's Ramírez suggests that the politicians brought about the disasters which befell the country by obliging the army to mobilize without due warning in an unknown region,⁵

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1. Ayala Moreira, Por qué no ganamos la guerra del Chaco, p. 46, quotes Kundt as having said this as early as 1924. According to Zook, p. 90, even as late as December 1931 a Bolivian operations plan estimated that a force of some 4,000 men would be adequate for a war with Paraguay.
 2. Landa Lyon, Mariano Choque Huanca, p. 140. This remark is probably meant to be taken as a figure of speech, however. See above, Chapter II, p. 37.
 3. Toro Ramallo, Chaco, p. 58. Cf. Vergara Vicuña, La guerra del Chaco, I, 54-59.
 4. Landa Lyon, p. 140. Cf. Vergara Vicuña, III, 12.
 5. Querejazu Calvo, Masamaclay, pp. 60-62, provides interesting statistical corroboration of this suggestion: in mid-1932, Paraguay had 4,200 men under arms, Bolivia 5,539 (of whom 1,251 were in the Chaco region). But Paraguay was able to mobilize 16,000 men in 36 days, whereas it took Bolivia four months to equal that figure.

as a result of which manoeuvres, however well-planned, were slow and uncertain (Guzmán, Prisionero de guerra, pp. 42-43). He also maintains that patrols were ineffective because the men were not accustomed to the absence of horizon, a more difficult assertion to substantiate¹ since it falls into the realm of the psychological, although there is no doubt that the Paraguayans had the advantage of being more familiar with all aspects of the Chaco (Vergara Vicuña, La guerra del Chaco, I, 238). On the question of mobilization, Landa Lyon maintains that the army itself contributed to these disasters by its own regulations, which insisted upon men being called up by certain classes, even though trained men might already be available.² The monthly mobilization figures provided by Querejazu Calvo tend to support this assertion.³ Nor would it be surprising to learn that the men had to be trained in the front-lines, since the training given in the barracks was valid only for the altiplano (Guzmán, Prisionero de guerra, p. 17, and see also Daza Valverde, ¡Guerra a la guerra!, p. 15). Toro cites the example of trench-digging at Campo Jordán, which had to be done initially with bayonets and metal plates, as another example of the army's lack of preparation.⁴

Toro's criticism of Bolivian political leaders is that they are

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1. Zook also makes this assertion, however (The Conduct of the Chaco War, p. 148).
 2. Mariano Choque Huanca, p. 118. Toro Ramallo, Chaco, p. 58, also notes the lack of a sense of urgency concerning mobilization. Zook, p. 91, asserts that "had Bolivia conducted general mobilization during August [1932] and struck promptly, she would likely have attained the river [Paraguay] and won the war."
 3. July 1932: 1,826; August 1932: 3,521; September 1932: 4,216. During this period Bolivia lost the fortines at Boquerón, Yucra, Arce and Alihuatá. See Masamaclay, pp. 60-62.
 4. Chaco, p. 116. Cf. Zook, p. 110. See also Vergara Vicuña, I, 410, who confirms the absence of sappers and the lack of tools.

attempting to fight the war "on the cheap," instead of committing the whole economy of the country to the war effort. One of the phrases that he uses, "la guerra se ha hecho con cuentagotas,"¹ is referred to by Vergara Vicuña as being of popular origin and used by soldiers and civilians alike.² Consequently military requests for equipment are cut to fractions, mobilization is carried out piecemeal, and even fundamental supplies such as ammunition run out.³ The military also take their share of reproof, however, especially the early leaders, described by Toro as inept and stupid.⁴ One of Toro's characters also criticises those generals "que han paseado por Europa, durante años. Cuestan al país millones de pesos y por resultado, han dado esta campaña absurda" (Chaco, p.140), but it is not clear to whom he is referring and could well be an example of the myths that emerge when scapegoats are sought.

The political figure who is subjected to the strongest criticism is, for obvious reasons, President Daniel Salamanca, who led the country for all but seven months of the war until he was forced to resign by rebellious army officers. Described as "terco y seco" (Chaco, p. 140) and as

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1. Chaco, pp. 138. It is used also by Taborga T., Boquerón, p. 74.
 2. Vergara Vicuña, I, 18, 236. Elsewhere Toro Ramallo remarks "se hizo la guerra por entregas" (Chaco, p. 183) and "estamos haciendo una guerra barata, de ocasión, con ahorro. Una guerra de segunda mano. . . ." (p. 139). See also Guzmán, Prisionero de guerra, p. 41.
 3. Toro Ramallo, p. 139. On the exhaustion of ammunition at Nanawa, see Daza Valverde, ¡Guerra a la guerra!, p. 81. Vergara Vicuña, I, 19, supports the criticism of the failure of the Bolivian government fully to commit the country's resources to the war. Zook, p. 126, adds that following the appointment of General Kundt, Salamanca succeeded in persuading him to adhere to an "economic war."
 4. Chaco, p. 183. This is a somewhat unjust accusation since President Salamanca's role can partly be blamed for Bolivia's early setbacks (see below, p. 214). However, Zook's account (pp. 98-99, 103), does lend support to Toro's contention.

suffering from an "inexpugnable egolatría" (Céspedes, "Opiniones de dos descabezados," Sangre de mestizos, p. 222), 'El Viejo' (as he was referred to) does not listen to his advisers and yet criticises the High Command for the shortcomings for which he is responsible.¹ Guzmán's character Ramírez accuses Salamanca of responsibility for everything (Prisionero de guerra, p. 105), but the most scathing criticism of him comes from Toro:

La torva testarudez de un mandatario, que vivía galvanizado por ideas que ya no eran ni siquiera antiguas, sino arcaicas y que como en el ejercicio de una venganza, largo tiempo acariciada, se rodeó de lo peor y mandó poco a poco, con sibarítica parsimonia, a toda la juventud, para que también, poco a poco, fuese muriendo, la falta de elementos y caminos y la estupidez de los primeros jefes, pavos con sable, en los que El creía a ciegas, estuvieron a punto de llevarnos al desastre (Chaco, p. 190).

As a consequence of his bellicosity (as some writers saw it) and in the light of Bolivia's defeat, the stature of his predecessor, Siles, who tried to avoid war (Klein, Parties and Political Change, pp. 111-12), is enhanced.²

However, all leading politicians have their apologists, and Salamanca was no exception. David Alvéstegui provides a voluminous historical defence of Salamanca's position in relation to the Chaco War and to his military advisers (in Salamanca: su gravitación sobre el destino de Bolivia, Vol. 4), but for that very reason it is preferable to turn to other more independent or non-committed historians for an objective assessment of Salamanca's role in the Chaco.

Toro's remarks quoted above seem naïve and churlish. Yet the picture which emerges from the works of historians such as Vergara Vicuña

1. Toro Ramallo, Chaco, p. 138, 140. Cf. Vergara Vicuña, I, 58; Taborga T., Boquerón, p. 56.

2. Montaña Daza, El mal natural, p. 49. See also Peláez, Cuando el viento, I, 189, 221.

is that much of the blame for Bolivia's fate can justly be attributed to Salamanca, who under the constitution became Captain General of the armed forces in war time. His indecisiveness regarding his objectives, his parsimony regarding men, arms and supplies, and his interference in military affairs¹ inevitably led to an intolerable relationship between political and military leaders which undermined civilian and military morale and stood in marked contrast to the relationship enjoyed by the Paraguayan President and his military commanders.² Criticism of Salamanca by the Chaco War novelists certainly does not seem unjustified.

Sharper barbs were, however, reserved for one of the principal military figures, General Hans Kundt. As a Bolivian military leader it is to be expected that he should come under attack from Paraguayan writers,³ but several Bolivian novelists subject him to some harsh criticism which, as was the case with Salamanca, is echoed by the assessment of the historians.

Landa Lyon's characters Gallardo and Requena are particularly harsh: the former accuses Kundt of being a mere mercenary (an easy but unjust accusation since Kundt had taken Bolivian citizenship as early as 1922) and suitable as commander of a regiment, not General-in-Chief of the army.⁴ He stifles ambition and progressivism amongst his

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1. Vergara Vicuña, I, 107-12, 146, 173, 249. See also Querejazu Calvo, Masamaclay, pp. 100-04.
 2. "The close cooperation of President Ayala and Estigarribia [the Paraguayan C-in-C] lent added strength to the country and was in no small measure responsible for the outcome of the war" (Zook, p. 199).
 3. Kundt inspired the title of the first Paraguayan novel of the Chaco War, Bajo las botas de una bestia rubia (1933) by Arnaldo Valdovinos.
 4. Mariano Choque Huanca, p. 142. This view of his abilities is supported by Ayala Moreira, Por qué no ganamos la guerra del Chaco, p. 72. Vergara Vicuña, III, 4-5, 11, and Querejazu Calvo, Masamaclay, p. 133, add that Kundt was not interested in establishing a proper Staff, but rather in organizing and training troops.

officers,¹ and according to Requena gives comfortable posts to his favourites.² There is nothing to substantiate the claim that out of fear none of his fellow-officers was prepared to reveal him in his true light (Mariano Choque Huanca, p. 127), nor the assertion that there were politicians who used Kundt for their own ends to keep themselves in power (p. 126), although it is possible to see this as a reason for his recall in the first place, since the prospect of his heading the Bolivian army was in itself encouraging to the Bolivians and disturbing to the Paraguayans owing to the legend which had grown up concerning his abilities and achievements during the First World War (Vergara Vicuña, III, 1-3). Céspedes, in another of his footnotes in "La coronela," points to Kundt's incompetence, lack of proper strategy, control or resourcefulness.³ He seems to Peláez' Juan Carlos to be old and almost played out,⁴ although he does appear to command the affection and confidence of the common soldier, as Otero claims for him.⁵ Yet none of the novelists goes so far as to suggest—as does Vergara Vicuña, quoting Colonel Oscar Moscoso—

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1. Mariano Choque Huanca, p. 142. Cf. Vergara Vicuña, III, 14, 17; Querejazu Calvo, Masamaclay, p. 195. It is scarcely surprising that, according to Querejazu Calvo, pp. 196-98, Kundt found on his visits to the front that his instructions were not being obeyed. The mistrust was mutual.
 2. Landa Lyon, p. 128. Cf. Vergara Vicuña, III, 20. The latter (III, 20-21), Querejazu Calvo, pp. 135-36, and Zook, p. 123, n. 67, suggest a political aspect to this which is not referred to by any of the novelists: Kundt bore a grudge against those who were on the opposite side in the coup of 1930 which led to Kundt's exile from Bolivia (see above, Chapter II, p. 40, n. 3).
 3. Sangre de mestizos, p. 87, n. 14. Cf. Vergara Vicuña, III, 16, quoting Colonel David Toro; Zook, p. 126.
 4. Cuando el viento, II, 43. Cf. Vergara Vicuña, III, 6, who points out that Kundt was already 63 when the war began, an advanced age for anyone to have to play a major role in the climatic conditions of the Chaco.
 5. Otero, Horizontes incendiados, p. 380. Cf. Zook, p. 156, n. 43.

that Bolivia's defeat can in large measure be explained by the fact that Kundt was responsible for the army for so long, both prior to and during the war.¹ Nor do the novelists criticize the command of Peñaranda, who succeeded Kundt and—to judge by the historians—led the army with equal ineffectualness for the last 18 months of the war (e.g. Zook, pp. 237-38). The possible explanation for this is that Peñaranda, unlike his predecessors, was seen as a potential social reformer in post-war Bolivia (he did in fact become President in 1940 [Lora, A History of the Bolivian Labour Movement, p. 170]). The same would apply to other younger military leaders in the latter part of the war.

Specific aspects of military operations are also the subject of strong criticism. Anze Matienzo, who otherwise avoids comment on the mismanagement of the war, does allow himself one justified remark upon the extraordinary lack of foresight which led to the whole Bolivian war-machine being dependent upon a barge across the River Pilcomayo outside Villa Montes:

Ese era el punto débil de la cuerda que Bolivia tendió desde sus centros de abastecimiento hasta el campo de operaciones. Roto o paralizado ese juguete frágil y ridículo, quedaba automáticamente paralizada la máquina de guerra. La montaña bélica construida con el sudor y la angustia de tres millones de hombres podía entumecerse por el simple capricho de ese juguete mecánico.² ¡Extrañas impresiones y contrasentidos de los pueblos niños!

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1. Vergara Vicuña, III, 36-43. Kundt's apologist is Raúl Tovar Villa, Campaña del Chaco: El General Hans Kundt, Comandante en Jefe del Ejército en Bolivia, (La Paz: Ed. Don Bosco, 1961).
 2. El martirio de un civilizado, p. 73. A bridge across the Pilcomayo was completed three months before the end of the war, according to Querejazu Calvo, Masamaclay, p. 391. Another weakness, potentially less serious but equally long in awaiting improvement, was the fact that the arrival of Bolivian troops and matériel at Villazón en route to the Chaco was visible by Paraguayan spies just over the Argentinian border at La Quiaca, especially on the Villazón-Tarija road. It was not until mid-1934 that the road was replaced. See Vergara Vicuña, I, 200-01.

On the question of transportation, Landa Lyon makes the unsubstantiated claim that lack of organization in the transport section prevented the Bolivians from using available resources to the full (Mariano Choque Huanca, p. 209). Any criticism of transportation, however, must be seen in the context of the daunting obstacles which faced those responsible for Bolivian logistics. The distance between La Paz and Villa Montes was 1,260 kilometres, consisting of some 850 kilometres of hazardous railway-line to Villazón, with the remainder a single-track road. From Villa Montes to Fortín Arce, Bolivia's most advanced position, was a further 600 kilometres of unpaved and often flooded road. Whereas the Paraguayans had 420 kilometres of railway in the Chaco itself, Bolivia had none.¹ In the face of these facts it is not surprising that Bolivia relied heavily on large numbers of lorries (of which she never had enough) for the movement of men and supplies.² If any criticism of the transport section is justified, recognition must also be given to the problems which faced it.

Perhaps the most serious criticism of all, however, is that of the overall tactics employed in the war. Both Montaña Daza and Céspedes point out the absurdity of fighting a war of positions (Montaña Daza, El mal natural, p. 51 and Céspedes, "La coronela," Sangre de mestizos, p. 90), and both of them see in it an inappropriate attempt by the European Kuntt to imitate the tactics that he used in the First World War (Montaña Daza,

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1. Rout, Politics of the Chaco Peace Conference, p. 42. Consequently the average time taken overland from La Paz to the front was 14 days; from Asunción the average was three to four days (Querejazu Calvo, Masamaclay, p. 98).
 2. Céspedes, "La Coronela," Sangre de mestizos, p. 73, n. 9, gives the increase in the number of lorries as from 22 at the start of the war to more than 2,000; Vergara Vicuña, I, 474, n., gives it as from 11 to 5,600--a considerable discrepancy. Zook, p. 24, points out that one of the lessons of the First World War was the importance of lorries for strategic mobility, and this lesson was re-emphasized in the Chaco.

p. 51 and Céspedes, pp. 84, 87),¹ although according to one historian he did not learn the lessons of the European War, and his tactics on the Eastern Front left a lot to be desired (Zook, p. 148). Montaña Daza suggests that it would have been far better if Bolivia had followed her opponent's example instead:

una guerra de movimientos, de permanente cuatreraje, de salirle constantemente al enemigo en la retaguardia, cortarle los abastecimientos y comunicaciones, exactamente igual que lo que han hecho los pilas con nosotros.²

The following remark by Professor Butterfield would seem to be particularly applicable to the Chaco War and General Kundt's leadership:

... . if men shape their minds too rigidly by a study of the last war, they are to some degree unfitting themselves for the conduct of the next one. If a nation decides conversely that it will set out with the particular purpose of avoiding the mistakes of the last war, it is still liable to be the slave of history and to be defeated by another nation that thinks of new things. Historical study, therefore, has sometimes a deadening effect on military strategists; and it has often been a criticism of them that they were too prone to conduct the present war on the method of the previous one, forgetting how times had changed (History and Human Relations, pp. 180-81).

To which might be added that the place had also changed: "La novedad de la línea Maginot los encandiló, sin tomar en cuenta que no somos Francia" (Montaña Daza, El mal natural, p. 51).

(c) Historical fact in fiction: the siege at Boquerón

The siege of Fortín Boquerón provides a good example to illustrate

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1. Cf. Vergara Vicuña, III, 9-11, who criticizes Kundt for his lack of imagination and adaptability in operational, tactical and logistical matters.
 2. Monaña Daza, El mal natural, p. 51. Vergara Vicuña, I, 356, for example, would not agree that this characterized Paraguayan strategy throughout the war, although elsewhere (I, 79-82) he acknowledges that her basic tactics were to keep moving whereas Bolivia was intent upon holding firm and wearing down the enemy. Zook, p. 144, makes the point that when on the offensive Kundt's objective was to gain ground, whereas Paraguay sought to destroy the enemy.

the ways in which the writer of fiction and the historian portray an actual battle in the war. Boquerón, the earliest major encounter between the two sides, involved the siege of the Bolivian-held fortín by large numbers of Paraguayan forces over a period of three weeks in September 1932.¹ According to the military historians, it was a situation in which Bolivia was bound to emerge the loser for a number of reasons. Paraguay was better prepared and more committed to hostilities (she had far greater numbers of troops in the area of conflict at this stage, and vastly superior fire-power, including mortars, which were unknown to the Bolivian troops); Bolivia's politicians and soldiers did not work in concert, and in both civilian and military spheres Paraguayan leadership was superior; finally Bolivia was not capable of keeping her besieged men supplied indefinitely with food, water, ammunition and reinforcements, given the state of the country's unpreparedness and the distance involved. Indeed, Vergara Vicuña points out that it was suicidal for Bolivia to have chosen to make Boquerón a decisive battle when in fact everything favoured Paraguay (La guerra del Chaco, I, 243). Its retention could not be justified in strategic military terms since topographically it was unimportant and as a salient on the general line of defence it would have required extra troops to defend it. It had been artificially elevated into a symbolic role, to the extent that the Bolivian High Command dare not withdraw from it because Bolivian public opinion had been led to believe that Boquerón could not and would not fall.²

1. See above, Chapter II, pp. 39-40.

2. Readers of La Paz newspapers had been informed that Boquerón was protected by steel casemates and reinforced concrete blockhouses (Taborga T., Boquerón, p. 26). In fact the toughest material used for such constructions was quebracho wood.

Some of these factors are indirectly referred to by the writers of fiction, although none reveals a full understanding of the Bolivian errors committed over Boquerón. Céspedes, in a footnote to the cuento "La Coronela," remarks that the siege of Boquerón revealed the extent of Bolivia's unpreparedness, since Paraguay was able to send 12,000 men to the front, whereas Bolivia, with a population of three million, could do nothing to help the 600 besieged men in the fortín.¹

The leader of the besieged men, Colonel Marzana, finally decided to surrender on September 29th 1932, and all writers concur in their admiration for the bravery and heroism of the Bolivian defenders. Otero's claim that Boquerón marked one of Bolivia's finest hours and revealed the sterling qualities of her soldiers (Horizontes incendiados, pp. 272-74) is echoed by Vergara Vicuña's remarks to the effect that Boquerón was well defended by disciplined, well-trained, well-led soldiers in a situation which emulated the most famous and the most heroic sieges in history.² Even the Paraguayans had to admit to the bravery and courage of the Bolivian defenders (Vergara Vicuña, I, 351-52; Taborga T., p. 90). Yet everyone except Otero seems aware of the hollowness of Bolivia's glory. Toro, who described the heroism of the defenders in hyperbolic terms (Chaco, pp. 76-77), calls it "una gloria inútil, acaso sólo el yunque siniestro donde se prueba una raza" (p. 77). But even he does not see the wider issues behind Bolivia's defeat at Boquerón. Landa Lyon, although seemingly unaware of the reasons for the apparent abandonment

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1. Sangre de mestizos, p. 78, n. 11. Elsewhere, in "Humo de petróleo," p. 155, he repeats these figures, adding with pointed irony that the Bolivians at Boquerón "aguardaban refuerzos 500 kilómetros más lejos." See Appendix for a study of the discrepancies in statistics concerning Boquerón.
 2. I, 198. General Quintanilla, who signed the message dropped by plane into the fortín on 11th September, described Boquerón as the "Verdún boliviano," according to Taborga T., Boquerón, p. 36. Taborga himself likened it to Dien-Bien-Phu (p. 15).

of the besieged,¹ does note that the loss of Boquerón was indicative of profound inadequacies at the top. Together with the swift loss of Fortín Arce in October, Boquerón revealed the country's political and military bankruptcy. Neither politicians nor officers were in control of the situation and, he suggests, the professional politicians merely used it to their own advantage (Mariano Choque Huanca, pp. 121-22). These claims are substantially corroborated by the historians' assessments of Boquerón referred to earlier.

Otero, who describes the fighting at Boquerón in some detail (Horizontes incendiados, pp. 241-74), uses the occasion for propaganda to illustrate the heroism of Bolivia and her soldiers. He concentrates on the fact that the defenders of the fortín managed to resist eleven assaults before having to surrender, and exaggerates his case not only in the description of the Paraguayan who died of fright (pp. 265-66), but even in his description of Colonel Marzana. Trying to invest him with a suitably heroic appearance, Otero describes him as "un militar fuerte, de anchos hombros de forjador, de recia figura criolla" (p. 262), which does not at all describe the photograph of him shown by Querejazu (Masamaclay, facing p. 92).

Hence although Toro and Landa Lyon do reveal some perception of the wider significance of Bolivia's defeat at Boquerón, it is the military historians who remark upon the psychological importance of the fall of Boquerón for the nation. Although ostensibly just one fortín of many, the loss of Boquerón in the first decisive battle of the war gave

1. "Todos aplaudían el heroismo de aquellos sacrificados, pero nadie se movía ni hacía nada por ellos. ¿Las causas? ¿El motivo? Misterio" (Mariano Choque Huanca, p. 102).

Paraguay a psychological advantage and dealt a heavy blow to Bolivian morale, not only by the defeat but also through the realization that the most miserable of the small republics of South America (President Salamanca's description of Paraguay) had been able to field such strength and show how far Bolivia had underestimated her opponent (Zook, pp. 101-02). Moreover since the Bolivian government had led the people into believing that Boquerón could not fall, their shock when it did so led to the demand for General Kundt to lead the Bolivian war-effort, a demand to which the government acceded (Vergara Vicuña, I, 423). Consequently Bolivian strategy for the period until December 1933 (when Kundt was replaced), a strategy which was little short of disastrous, was determined by what happened at Boquerón, and adds further to the significance of the outcome of the siege.

The novelists, however, did not perceive these wider consequences. Moreover on the level of factual information, it would be difficult to obtain a clear understanding of what transpired militarily at Boquerón from a reading of any of the works of fiction, other than a bare outline. This, of course, is a reflection of the differing objectives and functions of works of fiction and works of military history. The writer of fiction is neither concerned to provide nor capable of providing anything more than an imprecise view of an historical event, and this is in keeping with the fact that very often he is writing from the viewpoint of the ordinary soldier, who would most probably have neither an overview nor an understanding of the issues involved.

(d) Foreign intervention

There is a strong feeling amongst the writers that neither Bolivia nor Paraguay is entirely in control of the Chaco War, nor entirely

responsible for it. As Céspedes points out, and other writers concur, beyond the governments of the two warring nations a third party seems to be involved: "la oligarquía conservadora argentina que por medio de sus conductores Justo y Saavedra Lamas encendió el motor de la penetración territorial con vistas al petróleo."¹ Several writers explore this Argentinian involvement further. Anze Matienzo's principal character Mario, who is in Buenos Aires when the war begins, notes the near indifference with which ordinary Argentinians greet the news (El martirio de un civilizado, p. 14 and see also p. 111). But to judge by other writers' comments, the Argentinian government seems much more involved. Through a pre-war discussion between left-wing Argentinians, together with the Bolivian Padillita and a Paraguayan, Otero goes so far as to suggest that there will only be a war if it suits Argentina (Horizontes incendiados, p. 135). Whilst this is undoubtedly overstating the case, Toro points to the degree of control that Argentina exercises over the Paraguayan war-effort once war has been declared. He suggests that Paraguay receives arms, transport, staff officers and financial loans from Argentina,² and that the war is really against this imperialist enemy to the south.³ Argentinians are seen by Toro to be "los yanquis de este continente" (Chaco, p. 169 and also his Cutimuncu, p. 126), and according to him their aims are to take over Paraguay, Bolivia and ultimately to secure a port on the Pacific at Chile's expense.⁴ Although

1. "Opiniones de dos descabezados," Sangre de mestizos, p. 221. For a discussion of the oil question see below, pp. 226-30.

2. Chaco, pp. 97-98. On the supply of financial loans and oil supplies from Argentina, see Zook, p. 154, n. 30 and p. 205.

3. Chaco, p. 169. Cf. Querejazu Calvo, Masamaclay, pp. 164-75.

4. Chaco, pp. 169-70. See also Otero, Horizontes incendiados, pp. 144-45.

other writers do not go as far as this, both Costa du Rels and Céspedes accuse Argentina of aiding and exploiting Paraguay in the war (Costa du Rels, La Laguna H.3., p. 211; Céspedes, "La Coronela," Sangre de mestizos, pp. 56, 92), despite her lip-service to neutrality which also works to Bolivia's disadvantage.¹ Certainly the support lent to Paraguay by the Argentinian government is corroborated by non-fictional accounts of the war,² so that even if the accusations by the writers of fiction are exaggerated, their basic criticism of Argentinian involvement is amply substantiated.³

There are also hints of Russian participation in the Paraguayan war effort made by Toro, one concerning inscriptions on tree-trunks, another involving a story about an inflatable rubber woman told against "un comandante ruso, jefe de una zona militar paraguaya," and a third about the ill-treatment of Bolivian prisoners at Alihuatá by a Russian officer.⁴

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1. Peláez, Cuando el viento, II, 179; Daza Valverde, ¡Guerra a la guerra!, p. 40. Cf. Zook, pp. 140-41.
 2. See, for example, Ayala Moreira, Por qué no ganamos la guerra del Chaco, pp. 344-65; Querejazu Calvo, especially pp. 164-75; Rout, Politics of the Chaco Peace Conference, p. 58; Zook, p. 122, n. 55; Vergara Vicuña, I, 413-18, who argues that the collaboration of the Argentinian Colonel Schweizer, an outstanding figure and expert on the Chaco, was of much greater significance than the contact of his Brazilian and Chilean counterparts with Bolivia.
 3. Landa Lyon's character Gallardo points out (Mariano Choque Huanca, p. 139) the danger of placing the blame for Bolivia's disasters at the feet of the Argentinians instead of recognizing her own deficiencies. However, none of the writers who implicate Argentina fails to point the finger at the Bolivian leaders also.
 4. Chaco, pp. 88, 112, 131. For a further reference, see Chaco, p. 97. According to Fogelquist, Modern Language Journal, XXXIII (1949), 606, n. 11, a number of Czarist officers who had gone to live in Paraguay did participate in the Chaco War. Russian participation is also confirmed by Vergara Vicuña, I, 404, and Taborga T., Bocuerón, p. 49. Elsewhere Vergara Vicuña, III, 30, mentions the collaboration of a Russian General Belayieff (who according to Zook, p. 63, and Díaz Machicao, Historia de Bolivia 1931-36, p. 54,

One of Céspedes' characters describes a Russian captain being shot as he led a group of Paraguayans in an assault,¹ while Guzmán writes of Bolivian prisoners being treated by Russian doctors (Prisionero de guerra, p. 241). In fact Russian involvement went further than the mere participation of a few men: Paraguayan defences, upon which a great deal of her early success rested, were inspired and organized by two Russian generals (Zook, pp. 128, 130, 148).

Not all foreign influence occurred on the Paraguayan side, however: one novelist noted German influence as evidenced by the Bolivian uniforms (despite their unsuitability for the Chaco),² and tank crews, according to another writer, consisted of Germans.³ As has been shown, all of these assertions by the novelists are substantiated elsewhere, although it is interesting to note that no mention is made in the fiction of

had assisted Paraguay in her pre-war explorations of the Chaco) and also a French Colonel Langlois (a French military mission spent four years in Paraguay following the First World War, and Estigarribia and other Paraguayan officers had acquired their military knowledge in France).

1. "Seis muertos en la campaña," Sangre de mestizos, p. 109. See also Leitón, La punta de los cuatro degollados, p. 24. Cf. Zook, pp. 134 and 153, n. 24.
2. Landa Lyon, Mariano Choque Huanca, p. 254. Other German commercial ventures may have occurred, since from 1910 German trading houses had controlled commercial activity in the Oriente. See Fifer, Bolivia: Land, Location and Politics, p. 197.
3. Céspedes, "La coronela," Sangre de mestizos, p. 89. German influence in the Bolivian army dated from 1911 when a German military mission, headed by (then Colonel) Kundt, took over the task of modernizing the Bolivian forces from the French mission which had arrived in 1905. With Kundt as Chief of General Staff for a total of ten years between 1911 and 1930, the German influence persisted throughout the pre-war period and into the war itself. (See Zook, p. 62). Zook also mentions (p. 164) the participation of a Major Brandt, a German mercenary.

Chilean¹ or (on a smaller scale) Spanish and Czech participation on the Bolivian side.²

Aside from the involvement of the Argentinians, however, the most significant interference from foreign interests was considered to be that of the international oil companies, Standard Oil of New Jersey on the Bolivian side and the British company Royal Dutch Shell in Paraguay. At the time of the war there were varying degrees of belief ranging from suspicion to positive conviction that these two companies were actually manipulating the national governments of the belligerents in order to secure the untapped rich oil deposits which lay beneath the Chaco. Augusto Céspedes was typical of those who were convinced of the deep involvement of the oil companies. The Standard Oil Company, that "negro dios petrolífero" ("Opiniones de dos descabezados," Sangre de mestizos, p. 222),

no está obligada a sernos leal. Ella sólo puede ser fiel a sus pozos, y su gangsterismo es tan peligroso para nosotros como lo son

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1. Paraguay claimed that over a hundred Chilean officers were assisting the Bolivian army, according to La Foy, The Chaco Dispute and the League of Nations, p. 91, n. 44. Estigarribia, The Epic of the Chaco, (ed. Ynsfran), p. 152, claims the number to be as high as 300 officers. Rout, Politics of the Chaco Peace Conference, p. 62, confirms that "after 1933 Chile allowed Bolivia to recruit army officers and hire labourers." One of these officers was the future Chaco historian Vergara Vicuña. Chile had an interest in a Bolivian victory since she feared that defeat would renew Bolivian ambitions towards a Pacific outlet. Consequently Chile continued to allow Bolivia free passage of arms through Arica, in accordance with their treaty following the War of the Pacific, despite her declared neutrality (and that of the other neighbouring countries after Paraguay had officially declared war in May 1933). Chile was also anxious to oppose Argentinian supremacy in the southern part of the continent, and support of Bolivia was a means of doing this.
 2. Zook, p. 123, n. 67, refers to a Spanish military mission contracted by Bolivia in November 1932, and also (pp. 198 and 223, n. 19) to a Czech mission in June 1934 which early in the following year was incorporated into the command (p. 241, n. 1).

para el Paraguay los Casado, los Sastre y la Royal Dutch Shell.¹ Céspedes' conviction was echoed by the U.S. Senator Huey Long who charged in 1934 that Standard Oil were financing the Bolivian war effort, a charge which the Paraguayans took as proof of what they felt to be true (Rout, Politics of the Chaco Peace Conference, p. 65). The Chairman of the League of Nations Commission to the Chaco in 1933, J. Alvarez del Vayo, felt that the war would have finished much earlier if it had not been for the oil interests on the Bolivian side (La Foy, The Chaco Dispute and the League of Nations, p. 80). The hero of Boquerón, Colonel Marzana, thought that he and his men were defending "el acervo económico de la nación: petróleos" (in a letter dated 30 September 1955 published as a "Confirmatoria" to Taborga T., Boquerón, p. 10), and as recently as 1957 the former President of Bolivia stated that the principal cause of the Chaco War was oil (Paz Estenssoro, in Chang-Rodríguez and Kantor (eds), La América Latina de hoy, p. 155).

Yet the consensus of most contemporary observers is that "proof of Standard Oil's involvement has never been demonstrated" (Rout, p. 45) and that "oil was specifically insignificant in the origins of the Chaco War" (Zook, p. 72). It is certainly true that Standard Oil was granted large concessions from 1921 onwards for exploration and exploitation in the eastern and south-eastern sectors of the country (but none actually in disputed territory) and that by 1928 there were eight wells in operation.

1. "Opiniones de dos descabezados," Sangre de mestizos, p. 223. Casado and Sastre were Argentinian companies with large interests in Paraguay. See also Cerruto, Aluvión de fuego, pp. 171-72. Guzmán described his novel Prisionero de guerra as a record of his experience of events of "la única aventura petrolífera del Sudeste," according to Latorre, Atenea, 130 (1936), 143-44. In Chaco, p. 111, Toro Ramallo has a Paraguayan prisoner explain that they were promised the wealth of Bolivian oil, "y por eso vinieron."

In 1931 the company completed two small refineries at Camiri and Sanandita, and between 1930 and 1932 oil production reached 6,000 tons per year (Rout, Politics of the Chaco Peace Conference, p. 46). But already in 1931 Standard Oil had declared that commercially viable petroleum was not to be found in the Chaco (Rout, p. 49).

This did not convince everyone, however. Several books were published in Argentina, including La tragedia del altiplano (1934) by the Bolivian Marxist Tristán Marof, which supported the belief that the war was really one between the two oil companies.¹ Others believed that Standard Oil had financed the war in the first place in order to ensure both that the company would have access to possible oil-fields in the Chaco region itself and also that a trans-Chaco pipeline and a port for export on the River Paraguay would be guaranteed as part of a Bolivian victory (which was originally considered the most likely outcome of any armed conflict—see Rout, Politics of the Chaco Peace Conference, p. 49). In fact the degree of involvement of Standard Oil in the Chaco conflict is impossible to quantify, but it would appear to be minimal and in any case indirect. Until the company had established the extent and commercial viability of any oil deposits in the Chaco region, it was naturally interested in Bolivian ownership of the territory being confirmed (since Bolivia had granted the concessions), but that is not to say that the company deliberately financed the war to this end (Fifer, Bolivia: Land, Location and Politics, p. 220). Similarly it is quite likely that the Bolivian government used some of the money obtained from Standard Oil

1. On Marof, see above, Chapter III, pp. 67-69. Cf. Céspedes, "Opiniones de dos descabezados," Sangre de mestizos, p. 224, n. 6, in which he quotes the son of the Argentinian President in 1936. Céspedes adds that whatever the role of the foreign oil companies, the most important external cause of the war was Argentina.

through concessions and taxation to finance the purchase of war materials. But that cannot be taken as evidence that the oil company deliberately financed the Bolivian war effort (Rout, p. 52). Indeed neither the company's refusal to refine aviation fuel in 1933 (Rout, p. 48; Klein, Parties and Political Change in Bolivia, p. 153) nor shipments of Bolivian oil to Argentina during the war (Klein, p. 153) indicates any commitment to serve Bolivia's best interests: in this respect, Céspedes' concern seems fully justified.

What appears to have happened is that at a crucial time during the development of a confrontation over the Chaco region between Bolivia and Paraguay, the discovery of some oil deposits led some elements on both sides into believing that possession of the Chaco might be significant either for the exploitation or for the exportation of petroleum. In retrospect the potential resources were exaggerated, but this did not prevent them from being a significant factor in the conflict at the time, especially when the Paraguayans threatened to encroach beyond the Bolivian foothills in the north-west corner of the Chaco towards the end of the war (Fifer, p. 220). In fact the most successful oil strikes in that part of the continent made since the war have not been in the Chaco (where it now seems almost certain that commercially viable oil deposits do not exist--see Rout, p. 237), but in the Santa Cruz region. And if a trans-Chaco oil-pipeline ever was a serious cause of the Chaco conflict, the pursuit of such an objective has--like the port on the River Paraguay itself¹--been abandoned, in favour of an alternative, in this case a westward route to Arica (Fifer, pp. 227-28).

In view of the fairly widespread belief during the 1930's that oil

1. See above, Chapter II, p. 48, n. 1.

deposits were a major cause of the conflict it is surprising that a greater amount of criticism of the oil companies' role is not to be found in the fiction.¹ But clearly Céspedes' remarks at least reflect the same nationalist and anti-imperialist concerns which inspired other criticisms of foreign influence already noted.

Finally, Landa Lyon perceives the irony of the fact that on the Bolivian side the war was being fought by extranjeros: by a German-born General and by Aymara soldiers, brought down from the altiplano to an unknown land:

Ese jefe no sabía una palabra del idioma nativo del soldado indígena para poder alentarlos. Entre el soldado y el jefe había de por medio un abismo, un mundo que los separaba; un abismo de civilización, un mundo de distancia. Todo los separaba, nada los unía: ambos eran extranjeros en esa tierra chaqueña. El uno era un gringo prusiano, el otro era un gringo aymara que se encontraron ese momento ambos en el trance de defender esa tierra que no era de ninguno de los dos: el uno por un mandato, por una 'orden superior,' por interés económico el otro; esclavo el uno, mercenario el otro. La guerra la hacían extranjeros (Mariano Choque Huanca, pp. 229-30).

A reminder such as this of the "foreignness" of the Bolivian soldiers themselves in the Chaco lends a touch of irony to Bolivian criticisms of interference in the conflict by other nations.

In examining the social and national aspects of the war thus far, we have been dealing largely with historically verifiable facts and events. It has been possible to assess the veracity of the novelists' assertions, as J. Norton Cru would have had us do, precisely because others whose objective is to recreate a factually accurate description and interpretation of historical events have provided us with a yardstick

1. Greater criticism is to be found in the Paraguayan novels largely because Standard Oil's interest in the Bolivian oil-fields was more significant than that of Royal Dutch Shell in Paraguay. For examples in Paraguayan works, see Arana, "La novela de la guerra del Chaco," pp. 195-96.

by which an assessment can be made. But there are other questions (which we shall proceed to examine) under this heading which the historians do not examine or mention only fleetingly because they concern social or cultural problems rather than historical events. Some of them are of major significance, for they contribute to the outcome of the conflict. Others are merely phenomena to be observed, or observations to be noted, and may be common to other or to all wars. But together they help to produce a multifaceted view of the social and national aspects of the war which is broader than that of any historiographical work and consequently enhances our understanding of this historical event.

(e) The Indian Soldier

Conscripts are invariably reluctant participants in any war, but few countries could have called to arms a body of men so alien to a conflict as the Bolivian Indians, and this subject is a prominent feature of several of the works of Chaco War fiction. The alienation can be traced to the neglect which the Indian population of Bolivia suffered for three centuries at the hands of the dominant blanco and mestizo classes. The Indians of the altiplano lived largely outside the economic activity and the concern of the rest of the population who controlled the country. Since they constituted the bulk of the population, however, the Indians became the essential component of the Bolivian army when the Chaco conflict began and they were expected at the same time to become enthusiastic defenders of the Chaco in particular and of the patria in general. The Indians were not prepared for this transformation from pariah to patriot, and this contributed in no small way to Bolivia's defeat at the hands of Paraguay, whose racial mixture is totally different. Bolivia thus paid the price for having excluded the Indians from participation in the

country's affairs for so long, whilst the Indians themselves are shown to suffer the same exploitation in the war as they suffered before it (Landa Lyon, Mariano Choque Huanca, pp. 134-35, and see also Leytón, "¡Fusilado!" Placer, p. 101).

When the cry for war is raised, the Indian of the campo does not echo the enthusiasm demonstrated by the city-dweller. For the Indian going to war means abandoning his family, the land he works and the livestock he tends. Landa Lyon claims, therefore, that when the son of an Indian campesino goes to war, he is doubly missed (Mariano Choque Huanca, pp. 13-14). But the Indians have little choice as to whether or not they go, and resign themselves to their fate, especially if a priest tells them that the war is punishment for their sins (Mariano Choque Huanca, pp. 6, 8). The Indians set off for the war-front with stoical indifference (Mariano Choque Huanca, p. 31; Toro Ramallo, Chaco, p. 60), knowing little or nothing of their destination or the reasons why they are being sent there. Their ignorance of the Chaco and of the war itself--an ignorance for which they cannot, of course, be held responsible--and their indifference towards them both are the two most important aspects of the alienation of the Indians from the Chaco shown in the fiction.

The Chaco is an unknown region to all but a handful of Bolivians, but because of the emotional attachment of the altiplano Indian to his own piece of land and also to his own native scenery, the foreignness of the Chaco is peculiarly significant. Anze Matienzo tries to suggest that the common bond which unites the blanco and the Indian in Bolivia is their attachment to the land (El martirio de un civilizado, p. 55), but the Indian's feeling for it is based upon a pantheism which surpasses that of the blanco historically and in spiritual depth. For that reason the Indian cannot bring himself to feel that he belongs in the Chaco or

that the Chaco belongs to him, whereas the blanco can at least come to realize that the Chaco is part of his patria. It would not be surprising if Landa Lyon's Mariano felt as much at home in the Chaco as would a Welshman or a Pole: "Lo que estaba a su alrededor nada le decía a sus sentimientos. Nada había allí que le hablara de su tierra, de su lengua, de su religión" (Mariano Choque Huanca, p. 90). Fighting in the Chaco is for the Indians like participating in a colonial war in a distant exotic land for which they have no feeling and which they defend merely because they are obliged to do so (Mariano Choque Huanca, pp. 225-26).

At least having arrived at the front the Indian conscript has some clearer notion as to what the Chaco is, whilst the women left behind (according to Landa Lyon) continue to think of it as a village like their own, where everyone knows everyone else (p. 84). But to know what the Chaco is does not give the Indian any greater sense of attachment to it, and he is likely to return from it feeling no less alien:

Recordarán la guerra como un remolino de fuego de espinas y de sol. Sin noción de sitios ni de distancias, no sabrán nunca en qué lugar del laberinto de la selva les volaron un miembro o en donde quedaron los otros Quispe, Mamani y Condori, cuyos ranchos cerrados se van deshaciendo poco a poco, latigueados por el viento (Toro Ramallo, Chaco, p. 184).

The writers maintain that the Indian is a misfit in the Chaco: physically ill-adapted to its climate,¹ he is also spiritually out of place. Two writers illustrate this by references to music: when Indian recruits hear some soldiers singing American or European songs, they sound to them like noises from another planet (Anze Matienzo, El martirio de un civilizado, pp. 90, 104). Yet the Indians' own music sounds out of place in the Chaco: "en medio de aquella vegetación boscosa y de ese calor salvaje que los

1. See above, p. 209, n. 2.

sofocaba era un contrasentido."¹ In the realm of music, they are shown to have nothing in common either with other Bolivians or with the ambiente of the Chaco.

This incompatibility of the Indians and the Chaco does little to assist the Bolivian effort to defend the region. The Indians find it difficult to understand concepts of patria and the flag: patria means "su heredad,--los que la tenían,--sus campos, su choza y, cuando más, la infinita soledad de la pampa" (Landa Lyon, Mariano Choque Huanca, p. 30), whilst Anze Matienzo's character Mario fails even to convey anything to an Indian by likening the flag to a portrait of his mother (El martirio de un civilizado, p. 79). Since, these writers maintain, it is scarcely possible to appeal to the Indian's sense of patriotism, it is doubly difficult to instil in him any sense of commitment towards the Chaco, which is both hostile and foreign to him, and he will readily abandon it whenever the opportunity presents itself. This explains why there were 10,000 Bolivian deserters in the war (Zook, p. 240), and 20,000 to 25,000 Bolivian prisoners, as compared with only 2,500 Paraguayan prisoners (Zook, p. 240; Querejazu Calvo, p. 450; Cerruto, Aluvión de fuego, p. 179). Landa Lyon suggests that the Indians' readiness to surrender is also partly due to their submissiveness and obedience which had become part of their character (Mariano Choque Huanca, pp. 267-68). It is significant that none of the historians considers either the Indians' alienation from the Chaco and the concept of nationhood nor their natural character as explanations for the astonishing discrepancy in the numbers

1. Landa Lyon, Mariano Choque Huanca, p. 152. Certainly the Aymara Indians' music seems to correspond more closely to the cold, clear, wind-swept isolation of the altiplano than to the tropical, luxuriant, suffocating atmosphere of the Chaco.

of prisoners taken on each side.¹

The Indians' ignorance of the Chaco and their indifference towards it are, as has been suggested, paralleled by their feelings towards the war itself. The Indians do not understand why the war is being fought nor why the pilas are their enemy.² They are certainly not motivated by the Greco-Roman concepts of sovereignty and law which, according to Anze Matienzo, lie at the root of the conflict (El martirio de un civilizado, p. 54), although the same would be true for most participants in it, but nor are they moved by feelings of nationalism which are normally the inspiration of the ordinary soldier (El martirio de un civilizado, p. 54, and see also Cortez A., Los avitaminosos, p. 34). Rodrigo shows the Indians in their trenches during a heavy bombardment working at their carvings, mending their clothes or merely daydreaming, unconscious of time or place, but thinking instead of their pre-war existence (Fue la sed, p. 60). They are capable of dissociating themselves from the action around them, because they do not feel emotionally involved in it. This may not be typical, but it does show the difficulties faced by Bolivian commanders and officers in trying to work with Indian recruits.

This is not to say that none of the writers finds a good word to say for the Indians as soldiers. Rodrigo himself, through his main character Aparicio, admires the courage and heroism of the anonymous repetes (p. 67), and Otero (a well-known indigenista and student of Indian culture) enthuses over their contempt for death, their heroism and their strength which they derive from religious faith (Horizontes

1. Klein, Parties and Political Change in Bolivia, p. 196, attributes the figures for Bolivian POWs and deserters entirely to left-wing infiltration and agitation.

2. Leytón, "¡Indio bruto!" Placer, pp. 83-84; Cortez A., Esclavos y vencidos, p. 8. Cf. Zook, p. 149.

incendiados, p. 365). Lara shows an Indian lieutenant as a highly respected, fearless and competent leader of men (Sujnapura, p. 125), whilst in another of his novels he has his Indian protagonist return from the war as a hero who, as a consequence, improves his social standing and captures the affections of the daughter of the patrón. Both then go into the country to start the revolution.¹

In general, however, the consensus amongst the writers is that the Indians do not make good soldiers, and it is revealing to note that on two occasions Toro tries to praise them but concludes by criticising them. He remarks on their stoicism and the fact that "saben morir," but then criticises their lack of drive, initiative and comprehension in carrying out orders.² Elsewhere he writes that the Indian "es sobrio, es fuerte, es sufrido, se hace matar casi con indiferencia, pero le faltan altivez, amor propio, iniciativa,"³ although he concedes that the fault lies with the blancos and mestizos who have deprived the Indian of precisely those virtues which are now demanded of him.⁴ A character in Cutimuncu also accuses them of malingering by deliberately undernourishing themselves (pp. 130-31), an accusation which smacks of prejudice rather than fact.⁵ One of Peláez' characters, Teniente Novara, criticizes the Indian's false

1. Lara, Surumi, (2nd ed., Cochabamba: Los Amigos del Libro, 1950), pp. 159-273.

2. Chaco, p. 100. On the Indians' stoicism see also Landa Lyon, Mariano Choque Huanca, p. 214; Cortez A., Los avitaminosos, pp. 34-35.

3. Chaco, p. 182; Landa Lyon, p. 235, also remarks on the Indians' lack of initiative.

4. Cf. Zook, p. 148, who praises the Indian as an excellent, stoic, defensive fighter, whose subordinate, unintegrated position in society made him incapable of personal initiative.

5. However, cf. Daza Valverde, ¡Guerra a la guerra! p. 207, who also mentions such a practice.

sense of priorities: in order to save his life the Indian is concerned about the utensils by which he can live (such as an empty petrol-can for water) rather than his weapon, which he neglects. The weight of his belongings makes mobility difficult and more than one soldier is killed retreating from the enemy because it prevents him from moving fast enough (Peláez, Cuando el viento, II, 181-82). Landa Lyon shows how the Indians instinctively form into groups, like sheep or llamas, at the first sign of danger, thus presenting an easy target for the enemy and increasing the number of casualties from a single shell, and nothing would deter them from behaving in this way.¹ All this would suggest that the Indians, in addition to feeling alien in the Chaco and to being ignorant about the war, are unsuited to the kind of warfare which is waged against Paraguay. Indeed, Landa Lyon suggests that the Indian's concept of war is different from that of the modern Western world:

Para ellos la guerra era individual, no colectiva. La debían sobrellevar. Como todo en su vida, trabajos y penas, eran sólo suyos, nada más que suyos. No había en aquella masa el sentimiento solidario de la multitud que siente y piensa al unísono porque quiere lo mismo, anhela y ambiciona lo mismo, de donde surge un ideal colectivo, nace un impulso único y se crea el verdadero patriotismo, que es el que se hace carne, conciencia de un pueblo (Mariano Choque Huanca, p. 25).

It is perhaps for this reason that he excels in hand-to-hand fighting and becomes "feroz y sanguinario, valiente y arrebatador" (Mariano Choque Huanca, p. 261). The opportunity for such fighting in the Chaco is rare, however, and the general view remains that the Indians are of little use as soldiers. Leytón asserts that when the military leaders finally became convinced of the Indians' uselessness as fighting men, the Indians were given shovels and picks in exchange for their rifles and became

1. Mariano Choque Huanca, pp. 156, 241, 259, 266. Cf. Remarque's comments about new recruits, Im Westen Nichts Neues, p. 96.

sappers instead (Leytón, "¡Indio bruto!" Placer, p. 92). There is no confirmation of this from historiographical sources, and it is hard to believe that the Bolivian army could afford to do this with all her Indian soldiers, but even if it occurred only with some of them it is one further illustration of the handicaps under which the Bolivian war-machine was labouring.

Yet, as has already been suggested, the Indians are shown by the novelists more as victims of the war than as responsible for Bolivia's defeat, and Zook confirms that "the contemporary world belief that Bolivian officers were excellent, but troops poor, is just another of the innumerable myths of the Chaco War" (p. 122, n. 50). Although being a soldier may initially invest the Indian with some status in the eyes of his social superiors (Landa Lyon, Mariano Choque Huanca, p. 30), and although he may be transformed by the war through education and encouragement (Landa Lyon, pp. 120, 132), none of this is sufficient to overcome the deep-rooted prejudices against the Indian race engrained in Bolivian society:

Comprendía ya el pobre soldado que sus ansias infinitas de perfección tendrían que ser muy limitadas y frente al empuje de esa naturaleza primitiva estaba toda una conciencia nacional, hecha por la esclavitud y la ignorancia y su raza expoliada que desconocía los influjos de la cultura. Mariano se sentía ya vencido, notaba que le faltaba la mano que le impulsara otra vez adelante (Landa Lyon, p. 225).

The position of the repete Liquitay in relation to a group of non-Indian soldiers is likened to that of "un oso bailarín despreciado, no obstante que de él vive toda una tribu de gitanos," for they give him all the arduous and exhausting tasks to do (Anze Matienzo, El martirio de un civilizado, p. 193). Not until he has performed the heroic act of killing an enemy soldier in order to acquire provisions on their behalf is he allowed to occupy his place as a "ser humano entre hombres

civilizados."¹

Other writers are more bitter in their defence of the Indian: Leytón argues that the Indian should not be asked to contribute anything to the war, for he owes the country nothing ("¡Fusilado!" Placer, p. 102) while Leitón chooses the difference between medical treatment for the Indians and medical treatment for the privileged to show the class prejudice to which the former are subject (La punta de los cuatro degollados, p. 91). The Indian's position in the Chaco War is exemplified by the irony of Cortez who shows a group of Aymara Indians being addressed by a high-ranking officer with the fine-sounding but empty words: "Vosotros soldados voluntarios, animados por el fervor patriótico que os ha impulsado a presentaros. . . (Cortez A., Esclavos y vencidos, p. 7). The words are empty not only because they are patently untrue, but because the Aymara-speaking conscripts to whom they are directed cannot understand a single one.

(f) Life away from the front

We have seen how the novelists described the enthusiastic clamour for war in its early days, and how full of excitement were the scenes of departure for the front.² Some of the writers go on to show that the enthusiasm and excitement do not last, however, for as time passes the attitude in the towns to the war becomes at best one of acceptance, at worst indifference, and even within six months after the beginning of the war troops depart for the front in virtual silence (Cerruto, Aluvión de

1. El martirio de un civilizado, p. 195. Cf. the treatment of the Indian Condori in Daza Valverde, ¡Guerra a la guerra! pp. 143, 155.

2. See above, pp. 198, 201.

fuego, p. 172). It is not only the passage of time but also the distance between the front and the centres of Bolivian life which cause this absence of any sense of involvement on the part of those living in the towns, and once again, as "atmospheric" history, this aspect of the war is left to the novelists to describe. Urban life seems to continue as it was before the war (Landa Lyon, Mariano Choque Huanca, p. 59), and there is some strong resentment at both the gaiety and the plentiful supply of comforts to be found in the towns whilst men are dying at the front (Cerruto, pp. 190-96). Not that one has to go that far from the front to find revelling and luxuries; according to one writer, these are to be seen in Villa Montes, for example (Cortez A., Esclavos y vencidos, pp. 65-66), or even at Division Headquarters, where one can find the "turistas de guerra, que fueron allí para hacer creer a la retaguardia que cumplían con noble resignación el más encomiable sacrificio patriótico."¹

As well as feeling resentment at the gay, easy life in the towns, the writers are critical of the moral corruption there, as non-combatants take advantage of the soldiers' absence, particularly where women are concerned. Guzmán, when criticizing town life, thus moves on from the bright colours and new shapes of cars to be seen there, to bitter comments on the behaviour of women:

Las mujeres se afeitan mejor y se pintan las uñas con nuestra sangre. El amor es ahora aventura, intriga en que la mujer se entrega a la sarcástica tarea de sembrar una semilla córnea que retoña aquí prodigiosamente.²

Similarly Anze Matienzo, having noted how little the absence of thousands

1. Anze Matienzo, El martirio de un civilizado, p. 148. Cf. Klein, Parties and Political Change, p. 197, n. 1.

2. Prisionero de guerra, p. 55. See also Leitón, La punta de los cuatro degollados, p. 51; Daza Valverde, ¡Guerra a la guerra! pp. 106, 240-41.

of soldiers had changed the town, goes on to describe town life firstly through its sounds, and then through the sensuousness of its women (El martirio de un civilizado, pp. 140-41). The fact that women are not to be found at the front heightens the writers' indignation at the betrayal of the soldiers by their women-folk.

The corruption goes deeper, of course, than the level of infidelity or promiscuity. Far more serious are the criticisms levelled at the draft-evaders (emboscados) --the men who, by one means or another, manage to avoid being sent to the front. Some of them are patrones, who, according to Landa Lyon, disguise themselves as Indians so as not to be recognized by those who might denounce them to the military authorities;¹ most are young men who know people in the right places (Cortez A., Esclavos y vencidos, p. 12; Landa Lyon, p. 28). There are those who serve food or become medical orderlies to avoid going to the front (Anze Matienzo, El martirio de un civilizado, pp. 60-61), and the "niños mimados de la sociedad" who treat the war as an adventure and join the military police, so that they can wield power and yet avoid having to face the enemy (Landa Lyon, Mariano Choque Huanca, pp. 20, 22-23). Through the thoughts of the soldier López, Anze Matienzo launches into a contemptuous and, for him, an unusually vehement attack on those vulgar and pretentious mestizos who

por su miseria mental, se juzgaban todopoderosos y aptos, y desde el rincón de su refugio burocrático se ocupaban en gritar ridículos clichés patrioteros, inflamando la demencia guerrerista del país, mientras los combatientes, los cretines que ofrendaban sus pechos insulsos a la Patria y al Honor, eran los cornudos y los payasos

1. Mariano Choque Huanca, pp. 5-6. Such a disguise seems not only unnecessary (since patrones could probably find easier ways to escape conscription) but also inadvisable (since the first to be conscripted are likely to be the Indians). On these grounds, this seems implausible.

que abandonaron a sus hijos y a sus mujeres para que les exprimiesen los labios los "emboscados" cobardes.¹

Emboscados have existed since conscription began and are not unique to the Chaco. They gain from the sacrifices of others whilst risking nothing themselves. So, too, do the war-profiteers, of whom Landa Lyon is particularly critical: the troperos who bring conscripts to the front (Mariano Choque Huanca, p. 96); the men who exploit the Indians by offering to secure the return of their young men for payment (pp. 37-71); those who charge exorbitant sums from the illiterate for reading and writing letters, some of which are never sent (pp. 74, 81-88). Daza Valverde and Peláez add another category: the unknown people who intercept parcels or lorry-loads of food being sent to the front (Daza Valverde, ¡Guerra a la guerra! p. 50; Peláez, Cuando el viento, II, 147-48, 180 and see also II, 190). All of these injustices can be seen as part of the class struggle: the emboscados and profiteers are, by definition, exploiters of their social inferiors who do not have access to the same resources. These criticisms are evidently closely allied to the indigenista concerns of several of the writers (although not identical with them) and perhaps for this reason are largely free from the rhetoric of the class struggle, of which the following is a rare example:

Ellos, en las fosas, los que no encallecieron las rodillas ni entregaron las bolsas de dinero, menos el honor de las hermanas o de las esposas. Son los que empuñan el fusil, se arrastran como reptiles y no tienen el privilegio de los 'aristócratas.' Está el pueblo, la masa chola, el indio taciturno, menos los declarados 'tísicos' o 'reservistas en comisión' deliberadamente. Están los eternamente humillados, los esclavos del Capital extranjero. Ellos, en las trincheras, con pasión de profetas en espera de la gran reivindicación social y económica (Leitón, La punta de los cuatro degollados, p. 109).

1. El martirio de un civilizado, pp. 141-42. Cortez A., Los avitaminados, p. 20, also accuses them of cowardice.

With some of the indigenista denunciations mentioned earlier,¹ this is the relatively limited extent to which the Chaco fiction is used to inveigh against class exploitation. The greater attention given to the conduct of the war than to the class struggle suggests a greater preoccupation with nationalism and anti-imperialism, and this is supported by the criticisms made of foreign intervention and influence in the war which were studied earlier.²

(g) Bolivian attitudes to Paraguayans

However much writers may claim that Bolivia's real enemy is Argentina, the oil companies or the climate and terrain of the Chaco itself, the fact remains that Bolivia is fighting against Paraguayans and the Paraguayan army. The novelists' attitudes to them fall into two basic categories, neither of which is considered by the writers of the war-histories: the first shows the brotherhood between the ordinary Bolivian and Paraguayan soldier, while the second shows the Paraguayans as a nation to be aggressive, savage and, consequently, inferior to their opponents. This second category largely corresponds to a propagandistic approach to the war, with the rightness and wrongness of the two sides quite clearly defined. It is to be noted that a number of writers include an instance of fraternization by soldiers at the front, whereas the second category principally comprises references in the work of Otero who, as we have seen, uses Horizontes incendiados as a vehicle for anti-Paraguayan propaganda.

Most of the writers do not, therefore, use the fiction as a

1. See above, pp. 238-39.

2. See above, pp. 222-30.

tool of propaganda in the conventional sense, and do not appear to bear any overt feelings of hatred or prejudice towards the neighbours against whom they are fighting. Illustrative of the writers' general position is the episode in El martirio de un civilizado in which a Bolivian patrol discovers the mutilated victims of a Paraguayan ambush. Having buried them in crude fashion, the members of the patrol "se pusieron a andar en silencio, con los corazones tranquilos, sin una brizna de veneno, sin ápicc de rencor. . ."(Anze Matienzo, p. 170). Such is war, Anze Matienzo seems to suggest, and Paraguayans do not have a monopoly on savagery.

Some assessments of the Paraguayans do, however, conceal an underlying prejudice against them which expresses itself as a feeling of superiority or an attitude of condescension, both justifiable for the purpose of boosting morale. Toro, for example, describes eight Paraguayans who are taken prisoner:

Les miramos con curiosidad . . . Los pies desnudos son enormes, anchos, planos . . . Lo que más me llama la atención en ellos, es que juegan con los pedazos de paja o con las astillas de madera, con los dedos de los pies, que manejan como si fueran manos . . . Son los hijos de la selva, medio reptiles y medio simios y con un instinto sanguinario del que han dado innumerables pruebas (Chaco, p. 108).

They are viewed in this way as strange, animal-like creatures to enable the Bolivian soldier to feel superior to them.¹ Similarly Guzmán's appraisal of the Paraguayans (one which is echoed by the historian of Boquerón, Taborga T., pp. 80-81) is a good example of the condescending attitude towards them which again stems from a need to feel superior to the enemy:

Es una raza sufrida, estoica y aventurera. El campesino es tan sobrio que la proverbial sobriedad aymará la igualaría difícilmente.

1. Such an attitude is reflected in that of the British soldiers to the Germans in World War I, as illustrated by Fussell, The Great War and Modern Memory, pp. 76-77.

Viven con poca ropa, les basta el tereré por comida y por bebida algunos días en que no pueden regalarse con un buen trozo de carne asada al rescoldo y sus mandiocas cocidas. No son constructivos ni aman el confort, por eso sus casas y sus muebles siempre son provisionales, tienen la choza por casa y la hamaca por lecho. Su afición a la guerra puede ser inclinación ancestral... Aman su país profundamente y por eso casi todas las canciones populares son otras tantas canciones patrióticas. Son ingenuos y supersticiosos, buena gente mientras no entran en un sistema cualquiera que los automatiza completamente, como ocurre con el militarismo (Guzmán, Prisionero de guerra, p. 256).

It is interesting to note that Toro (whose work Chaco is partly set at the front) does not show any of the fraternization between the two sides which, to judge by the number of such scenes in the works of other writers, must have occurred in reality. Moreover Toro, as will be shown later, occasionally echoes some of Otero's feelings towards the Paraguayans, and these two factors suggest an unusually hostile attitude on Toro's part towards the enemy.¹

The scenes of fraternization are reminiscent of what took place on the Western Front during the First World War.² They show the common bond of humanity between the men of the two sides and are invariably set at the front. Saavedra chooses perhaps the most obvious device, that of Bolivians with Paraguayan prisoners.³ In "Navidad" a Bolivian soldier and his prisoner "se reconciliaban íntimamente, eran nuevamente hermanos," before being united in death by a single shell (Dimensiones de la angustia, p. 35, and see also Daza Valverde, ¡Guerra a la guerra! p. 167). In another cuento by Saavedra a patrol captures eight Paraguayans, and when they

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1. For Otero, see below, pp. 247-50. Even the episode with Paraguayan prisoners (Chaco, pp. 111-14) enables Toro to relate an anecdote at the enemy's expense.
 2. Cf. J.S. Roucek, "Social Attitudes of the Soldier in War Time," Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, XXX (1935-36), 171.
 3. Guzmán, Prisionero de guerra, p. 119, does the same through Paraguayans with Bolivian prisoners.

return to base the Bolivian soldiers "parecían enamorados festejando a una novia esquiva," showing a tenderness and Christian love which contrast with their hatred when in the trenches ("Patrullaje," Dimensiones de la angustia, p. 44). Otero, despite his strong anti-Paraguayan feeling, shows a Paraguayan soldier carrying a wounded Bolivian to safety, and becoming a prisoner as a result (Horizontes incendiados, p. 375). But the most commonly used device to show the brotherhood of the two sides is the exchange of songs or music between the trenches, a phenomenon reminiscent of the First World War. In La Laguna H.3., the sound of guitars replaces that of machine-guns, and tunes from both sides float in the wind, making the war seem "más bien pendencia de familia, por una cuestión de linderos" (Costa du Rels, p. 212). The same kind of exchange is to be found in the works of Peláez, Landa Lyon, Leitón and Lara.¹ Otero, who rarely misses an opportunity for anti-Paraguayan propaganda, finds a way of using these serenades for this purpose, claiming that "los que tocamos la última pieza somos siempre nosotros, dejándoles derrotados también en eso."² In Aluvión de fuego the strains of a Paraguayan polka and waltz lead to a pause in the firing, the emergence of troops from both sides from their trenches and the exchange of mementoes and warm embraces (Cerruto, pp. 179-80). All of these scenes of fraternization are thoroughly compatible with the view of war as futile and wasteful of human lives, although none of the writers makes an explicit link between them. But clearly there is a paradox between the amity of these exchanges

1. Peláez, Cuando el viento, II, 75; Landa Lyon, Mariano Choque Huanca, p. 238; Leitón, La punta de los cuatro degollados, pp. 75-76; Lara, Sujnapura, pp. 137-38.

2. Horizontes incendiados, p. 350. Daza Valverde, ¡Guerra a la guerra! pp. 109-10, also uses a musical interlude as a means of asserting Bolivian superiority.

and the enmity which war supposes and imposes upon the participants in it. The paradox and the irony are certainly not lost on Cerruto who, having described the scenes of brotherhood, shows the vigorous renewal of battle with the ensuing horrific slaughter, until the trenches of the Paraguayans are gained by the Bolivian troops who had embraced them the night before (pp. 180-81).

Few of these scenes are used to suggest any bond between the common soldiers of the two sides on account of their both being victims of social injustice, of the ruling oligarchies or of imperialist interests. Guzmán's left-wing radical asserts that the ordinary Paraguayans have as little responsibility for the war as the ordinary Bolivians.¹ Similarly Anze Matienzo's Juan Rod realizes that "esos hombres con quienes se enfrentaría en la trinchera, eran, en realidad, unos pobres diablos, irresponsables como él," and that those who are responsible are still in Asunción (El martirio de un civilizado, p. 110), but he does not pursue this line of thought further. The general absence of references to the class struggle in the fiction is again made apparent by their absence in these instances of fraternization, which would seem to present eminently suitable opportunities for doing so.

The second category of attitudes to the Paraguayans involves accusations against them, condemnation of their character, or even satire. Such attitudes are usually based upon prejudice and are designed merely to act as propaganda in favour of Bolivia. Neither documentary and informative nor fictional and imaginative, they are nevertheless an inevitable part of war literature.

As one might expect the Paraguayans are accused of planning the

1. Prisionero de guerra, p. 41. See also p. 54, and Céspedes, "Opiniones de dos descabezados," Sangre de mestizos, p. 225.

war for several decades (Otero, Horizontes incendiados, p. 155; Landa Lyon, Mariano Choque Huanca, p. 140) and of preparing for it well in advance (Otero, pp. 120, 134, 152), although this accusation is supported elsewhere (e.g. Ayala Moreira, Por qué no ganamos la guerra del Chaco, pp. 83-92). Paraguayan aggression is given as the cause of the war, not only on several occasions by Otero (pp. 100, 157-59, 167-68, 169-73, 195-201), but also by Toro (Chaco, p. 57) and Landa Lyon, whose prejudice allows him to write:

. . . la guerra la había desencadenado un pueblo primitivo y bárbaro como el Paraguay que había vivido toda su vida del bandalaje y del cuatreraje. Un pueblo sin pasado y sin historia. Un pueblo sediento de sangre humana, como todo conglomerado de esclavos y mendigos. . . . Las hordas paraguayas . . . desde hacía más de cien años habían plantado sus tolderíos de conquista en las inmensas y fértiles tierras chaqueñas (Mariano Choque Huanca, p. 7).

All three writers overlook the parallel aggression of Bolivia which is evident from all historical accounts (e.g. Zook, The Conduct of the Chaco War, p. 57). Céspedes, in a footnote in the story "La Coronela," suggested that Paraguayan leaders had deliberately and systematically stirred up hatred towards Bolivia and Bolivians,¹ but this, too, occurred on the Bolivian side through her own propaganda machinery.

The inferiority of the Paraguayans is emphasized by Otero in several ways, in particular by several examples of the savagery of the Paraguayan soldiers. He notes in their eyes "esa luz viscosa del delito" (Horizontes incendiados, p. 192), and "esa llama de furor lujurioso de los amantes sádicos" (p. 285), as they perform acts of torture and murder

1. This footnote appeared only in the 1st edition of Sangre de mestizos, p. 81, n. 1. Its removal for the 2nd edition (which was published in Bolivia, whereas the 1st was published in Chile) is probably due to a reference to the genital mutilation of a Bolivian victim rather than to any reconsideration on the author's part concerning the validity of his accusation.

upon Bolivian prisoners, although doubtless "neither side had a monopoly on virtue" regarding the treatment of prisoners (Zook, p. 114). This savagery of the Paraguayans means, as Otero sees it, that they have no concept of honour, of fair play, of the "aesthetics" of war (p. 361). One of Céspedes' characters suggests that Paraguayan officers behave in a barbaric way towards their men, whipping them and even shooting them if they retreat ("La Coronela," Sangre de mestizos, p. 92 and see also Daza Valverde, ¡Guerra a la guerra! p. 228). Toro minimizes the courage of the Paraguayan soldiers, and thereby implies their inferiority, by the discovery that "atacaban borrachos, en una borrachera apestosa a caña y alcohol."¹ This same author's description of the Paraguayan macheteros,² following and contrasting with that of the heroic defence by Bolivians at Boquerón, is a further example of his prejudice against what he refers to as "el enemigo sanguinario" (p. 93). Daza Valverde is another writer who allows characters to assert that Paraguayans are naturally more barbarous than Bolivians (¡Guerra a la guerra! p. 64 and also p. 11).

A final example of anti-Paraguayan propaganda is the satirical approach which Otero adopts on several occasions when writing of Paraguay or Paraguayans. He ridicules the Paraguayan President by describing an affair between Mecha Perales and former President Elgidio Ayulo, in which the latter, in tragi-comic circumstances, is shot by Mecha's son and

1. Chaco, p. 107. He also suggests, however, p. 94, that alcohol is an important ingredient of the Bolivian soldier's routine.

2. Pp. 78-79. These so-called "Macheteros de la Muerte" were irregular bands of men, armed but not in uniform, who for a short time in 1932 operated independently of the Paraguayan army in the southern sector near the Argentinian border. See Vergara Vicuña, La guerra del Chaco, I, 392-96.

fatally wounded in a clothes cupboard.¹ He satirizes the Paraguayan commander, Estigarribia, and later scoffs at his claims at Saavedra (Horizontes incendiados, pp. 187-89; 346-47). There are further examples of this satire, which is not without humour, in the description of a fabricated Paraguayan attack, and the distortion of a news report in a Paraguayan newspaper (pp. 179-86; 266-67). This satire is concordant with anti-Paraguayan propaganda and adds a further dimension to it, although it does not of itself justify the use of fiction for the purposes to which Otero puts it.

As we have seen, however, apart from occasional instances in the works of Otero and other writers, there is a marked absence of hostility towards the Paraguayans in the Chaco War fiction, less hostility indeed than is shown both towards the Chaco itself² and to Bolivian political and military leadership. This makes it clear that the writers' intention (with the exception of Otero) is not to use fiction as a vehicle of propaganda against the enemy. The scenes showing fraternization between the soldiers of the two sides suggest further that the writers' purpose was not even to examine the war specifically as a conflict with Paraguay or Paraguayans. Rather were their aims, on a social and national level, to express concern at the shortcomings and follies of Bolivian leadership, at the foreign involvement in the war (in particular at what the writers saw as Argentinian imperialism), and at some of the inequities of war-time Bolivian society which they saw as symptomatic of the ills which

1. Horizontes incendiados, pp. 109-17. Ayulo is clearly meant to be the Paraguayan President Eligio Ayala, who was in power 1923-28. It is not clear, however, whether Otero intends this to be explicit or implicit, since he calls him Ayulo on ten occasions, and Ayala on seven, within the space of these nine pages.

2. See below, pp. 252-55.

beset their country in peace-time.

(iv) The physical experience of the war

In the works of those writers of Chaco War fiction who are concerned to provide an accurate documentary picture of life at the battle front, much of the narrative deals with the physical problems and experiences of the soldier's existence and the milieu in which he finds himself. The physical dangers of participating at any war-front are obvious and these are well-documented, but there are less obvious dangers with which the soldier must contend in the Chaco, above all hunger, thirst, disease, or the hostility of the Chaco itself. For some of the soldiers these prove to be greater enemies than the bullets, shells or bayonets of the Paraguayans, whilst the combined effect of all of them is to reduce the soldier to a sub-human being. It is towards demonstrating this that much of the description of the physical experience of the war is directed. It is clearly not an objective of the historiographical works, and is therefore a major and unique contribution of the fiction towards Cru's "vérité tout humaine." Here it is not veracity of historical fact which comes into question, but veracity of experience, and there is rarely any historiographical yardstick by which to measure it.

(a) The Chaco

For most Bolivians the Chaco Boreal is an unknown foreign land. Its altitude and terrain are completely different from those of the altiplano, to which the majority of Bolivians are accustomed, and except to those soldiers who come from the neighbouring provinces of Tarija, Santa Cruz and Beni, the Chaco seems like another world (Montaño Daza, El mal natural, p. 78). Consequently misconceptions about its nature or

exaggerations of its features abound (Guzmán, Prisionero de guerra, p. 14; Peláez, Cuando el viento, I, 217) until the soldiers from the altiplano see it for themselves. But even seeing it may not dispel the feeling of foreignness. Pampino, for example, in Céspedes' cuento "Humo de petróleo," feels separated spatially and temporally from his past and his home town, both by the distance he has travelled and by the different nature of the Chaco:

Los 500 kilómetros de todo este trayecto de hormigas abrieron en el alma del Pampino una laguna de tierra infinita, separándole de su antigua existencia, como si fuese un nieto de sí mismo, de aquel Pampino de Uncía (Sangre de mestizos, p. 156).

Yet the Chaco is not only foreign, but also hostile to the Bolivian soldiers. They go to its defence out of a sense of duty, without knowing it or feeling for it emotionally, and in return they are repulsed by it (Montaño Daza, El mal natural, p. 134). Consequently the writers show in the fiction a developing relationship of mutual hostility between the Bolivian soldiers (with whom the writers identify) and the Chaco. In so doing, they endow the region with a personality and view it as a leading character in the drama of the war.

The most vehement hostility comes from Toro Ramallo who opens his novel Chaco with the words: "¡El Chaco! . . . Sol tropical, inclemente, africano. Ríos dormidos, espesos de lodo, selva impenetrable, agresiva, feroz" (Chaco, p. 7). For him the Chaco is a place which appears to have been murdered by the sun, for it has no character and no life (p. 150). Even before the war begins the very appearance of the Chaco seems to portend the death that the war will bring: it is a "tierra yerta y plana, donde el agua estancada recuerda los ojos de los muertos y donde crecen los matorrales, desteñidos como el pelo que crece a los difuntos" (p. 52). It is unlike any other region, for it is neither lush jungle nor arid desert, but combines "todo lo hostil de la selva y todo lo terrible del

desierto" (p. 25, and see also Cerruto, Aluvión de fuego, p. 171). It presents itself to him with a uniform monotony and a depressing sameness Chaco, pp. 25-26, 66, and see also Guzmán, Prisionero de guerra, pp. 15, 33).

Toro imposes upon his consideration of the Chaco something of a regionalistic bias, with the implication that the Chaco, because it is not the altiplano, is not Bolivian. Not that he puts in question the legitimacy of Bolivia's claim to the Chaco, but rather does he suggest that the altiplano is quintessentially Bolivian, and the Chaco is everything that the altiplano is not:

La llanura es la negación, la monotonía, la muerte. Por eso, los cansados y los muertos, buscan lo horizontal. Todo lo que se estanca o se deshace se convierte en llanura. El agua misma vive, mientras corre, mientras salta. Cuando llega aquí y negrea en los charcos de las cañadas, es también una llanura pequeña y oscura, que sólo incuba miasmas. En cambio el cerro es el seno que alimenta a la tierra, el que brinda el manantial y la cascada, el que nos enseña a comprender al aire, al horizonte, la distancia (Chaco, p. 163).

Even if Toro had not visited the Chaco when he wrote his book,¹ the authenticity of his forceful descriptions is substantiated by other writers who definitely had. This is not to imply that all those who go to the Chaco are unaware of its charms, for Céspedes suggests that it can exercise a kind of spell which makes one reluctant to leave it even when the opportunity presents itself:

[Sirpa] rechazó la licencia que le ofrecieron para salir a curarse a La Paz. Se sentía orientado hacia 'adentro,' hacia el Chaco en cuyos espinos dejara [sic] las hilachas de su alma andina.²

But such a feeling for the Chaco is rare. For Toro's narrator, finishing

1. See above, Chapter IV, pp. 97-98.

2. "La Coronela," Sangre de mestizos, p. 88. See also the different case of Condori in Daza Valverde, ¡Guerra a la guerra! pp. 203-04.

his service in the Chaco in peace-time, the prospect of returning to it holds no attractions (Chaco, p. 53). For Peláez' newly arrived troops the initial fascination which the Chaco exerts quickly wears off (Cuando el viento, II, 66). Once it has done so, the aggressiveness of the region makes itself felt. Cerruto's Sergio Benavente records in his letter to Mauricio that the first enemy in the Chaco is the terrain (Aluvión de fuego, p. 172). Like any enemy, it is hostile to invasion and tries to obliterate signs of the invaders' presence (Costa du Rels, La Laguna H.3., p. 151). The lorry-driver Pampino, in Céspedes' story "Humo de petróleo," becomes

uno de esos seres de la fauna de la guerra, prendido a la red de las picadas que se tejían sobre el Chaco, cuya tierra salvaje e indomable la rompía continuamente, cerrándose sobre los camiones (Sangre de mestizos, p. 158).

Alberto Saavedra conveys the idea most effectively that there are three kinds of violence being perpetrated in the Chaco: the violence of the combatants against each other, that of the combatants against the Chaco, and that of the Chaco against human intruders. The Chaco may be violated like a deflowered virgin (Leitón, La punta de los cuatro degollados, p. 80), but it is also a violator, and the image Saavedra chooses is that of a tormented snake which turns on its tormentor:

El pobre monte chaqueño se crucificaba diariamente en millones de sus propias cruces. . . . Había afilado sus garfios durante su interminable drama de calor, sequedad y abandono. Por eso se retorció bajo el sol, como furiosa culebra y como culebra furiosa aprisionaba también a quienes le despertaban de su sueño seco.

¡Y para qué le despertaban esta vez!

De contrapuestas partes habían venido tropeles estruendosos de hombres enfurecidos: para troncharlo, para astillarlo y convertirlo en fin, en devastado escenario de sus luchas de incomprensión y de egoísmo.

Pero el monte chaqueño tenía su desquite: mataba a los unos y a los otros: buyendo [sic] aun más los dientes de sus cactus; negándoles sombra fresca para el incendio del sol; negándoles agua para el infierno de la sed ("Navidad," Dimensiones de la angustia, pp. 33-34).

The hostility of the Chaco is thus answered by the hostility of man,

and its violence by his violence. Thinking that they were going to defend the Chaco and to fight the Paraguayans, the Bolivian soldiers found themselves fighting both.

(b) Nature as an enemy

The Bolivian soldiers encountered three different kinds of terrain in the Chaco: the selva, (called also the bosque or monte), the pajonal and the arenal. In the first there is over-abundance, the green hell of the "caos vegetal de urdimbres inconcebibles, promiscuidad de especies, aborto ciclopeo de una naturaleza enferma" (Peláez, Cuando el viento, II, 230); in the others there is barrenness and aridity, with little vegetation except dead trees (Rodrigo, Fue la sed, p. 145). Most of the writers concern themselves with the selva, for it is there that the more dramatic conflict between man and Nature occurs. Only one writer maintains that the pajonal is worse than the selva:

Uno se muere sin remedio, comido por el sol y el infierno que sale de la tierra. Siquiera en el bosque encontramos, sipoy y carahuatales. Un poquito de sombra bajo los matorrales. ¡En un pajonal . . . sólo la figura del diablo cruza! ¡Qué maldición es el pajonal! (Leitón, La punta de los cuatro degollados, p. 124).

Apart from this instance, the consensus is that the selva is not only the soldier's worst natural enemy but that it is worse even than the Paraguayans whom he has gone there to fight. Otero implies this when he relates that at Boquerón the Paraguayans decided on September 22nd to "entregar la reducción de los bolivianos a las fuerzas más poderosas que las balas y que los hombres: el sol, la fatiga, el hambre, la sed" (Horizontes incendiados, p. 267). Leitón is more explicit: "el clima, la traición de la selva, la falta de alimentos y de agua" are a greater enemy than the human foe (La punta de los cuatro degollados, p. 19).

Alone of all the characters in Chaco War fiction, Juan Carlos in

Peláez' novel feels in communion with Nature and even his feelings are shown not to run very deeply, for although he would like to call all living things his brothers, he stops short of distributing his small hoard of provisions to his "hermanos insectos" (Cuando el viento, II, 135-36). More typical are descriptions and episodes which show the aggressiveness and hostility of Nature. What is remarkable in these passages is the fact that the selva and the flora of which it is constituted are shown to be actively hostile to the human invaders. Like the Chaco itself, they are anthropomorphized; they become participants rather than inanimate objects, active rather than passive in keeping with the writers' general conviction that the soldiers face a more fearsome enemy in Nature than in their human adversaries. Paradoxically, the Paraguayans assume the role of invisible objects rather than participants, since the nature of the terrain is such that the enemy soldiers are frequently unseen. In dramatic terms, whereas the "figures" of Nature are always on stage, the human participants are for the most part lurking in the wings of the theatre.¹

Céspedes provides the best examples of the active hostility of Nature. In the story "El milagro," the narrator describes the way in which his companion Kruger is attacked: his legs get caught in the brambles, "que desarrollaban una infinita variedad de movimientos mecánicos para aprisionarlas" (Sangre de mestizos, p. 135). As he bends down to extract himself, "otras garras le quitaban el sombrero, le cogían de los cabellos, le arañaban la cara y le pinchaban, desgarrándole camisa y pantalones" (p. 135). Elsewhere, Céspedes writes of the "agresividad insidiosa" and the "dinamismo sarcástico y maléfico" of the monte (p. 142). The aggressor in the following sentence is not a human being

1. On the Paraguayans as an unseen enemy, see below, pp. 281-82.

but a humanized Nature:

Nos latigueaba los rostros, nos cogía de los brazos con sus uñas, nos obligaba a girar sobre nosotros mismos, enredándose a los pies, se cerraba alrededor de nuestros cuellos, nos prendía de los cabellos, nos extraviaba alrededor de un matorral, nos metía espinos dentro de las botas, y todas sus ramas flexibles, sus leños aguzados, sus malezas y sus púas conspiraban para detenernos (p. 142).

Costa du Rels also writes of the "hostilidad permanente" of the monte, in which the tuscal becomes a third opponent arrogating to itself the right to kill and to take prisoners (La Laguna H.3., pp. 37-38, and see also Toro Ramallo, Chaco, p. 141). For Landa Lyon the bosque, by defeating men in their fight against it, is gaining its revenge for their disputing its domains (Mariano Choque Huanca, p. 253), as if it were a human foe. Instead of turning the selva into a human figure, Leitón sees it as some kind of supernatural monster with tentacles and jaws, emitting polyphonic sounds and entwining itself around the soldiers before devouring them (Leitón, La punta de los cuatro degollados, p. 3). Elsewhere, with the same vividness, he describes Nature as thirsty for the blood and hungry for the flesh of the men who are bent upon destroying each other.¹ And neither man nor beast, Peláez' selva is a "divinidad cuya risa de follage [sic] es sarcástica y hechizante" (Cuando el viento, II, 103).

There are other observations on Nature's hostility as it is manifested by the fauna, in particular by insects. As living creatures, they are, of course, already animate, so that their aggression is shown not through animation but by being given larger-than-life powers over men. Not only is the louse "dueña absoluta de los hombres" but also "señor de

1. P. 10. Later he contradicts this view of Nature by crediting her with a sensibility and frailty which, he writes, cause her to weep at so much evildoing (p. 44; also p. 55). In those instances he personifies Nature, rather than "animalizing" her as here.

la guerra" (Peláez, Cuando el viento, II, 139; see also Daza Valverde, ¡Guerra a la guerra! pp. 24-25). Céspedes sees insects as a means through which the Chaco is enabled to satisfy its lust for blood: "esa fauna siempre hostil e inquieta en que se solidifica el ciego apetito del Chaco para chupar la sangre del intruso, el hombre ("Las ratas," Sangre de mestizos, pp. 185-86). The natural element of mosquitoes is the Chaco, for they are in harmony with the thorns, the torture and the stagnant pools of the region itself.¹ In Leitón's description of mosquitoes as they hover around a mosquito net, there is an element of mimesis, for in the context of the war they appear to imitate the bellicosity of the soldiers and their frustrations in fighting an invisible enemy:

Se oyen zumbidos de locura, ansias de sangre de los viles zancudos. Giran ufanos en una mancha multi-forme alrededor de los mosquiteros. Clavan sus agujones en las telas. Succionan con ahinco . . . nada. ¡Ilusiones! (La punta de los cuatro degollados, p. 33).

In a similar manner, although this time with animals rather than insects, the cannibalism of hogs is seen as symbolic of what human beings are doing to each other in the Chaco conflict:

Lanzando rugidos de placer y espasmos de gula, [los chanchos] devoraban a los chanchos muertos en clamoroso impulso de canibalismo. Ocultos en medio de las tuscas, mordían el cuero, masticaban la carne y tragaban los huesos de sus padres, de sus hermanos y de sus madres (Anze Matienzo, El martirio de un civilizado, p. 155).

The third aspect of Nature after the flora and fauna, which writers use to show her hostility is that of the ground itself. In a rare instance, it appears to be an ally, for it offers one character a chance of liberation from the torments of his desire to discover

1. Toro Ramallo, Chaco, p. 155. Toro, p. 118, spares us few details in describing the humiliating tortures inflicted by flies and mosquitoes upon soldiers crouching with pain from diarrhoea. For other references to flies, by which Toro seems to be particularly obsessed, see pp. 119, 145, 146.

la verdad que otros buscaban en las abstracciones del espíritu. Imploraba una liberación que viniese desde abajo. Y se habría quedado tendido allí, en el silencio de esa naturaleza, compartiendo de buena gana de sus metamorfosis, hasta convertirse, él, Contreras,--todo inteligencia--en un puñado de arena mezclada a resíduos calcáreos (Costa du Rels, La Laguna H.3., pp. 117-18).

Daza Valverde suggest that in the heat of battle the earth can be seen as a protective mother-figure, offering succour and salvation (¡Guerra a la guerra! p. 39). But for the most part the ground is as hostile as other aspects of the Chaco. Dust is for Toro what the louse seemed to Peláez, "dueño y señor," and like the flora and fauna it attacks the human intruders, splitting lips and getting into eyes (Chaco, p. 37). Céspedes, once more giving an active role to inanimate objects, associates the ground with death as the dust rises from it:

El suelo, sin la cohesión de la humedad, asciende como la muerte blanca envolviendo los troncos con su abrazo de polvo, empañando la red de sombra deshilachada por el ancho torrente del sol ("El pozo," Sangre de mestizos, p. 20).

Similarly Anze Matienzo sees the spectre of death in the dust of the Chaco: the earth-covered skin of the men suggests to him the idea that their bodies are already, prematurely, mingled with the dust as they will be in death, whilst the dust also insinuates itself into their bronchial tubes "para rasparles las mucosas hasta convertirlas en llagas" (El martirio de un civilizado, p. 71). During combat the dust rises up and, in Landa Lyon's description, becomes an enveloping, penetrating gas (Mariano Choque Huanca, p. 159). In winter, however, when the rains come, the dust turns to mud. That too is seen as man's enemy:

. . . nos agarra con furia, hasta desesperarnos.
Lodo, lodo, lodo. . . Hay que estar aquí para saber lo que es el lodo. Es peor que el arenal. El lodo es la negación, es enemigo de todo, es el pus de la tierra.¹

1. Toro Ramallo, Chaco, p. 130. Since it was scarcely a characteristic of the Chaco War, mud is far less in evidence in the Chaco fiction than in the fiction which deals with the First World War, in which mud was almost a leitmotif. The Chaco equivalent is the hostility of the selva itself.

With the rain and the mud comes the cold of winter, brought by the southerly wind to torment the soldier.¹ As if this change in climate were not in itself enough, the winter brings with it a plague of voracious, poisonous fleas and giant mosquitoes, producing an increase in cases of malaria.² The soil, the elements and the insects combine in a treacherous conspiracy against men in the Chaco.

The writers react to all this in two ways. Firstly, they show that Nature and the Chaco are self-destructive. Men may suffer at their hands, but so too does one natural element at the hands of another, and awareness of this enables men to feel that they are not merely helpless victims of Nature, singled out for punishment.

It is in the passages which attempt to show the self-destructiveness of Nature that the pajonales and arenales receive greater attention than the selva, for whereas the latter is luxuriant and over-abundant, in the barrenness of the pajonal can be seen the effects of Nature's "inhumanity" to Nature. To attribute a capacity for humanity to Nature is not entirely inappropriate, for Céspedes at least writes of the elements as if they were human. A pajonal which yesterday was yellow has turned dry and white, "aplastado, porque el sol ha andado encima de él" ("El pozo," Sangre de mestizos, p. 20), whilst the heat, "fantasma transparente volcado de bruces sobre el monte, ronca en el clamor de las cigarras" (p. 21). When a fire breaks out in the monte, Guzmán pictures it as some kind of punishment inflicted on the monte by the sun for having allowed "el juego cruel de niños que juegan al escondite con la muerte"

1. Toro Ramallo, Chaco, p. 86. See also Leytón, "La carpa de los aislados," Placer, p. 229; Céspedes, "La Coronela," Sangre de mestizos, p. 61.

2. Peláez, Cuando el viento, II, 212. Cf. Zook, p. 145.

(Guzmán, Prisionero de guerra, p. 44). But the aspect of Nature which most frequently appeals to the writers' imagination when they are showing her self-destruction are the trees of the pajonales. They too are readily personified, for not only are they like human beings in their appearance, dying "en actitudes trágicas, con los brazos extendidos en un gesto supremo de clemencia, como pidiendo misericordia" (Rodrigo, Fue la sed, p. 145), they are also, like the men, condemned to suffer, and they lament their abandoned state in a daily chorus (Saavedra Nogales, "Navidad," Dimensiones de la angustia, p. 33). Once more it is Céspedes whose imaginative and descriptive mastery provides the most outstanding picture of Nature suffering at the hands of Nature:

Ni un soplo de brisa movía los árboles fijos, tristes, condenados a una parálisis corroída de úlceras y llagas monstruosas. Colgaba de ellos la cabellera de la salvajina canosa y de los musgos parduzcos. Sobre el suelo compacto y duro la horrible arboleda exteriorizaba con actitudes de ira y de locura el padecimiento de su sed secular, fingiendo ante nuestras miradas un bamboleante esquema de esqueletos torturados por el fuego. Troncos caídos semejaban saurios disecados, osamentas de cíclopes con el ojo fósil prendido a las cortezas. Otros árboles se enlazaban con los vecinos, retorciéndose, carcomidos y apolillados como momias de tarántulas gigantes, acopladas, enredadas, contagiadas unas a otras de bubones tumefactos y de lúes rosadas. Todo el bosque fosco, deshecho, parecía haber sido asesinado por un huracán ("El milagro," Sangre de mestizos, pp. 141-42).

If the sun did not punish them and the sand not asphyxiate them (Anze Matienzo, El martirio de un civilizado, p. 101), then the trees would be attacked by legions of ants, "millones de obreros hambrientos y malditos que atacaban la plaza inerme de un árbol" (p. 100), or strangled by snake-like lianas which, with incredible viciousness and cruelty, entwined themselves around their trunks (Rodrigo, Fue la sed, p. 48). Some of the trees are shown to have been killed already, left as unburied skeletons "condenados a permanecer de pie en la arena exangüe,"¹ although Saavedra

1. Céspedes, "El pozo," Sangre de mestizos, pp. 17-18. See also Toro Ramallo, Chaco, p. 154.

sees them as "esqueletos agresivos," for they use all their remaining strength to grow thorns which "les defendían pero que al defenderles les herían a ellos mismos también" ("Navidad," Dimensiones de la angustia, p. 33). In other words, the sun is hostile to the trees, and this hostility is taken up by the trees, making them hostile to each other. Anze Matienzo gives a résumé of the states in which different trees may be found. It is a picture of Nature in decay, destroying itself:

Asomaban a las picadas algarrobillas martirizados y algarrobos podridos; quebrachos rotos y palos matacos fuertes y rebeldes; árboles frágiles y corroídos por las ratas o deshechos por las hormigas, y árboles esqueléticos con las coyunturas flojas (El martirio de un civilizado, p. 105).

The second way in which writers react to the hostility of Nature is to show the man-made destruction which has been inflicted upon her. All of the Chaco War fiction contains passages which describe the effect of shelling and machine-gun fire upon the Chaco. Typical of such passages is the following by Anze Matienzo, in which he also likens the effects of this human assault to those of a phenomenon of nature itself, a violent hurricane, thus associating the destructiveness of man in the Chaco with the self-destructiveness of Nature:

Siguió tronando en el espacio y en la matriz del universo el fuego escalonado de artillería, que caía desgarrando los árboles, violando la selva con trombas de fuego sólido, aplastantes como¹ masas desprendidas de las alturas, devastadoras cual un ciclón.¹

Trees once again figure prominently, and once again they are humanized. Toro is alone in incriminating them, endowing them not only with a resemblance to human beings, but also with a moral responsibility for the soldiers' sufferings. He accuses them of causing the soldier to lose his way and of concealing machine-guns:

1. El martirio de un civilizado, p. 133. See also the passage from Céspedes, quoted above p. 261.

. . . fueron los cómplices de todos los dolores, de todas las emboscadas, de todos los extravíos.

Estos no servirán nunca para hacer cunas, ni siquiera para hacer ataúdes. Sólo son cómplices, que evitaron la lucha cara a cara, sin astucia y sin ventaja. Son árboles que deberían morir en la horca y sin confesión (Chaco, pp. 154-55).

He makes the trees the scapegoats for Nature as a whole, for although they are solely responsible for the two crimes of which he accuses them, there are (as has been seen and as Toro himself observes) other elements of Nature responsible for other crimes, which do not receive the same strong condemnation or moral blame.

A number of writers, however, show considerable sympathy for the trees. Perhaps this sympathy stems from a sense of identification with them, because the destruction of trees is so similar to the killing and wounding of soldiers:

Los troncos de los árboles, despanzurrados [sic] giran en el espacio, parecen brazos fantásticos queriendo asirse del vacío. Millones de astillas y hojas que caen en las posiciones. Las partículas de carcasa, rechinando fieramente se incrustan en los troncos y se oyen quejidos agónicos de los esbeltos árboles.

En el claro del bosque, talado por las bombas y las ametralladoras, ha quedado un quebrachal: desgajado, con la pulpa roja como carne viva. El viento se cuela en las heridas frescas del cuerpo leñoso y arranca notas discordes de angustia y de dolor.¹

The sympathy of Montaña Daza and Saavedra for the trees is stronger than most, and they certainly provide a strong contrast with Toro's view. In a list of the various types of tree to be found in the Chaco, Montaña describes the cipoy as a "raíz milagrosa que salvó a tantos de la agonía y de la muerte," and the toboroichi ("¿cómo no pensar en él con cariño si

1. Leitón, La punta de los cuatro degollados, pp. 53-54. See also Otero, Horizontes incendiados, pp. 249-50; Daza Valverde, ¡Guerra a la guerra! p. 230. Cf. David Jones, author of In Parenthesis (1937): "Wounded trees and wounded men . . . are very much an abiding image in my mind as a hang-over from the [First World] War." Quoted in Fussell, The Great War and Modern Memory, p. 145.

era el compañero árbol?"), as resembling "unas bellas y gordas matronas; claro que cuando la gordura era un signo de belleza," although he concedes that the carahuata is a "forma vegetal del demonio," with thorns and claws which scratch the flesh (El mal natural, p. 73). Montaña feels that such trees as the carahuata must be forgiven, for they are the natives of the region:

Nacieron y crecieron aquí, ésta es su tierra; nosotros somos los intrusos. Los árboles también son heridos y muertos en los combates y su situación es más injusta que la nuestra, son inocentes de todo lo que pasa, tan inocentes como el soldado.¹

This innocence of the trees is matched by their greater sense of solidarity than men. Montaña does not find it surprising that the men were defeated by the selva, because "aquí unas ramas se estrechan, se juntan, se enlazan con las otras; no les importa si son ramas de árboles negros o amarillos, si de grandes o de pequeños" (p. 71). Montaña's strong sympathy for the trees may be due in part to the fact that he was writing long after the war itself. As a result, the damage inflicted upon Nature by men could well appear to be more unjust than the harm which Nature inflicted upon men. Nature's hostility to man can be forgotten with time, whereas man's destructiveness to trees in particular is readily visible, since—as several writers observed—their skeletons are left to stand as a reminder of human violence.

Saavedra's sympathy for the trees stems not so much from a feeling of regret at the physical harm done to them by men as by what can only be called the psychological damage which they suffer as the result of hearing the soldiers, who hide behind them in battle, talking of "their" trees, of the trees in their native regions which were cared for and in

1. P. 75. The reference to the innocence of the soldier will be examined later; see below, pp. 300-03.

return provided shade from the sun. These trees from other latitudes "belonged,"

mientras 'ellos,' árboles ajenos, árboles de nadie, durante todo el tiempo se cargaban y recargaban de espinas y de espinas . . .

¡Era también el diario suplicar del monte chaqueño para que los hombres accidentalmente venidos junto a él, le deparasen piedad con el agua, a cambio de la cual serían para aquellos seres humanos, árboles completos! (Saavedra Nogales, "Navidad," Dimensiones de la angustia, p. 33).

There is, in fact, no consensus of feeling towards the trees.

Whereas for Leitón they are like brothers "que inspiran perdón o extienden los brazos en demanda de ventura y cariño" (La punta de los cuatro degollados, p. 34), Céspedes sees them from a lorry at night in an ominous guise, as "una ubicua ronda de colosales brujas melenudas" or making faces and pointing their black fingers ("Humo de petróleo," Sangre de mestizos, p. 166). Mario, in El martirio de un civilizado, sees in the toborochi an even more ominous image than witches. As he gazes at this "payaso grotesco de la selva," he sees in it a variety of shapes: a pot-bellied bottle or a fat, well-satisfied, good-natured fellow. But most often, "evocaba la silueta torturada de una mujer en cinta [sic], amasando en el vientre un ente destinado a vivir, a sufrir y . . . a guerrear" (p. 132). In other words it appears as though the toborochi could give birth to a being which would have learnt nothing from the present conflict. If trees can produce "guerreros," despite what trees suffer in the Chaco and the sufferings that they witness, then this comment is one of the most gloomy observations to be found in Chaco War fiction.

If there is no consensus of feeling towards trees, there seems at least to be agreement about viewing them as human beings, for as has been shown they are depicted indulging in a variety of human activities, from weeping and lamenting to committing crimes, giving birth, or even

simply meditating (Costa du Rels, La Laguna H.3., p. 120).

Concerning Nature and the Chaco in general there is greater accord, for the writers' view of it is consistently hostile. In summer the Chaco is as hot and parched as it is cold and wet in winter. Such year-round hostility is met with the verbal hostility of the writers. The Chaco has its charms and its beauties, such as the splendour of its twilights, but these are not enough to dispel the overpowering sense of inhospitality with which the region impresses its visitors. Anze Matienzo, describing an evening as the sun sets over the Pilcomayo, cannot ignore the vile and revolting as he does so, and deliberately juxtaposes "una costra de excremento, sobre la que revoloteaban alegremente bellísimas mariposas blancas como la nieve y transparentes como la luz, ebrias de fetidez y de felicidad."¹ And as the red glow of the sun fades, with the trees becoming shadows bent over the slowly moving water, "un viento leve cargó hasta las narices de Juan Rod los malos humores de las entrañas podridas de las reses sacrificadas para alimento de la tropa" (pp. 110-111). There is nothing healthy about the Chaco at all, and to its own inherent sickness, whether over-abundance, self-destruction or decay, man has added his own malefic influence. Leitón shows, in his staccato style, how man and Nature have combined to produce a region in which death and oblivion reign supreme:

La orilla del bosque, gris y desfigurada. Troncos opacos y tritutados. Árboles tumefactos y esqueléticos. Trilladas las ramas. Laten horas de sensación de barbarie y de crimen. Tiemblan las hojas de los bejucos. Brazos de árboles desgarrados. Lacras de acero. Las zanjás escuetas, saturadas de agua corrompida. Rocío de sangre inocente . . .

Se siente el paso frígido de la muerte. Impresión trágica

1. El martirio de un civilizado, p. 110. See also Costa du Rels, La Laguna H.3., pp. 197-98. Cf. Taborga T., Boquerón, p. 71.

de la tierra ofendida por la furia humana. Silencio. El tiempo ha puesto su enorme parche de olvido sobre este paisaje de angustia y ansias de destrucción (La punta de los cuatro degollados, pp. 21-22).

(c) The physical effects of the war upon the soldiers

What seems to have interested the writers most with regard to the physical effects of the war is the way in which conditions in the war affected the soldiers' basic primitive instincts. These appear to influence their behaviour to such an extent that they undergo a process of dehumanization. This must, of course, be viewed in the light of the process of anthropomorphosis which has been noted in connection with the Chaco and Nature in general, and the one can therefore be seen as a corollary of the other. If war is in itself dehumanizing both to participants in it and to mankind as a whole--as most of the writers consider it to be¹--then an effective way of exploiting this is to render unhuman things human, and turn the human figures into non-human figures or objects. It may not be a conscious device with all writers, but an examination of the fiction reveals that the device is widely used.

Some of the writers mention the outward, physical changes in men's appearance effected by war. The dust, for example, gives the soldiers a weird appearance, as in Anze Matienzo's description: "Esos pobres hombres parecían muñecos de una cabalgata siniestra, con la cara embadurnada, las pestañas y las orejas blancas, los pómulos enharinados" (El martirio de un civilizado, p. 91; see also Guzmán, Prisionero de guerra, p. 31), or

1. Arana, "La novela de la guerra del Chaco," pp. 84-87, writes that the novelists stress the dignity of the Chaco soldier. It is true that they are aware of the importance of dignity, but as the examples which follow will illustrate, there is a consensus that in life and death the soldier is stripped of all human dignity.

when dust is mingled with sweat it produces a tattooed effect (Rodrigo, Fue la sed, p. 46). Mosquito-bites disfigure the hands and face, making them appear like the skin of a chirimoya fruit according to Leitón, a "masa gris y pustulenta por las carachas y las comezones de la piel" (La punta de los cuatro degollados, p. 27). Toro adds to the mosquitoes the thorns which scratch, stab and poison the flesh (Chaco, p. 69). The combination of this disfigurement at the hands of Nature, with the ravages of hunger, thirst, fatigue, sickness and the stress of combat itself has the effect of reducing these young soldiers to old men.¹ Leitón adds to this aging process the wildness of the soldiers' appearance and their apparent acceptance of the filth in which they live, as the niceties of civilization fade in the memory and squalor becomes the norm:

Rudos. Petrificados. Tienen perfiles de una existencia salvaje. El cariño valeidoso de la selva los envejeció. Se asoman canas prematuras. Brochazos de suciedad en las frente combas [sic]. Arrugas profundas en las caras, como surcos de tierra llena de abrojos. Barbas hirsutas de hombres temerarios. Parecen rostros tallados furiosamente por un artífice demoníaco. Grasientos y embarrados hasta el alma. Perdieron la idea del agua y del jabón. Bohemios de zahurda, sin ansia de liberación.²

Other writers note this process whereby the soldiers are reduced to the status of primitives, with an overriding concern for the basic trivia of existence: eating, drinking and performing bodily functions.³ But Anze Matienzo also remarks--in an apparent contradiction of Leitón--on the constant physical preoccupations of the soldiers, to the extent that they

1. Chaco, p. 179; Leitón, La punta de los cuatro degollados, pp. 28-29, 89; Daza Valverde, ¡Guerra a la guerra! p. 240.

2. Leitón, p. 96. Peláez, Cuando el viento, II, 73, notes the opposite effect of the soldier's beard: even the most insignificant nobody seems to acquire some degree of personality with a few whiskers on his face.

3. El martirio de un civilizado, p. 77. Cf. Barbusse, above, Chapter III, p. 57; Remarque, above, Chapter III, pp. 72-73.

almost become a mania: "la ambición inverosímil que los subyuga por un poco de yodo o por una aspirina; el afán pueril por cuidar las muelas, por cortar las uñas, por salvar la piel" (p. 198). Such preoccupation is a means whereby the soldiers can retain an awareness of being alive, and yet ironically they might be killed at any moment. Peláez shows how this reduction to the state of a primitive is--for one man at least--part of the awakening or enlightening process which the war as a whole initiates. Cortez Ochoa finds hunger interesting because, never having been hungry before, he is for the first time experiencing its physical sensation and is happy to have "revivido físicamente" (Peláez, Cuando el viento, II, 59). And because this is a primitive sensation it is therefore a humanizing one, free from the artificial lustre of good manners or refinement (II, 61).

Not many of the Bolivian soldiers would have appreciated such an observation, however. Clearly Cortez Ochoa does not speak for Peláez himself, for elsewhere the author writes of hunger in a much more realistic way, as he shows its effects on appearance and morale:

. . . la guerra la llevaban adentro!.. Ojos hundidos y mendicantes, gestos de imploración muda. La timidez les copó el ánimo en complejo de inferioridad.. ¡Era el hambre!. (II, 131; see also II, 179-80).

The act of eating becomes an untold pleasure, out of all proportion to the food in question (II, 132; see also Cortez A., Los avitaminosos, pp. 28-29), and Peláez' Santos Palma describes a dying soldier for whom eating is his last satisfaction:

Todo el día masticó a hurtadillas, cuidó de las migajas, besó la harina adherida, se relamió de gusto y, por la noche, satisfecho, sonriente, feliz, se murió sin decir Jesús (II, 194-95).

To be reduced to deriving such pleasure from such a basic activity is in itself dehumanizing and lowers the soldier's status to that of little more than an animal: it is appropriate that Daza Valverde's character

Vidal, who becomes obsessed with food, should be dubbed "Hambre canina" by his comrades (¡Guerra a la guerra! pp. 57-58). Leytón notes that the Indian soldier before the war ate very little but sufficient; now in the war he eats a lot and never has enough.¹ Landa Lyon explains that their voracious appetite can be attributed to the soldiers' youth and the effects of the heat and dehydration which use up considerable energy (Mariano Choque Huanca, p. 154). Moreover the soldiers' preoccupation with food is explained by Daza Valverde as a consequence of the solitude, boredom and unhappiness imposed by their circumstances (p. 25). However not all writers would agree that the soldier has a lot to eat. Leitón suggests that the basic diet is boiled water with a few grains of corn in it (La punta de los cuatro degollados, p. 32), while Peláez describes it as a watery soup containing a few bones (Cuando el viento, II, 131). If that is so then it is small wonder that the soldiers talk of the "paraísos perdidos" of pre-war dishes (Peláez, II, 149; see also Daza Valverde, p. 187). The hard times of war inevitably prompt memories of earlier times which equally inevitably seem that much better.

Hunger is closely associated with fatigue, another of the Chaco scourges. The kind of fatigue from which the soldiers suffer is the result of several successive nights without sleep. It reduces them to mindless machines and walking automatons (Leytón, "Perdidos," Placer, p. 126), and is thus another aspect of the dehumanizing process. Even when the soldier is allowed to rest, hunger conspires against him and gnaws pitilessly at his bowels (Leitón, La punta de los cuatro degollados, p. 61).

1. Leytón, "¡Indio bruto!" Placer, pp. 84-85. Contrast Toro's remark referred to above, p. 236.

The greatest scourge in the Chaco is, however, thirst, and Man's struggle against it is one of the distinguishing features of the conflict.¹ As has been seen, the story of several novels and cuentos is based on the struggle with thirst, others have death from thirst as a concluding element, and none of the writers neglects it. Guzmán, in his unemotional style, describes thirst as the "enemigo interior más terrible que el enemigo oficial calificado por la guerra" (Prisionero de guerra, p. 108), and most of the other writers' comments illustrate the truth of that remark. Although thirst physically besets both men and beasts, for the soldiers it can also lead to the most soul-destroying hallucinations.² Costa du Rels shows how, when one soldier asserts that he has heard the sound of water, the others feel such a strong need to hear the sound themselves, that they ultimately do so:

Pero cada cual su propio cantar, el que, en aquellas horas, casi postreras, abriéndose paso a través de arenales ignotos, acudía desde lo más lejano de sus años mozos. Todo el agua natal resumiase en los espejismos del recuerdo.³

These hallucinations are, of course, mental effects of thirst, but the physical effects of a lack of water are far worse. Many are those who die from thirst, succumbing quietly to their fate. Others go mad and disappear into the selva, shouting and laughing (Rodrigo, Fue la sed, p. 169), or, like Toro's soldier Ortiz, bury themselves in the sand to die.⁴ Céspedes, in the story "El Milagro," describes in detail the

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1. Cf. Zook, p. 94, who writes that after the first day of serious fighting in the war "it was obvious that lack of water could of itself destroy an army in the Chaco."
 2. Peláez, Cuando el viento, II, 195-96. See also Céspedes, "El pozo," Sangre de mestizos, p. 30; Daza Valverde, ¡Guerra a la guerra! p. 255.
 3. La Laguna H.3., p. 144. Leytón, "¡Indios brutos!" Placer, p. 93, also includes an episode involving hallucinations due to thirst.
 4. Chaco, p. 178. See also p. 89; Anze Matienzo, El martirio de un civilizado, pp. 197-98; Daza Valverde, ¡Guerra a la guerra! p. 257.

physical effects of thirst:

La sed, con su incandescencia amarga, nos descascaraba los labios y nos hinchaba las lenguas. Ya ninguno sudaba. Se apoderó de mis fauces un demonio que me lamía la garganta, y sentía mi sangre como resina. Mi boca me parecía extraña, como una caja de cartón recubierta de pintura seca, algo insólito y desagradable. El acto de la deglución se me repetía mecánicamente, produciéndome a cada instante un golpe doloroso en la garganta.¹

Men would do almost anything in an attempt to alleviate their thirst.

Like leprous beggars they drag themselves along and lick the ground in an attempt to secure just a drop of the water which falls from a water-lorry (Anze Matienzo, p. 196). Anze Matienzo depicts men offering vast sums of money for urine, or sucking the blood from the corpse of one of their companions.² Such acts would seem to be in the realm of fantasy were it not for their verification in factual accounts of the war which showed that the horror of reality required no imaginative embellishment on the part of the writer (see Zook, p. 218, who cites two eye-witness sources).

Not surprisingly the soldiers' need and desire for water causes all discipline to be abandoned and all other considerations to be neglected. Troops disband like lost sheep in search of a means to quench their thirst,³ and if water is found its discovery is enough to obliterate all other concerns:

Es cierto que en esa cañada me olvidé hasta de la guerra y ahí me hubiese quedado toda la vida, sin acordarme de nada ni de nadie, si no hubiesen llegado, detrás de nuestras huellas, estos

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1. Sangre de mestizos, p. 139. See also Anze Matienzo, El martirio de un civilizado, p. 194; Daza Valverde, ¡Guerra a la guerra! pp. 252-53.
 2. Pp. 196-97. See also, Cortez A., Los avitaminosos, p. 55; Peláez, Quando el viento, II, 235; Daza Valverde, pp. 257-58.
 3. Anze Matienzo, p. 193. Cf. Zook, pp. 166-67, 217.

camiones abollados . . .¹

Water, its absence or its presence, in fact plays a very significant role in the war. The first skirmishes in 1928 between army patrols of the two countries were caused by their contending for water-holes (Peláez, I, 211); water lorries were a considerable expense to acquire, maintain, send to the front and replace, and could not be used to transport men, arms and other supplies because their cargo was so vital; the lack of water greatly contributed to the enormous numbers of soldiers on both sides who died at the hands of natural rather than human enemies; and, of course, water as rainfall determined the terrain of the Chaco itself. Ironically in some places there was water which was undrinkable (Peláez, II, 90, 218), and in others a light rain fell but was absorbed or dissipated by the foliage, so that "a medida de crecer la sed, el agua se espolvoreaba en niebla" (II, 218). It is ironical, too, that some two hundred Bolivian soldiers were drowned when they tried to cross the flooded River Pilcomayo to escape the Paraguayan attempt to trap them against the river (Anze Matienzo, p. 199). Water, the giver of life, also takes it away.

Nature is seen in these instances to be not only hostile to the soldiers, but even cruel and sadistic.² The only consolation was that thirst afflicted both sides, and Toro presents this effectively by showing a Paraguayan, anxious to become a prisoner so as to escape from the war, carrying a Bolivian back to the Bolivian lines, "unidos ambos en la misma tortura que retuerce las entrañas como una férrea mano feroz"

1. Toro Ramallo, Chaco, p. 180. See also Peláez, Cuando el viento, II, 114-15; Lara, Sujnapura, p. 198.

2. Nature is also "masochistic" as far as water is concerned, for as one of Leiton's characters points out (La punta de los cuatro degollados, p. 110), the ground seems to have an even greater thirst than the men.

(Chaco, pp. 91-92).

In nearly all of these descriptions which have been mentioned thus far, the soldiers are shown barely to have retained their human qualities. Their physical appearance under the ravages of Nature is still, in most cases, recognizably human. But their behaviour is shown largely to be controlled by the force of their basic needs and instincts which, at their worst, reduce the men to acts of self-destruction or animal savagery. This process of dehumanization is further evident in the ways in which the writers describe the soldiers in activities which do not involve basic instincts like hunger and thirst. The catalogue of creatures to which the soldiers are likened reveals an unspoken consensus amongst the writers that the demands made on men by war turn them into sub-human beings.

Anze Matienzo, in particular, likens the soldiers to a variety of animals. In his description of what Mario feels when he first enters the ranks of the army, he sees them as tamed wild animals:

Se sintió descender hasta los fondos primordiales de la bestia humana. La amalgama de los hombres en ese nivel mental, la cohesión del grupo humano, parece que se operara en momentos en que el individuo toca el límite de la fiera domesticada.¹

Elsewhere he likens them to animals in a zoo, a thousand different species "que se alisan las plumas o se lamen las patas y se soban los mostachos, sin dirigirse entre sí ni una queja, ni una confidencia" (p. 143). The soldiers are also seen as a specific species of tamed animal, circus elephants which the men resemble in their air of resignation as they perform ridiculous feats (p. 77) or else wild animals, for whom pits are used as traps (p. 121). But domestic animals also come to mind: men

1. El martirio de un civilizado, p. 77. See also p. 78, and Leitón, La punta de los cuatro degollados, p. 37.

running blindly are seen as bolting horses (p. 134), or as a pack of panting dogs, tired and dejected after losing their prey.¹ Men in the trenches become "liebres temerosas acosadas por una legión de cazadores" (p. 133), men on the march, ragged and bruised, "formaban manadas ondulantes de carneros sucios" (p. 92), and Paraguayan prisoners huddle in a corner like hungry donkeys.² The only way to survive in the Chaco, says Anze Matienzo's hero Mario, is to become more chimpanzee-like, to sharpen one's fangs and let one's claws grow: "Y así, volviendo atrás, gravitando hacia el abismo, es como hay que cumplir una misión . . . humana" (p. 20).

Other writers also see the soldiers as animals. The men who, after getting supplies through to the besieged men at Boquerón, fall into an ambush and flee into the bosque where they regroup, are likened to horses after a battle, and with their empty saddles

acuden desde todos los rincones del horizonte, olfatean sus heridas, se entrefrotan sus flancos mancillados y, luego de haber confrontando [sic] su desamparo, llaman con un largo relincho, la caballeriza y el abrevadero (Costa du Rels, La Laguna H.3., p. 21)

Toro's narrator forgets all the theories and rules of humanity and becomes "una bestia furiosa y obediente" like all the others (Chaco, p. 93). Blanco, the hero in Daza Valverde's novel, is compared to a "res destinada a bárbaro sacrificio" as he crouches in a besieged sentry-post, and elsewhere wounded soldiers trying to run to safety are like a herd of wild animals (¡Guerra a la guerra! pp. 20, 160). In Prisionero de guerra the captured soldiers getting up in the morning are likened to oxen or horses (Guzmán, p. 121; see also p. 233), and elsewhere are treated like

1. P. 94. Cf. Daza Valverde's description in ¡Guerra a la guerra!, pp. 254, 264, of soldiers withdrawing to 27 de Noviembre as a "jauría."

2. P. 188. Cf. Guzmán's soldiers on the way to the front, Prisionero de guerra, p. 13.

mules (p. 176). Céspedes' soldiers are described as "una cadena de bueyes" ("El milagro," Sangre de mestizos, p. 138), but later they are half-animal, half-puppet, for they seem

como colgados de una cuerda invisible, con las cabezas caídas sobre el pecho y los brazos inútiles, las lenguas en las bocas abiertas, sin mirar a los lados, como perros rabiosos.¹

If a likening of men to animals is dehumanizing, then even more so is the parallel drawn by some writers between men and insects or reptiles. One of Peláez' characters remarks that the soldiers seem to be adapting to their surroundings, for they are thin, yellow and dried up like stick-insects (Cuando el viento, II, 209). Guzmán sees the soldiers in the selva as ants, following paths which are not there, as ants seem to do (Prisionero de guerra, p. 15; see also Costa du Rels, La Laguna H.3., p. 179), and the soldiers turned sappers who clear the paths that will lead them to their deaths are "modestas hormigas de un trabajo infecundo y sin provecho" (Cerruto, Aluvión de fuego, p. 172). Anze Matienzo pictures the soldiers from the air as ants, also bent upon mutual destruction (El martirio de un civilizado, p. 107), but elsewhere he sees them as reptiles crawling to a trench (p. 121; see also Leitón, La punta de los cuatro degollados, p. 47), or as impotent frogs in their flooded trenches at Ibibobo (p. 199). Lost in the bosque the men are seen by Landa Lyon as flies in a spider's web (Mariano Choque Huanca, p. 253), or by Daza Valverde as flies in honey as they cling to lorries in hasty retreat (¡Guerra a la guerra! p. 221). Toro likens the soldier at Campo Jordán to a worm,² and later remarks that the war itself has become a

1. p. 145. For a further example of soldiers as puppets, see Guzmán, Prisionero de guerra, p. 227.

2. Chaco, p. 117. Cf. Céspedes, "El milagro," Sangre de mestizos, p. 138, where a column of soldiers wending its way through the selva becomes a "mísero gusano." See also Daza Valverde, p. 50.

reptile, as the two sides, like a filthy, black, mud-covered snake, slither through the selva seeking someone or something to strangle (p. 163; cf. Daza Valverde, pp. 36, 93).

Beyond animals, reptiles and insects, some writers dehumanize the soldiers even further by describing them as inanimate objects. Anze Matienzo asks: ". . . ¿cómo se puede ser altanero, humanamente, con esos leños secos que son los hombres de tropa, listos para ser atizados en la hoguera?" (El martirio de un civilizado, p. 145; see also Guzmán, Prisionero de guerra, p. 130). We have seen the trees humanized and likened to dying or wounded soldiers;¹ in the process of dehumanization, the soldiers lying on the ground are seen as "pedazos de árboles aserrados en el bosque y abandonados en medio de la maraña."² Lara perceives a symbiosis between the selva and a group of men lost in it who "no son más que simples y miserables puñados de selva" (Sujnapura, p. 202), whereas the men who fall by the wayside from sunstroke are described by Daza Valverde as "hojas mustias desprendidas de un árbol caído" (¡Guerra a la guerra! p. 221). The sick and wounded are, in Anze Matienzo's eyes, like sand or manure as they are unloaded from the lorries (p. 198), while in Guzmán's novel Villafuerte's friend Echenique becomes a torn rag.³ For Cerruto the marching soldier is minimized to the size of a grain of sand, blown by a gust of wind (Aluvión de fuego, p. 60). Céspedes, however, takes the dehumanization of the soldier to its extreme, by portraying him as expendable and replaceable, not in terms of

1. See above, p. 263.

2. Landa Lyon, Mariano Choque Huanca, p. 239. Cf. Barbusse, Le feu, p. 244.

3. p. 260. Daza Valverde, p. 137, uses the same kind of image collectively: the 1st Company is described as "un juguete de trapo" which has constantly been broken and mended again.

an animal, a reptile, insect or inanimate object, but as water soaked up by the sand.¹ Physically annihilated, he is dehumanized into a liquid which then vanishes into nothing.

A further illustration of the anthropomorphosis of inanimate things and the dehumanization of men is to be found in the way in which lorries are treated in Chaco War fiction. They are, of course, man-made, mechanical objects, but are rarely viewed as such by the writers. Instead they take on the role of man's best friend, to the extent that they also become humanized in many instances, for the fate of the soldiers is often closely bound to that of the lorries, and frequently they meet similar ends. This identification with the men is so strong that the lorries are not merely humanized, but undergo a similar sort of treatment in the writers' creative process as the soldiers themselves. Just as the soldiers suggest a variety of comparisons to the writers' imagination, ranging from animals to inanimate objects and, in Céspedes' striking instance, a vanishing liquid, so the lorries inspire the writers to a similar range of comparisons, from inanimate objects to men.

Thus, viewing them as animate objects, Anze Matienzo sees them (somewhat incongruously) as dried fruits made of old iron (El martirio de un civilizado, p. 72) or as "paquetes animados envueltos en papel de estraza de color turbio" (p. 104). Elsewhere they are likened to insects, jumping about like epileptic crickets on the bumpy roads (p. 105), or to leaping giant toads (Guzmán, Prisionero de guerra, p. 125),

1. Céspedes, "La Coronela," Sangre de mestizos, p. 96: ". . . y se agotaban como agua chupada por el arenal, para ser reemplazados por nuevos hombres." Cf. Daza Valverde, ¡Guerra a la guerra! p. 137, where as an alternative to the image suggested on p. 277, n. 3, above, he suggests that of a fountain, constantly emptying and refilling with water.

and then to animals: in one case to elephants (Otero, Horizontes incendiados, p. 223), in another, as a lorry lies overturned by the roadside, to a helpless tortoise with its legs in the air (Anze Matienzo, El martirio de un civilizado, p. 67), and in a third to a megatherium, an extinct, huge sloth-like animal (Guzmán, Prisionero de guerra, p. 44). Finally, the lorries are endowed with human attributes: they have their own voices and lungs (Céspedes, "Humo de petróleo," Sangre de mestizos, p. 156), and when their radiators boil, they gargle with their foul, toothless mouths (Anze Matienzo, p. 105). They have power over men, and can play sadistic games with them by throwing them about as they bump along (Anze Matienzo, p. 173), but like men they are mortal, and their skeletons are left in the mud or sand like those of the soldiers (Anze Matienzo, p. 170; Toro Ramallo, Chaco, p. 66). Lorries can wound the Chaco, for their tracks leave long white scars across its surface (Céspedes, "Seis muertos en la campaña," Sangre de mestizos, p. 124), but the conditions of the Chaco can also inflict wounds upon the lorries: some of the wounded have other lorries in attendance which, on seeing that the wound cannot be dealt with on the spot, leave "con el compromiso de enviar uno vacío para remolcar al inválido" (Anze Matienzo, p. 67), whilst others are abandoned, like the "camión cojo, con una rueda al aire, [que] parecía un mutilado con expresión lánguida" (Anze Matienzo, p. 147). Céspedes' identification of men and lorries takes the form of a wordplay: as a lorry makes its way from Uyuni to Villa Montes, it passes "la arboleda tropical que devoraba, nunca satisfecha, la carne de cañón y la carne de camión" (Céspedes, "Humo de petróleo," Sangre de mestizos, p. 154).

This process of the humanization of lorries is completed by Landa Lyon, who writes not of lorries which are humanized but of soldiers who

are like lorries (just as trees become men and men become trees):¹ the medical orderlies at the hospital are the "Jefes de Taller de la Mecánica Humana," and if after thorough repairs "el motor volvía a funcionar" the soldiers would be sent back to the front or to auxiliary services in the rear (Mariano Choque Huanca, p. 169). It may be a rather trite metaphor, but it does indicate the extent to which vehicles and men become indistinguishable: so closely are they associated with each other that each is accorded the attributes of the other. In one instance the two become symbiotically fused: the lorry and its driver are simply extensions of one another:

Incorporado a la movilidad impalpable de la picada, [Pampino] formaba con el motor del camión una intimidad orgánica por la que sus pies se prolongaban hasta las ruedas y toda su carne hasta la tierra larga.²

The overall effect of this humanization of the lorries in the Chaco is to produce a consequent dehumanization of the soldiers, for if the lorries are endowed with human attributes and are likened to the soldiers, the soldiers are implicitly (and in Landa Lyon's description explicitly) seen as machines.

(d) The role of hearing and other senses

Partly because of the restrictions which the military ethos imposes upon his capacity to think and feel,³ the ordinary soldier is obliged to

1. See above, pp. 263, 277.

2. Céspedes, "Humo de petróleo," Sangre de mestizos, p. 158. Given this symbiosis it is not too fanciful to view the incessant sound of the lorry's horn at the end of the story (Pampino is shot and falls forward on to the horn-button) as an almost human cry. Céspedes himself lends weight to this interpretation by describing the sound as "angustioso" (p. 168).

3. See below, pp. 297, 302-03.

live in war by his physical senses. Since he is encouraged neither to make decisions, nor to criticize, nor to respond emotionally, his physical senses play a more important role than they would under other circumstances, because his mental activity is channelled towards his senses as an outlet. Response through the senses is a passive, instinctive activity which readily fills the void left by the removal of any need for thought or emotion. But the pre-eminence of the senses is also partly due to the nature of modern warfare, and in the Chaco in particular to the kind of terrain in which the war was fought. Both have the effect of making the enemy invisible, due on the one hand to the fact that the soldier either fights at a great distance from his enemy (especially with long-range artillery and even more so with aerial bombing) or else in trenches (from which he can scarcely see or be seen), and on the other hand to the fact that the selva in the Chaco often makes it impossible to see the enemy, even though he may be close by. Consequently the writers show the soldier in the Chaco to be most conscious of what he cannot see, and to compensate by making his awareness of sounds more acute.

We find that little attention is devoted to the other senses of taste or touch although several writers are conscious of the odours which war can produce. Some are merely personal: the stink of sweat "que sube como bocanadas de vapor de los sobacos, de las ingles y de las patas;"¹ others are more specifically the smells of war, such as burning petrol (Peláez, Cuando el viento, II, 28, 66), or the smell of putrefaction, be it animal carcasses, excrement, or human corpses.² Toro writes of the

1. Anze Matienzo, El martirio de un civilizado, p. 131. See also Daza Valverde, ¡Guerra a la guerra! p. 54. Cf. Taborga T., Boquerón, p. 76.

2. Guzmán, Prisionero de guerra, p. 28; Anze Matienzo, p. 131; Toro Ramallo, Chaco, pp. 118, 119; Costa du Rels, La Laguna H.3., p. 197; Daza Valverde, p. 97.

smell of war as "un olor de infierno," as flies walk over the dead leaving behind a vile viscous liquid (Chaco, pp. 117-18). It is surprising that smells should have impressed some writers so forcefully, and others not at all.

Several writers comment upon the invisibility of the enemy. For Landa Lyon the enemy would not exist were it not for their firing (Mariano Choque Huanca, p. 258), and other writers also get the impression that it is the bosque itself which is doing the shooting (Rodrigo, Fue la sed, p. 155; Toro Ramallo, p. 181). Some men never see the enemy at all (Toro Ramallo, p. 181; Anze Matienzo, El martirio de un civilizado, pp. 153-54). It is Anze Matienzo who perceives the relationship between this absence of anything to see, and the consequent importance of sounds as points of reference:

Los oídos toman, por esa razón, importancia inusitada, parece que fuera el único sentido que sirviera para algo en esa guerra espantosa que se desarrollaba en la selva.¹

There are three categories of sounds to be heard in the Chaco: the sounds of Nature, the sounds of combat, and other man-made noises which are incidental to the fighting. The selva is full of the sounds of insects and animals which, like the enemy, are mostly unseen. Consequently, and in keeping with the writers' view of Nature as hostile, these sounds are frightening, especially at night against the background of tropical silence which enables one to hear more clearly

la voz gigante de la foresta; los pajonales hervían de zancudos, el cascabeleo de las serpientes se escuchaba prístino, aullidos

1. Anze Matienzo, p. 161. None of the novelists points out that advantage was taken of this reliance on sound: lorries were driven around out of sight but within earshot of the enemy to give them the impression that there were more men in the vicinity than was actually the case. See Vergara Vicuña, La guerra del Chaco, I, 369-70.

y gritos salvajes llenaban la obscuridad por sí misteriosa
(Peláez, Cuando el viento, II, 134).

Toro finds that the sound of splashing mud increases the feeling of uneasiness before combat (Chaco, p. 130), as if Nature were issuing a fatal warning. But Nature herself, in the shape of giant toads, is subject to the influence of the sounds of war, for the rococos imitate the sounds of machine-guns, instead of the reverse (p. 155; Leitón, La punta de los cuatro degollados, p. 72).

The sounds of combat hold a far greater attraction for the writers, however, than the sounds of Nature, although the difficulty of capturing sounds in words¹ produces a generally unimaginative response by comparison with attempts to convey visual impressions. Some writers do find imaginative ways of describing the sounds of firing by likening them to human sounds. Thus falling shells imitate "lamentos o ayes de seres agónicos" (Leitón, p. 96) and the echo of bursting shells "reparte como el sollozo de un asmático" (p. 103). Heavy artillery sounds like a woman's sardonic laughter (Landa Lyon, Mariano Choque Huanca, p. 163), and the sound of machine-guns is also likened to loud or hysterical laughing.² Otero, who is favourably disposed to war, is less felicitous in describing machine-gun fire as a Wagnerian symphony (Horizontes incendiados, p. 240). But most writers, like Anze Matienzo, whose imaginativeness has been noted elsewhere, can produce only a list of sounds with the minimum of elaboration (Anze Matienzo, El martirio de un civilizado, p. 122), and they seem to have the same stupefying effect upon his sensibilities as the effect which he himself observes upon the soldiers who "se movían

1. See Lara, Sujnapura, p. 146, for an example of an attempt to transcribe sounds of gun-fire.

2. Leitón, p. 44; Rodrigo, Fue la sed, p. 88; Peláez, II, 84.

apenas sobre los camiones, con los ojos perdidos en el espacio violado por la trepidación del combate" (p. 116). It is scarcely surprising that the noise of combat should be so overwhelming, and several writers describe the fighting simply in terms of the noise it creates. The initiation of combat is thus marked by the noise, or similarly a decrease in noise reflects the decrease in the intensity of battle (Anze Matienzo, pp. 116, 125). For one writer, combat is simply "un solo ruido de torrente, creciente, arrollador" (Rodrigo, Fue la sed, p. 56), and for another "como un solo trueno que trajera la muerte" (Toro Ramallo, Chaco, p. 107). Nor is it surprising, since the sounds are so fearful and the soldiers' hearing has become sharpened, that the sounds of battle should remain hauntingly in the soldier's head when the fighting has stopped:

Otra vez en el galpón que sirve de hospital. Hay silencio, pero en mis oídos repercute aún el eco del cañoneo, como si escuchase una concha de caracol. . . . En mis oídos, el rumor es inacabable, sordo, como el ruido de un río lejano (Chaco, p. 162).

The third category of sounds is that of men themselves, producing sounds which are not specifically connected with the fighting. They are the sounds of men at night, uttering incoherent words and unfinished sentences, or the brittle metallic noise of men drinking (Anze Matienzo, El martirio de un civilizado, pp. 82, 93); the chatter, laughter, exclamations, imprecations, songs and whispers (Leitón, La punta de los cuatro degollados, p. 38) which constitute the background noise of war, produced by men in large numbers. They are the "rumor afelpado e irreal" of men marching (Anze Matienzo, p. 93), or the flat, hollow voices of men singing the national anthem, the notes of which become tragic, agonized groans (Leitón, p. 29). But mention of these human sounds from human beings is relatively infrequent and uninspired, in keeping with the dehumanized view of the soldiers which most writers adopt. And the sounds of combat, some of which seem to pierce the ear-drums (Anze

Matienzo, p. 125), are clearly more impressive and evocative of the atmosphere at the front, despite the rather ordinary descriptions which the writers accord to them.

Although not strictly concerned with the senses, other mental responses of the soldiers to happenings in the war may also be mentioned here. Reference has already been made to the hallucinations prompted by thirst,¹ but illusions of other kinds can also be occasioned by the nature of the war and the Chaco. Juan Carlos, for example, in Peláez' novel, is led into imagining the existence of a house or hut in the selva, because the vastness and omnipresence of the vegetation makes him respond by seeking some expression of man's civilizing influence (Cuando el viento, II, 227-28). Santos Palma is also affected mentally by the green sameness of the selva (II, 191-93). This sameness, and the long periods of inactivity in this war of watchfulness and waiting (Toro Ramallo, Chaco, p. 71), are also causes of a depressing boredom,² which (Cerruto suggests) is responsible for driving men to the desperate acts of the izquierdistas.³ One writer describes time as seeming to get stuck, like a lorry in the mud which has to be extricated from it with much effort (Lara, Sujnapura, p. 121). For other writers time slips by meaninglessly: it becomes "una mancha borrosa en el cerebro" (Leitón, p. 122), and the days and months run together like the jungle creepers (Leitón, p. 36). As Céspedes remarks, it is as easy to lose oneself in time in the Chaco as it is to lose oneself physically in the monte ("El milagro," Sangre de mestizos,

1. See above, p. 271.

2. Chaco, p. 88; Peláez, II, 208; Leitón, La punta de los cuatro degollados, p. 122; Daza Valverde, ¡Guerra a la guerra! p. 13.

3. Aluvión de fuego, p. 177. See below, pp. 288-89.

p. 137). Such a picture of inactivity is the reverse side of the coin of war, and stands in strong contrast to the mental impressions of the fighting itself, in particular to Toro's hell-like phantasmagoria of light and shade, the extravaganza of colours, accompanied by oaths and curses, hoarse shouts and moans, the rapid tap-dance of the machine-guns and the rolling thunder of the artillery (Chaco, p. 121).

(e) The sick, the wounded and the dead

No modern war fiction could neglect to describe those who are wounded in combat or who fall on the battlefield, since whatever the declared object of war, it necessarily involves eliminating participants in it. The infliction of wounds and death are an intrinsic part of war and victories or losses are counted in terms of the number of casualties; they are part of what Guzmán calls "la estadística macabra" of war (Prisionero de guerra, p. 56). Once considered the most noble way for man to die, to be killed or wounded in action is now seen by most writers as gory and humiliating. The Chaco War fiction has its share of descriptions of both the wounded and the dead. One of the most graphic descriptions of the wounded is provided by Toro, who writes of worm-ridden and gangrenous victims, sparing no details (pp. 146-47). And it is Toro again who produces a most horrific description of the dead, as he portrays the shambles after the fall of Alihuatá (pp. 125-26), although the descriptions of the dead written by Anze Matienzo, Daza Valverde or Leitón are equally vivid.¹ Of course, the writers would have failed in their intent to provide an accurate picture of what it was like at the front, had they not included these scenes, which, as one writer puts it,

1. Anze Matienzo, El martirio de un civilizado, p. 135; Daza Valverde, ¡Guerra a la guerra! pp. 231-34; Leitón, La punta de los cuatro degollados, p. 25.

make illustrations of Dante appear pale by comparison (Toro Ramallo, Chaco, pp. 147-48). This intent explains why the descriptions are so explicit: the writers' aim is to shock the reader and to stress that the ultimate physical effect of war is wounding or death. The descriptions must also be seen as an important means of conveying the dehumanization which is caused by war: inflicting wounds or killing dehumanizes the perpetrator of the act, whilst the disfigured, mutilated or dismembered victim is dehumanized by losing his physical human attributes.

Apart from those who are wounded on the battle-field--the useless, mutilated "andrajos humanos" (Landa Lyon, Mariano Choque Huanca, p. 174) who, if they survive their stay in hospitals, may well carry with them after the war a permanent mark of its physical effects--there are also the sick: those who have not been wounded but who have suffered from disease or malnutrition endemic to war, the "avitaminosos" (or "escorbúticos" as they used to be called [Peláez, Cuando el viento, -II, 180]). Guzmán points to the irony of the fact that the sick are in a sense at a disadvantage by comparison with the war amputees, since

el enfermo es algo tan penoso, tan profundamente penoso, que carece del prestigio de lo heroico ante la impresión general; su lenta agonía con la muerte que trabaja por dentro, no tiene el nimbo glorioso que rodea al herido, muchas veces, casi siempre, menos perjudicado que el enfermo (Prisionero de guerra, p. 84; see also Cortez A., Los avitaminosos, pp. 10-14).

It is scarcely surprising that descriptions of the sick should reduce these men to less than human figures. Once more they are dehumanized: they seem like puppets made of scraps, broken springs and chewing-gum, or demolished buildings, or trees eaten away by rodents (Anze Matienzo, El martirio de un civilizado, pp. 70-71). They resemble flocks of owls sitting in trees, with staring, useless eyes fascinated by the daylight (p. 203). They look like mummies or walking skeletons, Dantesque figures returned from the hell of war (Landa Lyon, p. 218).

The second kind of wounded are those who are captured and upon whom atrocities are committed, although these by their very nature are liable to be distorted accounts: such may be the case with Zambrana who is castrated (Toro Ramallo, Chaco, p. 164), or the Bolivian prisoner who is shot in the mouth so that his captor may have his gold tooth.¹ Nor are animals shown to be safe from man's sadistic instincts, as the burning of horses and mules by besieged Paraguayans illustrates (Toro Ramallo, pp. 167-68). Such examples, even if exaggerated, are no doubt illustrative of a fairly common phenomenon, and the treatment of prisoners is fully exploited by Guzmán in Prisionero de guerra. The dehumanization is, in the case of atrocities, applied implicitly to those who perpetrate them, for they are clearly related in order to show the bestiality of which human beings are capable under conditions of war.

The third kind of wounded soldier is the "izquierdista," the soldier who shoots himself in his left hand or foot in order to get himself evacuated. Such are Salustio Mamani in Leytón's story "¡Fusilado!" the Indian soldier in Céspedes' "Seis muertos en la campaña," or Fermín Eysaguirre in Cerruto's novel.² According to Toro, the practice in the Bolivian ranks was copied from the Paraguayans (Cutimuncu, p. 130), but it was adopted elsewhere long before the Chaco War by those disillusioned by war and its so-called glories. They are cowardly acts from a military point of view and yet, ironically, they are not dehumanizing. For they

1. Anze Matienzo, El martirio de un civilizado, p. 189. See also Toro Ramallo, Chaco, p. 131; Otero, Horizontes incendiados, pp. 283-86, 287-88, 294-95; Guzmán, Prisionero de guerra, p. 128.

2. Leytón, Placer, pp. 97-105; Céspedes, Sangre de mestizos, pp. 108-12; Cerruto, Aluvión de fuego, p. 176. Cerruto, p. 177 and Daza Valverde, ¡Guerra a la guerra! p. 207, describe other ways by which soldiers attempt to get themselves evacuated.

are the acts not of animals--few animals deliberately inflict wounds upon themselves--but of human beings, who have taken a courageous¹ and positive if drastic step to escape from the war and its animalization.

Every Bolivian soldier who went to the Chaco War front faced the possibility of death. For over 50,000, one in four of those mobilized, that possibility became a reality,² for some at the hands of the human enemy, either on the battle-fields or as prisoners, and for others, who had survived the bullets, at the hands of the Chaco itself (Céspedes, "La Coronela," Sangre de mestizos, p. 79). Many writers were interested in the soldier's reaction to this unnatural invitation which he extends to death by virtue of his participation in the war, and so we find, beyond the documentary descriptions of death on the field of battle or in hospital, a probing (albeit a rather superficial and unsatisfactory one) into some aspects of the psychology of death in war.

The picture which emerges is a paradox, but precisely because of the proximity of death, not a surprising one: the soldier retains a fear of death because of his determination to live, and yet at the same time there are moments when he appears to disparage life. The fear of death, Montaña Daza asserts, is felt by all: to say that some laugh in the face of death is just a nice-sounding phrase (El mal natural, pp. 77-78). Cerruto 's Sergio Benavente concurs: the journalists who say that one loses a fear of death have no idea of the "sensación de ausencia, de

1. If suspected of having inflicted the wound upon themselves they were liable to be court-martialled and shot.

2. Zook, The Conduct of the Chaco War, p. 240. Not surprisingly figures vary: Querejazu Calvo, Masamaclay, p. 450, and Vergara Vicuña, La guerra del Chaco, VII, 682, give 50,000; Ireland, Boundaries, Possessions and Conflicts, p. 94, gives 55,000. For Paraguay the figures given are Zook: 36,000; Querejazu Calvo and Vergara Vicuña, 40,000; Ireland: 45,000.

insensibilidad, de vacío, que el soldado padece delante de la muerte" (Cerruto, Aluvión de fuego, p. 169). It is this fear which, Toro suggests, may promote a desire to kill (Chaco, p. 74), although elsewhere he remarks that death is not the greatest of the soldier's concerns, for he already has the tortures of his flesh--in the form of wounds, diarrhoea, and thirst--with which to contend (p. 119). And it is this fear which produces the vision of death as a skeleton covered by a sheet and carrying a sub-machine gun which is seen by Montero and Galarza in Toro's Cutimuncu (p. 58). Landa Lyon suggests that even worse than the fear of death itself is the awareness of the sensation of death: "Morir no es nada, sentirse morir es lo terrible" (Mariano Choque Huanca, p. 251).

Yet in spite of this fear, life can become insignificant: in battle one's instinct of self-preservation is suppressed (Cerruto, Aluvión de fuego, p. 169). It becomes so insignificant for some that they take their own lives:¹ suicide in war becomes an act of supreme irony, the more so when, like Max in El martirio de un civilizado, the soldier kills himself because he is afraid of death (pp. 127-28). Occasionally suicide is an act of heroic defiance, as in the case of Peláez' Sergeant Palza (II, 231), but suicide in preference to capture, which one of Cortez' characters advocates (Esclavos y vencidos, p. 82; see also Guzmán, Prisionero de guerra, p. 127), suggests an indifference towards life which not all would share. As a contrast there are those like Cruz Vargas, whose notes form the story "Seis muertos en la campaña," who find

1. Céspedes, "El milagro," Sangre de mestizos, p. 143; Leytón, "¡Indio bruto!" Placer, p. 91; Peláez, Cuando el viento, II, 129; Toro Ramallo, Chaco, p. 179; Rodrigo, Fue la sed, p. 168; Cortez A., Los avitaminosos, p. 55, Esclavos y vencidos, pp. 106-07.

it hard to die and suffer an interminable, lingering death (Céspedes, Sangre de mestizos, pp. 101-27).

There are, of course, three attitudes to death (and life) to be considered by the soldier: his attitudes towards his own life and death, that of his comrades and that of the enemy soldier. None of the writers fully examines the relationship between these attitudes. Cerruto does so in part by relating the death of a comrade to the soldier's attitude towards his own death,¹ and several writers show the effect (or rather lack of effect) of the death of a patrol member on his fellow soldiers.² As for the third attitude to death, Otero remarks that the Paraguayans are not seen as flesh and blood, or even as men, but merely as enemies to be repulsed as efficiently as possible (Horizontes incendiados, p. 364). But no-one examines how the Bolivian soldier sees himself, or how the Bolivian soldier thinks the Paraguayan soldier sees him. It is perhaps the documentary concerns of the writers which prevent them from delving more deeply into the psychological aspects of the soldier's view of life and death.

Death in war is so commonplace that it is scarcely remarkable (Anze Matienzo, El martirio de un civilizado, pp. 72, 108; Costa du Rels, La Laguna H.3., p. 158), and it therefore becomes difficult to keep the significance of death in perspective. Anze Matienzo seems aware of this and finds a special significance in two different deaths which he describes. The first concerns the deaths of Teniente Carranza and the Chulupi Indian girl Ojé with whom he had been living. Romantically united in death,

1. Aluvión de fuego, pp. 169-70. But contrast the reaction of Toro Ramallo's narrator to the death of a comrade in Chaco, pp. 128-29.

2. See below, pp. 300.

they lie unburied in no-man's-land, entwined in each other's arms. But the grim reality of death cannot be hidden by this beautiful, idyllic union, as the writer reminds us that there are unpleasant aspects to death also: whilst the vultures wheel overhead or mount guard, ". . . el viento llevó hasta las trincheras el relente fétido que emanaba de los dos cadáveres enamorados . . ."¹ Death must therefore be seen for what it really is, however romantic the circumstances: the physical destruction of living flesh which becomes carrion for the vultures and which putrifies. The second occasion on which Anze Matienzo sees a special significance in death concerns Mario's observation of a dead officer's white gloves in the midst of decomposing corpses:

Esos guantes eran un residuo de civilización, una sonrisa en medio de la mueca pavorosa de tragedia, una coquetería prendida como una flor en un pliegue del manto siniestro, un piropo cortando fugazmente el alarido de la muerte . . . (El martirio de un civilizado, pp. 182-83).

Yet the irony of this description will not escape us, for to find such small comforts in the midst of death is like whistling in the dark. The owner of the gloves lies dead and little can be said for so-called civilization if all that remains of it is a pair of incongruous white gloves.

(v) The personal experience of the war: the inner man

To suggest that by dehumanizing the soldier and emphasizing the animal side of his behaviour the writers fail to see the human, personal side of war would be quite unjust. The dehumanization is an artificial device designed to show how unhuman man is rendered by his physical

1. Anze Matienzo, p. 172. Cf. above, p. 266, where the same author was seen to use a similar juxtaposition of the beautiful and the revolting when describing the Chaco itself.

involvement in the war. But this is only part of the truth, for to whatever degree of animalization or even reification man might be reduced, he retains in many aspects of his mental behaviour the characteristics of a human being. He is, for example, tied emotionally to his past and to his family; he retains a personality and an individuality which must constantly be suppressed; he may bring with him a religion and a moral code and he cannot free himself entirely from their influence, however strong the pressures to which they are subjected. What is of interest to the writers is the way in which these ties, traits and beliefs undergo irrevocable changes in the course of the soldier's experience in the war. Just as with the soldier's physical experience of the war, these aspects are not subject to verification by historians, and they constitute the contribution which best distinguishes fiction from other records of an historical event.

(a) War and family life

If the family is one of society's fundamental and stable institutions, then the disruption of family life caused by war is of great significance and consequence, not only for the soldier and the rest of the family, none of whom adjusts completely to his absence, but also for society in general. There are several instances in Chaco War fiction which illustrate the way in which war disrupts families and personal relationships, particularly in the cuentos. In Leytón's "Enajenado," the death of the son Adolfo leads to the mother's insanity, and the ex-combatiente Jaime Oblitas in the same writer's "¡La luz!" loses his sight and is abandoned by his wife (Placer, pp. 107-23). Camilo, in Saavedra's story "Deuda," is thought killed in action and returns to find his wife has remarried (Dimensiones de la angustia, pp. 49-75). The

relationship of Sirpa and Bara in Céspedes' "La Coronela" is destroyed by the war, and we are led to believe that the war emotionally engulfs Sirpa so that the relationship no longer matters, until the closing lines of the story reveal that it never ceased to be important to him (Sangre de mestizos, pp. 37-100). In Daza Valverde's ¡Guerra a la guerra! Edmundo Blanco not only loses his novia (who marries one of his friends) but also his sister (who dies) and his grandmother (who brought him up, and who goes insane as a result of false reports of Edmundo's death). Montero's problems in Cutimuncu are, like Camilo's, also largely due to his having been reported killed and to finding his wife about to remarry (Toro Ramallo, pp. 13, 20, 40), whilst the relationship of Mariano and Lucía in Landa Lyon's novel is prevented from developing by the war (Mariano Choque Huanca, p. 200). Mariano does not return from the war, so the fact that Lucía runs away with Eugenio matters less than the action of the wife of Saavedra's Camilo, although Lucía's behaviour does destroy Mariano's father, Manuel (pp. 205-06). Leytón, in "Se pervirtieron," shows the penury to which those who are left behind by the soldiers are reduced, a penury which leads first to the acceptance of charity, and then to moral corruption.¹ Such disruption or destruction of relationships, which Landa Lyon suggests is widespread (p. 199), is one of the countless unseen effects of war which subsequently makes itself felt,² although

1. Placer, pp. 145-72. For other examples of the disruption of family life, see Toro Ramallo, Chaco, pp. 151, 172-75, and Cutimuncu, pp. 131-35; Leytón, La punta de los cuatro degollados, p. 107; Anze Matienzo, El martirio de un civilizado, pp. 42-47.

2. Anze Matienzo, pp. 95-97, illustrates through the encounter between Mario and Justina the reverse side of this effect of war: the way in which horizons may be widened and dreams awakened by lives touching as the result of the mobility produced by war. In this instance, however, their second encounter shows the dreams to have been an illusion (pp. 175-78).

only Leytón, Saavedra and Toro examine the consequences to any extent, and then only in a personal, rather than a social context. Nevertheless, comment on this topic can be seen as part of the general condemnation of war and its effects.

One way of attempting to maintain relationships through the separation which war causes is by correspondence, and several writers stress the importance of letters at the front. A letter represents a link with life (Peláez, Cuando el viento, II, 188; Daza Valverde, ¡Guerra a la guerra! pp. 49-50); it provides a spiritual sustenance which is awaited with greater eagerness than food itself (Landa Lyon, Mariano Choque Huanca, p. 227; see also Toro Ramallo, Chaco, pp. 75-76). Landa Lyon expands upon the importance for the soldier of maintaining contact with his family:

No saber nada de los suyos, era sentirse solo en el mundo. Y sentirse solo en la guerra es morir de angustia . . . El soldado que se siente solo en la trinchera es un muerto moral antes que materialmente lo sea por el enemigo.¹

Contact with one's family and with pre-war memories do have their problems and dangers. According to Toro, memories are for most soldiers a torture rather than a comfort, and that explains why the men try to drown their broken hopes and illusions in drink (Toro Ramallo, Chaco, p. 99; see also pp. 122-24). Costa du Rels illustrates how memories can be dangerous in a desperate situation such as that in which Bórlagui and his companions find themselves. The Captain has to take a soldier's photograph from him, because of the effect that memories could have on the soldier concerned, Monroy:

La persistencia de gratos recuerdos, en circunstancias penosas, es la forma más artera, por ser la más seductora, que toman los monstruos para vencernos. Se entregaba a una especie de desvarío

1. Pp. 226-27. Guzmán, Prisionero de guerra, p. 147, writes of the importance of letters for POWs.

malsano. Un mes antes, esa imagen, sobre la cual sus dedos se abrían y se cerraban sucesivamente había estimulado su fe y su valentía. . . Hoy día . . . ese ser se había convertido en una fuente de desesperación (La Laguna H.3., p. 98).

And yet, ironically, the disagreeableness of the present forces the soldier in war to think back to more pleasant personal experiences, although to do so, as Peláez points out, is of as little practical value as going into an attic full of bric-à-brac and immersing oneself in day-dreams conjured up by the smell of a perfume used by one's grandmother.¹

Although life in the cities during the war seems to go on as before,² the disruption of personal relationships is symptomatic of other social and personal changes which will mean that life can never again be the same. Cerruto seems to sense this, for Clara Eugenia remarks that "por momentos, todos vivimos descentrados, como si la guerra hubiera roto algo en el mecanismo de nuestras existencias" (Aluvión de fuego, p. 63), and Sergio Benavente in his letter to Mauricio realizes that the war will have a profound effect on a whole generation (p. 176). Finally it is clear that Peláez' purpose in describing at length the lives of his protagonists prior to the war is to indicate the profound changes that war imposes on the lives of so many young men.

(b) War and the inner self

Since the soldier's situation and personal life is fundamentally altered by his participation in the war, it is inevitable that the change in his circumstances should have some effect upon his personality. Many writers investigate the changes which are occasioned by army life and the

1. Quando el viento, II, 215-16. Cf. Leitón, La punta de los cuatro degollados, p. 82.

2. See above, p. 240.

experiences of actual combat, and the general consensus is that the soldiers' mentality and their morality are debased by the process of war, just as war dehumanizes them physically. As Leytón suggests, there are two kinds of mutilation in the war, physical and spiritual ("Mutilados," Placer, p. 183; see also Costa du Rels, La Laguna H.3., p. 143), and though the former is more obvious the effects of the latter are arguably more pernicious. Hence these psychological consequences certainly merit the attention which the writers devote to them, tentative though their investigations might be. They do at least illustrate the fact that the work of documentary fiction does not necessarily stop at the accurate or even impressionistic recording of observations and sensations but may fruitfully extend to considerations of a psychological and moral nature.

One of the major problems involving the soldier's personality is the question of his individuality. The soldier is discouraged from exerting his individual will, and at the same time has to adjust to unaccustomed discipline (Willard Waller, "War and Social Institutions," in Waller [ed], War in the Twentieth Century, p. 515), an adjustment which Leytón's Román Cáceres, for one, finds humiliating (La punta de los cuatro degollados, p. 11). For Anze Matienzo the individual as a soldier ceases to be a man: soldiers are not men but "combustible en potencia, objetos de un proceso espiritual, esclavos de un prejuicio, de un vicio social" (El martirio de un civilizado, p. 53). It is once again Leytón's character Cáceres who senses his insignificance and who feels like a "pingajo humano sin control de su vida" (p.7). The soldier here becomes an anonymous boulder in an unstoppable avalanche. The consequences of this conflict between the individual and the collective activity that war demands are, however, rarely pursued by the novelists. The best illustration of it is to be found in Céspedes' cuento, "La Coronela." Sirpa's

personal concerns initially override military ones: this is made apparent by the question Sirpa asks of Hinojosa, who brings a report from La Paz of great import--news of mobilization: "Y de mi mujer ¿qué sabes?"¹ Sirpa's sense of honour is concerned with his wife Bara in La Paz, not, as Hinojosa reminds him it should be, with Bolivian honour in the Chaco (p. 75). As the cuento progresses the collective forces of war gradually overtake Sirpa, so that his concerns as a private individual become buried beneath his commitment to the general will, until at the moment of his death at the end of the narrative, his vision of Bara shows that the individual had survived all along.

Just as the soldier needs to make a physical adjustment in order to withstand the rigours of war, so too must he make an adjustment of a mental order (Anze Matienzo, El martirio de un civilizado, p. 72), of which the suppression of individuality is but one aspect. But the degree of adjustment necessary is in most cases too great to allow the soldier to remain unaffected by his experiences. Several of the writers show how participation in the war turns the soldiers from bright young men into forlorn, prematurely aged shadows.² Raúl Contreras was a brilliant conversationalist, intelligent, witty and renowned for his courage. But the war turns him into "un anciano precoz, gruñón, de gestos meticulosos, que confundía el pasado y el presente, dando la impresión de un total desconcierto" (Costa du Rels, La Laguna H.3., p. 203). Montero loses his "arrogancia, elasticidad, viveza," to become a sad remnant of war, marked

1. Sangre de mestizos, p. 70. See also Sirpa's telegraph exchange with a General in Roboré, p. 72.

2. A notable exception to this kind of transformation is Peláez' Cortez Ochoa who "antes hosco, desconfiado y holgazán se había convertido en un tipo asequible, profundo, risueño" (Cuando el viento, II, 60-61).

by its barbarity (Toro Ramallo, Cutimuncu, p. 19). Juan Carlos looks at his friend Campos and sees that

sus ojos tenían la profundidad de la insania, su faz arrugada era risible. Toda su persona representaba un signo psicopatológico . . . Pobre 'loro' la guerra había hecho estragos en su cuerpo: era un quidam físico, un desecho mental, un miserable estoico asustado asido a una teoría extravagante (Peláez, Cuando el viento, II, 200).

Campos buries himself in the study of the world of insects; he grows thin, his eyes lose their sparkle, and when eating he becomes suspicious, impatient or melancholy (II, 204-05). Mario finds that everything he knew or that constituted his spiritual or moral make-up before the war is of no use to him; he has totally to readapt himself, to "andar con paso tardo, a mirar de reajo, con desconfianza implacable, a fruncir el entrecejo, a empuñar las manos y a no lavarse las patas" (Anze Matienzo, El martirio de un civilizado, p. 78). Smiling becomes so rare that when it occurs, it is almost painful and feels like a strange contortion of the face.¹ One thing that makes the soldiers smile in spite of themselves according to Toro is the incongruity of an intimate confidence being read from a letter by a bearded soldier, for it seems strange to hear such tenderness come from such a scratched, bruised, dirty soldier in a torn, mud-stained uniform (Toro Ramallo, Chaco, pp. 99-100; see also p. 81). The niceties of civilization, with death always imminent, seem so far away and so alien to his actual circumstances (Cerruto, Aluvión de fuego, pp. 173-74).

Such things are trivial, however, beside some of the more serious effects which war may exercise. We have already seen how some men are driven to suicide because the pressures of war are insupportable.²

1. Toro Ramallo, Chaco, p. 152. See also Leitón, La punta de los cuatro degollados, p. 89; Anze Matienzo, p. 78.

2. See above, p. 290.

Others, equally disturbed by their experiences, commit homicide, as Toro shows in Chaco (pp. 170-72). Teniente Llanos' remarks make it apparent that such cases would be more frequent if measures were not taken to prevent them:

Es la guerra que nos va a enloquecer a todos. Y lo peor es que hay que castigar, hay que reprimir, porque de otro modo, aquí habrían más bajas que en las líneas. Ya son innumerables los casos de soldados que, por cualquier cosa, lo despachan a uno... Y dicen después que en retaguardia no hay peligro...¹

In general war brings out man's worst instincts. Not all of them result in murder, but they do all show a disregard for the lives of others. To the members of one patrol lost in the selva, the disappearance of one of their number is not a cause for concern but prompts the thought that their own chances of survival are increased: "En la mala entraña de cada ser, un monstruo oculto, afirmó sin rubor: 'Mientras menos seamos, mejor! Duraremos más! Que se joda Macedo!'" (Costa du Rels, La Laguna H.3., p. 141; see also Peláez, Cuando el viento, II, 232). Another patrol absent for three days in the selva returns exhausted to its base, but the men in the trenches "los miraron como a seres de otro planeta, sin conexión material ni sentimental con ellos" (Anze Matienzo, El martirio de un civilizado, p. 170), and when a soldier drops to the ground in Céspedes' story "El milagro," the soldier following him, far from stopping to help him, does not even see him.² The reason, as Leytón sees it, for this indifference to normal morality, is because life at the front is totally different

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1. P. 172. Céspedes, in the story "Seis muertos en la campaña," Sangre de mestizos, pp. 112-13, makes the most serious attempt to illustrate the psychological disturbances which were caused by the experience of participating in the war.
 2. Sangre de mestizos, p. 141. See also Toro Ramallo, Chaco, p. 179; Lara, Sujnapura, pp. 199-200; Cortez A., Los avitaminados, p. 53; Daza Valverde, ¡Guerra a la guerra! pp. 256-57; Landa Lyon, Mariano Choque Huanca, p. 254.

from normal life, and consequently the men who live it are abnormal (cf. Costa du Rels, La Laguna H.3., p. 44): the soldier does not seem to be a recognizable human being, "sino un ente criminal porque no parecían asistirle ni el juicio, ni la razón, ni el sentimiento" (Leytón, ¡Fusilado! Placer, pp. 98-99). The criminality of the soldier in war-time stems directly from two things: firstly the connection between war and immorality, and secondly the ease with which the soldier can abrogate his moral responsibilities. Clearly these two matters are related: if war itself is seen to be immoral (and yet despite this it may be defended and justified on other non-moral grounds) then the moral system of the individual soldier becomes meaningless. It is not difficult for the soldier to feel that war is immoral, for he will easily recognize that moral precepts upheld in times of peace, such as the commandment "Thou shalt not kill," are readily abandoned in favour of their opposites during war-time.¹ Consequently the soldier sees no reason and receives no exhortation to uphold the precepts of private morality in war-time, since he is leading an immoral life by participating in the war, and in any case the fact that he may be killed at any moment does not encourage him to consider the morality of his own actions. Daza Valverde's character Gamboa, who steals the photograph of his friend Edmundo's novia and eventually the novia herself, or the Paraguayan soldier who steals from a dead Paraguayan officer, are both acting under the influence of the fact that the normal moral code has been suspended (¡Guerra a la guerra! pp. 150, 199).

1. Not many writers would (as Céspedes does) classify shooting an enemy soldier as homicide, with that word's criminal overtones. See "La paraguaya," Sangre de mestizos, p. 204. Anze Matienzo, El martirio de un civilizado, p. 134, hints at it also, describing a bayonet as an "arma . . . que da la sensación del homicidio."

Anze Matienzo does not show war to be immoral per se, but suggests that war brings immorality with it, and this undermines the normally accepted virtues of war such as conscience, duty and defence of national honour. The author's central character, Mario, defends these virtues, but the author himself shows their hollowness by including in Mario's harangue mention of the price that has to be paid in order that such virtues might be upheld. Firstly Mario admits that the soldiers cannot prevent their families from being morally corrupted while they (the soldiers) are away,¹ and secondly he says, "nuestro deber es embrutecernos para poder matar mejor" (p. 143). After the speech, Mario "tuvo ganas de llorar, de llorar a mares" (p. 143). We are not told the reason why, but we might hypothesize that Mario himself is forced to realize that his moral position is untenable: war does not allow one set of principles to be upheld (principles such as conscience and the defence of national territory at any cost) without a deleterious effect upon another set of principles. However noble or lofty the justification for war and for participation in it may seem to be, war brings immorality in its wake.

The second reason for the soldier's criminality--the abrogation of moral responsibilities--is a direct consequence of the suppression of his individuality. Since the military ethic requires unquestioning obedience, and since the source of all commands can be traced back to a superior officer or simply to the objectives of a given operation, then the ordinary soldier--or even a junior officer or an NCO--need not feel morally answerable for his actions. Instead he becomes merely an extension of his

1. El martirio de un civilizado, p. 142. Toro Ramallo, Chaco, pp. 63-64, illustrates also the moral corruption of the soldiers at a brothel in Villa Montes.

rifle or machine gun with which no-one can reason.¹ He fires it because he is told to and he kills with it because that is what it is for.

Although Toro's narrator finds it hard to sustain the automaton obedience of his fellow soldiers who question nothing (Toro Ramallo, Chaco, p. 120), most soldiers prefer to accept orders unquestioningly and are glad not to have to concern themselves with the morality of their actions. Their razón de ser is not to think but to kill (Anze Matienzo, p. 111; see also Costa du Rels, La Laguna H.3., pp. 23, 27), and when a group of soldiers in Anze Matienzo's novel charges with fixed bayonets only to find that there is no-one left to kill, the men feel disappointed and cheated (p. 135), rather than feeling relieved at being able to avoid killing. In the heat of battle the morality of killing is clearly an irrelevance, but as long as the soldier knows that he is merely obeying orders, he does not need to trouble his conscience about the morality of killing even in quieter moments.

The weakening or absence of morality in war can be related also to the lack of religious influence on the soldiers' lives, either through moral leadership from the Church as an institution or through the creed of a religious faith. It is one of the paradoxes of war that institutions such as the Church, normally one of the arbiters of private behaviour, abandon their principles to the amoral standards of the military, and show themselves to be disconcertingly ready to respond to the climate of political opinion and the exigencies of nationalism (Waller, War in the Twentieth Century, p. 504). Only one writer commits any of his characters to an unequivocally heretical attitude: Jesús Lara's well-born communist,

1. Céspedes, "Opiniones de dos descabezados," Sangre de mestizos, pp. 219-20; Anze Matienzo, El martirio de un civilizado, p. 120. See also Peláez, Cuando el viento, II, 59.

Aldana, who remarks: "Dios es un burgués poderoso . . . Hace las guerras y los cadáveres son su ganancia. Todos le invocan; pero él escucha sólo a los vencedores" (Sujnapura, p. 197). By contrast there are a few instances of religiosity in Chaco War fiction. Two occur in cuentos of Leytón: Telmo Terrazas is shown obtaining comfort from prayer ("La carpa de los aislados," Placer, p. 209), whilst Jaime Oblitas turns to faith, after his wife's desertion of him caused him to contemplate suicide.¹ Two others are to be found in Peláez' novel: one depicts a chaplain holding mass at the front (Cuando el viento, II, 78), the other concerns one of the characters, Antonio Libert, who is always immersed in prayer or going to mass whilst others seek entertainment. He is one who genuinely finds comfort from his belief, and sees man's suffering in the Chaco as the will of God and retribution for his sins (II, 127).

Two writers affirm the value of religion: Landa Lyon describes it as the last redoubt, and faith in God as the last hope (Mariano Choque Huanca, p. 90). Costa du Rels concurs, for even the non-believer Contreras, who is at least prepared to agree that religion is a source of energy and strength, and that for the sake of the common good it should not be ridiculed (La Laguna H.3., pp. 90-91), finally turns to prayer when all seems lost (p. 199). Costa du Rels' book is an affirmation of the value of religious belief and of the moral standards that such belief, if acted upon, implies. Although most men hide a strong belief in God out of shame, mental torpor or fear of ridicule (p. 32), Bórlagui makes no attempt to do so and throughout unashamedly admits to his belief in God and in the value of faith and prayer (pp. 26, 68, 157). Contreras, who

1. Pp. 141-43. It should be noted that the author was a priest.

initially opposes religion as a superstition (p. 26) and defines God as "uno de tantos mitos que el hombre inventa para precautelar su debilidad" (p. 46), is inspired by Bórlagui's words and example to continue to lead the survivors to safety--a kind of belief by proxy (pp. 166, 170, 187)--and is himself "saved" in a Christian sense, by his act of brotherly love and self-sacrifice at the front on Christmas Eve (p. 219). Of the minor characters, both Moro and Kakumini argue a blind, innocent faith in God (pp. 44-49, 178, 181), and it is interesting to note that whereas Contreras taunts Moro out of fear, and with some justification rejects Moro's hypocrisy of defending God but denying charity to his comrades (p. 48), he is later inspired by Kakumini's faith to make further efforts to survive (p. 182).

However, Costa du Rels, perhaps unintentionally, undermines his argument in favour of the value of a belief in a divine power in two different ways. In the first and obvious place, Bórlagui the believer does not survive (neither does Moro and Kakumini's fate is unknown), so that although Bórlagui is also "saved," his faith in divine providence and in hope does not protect him from physical destruction.¹ By contrast Contreras the sceptic emerges from the ordeal, even if a mentally broken man. Secondly, and more significantly, Costa de Rels shows that faith in God is not the only source of moral strength: even such a thing as a compass, which the author unmistakably identifies in a god-playing role (pp. 55-56), can provide men with the same kind of fortitude if it is thought to control their fate (p. 67). We learn, however, that the compass does not exist (p. 65); hence the source of the strength can be effective, even if it is a myth, for as long as the men continue to

1. Pp. 31, 33. Of course the author may believe that faith is more important than physical survival.

believe in its existence. We may infer from this that belief in God may be based on a similar kind of myth which acts upon men in the same manner.

Thus if religious faith is defined as a belief in some source of spiritual strength, however far removed from a divinity that source may be, then faith clearly can be helpful to the soldier in war. But faith is one thing, the Church as an institution is another, and little is written of the role of the Church in the Chaco War.

Siles Salinas laments the general absence from Chaco War fiction of a concern for religious values (La literatura boliviana de la guerra del Chaco, pp. 125 ff). Gómez, in Chaco, suggests one reason: men are simply too wicked to heed Christ's teachings:

Si no ha habido nadie más inútil que Jesús. Predicarles amor a los aguarás . . . ¡Qué disparate! Cada día somos más brutos, más salvajes, más inconscientes. ¡Predicar amor a los hombres! ¡No me hagas reír! Nadie ha perdido el tiempo como Jesús (Toro Ramallo, p. 124).

War contradicts all the precepts of Christianity; religious values and the objectives of war are incompatible, and the one has little place in works which aim to document the other (cf. Graves, Goodbye to All That, pp. 167-68).

(c) Prisoners of war

The historians will tell us how many men were captured during the war: the number of Bolivians was between 20,000 and 25,000 (Zook, p. 240; Querejazu Calvo, p. 459). But they are a particular kind of victim and are subjected to a particular kind of suffering which it falls to the novelist to describe. They are soldiers who have lost their function and their usefulness; they are forced into contact with their enemies and suffer at their hands without means of redress and with only the

theoretical protection of international conventions.¹ Their physical discomforts are the same as those of the fighting soldiers--the rigours of the climate, hunger and disease--and in addition they must face the ill-treatment and torture inflicted by their captors (Guzmán, Prisionero de guerra, p. 132). But their mental sufferings are different from those of the soldier at the front and in many ways, it may be argued, are harder to bear. The status of being a prisoner of war is in itself degrading: the conditions of the camp and the attitude of the captors both contribute to the animalization of the captured soldier, who must also accept the sense of failure which capture implies. The soldier faces a test of courage in the prison camp not just because he is in the hands of an "ignoble enemy" (Otero, Horizontes incendiados, p. 276), but because of the mental pressures to which he is subjected. Guzmán describes the prison camp as "la casa de los suspiros, la morada del fastidio y de la decepción, de todo lo más ruin y depresivo capaz de germinar en el alma humana."² The prisoner's most relentless and oppressive scourge is time, and Guzmán succeeds in conveying the crushing effect of its slow passage:

Gira la lenta rueda del tiempo, enorme, pesada y sombría como un fantástico rodillo que nos aplana el corazón, la vida toda puesta a laminarse estoicamente bajo esa presión de toneladas (p. 139).

It is scarcely surprising, therefore, that prisoners care little who wins or loses, but simply that the fighting should cease so that they may be

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1. Bolivia rejected Paraguayan proposals on the care of prisoners of war because each side would have had to pay for the care of its own men (there were only some 2,500 Paraguayan POWs). "The prisoners were left to fate" (Zook, p. 114).
 2. P. 144. There is no confirmation in other sources that prisoners were sold to a foreign company as slaves (p. 261).

set free. When Cruz Vargas, a prisoner for two years, learns that the Bolivian army has been destroyed at Cañada Carmen, his comment "Gracias a Dios" is not a sign of defeatism, but of hope that his captivity may soon come to an end as a result (Céspedes, "Seis muertos en la campaña," Sangre de mestizos, p. 114).

As a consolation for the time spent by prisoners of war in captivity, and so that it should not seem totally wasted, Guzmán suggests that there are lessons to be learned from their experience. Captivity can provide spiritual enrichment, and give the soldiers a greater sense of purpose. They must analyze their experiences to see if they can find a "principio simbólico" behind them all, "para afirmar en la conciencia la voluntad de vivir que no es otra que la de realizarse conforme a ciertos ideales de grandeza colectiva o personal" (Guzmán, Prisionero de guerra, p. 259). This seems a somewhat optimistic exhortation and one to which few prisoners of war would have responded, for it assumes a self-awareness which, according to indications from other writers, most of the Bolivian soldiers did not possess. Even if they did possess such awareness before the war, their experiences in it have so profoundly affected their personality that analysis of this sort is beyond them. And yet this "voluntad de vivir" did emerge from some prisoners and other war-veterans in post-war Bolivia in the form of political activity which ultimately led to the revolution in 1952. Even if self-realization for the individual was denied to many because of the effects of the war, both physical and psychological, the collective will did succeed ultimately in finding a symbolic principle embodied in the Movimiento Nacional Revolucionario, in accordance with which Bolivia was able to bring about profound changes in its social and political structures.

(vi) Post-war Bolivia

The cease-fire on June 14th 1935 brought the Chaco War to a merciful end after three years of bitter conflict. Much of what followed is told by historians, not just about the aftermath of the war but also about Bolivia's political development in the years which followed it. Some of the writers of fiction touch upon these political aspects, and such statements as they make are subject to verification by other sources. But once again the historians do not tell all, for it is the novelists who inform us about the personal adjustments which a return to social normality requires both of the war veterans and of those who have been waiting for them.

When news of the cease-fire was received, Bolivians found it hard to rejoice. Leytón notes that in Sucre the first announcement of peace was greeted with indifference ("Se pervirtieron," Placer, p. 165), and although subsequently there was greater enthusiasm (pp. 166-67),

hubo soldados que en la línea recibieron la noticia de la paz con una estúpida indiferencia. ¡A tal punto se habían decepcionado del mundo! ¡A tal punto se hallaban embrutecidos en sus sentimientos que ya no sabían alegrarse! (p. 169).

Learning again how to rejoice is but one of the re-adjustments that the war-veterans have to make in order to "lavarse de la mugre chaqueña" (Toro Ramallo, Cutimuncu, p. 22). Even their actual return is not without its emotional difficulties. Partly because Bolivia came so close to ignominious defeat--the dispute was formally settled by arbitration--and partly because the altiplano inhabitants felt so distant from the war and unaffected by it, the Bolivian soldiers do not return to anything like a hero's welcome:

Era un retorno adusto como una prolongación de la guerra. Ni un abrazo . . . Había acabado la guerra, pero en la llanura pétrea, en el Collasuyo Inca, todo quedó sereno. Ni júbilo ni entusiasmo. No había flores de regreso en las aldeas, ni abrazos, ni lágrimas.

Tal vez, sólo en las ciudades, gritos o sollozos al desfilar las banderas deshilachadas por la metralla (Cutimuncu, p. 14).

Guzmán would gladly accept any kind of return in exchange for the limbo of continued confinement in a POW camp awaiting repatriation, which did not begin until April 1936 and was not completed until December of that year (Querejazu Calvo, p. 459). He writes very bitterly that the excessive delay represents

la quiebra moral del continente, cuya política oficial profundamente materialista, no percibe, no quiere percibir los factores espirituales para usarlos en servicio de la historia, cadena interminable de torpezas nacidas en el egoísmo y la estrechez de conceptos (Prisionero de guerra, pp. 259-60).

Eventually all those who survived the war went back to their native country and began the difficult process of readjustment, while the diplomats argued over the peace treaty at the conference table. Toro Ramallo devotes his work Cutimuncu to an assessment of post-war Bolivian society, and hence examines these questions of readjustment more fully than most of the other writers. That the war-veteran nurtures a desire to readjust is not in question, if Toro's Montero is a good example:

Como muchos otros ex-combatientes, [Montero] anhelaba paz, tranquilidad, quietud, quería reconciliarse con la bestia feroz que vio aullar en el campo de batalla, quería creer otra vez en todas las cosas bellas y santas, que la guerra pareció desmenuzar (p. 50; see also Lara, Surumi, p. 272).

But there are too many things which conspire against him. In Montero's case he is crippled, his family has broken up and his country turns its back upon the remnants like him, "los hombres pálidos, que la guerra no quiso matar" (p. 153). Having served in the Chaco Montero feels that so much hardship cannot have been for nothing, and yet he and his fellow veterans seem now to have no aim or purpose: they are "náufragos, medio locos, del mar de arenas y de espinas . . . que perdieron su rumbo en las

oleadas de sol y de arena del Chaco."¹ Not surprisingly many of them turned to drinking and gambling "en un afán de olvido colectivo" (p. 51). But in addition to problems of a personal or emotional nature there is also the difficulty of casting off the mental effects of war and warfare. Leytón's narrator in "Mutilados" is constantly tortured by scenes and events from the war, and experiences a terror far greater than anything he felt during the war itself. It is, as Leytón himself remarks, a kind of delayed reaction to his experiences (Placer, pp. 174, 178-79), and is no doubt far more common than this single observation by Leytón suggests.

The picture of the war-veteran as a broken, degenerate, mutilated wreck is, however, only one half of reality, as Peláez is aware, for such men could not have produced the great social changes which Bolivia underwent in the years following the war. On the one hand, it is true, there is

la humildad del ex-combatiente a manifestarse en la ostentación perenne de ser un sacrificado por la patria, pedigüeño, sin iniciativas y pobre de solemnidad del que se acordarán en los aniversarios nacionales para obsequiarle una camisa de tocuyo o un almuerzo preparado por alguna escuela (II, 237),

but on the other hand there is "audacia, exigencia de derechos al sacrificio mayestático del ser, derecho por sangre vertida para ocupar situaciones preponderantes" (II, 237). In other words there exists also the war-veteran who is the potential social leader and possible reformer.

That both social and political reform should result as a consequence of the war is scarcely surprising in the light of some of the social injustices mentioned in the fiction and of the disillusionment with

1. p. 96. For another "desadaptado" like Montero, see Raúl Botelho Gosálvez' character Álvaro Díaz in Coca (1941).

Bolivian leadership and established political structures.¹ A number of the writers point to socially equalizing factors which emerged in the war, perhaps insignificant in themselves, but collectively instrumental in effecting some of the changes in the post-war period. Fernando Caso, in Leitón's work, reminds Román Cáceres of a generality about war:

La guerra cumple su finalidad de inutilizarnos, para ella, todos somos iguales. ¡Amiguito! Las farsas que hacías cuando civil, aquí no cuajan. Todos somos lo que somos. Es la ley de la guerra (La punta de los cuatro degollados, p. 8).

By way of more specific examples, Peláez shows class barriers being broken down by ordinary soldiers entering what would formerly have been an exclusive hotel (Cuando el viento, II, 44), and the way in which Pedro, the company cook, changes from the lowly status of "Pedrito"--a pejorative diminutive of familiarity--in pre-war barrack days, to "Su Majestad el Cocinero" in the field (II, 130). Anze Matienzo notes the socially levelling effect of the uniform, which minimizes social and racial differences (El martirio de un civilizado, p. 25). Cerruto perceives how, at the war information office, all of the women seeking news are reduced to the same human level through their common purpose and anxiety (Aluvión de fuego, p. 147). As a natural consequence of the contacts and juxtapositions brought about by the war, new sympathies are aroused and alliances formed. In particular the indigenista movement, emergent before the war, became much more widespread as paceños and campesinos encountered each other, perhaps for the first time. One such symbolic indigenista awakening is described by Montaña Daza:

1. Cf. Butterfield, History and Human Relations, pp. 39-40: "It was not Communism that broke down the society and the structure and the culture of Old Russia, but the catastrophe of war itself. Since 1917 it has been demonstrated in one country after another that revolutions of the modern kind--Communism, Fascism, National Socialism, etc.--arise out of the elements of disintegration and demoralisation produced by war." See also Waller, War in the Twentieth Century, pp. 530-31.

Ahora que te miro aquí, a mi lado, compañero campesino, hermanados por el peligro y el miedo, recuerdo con vergüenza, con qué inhumana injusticia te tratábamos, con qué soberbia te pisábamos, olvidándonos, intencionalmente, que también veníamos de la misma madre india (El mal natural, p. 96).

Other contacts made during the war resulted in the formation of basically left-wing groups which led to the establishment of new political parties in the decade following the cease-fire. Most of the works of fiction were written too soon after the war to illustrate the consequences of these alliances. Some of the writers do, however, mention some aspects of socialism in Bolivia during and immediately after the war, although it is clearly peripheral to their main concerns. This further confirms the writers' general neglect of the class-struggle in favour of other preoccupations.

Two writers put forward the socialist argument against the war. Otero's Paraguayan figure Asunción Fernández argues that the workers do not want war because they will be the ones to suffer (Horizontes incendiados, p. 136). Cerruto provides fuller reasoning of this position through a discussion between miners and lawyers, representing radicals and reactionaries (Aluvión de fuego, pp. 165-66). However, open opposition to the war, including the opposition of socialists upon ideological grounds, was scant and weak, and as Montaña Daza points out the revolutionaries and thinkers were certainly not the men in command, but at best sergeants or non-commissioned officers (El mal natural, p. 43). Socialist ideology was thus little in evidence during the war itself, since most of the leading socialists were in exile, and it began to emerge only during the post-war period, as the ideas which were formulated, the contacts which were made and the experiences which had been undergone during the war assumed concrete political expression (see Klein, Parties and Political Change, pp. 203-04).

Toro Ramallo in Cutimuncu is able to provide some assessment of socialist activity in post-war Bolivia, calling it the most significant repercussion of the Chaco War (p. 66). It made its first impact through the so-called military socialism of Colonel David Toro's government, and as a result of not having had to fight in opposition beforehand, it lacked vigour.¹ Toro Ramallo notes, however, that in spite of the fact that the movement was there to stay in Bolivia, it was difficult for Bolivians at first to accept the doctrine of socialism, since it did not follow the traditional Bolivian pattern. Socialism involved not only the absence of personalism, but also meant an adherence to foreign ideas and international bodies which did not satisfy the nationalistic or even regionalistic feelings nurtured by many.²

There were, of course, non-political consequences of the war, which could be seen in different aspects of society, and most of these appear to be beneficial to that society, according to these writers. On a large scale, Toro Ramallo suggests that Bolivia succeeded in breaking away from its system of privileges and sinecures as a result of the war (Cutimuncu, p. 51). Landa Lyon also detects the emergence of what he calls "una psicología nueva" as one of the benefits (Mariano Choque Huanca, p. 171), whilst other writers deal with more specific advantages: a greater sense of comradeship (Leytón, "Perdidos," Placer, pp. 129-30), and the

1. Cutimuncu, p. 67. Cf. Klein, pp. 228-66, whose assessment of David Toro's government does not support the novelist's contention.

2. Cutimuncu, pp. 67-68. See also pp. 93-95. This explains, of course, why Bolivia preferred to develop a form of national socialism embodied in the MNR. Toro Ramallo wrote Cutimuncu before the MNR was formed, but correctly perceived the direction that socialism had to take if it was to succeed in post-war Bolivia. The country did adjust to an absence of personalism, although Paz Estenssoro, when he came to power, enjoyed a degree of personal charisma.

emancipation of women (Anze Matienzo, El martirio de un civilizado, pp. 36-37). On the debit side, Toro detects the accentuation of regionalism, in particular the formation of two camps, the "colla" and the "camba," or the altiplano and the oriente (Cutimuncu, p. 89; see also Leytón, "La carpa de los aislados," Placer, p. 214), although this regionalism has only begun to acquire any significance in very recent years as the Bolivian Oriente has begun to be developed.

In general, therefore, despite the ills suffered by Bolivia during the war, there is hope and optimism for the future. At least, according to Montaña Daza, Bolivians learned who was responsible for the country's backwardness, corruption and weakness (El mal natural, pp. 139-40), whilst Anze Matienzo is more positive in his hope that the war will provide lessons for future generations, especially for the young who participated in it (p. 44). Toro's voice expresses the gloomiest predictions: he remarks that the Chaco War gave birth to a new national feeling, which may awaken slumbering consciences and from which future dangers and conflicts may hatch (Cutimuncu, p. 8). Certainly this new nationalism, evident in much of the fiction, was an element of the driving force behind the revolution in 1952, and if that is what Toro had in mind his concern was justified, for the revolution did not occur without bloodshed. But he also fears that the lessons of the Chaco may not be learned: "Pero volveremos a las andadas y volveremos a la guerra, porque habremos fabricado otros idolillos y creeremos que ellos nos llevarán al éxito . . . y esto parece un mal no sólo boliviano, sino americano" (p. 138). So far he has been proved wrong in this: Bolivia and Paraguay have lived peacefully with their mutual frontier, and the Chaco War remains as the last major international conflict within the continent.

(vii) The Nature of War

The justification of war as a beautiful, exciting, natural human activity is not characteristic of modern writing on the subject. As has been demonstrated, the fiction of the Chaco War in general shows war to be physically, socially and morally dehumanizing. Even when war fiction is used for propaganda, it is not incumbent upon the writer at the same time to justify war, since war can be shown to be politically and ideologically essential and inevitable without being held aloft as noble or admirable. Otero is the one writer of Chaco War fiction who does choose to make the justification of war part of his propaganda. Mainly through the character Padillita, who is converted from an anti-war pacifist to an enthusiastic and heroic patriot, Otero defends war as a natural and estimable activity, and thereby runs against the tide of contemporary attitudes concerning the status of war.¹

Padillita is not the only mouthpiece for Otero on this subject. It is in fact Padillita's friend Guerra who describes the beauty of war,

combates espectaculares y gloriosamente trágicos, en los que nuestros soldados han hecho verdaderos prodigios de valor y de entusiasmo . . . Los ataques se sucedían los unos a los otros, y todos eran rechazado con derroche de valor y de energía . . . ¡Qué días hermosos aquellos! (Horizontes incendiados, p. 347).

But Padillita, in his letters to his father, becomes the true spokesman for the author's appraisal of war. He writes of the excitement of war,

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1. Pfeiler, War and the German Mind, p. 303, classifies the two ethical approaches to war as "egocentric" (in which the rebellion of the individual leads to an anti-war position) and "ethnocentric" (in which national values dominate and the individual is prepared to sacrifice himself for the common good). The former approach predominated in the Chaco War novels, due both to the remoteness of the Chaco from the native region of the soldiers and the consequent lack of commitment which they felt towards it, and to the fact that the Bolivian leadership failed to inspire the soldiers with confidence in their ability to defeat the enemy.

el imperio de las voces de mando, el clarín de guerra, la camaradería constante con los compañeros de gloria, el tronar del cañón, ese estremecimiento sutil que penetra en el corazón al ver a un compañero muerto (p. 355).

He finds that the horrors of war are impressive but that war itself is natural (pp. 359, 360). Men destroy men in war not for the pleasure of killing but to "paralizar sus movimientos" (p. 359), whilst the heroism and sacrifices of war lead to progress, truth and the dignity of man (pp. 357-58).

Characters in other works echo some of these sentiments, although we never receive the impression that such characters speak on behalf of the author, who is always careful to make clear his real feelings about war, either explicitly elsewhere or implicitly through the course of the narrative. Contreras, for example, in La Laguna H.3., is shown early in the narrative to find war exciting and the lure of glory irresistible (Costa du Rels, p. 71), yet his experiences in the bosque show these to be illusions. The view of war held by Cerruto's Mauricio Santacruz before he actually enlists is a romantic, idealized picture, seen in terms of an epic poem (Aluvión de fuego, p. 51), which Sergio Benavente's letter strongly contradicts (pp. 169-81). Hinojosa in Céspedes' story "La Coronela" is intoxicated by war (which Toro elsewhere likens to "un licor que no se puede beber impunemente, sin que llegue el deseo otra vez.")¹ Hinojosa cannot imagine the Chaco without the war, nor his own life without fighting in the Chaco (Sangre de mestizos, pp. 90, 92). It may not be pretty, he says to Sirpa, "pero yo respiro, me siento vivir aquí . . . Lo único que vale en la vida es la guerra" (p. 91). The author effectively shows the folly of this philosophy, however for three

1. Toro Ramallo, Chaco, p. 198. Cerruto, Aluvión de fuego, p. 172, also writes of "la embriaguez de la sangre."

days later Hinojosa is killed in action. Even if war were the only worthwhile thing in life, (despite the fact that, paradoxically, it seeks out death), in order to enjoy it one needs to be alive.

Otero's opposition to pacifism is as strong as his support for war and once again Padillita is his mouthpiece. He calls pacifism a chimera, "una creación geométrica del pensamiento," and argues that one can be a pacifist in the name of intelligence and of philosophical principles, "pero jamás en nombre de la vida" (Horizontes incendiados, p. 360), echoing Hinojosa's paradoxical philosophy noted above. Earlier Padillita asserted that a just war to defend peace and justice is right and proper, whereas to turn the other cheek would bring shame upon the nation (p. 211). It is clear, however, that by a pacifist people Otero means a cowardly, selfish people, "cuyos hombres tiemblen anticipadamente ante los horrores de la carnicería y hagan latir su egoísmo en la pulsación más íntima" (p. 361), a somewhat prejudiced interpretation of pacifism. As an advocate of war, Otero is a strong believer in the value of patriotism or nationalism, which if deeply felt will command the respect of other nations and help to subjugate them (p. 146). Leitón, perhaps the least nationalistic of the writers, provides a counter to this with his own interpretation of the meaning of "patria":

Palabra vacía, hueca y deshumanizada. Figura siniestra en esta hora de dolor y de vergüenza. Ninguna representación de ella. Patria, generadora de hordas asesinas. Patria, excusa de la mayor ignominia: peculados, estafas y traiciones (La punta de los cuatro degollados, p. 21).

Whereas Otero's defence of war is explicit, the majority of the other writers' condemnation of war is implicit in their narrative. However some of these writers make explicit statements on the nature of war as they see it. Peláez' Juan Carlos, for example, perceives the all-embracing destructiveness of war beyond the merely material

destruction which is self-evident:

La guerra--habló con tono ronco Juan Carlos--, sobreviene como un terremoto, sin preanuncios, sin lógica; todo lo destruye igual que un torbellino de huracán. No respeta la moral, ni el arte, ni el trabajo penoso de años continuos. La guerra es una enfermedad del viejo globo terráqueo. Sólo a su anuncio prematuro se trastoca la existencia. Es nefasta cual una pesadilla (Cuando el viento, I, 196-97).

A short conversation between Teniente Hurtado and Gómez makes clear Toro's view that war is always bad: Gómez' remark that the war is bound to end well elicits from Hurtado the response: "Aunque llegáramos a la Asunción, acabaría mal" (Chaco, p. 105). Leytón, having shown war as a devourer of men and materials ("Se pervirtieron," Placer, p. 163), provides perhaps the most explicit condemnation of war by summing up its realities:

Esa era la guerra: dolor y miseria, agonía, pudredumbre, en los hospitales . . . Sol canicular, frío inclemente, angustia, hambre y sed, destrozos, barbarie y muerte, en las trincheras! ¡Qué heroísmo ni qué hazañas de titanes! Eso estuvo bien para escribirse! Y el que se había lanzado a la campaña con ansias de triunfos y sed de gloria cambiaba de modo de pensar casi repentinamente. Todas las ilusiones que en su juvenil y optimista imaginación se había pintado, se borraron de un solo brochazo, para siempre (p. 221).

Apart from these categorical attempts to justify or condemn war, we also find more subtle interpretations of the phenomenon of war which try to explain the power that it can exercise over men. War is here endowed with its own personality and its own driving force. Anze Matienzo sees it to be a cosmic force, more powerful even than Nature since it interrupts the logical process of natural evolution (El martirio de un civilizado, p. 53). Earlier, writing of preparations for war, he sees it in more concrete and more graphic form, as a machine whose construction cannot be prevented, thereby making war inevitable:

La máquina de destrucción se alistó en la sombra, sin que nada concurriese a interrumpir su montaje. Las cosas humanas requieren frecuentemente que los hechos estén consumados para

ponernos en acción. Pero ocurre que las voluntades se mueven cuando los émbolos están en plena actividad; entonces es ya imposible detenerlos, deben funcionar hasta que se gasten, hasta que se consuma la última energía y salten los engranajes sin dejar ni una tuerca en su sitio (pp. 14-15).

Leitón's picture of war is also of a machine, a kind of animalized angry machine which, foaming at the mouth, "en un ímpetu terrible, bárbara y deshumanizada, sigue su obra asesina."¹ There is in these descriptions of war a sense of helplessness, which Guzmán also detects:

Jamás he deseado la guerra. Es la guerra que me ha deseado a mí. Ogro voraz, ahijado de gobernantes vesánicos, se alimenta con el grano escogido de los trigales (Prisionero de guerra, p. 9).

There is helplessness also in the idea of submission to "las ruedas dentadas de esa máquina trágica" as an act of instinct which cannot be resisted, despite the knowledge that one may be pulverized or, at best, bruised and half-crushed by the machine (Anze Matienzo, El martirio de un civilizado, p. 77).

Saavedra's picture of war is different: it is not a force, but an artificial bridge built by men between life and death, from which it is impossible to return once men have embarked upon it, for "el diario vivir matando y muriendo, los había distanciado de la vida y emparentado con la muerte" ("Deuda," Dimensiones de la angustia, pp. 62-63). Hence, Saavedra concludes, war for soldiers can only end in death, by which he means both mental and physical death, whereas the only ones who gain victory from war are those who did not fight (p. 63).

If society as a whole is rendered helpless by the power exercised by war, so too is the individual whose will is taken over by the

1. La punta de los cuatro degollados, p. 69. Peláez, Cuando el viento, II, 72-73, also sees war as a machine.

collective will,¹ thus removing from the individual his control over his own destiny (Guzmán, Prisionero de guerra, p. 12; Céspedes, "Opiniones de dos descabezados," Sangre de mestizos, p. 220). Anze Matienzo perceives a paradox between the position of the individual and that of society with regard to war. War, as a means of settling international disputes, is condemned as being unlawful:

Lo que no impide que cuando un horno se pone a arder, todo y todos contribuyen a alimentarlo con el mayor número posible de vidas sacrificadas, lanzando el anatema del deshonor sobre los rebeldes. El deber de cada individuo es convertirse en combustible para consumirse en la fragua. La condenación de la guerra ni siquiera roza a los individuos aislados, que son los actores anónimos de un drama anatematizado por la humanidad, actores que no tienen el derecho de rebelarse contra el fenómeno oprobioso, sin caer en el oprobio (Anze Matienzo, El martirio de un civilizado, p. 19).

The individual is thus also rendered morally helpless by the collective will, which demands his sacrifice. On a more simple level, Landa Lyon's Mariano is made aware of the insignificance of the individual on the battle-field, realizing that "nadie se fijaría en él, era un número, uno más que bien podía morir o seguir viviendo, a nadie le importaba eso más que a él."²

This helplessness of the individual in war can be seen as a reflection of the position of the individual which has emerged from this consideration of the treatment of the Chaco War in fiction. The individual is reduced by war to something less than his full humanity, at times to the status of an animal or even an inanimate object, and at best to a human being deprived of his last weapon against collective forces, his individual will. As a soldier bound to obey orders or as a member of

1. See above, p. 297.

2. Mariano Choque Huanca, p. 159. See also idem, p. 213; Cortez A., Los avitaminosos, pp. 45-46.

society opposed to the collective will, the individual cannot exercise his natural, instinctive power of self-determination. For the writer of fiction, who is above all the champion of the individual (Caute, The Illusion, p. 81), this must be seen as a tragedy. When to this are added Bolivia's failures in the Chaco War, that is, the failures of the collective will, the only justifiable documentary picture is one of failure, the failure of Bolivia and of mankind.

Toro attempts a prognosis of the future of war and produces a predictably and justifiably pessimistic picture. We shall never banish war, he argues, for we glorify it too much:

El mutilado mostrará su muñón, con orgullo y mientras en su pecho tintineen las condecoraciones, contará su hazaña a sus hijos, a sus nietos, a sus amigos, despertando así, en ellos, el entusiasmo marcial, el deseo de ser también un día, héroes.

Y la mujer que fue esposa o madre, agotadas ya las lágrimas con los años, hablará con orgullo, del que murió cumpliendo su deber y pondrá su memoria como un ejemplo, sembrando así, sin pensarlo, el respeto a la gloria, de la que el hombre no se podrá librar (Chaco, pp. 189-90).

War is so much part of man that he cannot resist the call of death. He goes towards it with the certainty of meeting it:

En eso consiste la cobardía valerosa de [1] hombre, que nunca se rebela, que siempre obedece. Encorvado, temblando a veces, sin arrogancia, marcha hacia el fin. Después, herido, cuando puede, grita, grita, peor que el más innoble animal. Y así fue ayer y es hoy y será siempre, aquí, allá y en todas partes. (Chaco, p. 192).

CONCLUSION

"... the accurate transcription of actuality does not necessarily produce a work of any real truth or enduring literary value" (Ian Watt, The Rise of the Novel, quoted in Booth, The Rhetoric of Fiction, p. 41).

This study of the fiction of the Chaco War has shown that fiction written about an historical event--some of it documentary fiction--has a distinctive contribution to make to an understanding of that event. That contribution has something to do with the "vérité tout humaine" which Cru sensed in his book Témoins but could not define. It is a truth which is both a faithful reflexion of a lived-through experience, and at the same time it is a truth with a quality of universality about those aspects of the experience which transcend the temporal and spatial limitations of the historical event. The fiction of the Chaco War both tells us what it was like to participate in that war, and also brings out, in a way that historiographical works cannot do, those characteristics which are common to all or most wars.

As we have seen, Chaco War fiction is at the same time informative about historical facts relating to the war. In general the information it furnishes corresponds to that which is provided by historiographical accounts, so that a judgement based solely upon a reading of the fiction about an historical aspect of the war would be reasonably accurate. Of course some of the information is distorted, lacks perception or perpetuates myths and prejudices, and for these reasons Cru is quite justified in preferring readers to turn elsewhere than to fiction for their factual information. In addition there are many factual omissions by the writers of Chaco War fiction and many observations made by the

historians which the novelists did not or simply could not include.

However, given that many readers do turn more readily to fiction for factual information about society or about historical events, the understanding which they would acquire about the Chaco War from the writers of fiction would not give Monsieur Cru too great a cause for concern. Moreover, as we have already suggested, although one may comment upon distortions or omissions of fact, actually to chastise a novelist on these grounds is to attribute to him a function which he would not claim. The documentary novelist may look as though he is writing history, but it falls to the reader to decide whether it is history that he is actually reading. Of course the more accurate the novelist's observations and judgments the better, but if the reader wishes to ensure that the writer of what he is reading has set out with the intention of providing an accurate record, he would do better to turn to an unequivocally historiographical work written by a "scientific" historian. Monsieur Cru and others like him who are disturbed by the possibility of a reader deluding himself must simply trust in the reader's ability to recognize what it is that he is reading.

That fiction can have an informative value is beyond dispute, as it is hoped this study has helped to show. One of the major problems is to assess the historical accuracy of that information by comparing it with that provided by historiographical sources. Another, entirely different problem is to evaluate the fiction artistically. A prominent Hispanic historian has astutely remarked: "The value of novels to the historian is frequently in inverse proportion to their literary merit: bad novels often make good sources."¹ Our study of the fiction of the

1. Raymond Carr, Spain 1808-1939, (Oxford: OUP, 1966), p. 714.

Chaco War in Chapter V tends to support Professor Carr's assertion. According to the three criteria that were used--narrative organization, characterization and imaginative language--the documentary novel of the Chaco War did not and could not reach any degree of excellence.

The basic reason for this is inherent in the documentary form which is, in the final analysis, but an extreme form of naturalism. It could be argued that what is wrong with documentary fiction is what is wrong with naturalism, only to a greater degree. If we examine our three evaluative criteria as they apply to naturalism we find that they are accorded the same criticisms as those which were applied to documentary fiction in Chapter V.

With regard to narrative organization Lukács, writing of the historical novel, finds that under the influence of naturalism's concern with "the faithful reproduction of immediate reality," the historical novel, even that of Flaubert and Maupassant, "degenerates into a collection of episodes" in which "there is no connection between the exclusively private individual experiences of characters and historical events" (The Historical Novel, p. 206). By the same token, the documentary novel--the contemporary historical novel--of the Chaco War does not, as we have seen, produce any historical overview of the events of the war. It is rather a narrative of an individual's (or a small group's) experience, and what historical references there are--accurate though they may be--are limited by that individual's or group's vision. The episodic framework of the documentary novel is also a reflexion of the neglect of form and the emphasis on truth as against artistry, the slice-of-life as against the structured artifice, which characterizes the

naturalist novel.¹ We have already raised the argument which seeks to justify the fragmentation in terms of the subject matter.² Such an argument could add that if a writer responds in artistic ways to the times in which he lives and to the subject which moved him to write, then we should not necessarily expect war fiction to adhere to established patterns of writing. Yet the work of art persists beyond the age of its conception; it becomes part of the history of fiction alongside what preceded and what will follow, and ultimately must be judged in this wider context, wherein the circumstances of its conception become less significant and what matters are the qualities which are relevant to posterity. Nothing is more damning to a work of art than to suggest that it is merely of historical significance.

Some would argue that narrative organization is anachronistic and no longer relevant to the modern Latin American novel. To which one may reply that one leading contemporary novelist in Latin America has stated his belief in the virtue of organizing the narrative of a novel. "La realidad . . . es caótica," writes Mario Vargas Llosa. "No tiene ningún orden. En cambio, cuando pasa a la novela sí tiene un orden. Y cuanto más rigurosa sea la construcción de la novela, mejor será la comprensión que da del mundo que evoca."³ It may not be a linear construction, but it is required because art is not reality, only one man's interpretation

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1. Lilian R. Furst and Peter N. Skrine, Naturalism, (London: Methuen, 1971), p. 47.
 2. See above, Chapter V, pp. 113, 138-39.
 3. Quoted by René Jara C., "El mito y la nueva novela hispano-americana; a propósito de La muerte de Artemio Cruz," in Helmy F. Giacomani (ed.), Homenaje a Carlos Fuentes, (New York: Las Americas, 1971), p. 159, n. 16.

of it, however faithfully it may be reflected.

The same connection between the problems of the naturalist novel and those of documentary fiction can be seen with regard to characterization. War fiction, with its emphasis upon the "animalization" of man, corresponds to the naturalist's view of man as a potential primitive and brute, and even though the documentary fiction we have examined here is not conditioned by the biological determinism theories of the naturalist school, it is evident that the characters depicted are, like most figures of naturalist fiction, at the mercy of their circumstances and unable to control their fate. In addition, as in most naturalist works, the description of the milieu features prominently and there is no "hero" —since the heroic is alien to the scientific view of man (Furst and Skrine, Naturalism, p. 51). The role of the "hero" is taken by the environment, by the Chaco itself, in accordance with Philip Rahv's assertion that a naturalistic work is a work of realism "in which the individual is portrayed not merely as subordinate to his background but as wholly determined by it."¹ Furthermore the naturalist's characters are reduced to standard types because he deals with experience "almost exclusively in terms of the broadly typical" (Rahv, p. 419). Neither naturalist nor documentary novelist showed much interest in exploring man's inner world (Cowley, "A Natural History of American Naturalism," in Aldridge, p. 382), a characteristic of realism and also of contemporary fiction, in which writers are concerned with the labyrinths of the mind and the cultural myths which constitute man's psyche.

1. Rahv, "Notes on the Decline of Naturalism," in Aldridge (ed.), Critiques and Essays on Modern Fiction, p. 418. "Background" is used in the sense of "environment," not "heredity."

Finally, we took as our third criterion the kind of language which is associated--or has traditionally been associated--with fiction: a figurative language based upon the use of metaphor and other tropes designed to prompt or to expand the reader's response. We discovered an inherent contradiction in the fact that whereas reportage was theoretically the kind of language most suited to reflecting a documentary approach, the writers preferred a metaphorical language or in some cases an alternation between the two. Indeed the analysis in Chapter VI revealed the extent to which an imaginative language is essential to the particular contribution that fiction (documentary as well as non-documentary) has to make to an understanding of reality. The active hostility of the Chaco, the parallel between men and trees, the dehumanization of the soldiers, the anthropomorphosis of the lorries--none of these could have been conveyed through a language which avoided the use of imagery. Furst and Skrine noted that all naturalist writers have found it impossible to maintain the objectivity which they set out to achieve. The narrator tried to eliminate himself from his work, but by his very choice of words he was unable to do so, especially when using adjectives "which break the surface objectivity to express some sympathy or judgement" (Furst and Skrine, Naturalism, p. 52). The naturalist thought he could capture reality, but this was an illusion: the naturalist fallacy (Furst and Skrine, p. 60). Even Zola's reality had to pass through an "écran réaliste"¹ and in so doing was no longer reality itself.

So what, in the final analysis, is the value of Chaco War

1. See above, Chapter V, p. 155, n. 2.

fiction? It could be argued that the evaluation of fiction is itself too imprecise to have any validity, since too much depends upon the choice of criteria by which that evaluation is made, and--as was shown with Cru in particular--this can lead to some very distorted judgements. The answer to this must be simply that in a genre established for as long as the novel has been, the weight of evidence accumulated in favour of or in opposition to certain characteristics of an art form can be taken as the most reliable means of establishing a set of evaluative criteria. If we apply conventional criteria to the fiction of the Chaco War, no outstanding work emerges from that conflict. The fact that the norms of fiction --of what a novel can be, or of what it can try to achieve--may change does not mean that evaluative criteria need change also. Robbe-Grillet may argue that to create characters in novels is outmoded, that "the adjective that is content to measure, to situate, to limit, to define, is probably showing us the difficult way to a new art of the novel," that the new novel will not try to "play down the disasters and attribute a conventional order to our existence and our emotions" (Snapshots and Towards a New Novel, pp. 61, 57, 139). But these new norms (which one may in any case reject) with regard to character, language and narrative organization do not invalidate the conventional criteria by which fiction has traditionally been evaluated. And if it be argued that there can be no absolute standards in art, then at least it must be accepted that there is no validity in imposing new norms upon fiction produced prior to those norms being established.

There is, of course, a second way of evaluating art, by examining what the artist had to say rather than the way in which he said it (although clearly the two cannot be entirely divorced). Such an

assessment is, like that using artistic criteria, dependent to some degree upon the assessor's own values and beliefs. The message of Chaco and other anti-war novels is to be applauded if one is opposed to war and to exploitation, but it is anathema to those who see war as a natural human activity and as an adventure offering men the opportunity to display the highest human qualities of heroism and sacrifice. Ideally the critic should be able to discard his own views and make an objective judgement regarding the degree of success achieved by the writer in conveying his message. On this count it is possible to assert, as our assessment in Chapter VI demonstrated, that the writers of Chaco War fiction were in general eminently successful in communicating their view of that war and, by implication, of all wars as futile, destructive and degrading to humanity.

APPENDIX

THE SIEGE OF BOQUERÓN: STATISTICAL DISCREPANCIES

Boquerón provides an interesting indication that both "fictional" and "factual" accounts are liable to disagree on the question of the numbers of troops involved. The figure of 600 (Otero, Horizontes incendiados, p. 246, says 500) besieged Bolivians given by Céspedes (Sangre de mestizos, p. 78, n. 11) and Toro Ramallo (Chaco, pp. 139-40) is confirmed by Vergara Vicuña (La guerra del Chaco, I, 339) although Taborga T., (Boquerón, p. 39), is more precise and gives 619, while Zook (The Conduct of the Chaco War, p. 93) gives 711. Not surprisingly the Paraguayan figure is much higher: Estigarribia in his memoirs (The Epic of the Chaco, p. 44), claims that there were at least 2,000 Bolivians occupying Boquerón. However, it is only historians who mention that there were 4,000 Bolivian troops mobilized in the Boquerón sector as a whole (Vergara Vicuña, I, 243; Querejazu Calvo, Masamaclay, p. 105; Zook, p. 102). The novelists' depiction of 600 apparently standing alone against 12,000 gives a much more dramatic picture. In fact the men in the fortín were never totally cut off, although Céspedes' statement suggests they were, since small detachments did manage to get past the Paraguayan patrols to join the besieged, and small quantities of supplies were dropped into the fortín by air. As far as the number of Paraguayans involved at Boquerón is concerned, Céspedes' figure of 12,000 was originally 14,000 in the first edition of Sangre de mestizos (p. 92, n. 2), the same figure as Toro Ramallo in Chaco (p. 140), whereas the historians' figure is 15,000 (Querejazu Calvo, p. 105; Taborga T., pp. 15, 88; Vergara Vicuña, I, 243, 333) except for Zook (p. 120, n. 37), who feels that 12,000 is a more

realistic figure for the sector and that actually at Boquerón on September 26th 1932 there were 8,390 Paraguayans (p. 101). Clearly the novelists had to guess or use uninformed Bolivian sources for Paraguayan statistics, for they are hardly likely to have underestimated such a figure deliberately; and yet the historians do not all agree either. Indeed Estigarribia (p. 44, n. 23) only admits to 3,500 Paraguayans at Boquerón. With regard to Paraguayan losses, Otero's figure (p. 272) of 5,000 is far greater than the 3,000 given by Vergara Vicuña (I, 338) or the 2,800 by Taborga T., (p. 89), a figure admitted by the Paraguayans themselves (despite which Zook, p. 101, says that Paraguayan casualties probably totalled "over 2,000"). The novelists do not mention Bolivian losses, which were about 250 in the fortín (Vergara Vicuña, I, 339; Taborga T., pp. 89-90) and between 1,500 (Vergara Vicuña, I, 337) and 2,000 including prisoners (Zook, p. 102) in the sector as a whole. For the novelists the most significant factor was the symbolic loss of the fortín itself: Toro Ramallo (Chaco, p. 77) can only say of the casualties: "Se dan cifras pavorosas."

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