CHAPTER IV
THE AESTHETICS OF SPECTATING:
THE WITNESS/HERO AT THE CENTRE

A Fan’s Notes is an autodiegetic narrative of Frederick Exley’s discordant life. "The manic-depressive author-narrator" (Sterling 39) is obsessed with the quest for fame and holds a hypnotised liking for American sports’ phenomenon: Football. Football is essential America: it becomes a grand metaphor of the monolithic American success myth. Exley is a non-participant, a witness-spectator "whose constant reference points are football and its, attendant glories and heroes" (Messenger, Sport 224).

His team is the New York Giants and his ultimate hero, Frank Gifford, the celebrated wingback. Sitting in a bar in Watertown, New York, awaiting the kick-off of a televised game between his beloved New York Giants and the Dallas Cowboys, Exley recalls the fascination the sport has always held for him. "Why did football bring me so to life?" He asks himself:

Part of it was my feeling that football was an island of directness in a world of circumspection. In football a man was asked to do a difficult and often brutal job, and he either did it or got out. There was nothing rhetorical or vague about it; I chose to believe it was not unlike the
jobs all men, in some sunnier past, had been called upon to do. It smacked of something old, something traditional, something unclouded by legerdemain and subterfuge. It had that kind of power over me, drawing me back with the force of something unknown, something remembered, as elusive as integrity—perhaps it was nothing more than the force of forgotten childhood. Whatever it was, I gave myself up to the Giants utterly. The recompense I gained was the feeling of being alive. (FN 10)

A die-hard fan, whose life revolves around the changing fortunes of his team and its hero. Every aspect of his life is viewed from that perspective. Gifford, the innocent, sober hero is the alter ego of Exley, his flighty imaginative witness.

The witness-spectator's 'concretization' of the text of football is absolute. He labours to get a reading on the meaning of the heroic figures. The correlation that he develops between notoriety and success is the difference between the millions of unknown fan-spectators and a few well known players. The chasm is deep and painful but is a reality. It is a game of brutality and the one that calls for the manly virtues of self-discipline, patience, bravery and team work. They represent the best of America. The text of the game, then offers the beholder different 'schematized views.' The reader/spectator has to make the play
vicariously in his mind. "From here on the characters are clearly delineated: either they play the game, realize life's promises, and live out their visions or they sit on the sidelines" (Sterling 41).

The subject-narrator's deep and lasting attachment to his father is reminiscent of the traditional, adolescent school sports' hero's bond with fathers. Exley's father was that most pathetic of heroes, "he had in his day been a superb athlete" (FN 27). What Frank Gifford was to become in New York, Earl Exley was to Watertown. The burden of like-father-like-son was too much upon the young Exley. "His fame, his toughness, his manliness upped the ante: Exley felt he had to be better—more famous, even tougher—if he was ever to emerge from his father's enormous shadow" (Chabot 91). In one of the trips to New York with his father, young Exley was witness to a confrontation between his father and the New York Giants coach, the stout Steve Owen. Owen rejected a proposed exhibition game, between the Watertown Red and Black and New York Giants, giving Earl Exley his first humiliation in the eyes of his ambivalent son:

My father's shadow was so imposing that I had scarcely ever, until that moment had any identity of my own. At the same time I had yearned to emulate and become my father, I had longed for his destruction. Steve Owen not only gave me identity; he proved to me my father was vulnerable. (FN 56-57)
In Exley's future romance with New York he attempts at an emulation of and a struggle to excel his father.

The second unit entitled 'Cheers for Steve Owen' sets up the discourse of the father-Gifford antithesis. Earl Exley's fame brought him the fans he required. The fractured chronology of his memories brings forth the role of the fan-spectator in driving a wedge between the father and son. The crowd usurps Exley's own place in his father's affections and he becomes one among many sons. Messenger observes that "The pressure of being only one of Earl Exley's many 'sons' is intense" (FN 225). It becomes an adolescent wound and breaks the circle of his love: "It is a terrifying thing to have a wedge driven into one's narrow circle of love" (FN 33). This private childhood scar accounts largely for the deep felt urge for mass adulation and fan following. As Exley puts it:

Other men might inherit from their fathers a head for figures, a gold pocket watch all encrusted with the oxidized green of age, or an eternally astonished expression; from mine I acquired this need to have my name whispered in reverential tones. (FN 35)

The player/son's attitude to his precursor/father is characterised by the same anxious mixture of love and rivalry to which the Freudian term Oedipus Complex has been assigned. At a very early stage in his life, when he was thirteen and a freshman in high school "... I was
already having my abilities unfavorably compared with those of my father" \((FN\ 205)\). One night prior to the junior varsity team’s basketball game against "the old-timer’s team led by my father" he felt sick and wanted to quit not only the team but the world of sports itself. In order to avoid a confrontation with his father in the test of basketball skills and thereby exposing his vulnerability and inadequacies, Exley decides to stay away from the game. But the father persuades him "to go through this one game for him" \((FN\ 205)\). For the better part of the game, in front of the packed gymnasium, he "sat on the bench stupefied." Unlike the benched players’ eagerness to be in the court and ‘raring to go’ mentality, Exley wavered between fear of the game and nausea. "In an effort to humor the crowd, the coach ordered me in to guard my father in the waning moments of the final quarter" \((FN\ 205)\). In the remaining two-minutes time of the game the father-player went past the son-player to basket three set shots.

The aspirant player-son unable to destroy the power of his precursor/father subsides into a pall of gloom on the way back home. At thirty-nine and with such heavy smoking, the father/player’s display of game skills, although at the expense of the son, should have made the son proud. But Exley sulking at the slighting from his father thinks even nature is harsh to him: "The cold was fierce, the moon was bright, and the snow uttered melancholy oaths beneath our boots" \((FN\ 205)\). The father overcome by filial affection, in penance, places his
hands on his son's shoulder and utters these words: "I'm sorry about tonight." Young Exley repressing his urge to weep and to shout at him for the humiliation that he has showered just mumbles a few unintelligible words. At a later stage in the subject's life he always felt sorry for not shouting that humiliation. Neither could the father muster up courage to tell the son, "why he so needed The Crowd." In an instance of prolepsis in the narrative the subject-narrator informs the reader of the death of the father in little over a year's time. It was the realisation of the son's thoughts at that moment of agony, "wishing he were dead." The words of apology that the son thinks should have rightfully come from the father's mouth get stuck in his throat. "Among unnumbered sins, from that damning wish I seek absolution" (FN 206).

The aspiring player-son who undergoes "the anxiety of influence" gives up the sport of basketball completely. But throughout his later life, in his quest for fame which was initially generated by his father, he suffered from a sense of belatedness as Harold Bloom theorises it in the case of poet/son vis-à-vis precursor/father. A sense that he or she has come after important things have been said. The 'potent patriarchal' whose power could neither be destroyed nor could it be imbibed and transformed into one of strength and authority.

His father's famed status converts Exley into one of the crowd, all of whom bask in that fame. He thus grows into his desire as other from his father, balancing vulnerability and immortality, famelessness
and fame. In one of the climactic scenes in the narrative, Exley engages in a brawl with two men; one white and the other black, in Greenwich Village. Brooding over this incident he retrospectively comments:

I fought because I understood, and could not bear to understand, that it was my destiny--unlike that of my father, whose fate it was to hear the roar of the crowd--to sit in the stands with most men and acclaim others. It was my fate, my destiny, my end, to be a fan. (FN 357)

He does not however completely submit to his fate. He takes to writing; endeavours to create his own reader-fans. In his attempt to launch his writing career in New York, he suffers from "the inability of a man to impose his dreams, his ego upon the city" (FN 70) and spends the latter part of the 1950s in and out of mental institutions.

His first stint at the "Avalon Valley State Hospital for the mentally insane" (FN 72) was induced by heavy alcoholism. Standing at the window and looking outside at "the stunning autumn valley" (FN 74), Exley caressed the illusion that he was in the "sheltered bosom of a university." It was only the interruption of "a blue-black" paranoiac "negro" (FN 73) that woke him up to the reality that he was at no university.

The hospital relied on a system of "moving-up" and "moving-down". When a patient’s case has been diagnosed, he had only to go downstairs where the inmates are tortured by "... the hideousness of
the food to the gross inhumanity of the attendants." Those who have been down-hill advised the others to avoid that "trip downward" (FN 75). The indignities heaped upon the patients worsened their mental condition. The social derelicts at Avalon were both "non-players and non-fans ... They were America’s rejects, the anonymous that Exley fears himself becoming" (Sterling 41-42).

This consciousness of anonymity is reinforced into the mentally deranged Exley’s mind with the death of a young, unknown boy who had hung himself. "... he had stood astride the edges of a toilet bowl, tied the loose ends of his necktie ... and swung himself free from the hot, awful agony of his life" (FN 97). Exley had not known the boy but he never revealed this fact to the other inmates. He felt the stranger-boy’s death as much as any other patient’s in Avalon. For the narrator-protagonist the boy’s face was faceless and the death of the boy signified as one who never lived in his ‘reality’. Visions of famelessness and fame; anonymity and stardom flash across his mind as he philosophises the death of another unknown American with these words: "... and now quite suddenly it occurred to me that it was possible to live not only without fame but without self, to live and die without ever having had one’s fellows conscious of the microscopic space one occupies upon this planet" (FN 99).

The player-fan, fame-failure antithesis, that the narrative of the unknown boy’s suicide bolsters, is emblematic of the larger America
outside the hospital. Exley identifies the hospital as a microcosm of America, where, if one plays the game according to the rules, one can become a minor success. In the world outside, in American society they had been dubbed misfits and rejects: "We had failed our families by our inability to function properly in society ..." (FN 75). The doctors failed miserably to probe and understand the "perverse realities we had fabricated for ourselves" and what they did in turn was to impose "society's realities" into their incompatible minds. Hence the witness-protagonist evolved what came to be called "Exley's Law of Institutional Survival." The idea being to leave the mind "as malleable as mush" and allowing the doctors to institute "any inanities" (FN 76) upon his mind.

Among the patients were "repeaters" and "first-timers." The repeaters were mostly grotesques who had no sense of bodily proportion. They "... were the ugly, the broken, the carrion." They are total misfits in an America "drunk on physical comeliness" (FN 77). America's conformist individuals can be seen in advertisement commercials; its ideal of a common humanity with no grotesqueness. The paranoiac negro, believes that a devil is inside him. He underwent the most unwanted, nightmarish of operations by the doctors and attendants who are devoid of any imagination. "His devil was, like those others, his alienation from his countrymen ..." (FN 78).

The subject-narrator decides to keep "his devils" within himself and surmises that "one still has to learn to live with them" (FN 79). To
rid himself of the devils in his body and mind it was decided that he "undergo insulin-shock treatment" (FN 82). After long deliberations with the doctor about his mental state and his fantasies, the initially unresponsive doctor, to the extreme shock of the subject started talking at length in unintelligible manner about the way insulin works on the human cell. After his attempts "to get away" from the hospital, he was caught and "ordered onto a bed to receive (his) first electroshock treatment" (FN 86) at the tender age of twenty-nine.

Striking friendship with a doctor in the hospital, he convalesces in his aunt's guest house, adhering to a strict diet to reduce the weight. But without much time-gap he makes his trip to the Avalon hospital as a repeater. This time around he was housed in an open ward with seventy others. Each morning before breakfast, they lined up for treatment. The hospital employees were made up of Negroes and Whites in almost equal numbers. "Both groups looked down on us patients as little more than animals, loathing us ..." (FN 95).

In Dr. K., Exley found a man "— a not altogether common phenomenon in America" (FN 96). He was a short man with a big heart, ready to listen to even the silliest of complaints of the patients and "we had large love for Dr. K." Dr. K. made the patients at Avalon hospital, feel at home. The subject perhaps for the first time in his life had a calmness of mind and an equanimity that he started believing that he
could spend the whole life at Avalon: "... live it there as well as live it any America I had yet discovered" (FN 97).

The protagonist's first encounter with Paddy the Duke, a fellow inmate at Avalon, was in the reception building on the day of their psychiatric consultations, with the doctor. He had an air of gravity about him but he nonetheless made an impression upon Exley. In the ward he was a loner and a patient who refused "to accept the camaraderie of his fellow-patients" (FN 103). He did not speak to any other patient, nor did he care to even listen to anyone. His arrogance was most visible when a queue was formed in the hospital which "was a piece of endless and fatiguing waiting." He simply proceeded to the head of the waiting inmates and on occasions when his "cafeteria etiquette was challenged" (FN 103), he browbeat them by his imposing bearing and the cold look in his eyes. Exley and the other inmates could merely be docile and servile and allow him the privileges that are accorded to the high and mighty.

Paddy the Duke, "finally committed a profound sin of commission" (FN 104). He beat all the other inmates in ping-pong. Ping-pong being the favourite game of their ward, his invincibility "rallied us and made us One." The rules of the ward stipulated that "the winner of the game retained his paddle until he was defeated ..." (FN 105).
Some of the better players carried on for one or two days, but Paddy made a beginning to his undefeated run for nine days, by defeating the subject-player twenty-one to two. Paddy hardly knew the serve, backhand, offence or defence of table-tennis; all that he knew was to return the ball:

... and that return became our monomania. It was the fever in our brains. It was the longing in our hearts. It was the Ahab enlisting us in a blasphemous bargain toward our own destruction. We went to bed with that return; we dreamed about it. We rose to that return; we lived all our waking hours with it, trying to fathom its perverseness. (FN 106)

With his girlish way of holding the paddle, Paddy had the most unconventional of table-tennis grips. They tried every strategy, permitted by the game, to defeat him. But Paddy with little mobility while returning did return every ball with precision.

The other players are now turned into mere spectators. The subject-player is also transformed into a witness among the partisan crowd. Paddy represents the American ideal of success and monomania. The hostility of the crowd does not deter the anti-hero/player going from strength to strength. The hostility turns to plotting on the previous night of the ninth-day of his successful retention of the paddle. Exley unwittingly becomes the leader of the
plotters, who gang up to devise various ways to coerce the monomaniac into submission. The perceiving subjects fail to bully and sniff out the perceived. On the ninth day after being undefeated, Paddy allows the subject-narrator to beat him in a seemingly close game. After which he lays down the paddle, achieving a sense of counter-humiliation. "A loner, he had known exactly how to gauge the hostility of the crowd, precisely the moment to go out the door" (FN 109).

The Avalon valley's chapter of "Alcoholics Anonymous" had a regular meeting on Wednesday evenings. Every patient "whose trouble was compounded by booze, or whose trouble had become booze" (FN 110), attended that meeting. Paddy, who occupied a table of his own, took down note, almost every word of the confessions uttered there. Exley, a confirmed boozer, one night had a discussion with Paddy on alcoholism. He declared that "I've discovered what alcoholism is ..." Suppressing a sarcastic laughter, Exley waited for the discovery made by Paddy. He declared: "It's Sadness" (FN 114). For the first time the subject took Paddy's words seriously and pondered on the weighty statement:

Despite the arrogant ignorance, Paddy was a poet ...

Paddy had come to a kind of truth ... a truth that to this day will not let me divorce the term alcoholism from sadness. (FN 115)
Paddy was to leave the hospital the following day and the inmates gave him a farewell befitting a hero. From anti-hero to hero, his transformation in the eyes of the crowd had been phenomenal. For Exley, the witness-subject, Paddy became a successful persona in the image of the father-Gifford man.

Exley's life in Chicago is marked by his falling in love with that city and with a girl named Bunny Sue Allorgee. Bunny, the only fully developed female character in the narrative, other than Patience, his future wife, walks into the life of the narrator-spectator on "one blustery June morning." His love-life supplies him with a few precious moments and the love of the city doubles the effect. "It was a splendid arrangement, first the city and then the dream-maiden, for love, in its awful intimacy, demands to be played out against familiar backdrops" (FN 119). Tired and exhausted by the never-ending defeats in his life; donning forever the costumes of the spectator/non-participant, cheering others on their way to victory and fame, Exley begins life anew with the job of the managing editor with a publication of the Public Relations Representative. However, his alcoholism stays with him.

His evenings were invariably spent in the bars and saloons of that city. Evening to late night he hopped from one bar to another. He lived in that section of the city called the "Near North Side, a paradise for the young men and women" (FN 139). He had his own band of
companions, whose major pastime was booze and flirting blatantly with other men's dates. His life in that city was ridden with lust and sexual perversions. From 'The Singapore' to 'Larry Lounge,' and then onto 'Mister Kelley's' and finally to 'Gus' Pub'; this was his usual schedule at night with the bars and pubs. In a tone coloured with remorse and apology Exley comments upon his life in Chicago: "I was neither comely, brutal nor subtle. I knew something of America's vulgar yearnings and I played on these unmercifully" (FN 142).

Bunny Sue was only nineteen years old. "She had honey-blond, bobbed hair ... She was Hudson's Rima, Spenser's Uma, Humbert's Dolly ... But oh, she was so very American." She was the very epitome of American beauty. The girl who was chosen as the "Homecoming Queen" (FN 149) in the sophomore days of her college. She is the "paramount cheerleader," the "Miss America--the girl football players always get, the ultimate American male fantasy" (Sterling 42). For Exley the fan/non-participant it was a prize catch. At USC he fought with Gifford for the attention of a beautiful girl.

Girl's cheerleading is an institution by itself and a permanent fixture in America's mass spectator sports. As a sub-text to crowd-gathering, it communicates in varied ways. Bunny Sue's persona images the America that offers symbolic brides to its heroes. Cheerleaders are part of the spectators/non-participants. But they swing into action at times when the action at the centre is 'absent'.
This 'absence' of the 'presence' is fulfilled by the synchronised sexist play of the non-players in the stands, in the sidelines and at times in the centre itself. In this act they transform from themselves from the perceiving subject to the 'perceived'.

They perform synchronised, regimented acrobatics and teach the value of uniformity and teamwork. Although subject to sexist interpretations, the popularity of the cheerleading group is on the rise. It provides fun to the non-players/non-participants and is a source of prestige to them. The spectacle of cheerleading depends on various looks: that of the spectators/non-players within the stadium, that of the viewers of the televised action at the centre and the stolen gaze of the player participants. 'Scopophilia' or the pleasure of looking at the "stake of the game" is immense. They are expected to fill the vacuum created by the "playing males" when they are resting or plotting strategy and thereby paves the way for a possible gaze by the "paying males" (Kurman 58) who constitute a majority of the witness/spectators. The voluptuous acts presented by the beautiful females is completely orchestrated and rehearsed but attempts at an illusion of spontaneity and extemporariness. The females strutting her stuff in public is traditionally associated with the desire of sexual contact and fulfills a basic male-voyeuristic fantasy.

Bunny Sue as cheerleader and 'Home-Coming Queen' represent America's middle-class values, which Exley cannot imbibe in reality.
He is being rejected by them in the figure of Bunny Sue. "With Bunny Sue, Exley is impotent" (Sterling 42). He fails to couple with her and therefore with America’s ideals. The reality ensnares him and he explains his incapacity to do so with these words: "... had not been with her but with some aspect of America’s with which I could not have lived successfully" (FN 202).

Exley’s proximity to various ‘potent males’ account for his deep-felt feeling of insecurity and the psychic need for the reassuring presence of ‘father-Gifford successful types’. He had spent several months in the apartment of his friend, the Counselor, as a guest. The house was open to any acquaintance of the Counselor, and his married peers used the apartment for their extra-marital sexual exploits. The subject, fresh from his experiences with the grotesque characters at the Avalon hospital, has a look at the grotesquery of the outside world. The non-participant/spectator leading normal life is not different from the witnesses inside the mental asylum. The middle-class, non-participants representing the cream of the American society are as crazy and paranoiac as the patients inside.

Exley casts a long and concentrated look on America and its well-bred children with the eyes of a witness-spectator. Although, most of these salaried, educated men are in the mould of the father-Gifford success paradigm, they too are non-participants, non-players and fameless people. Unlike Exley they are potent males who have struck
success in their love-life. The wanton nature of these 'American specimens' and their indulgence baffled the subject-narrator. They skilfully play up to the American ideals. Exley the witness was rendered impotent when offered with a cheerleading, 'homecoming queen' in the form of Bunny Sue.

Studs is by profession a plaintiff and "had been in a series of one-car accidents" (FN 248), a regular visitor at the apartment of the Counselor. Another of the long line of visitors to the apartment is Oscar, a "high Episcopalian" (FN 250) who had obtained a divorce from his wife and six children. Girls came in and went out of the back door of the apartment and the counselor "was most magnanimous with his castoffs." One girl arrived one sunny Saturday and departed the following Friday "only because she was the next day being married" (FN 253).

The exemplary, middle-class successful American, 'father-Gifford figure' was Mr. Blue, "who seems to embody all of the football American ideals" (Sterling 43). By the time the fifty-year old Mr. Blue arrived at the apartment Exley had been mentally prepared to witness the worst. The narrator-protagonist had hardly then understood that this man would be the cause of his getting off the davenport and moving on.
Mr. Blue is a short, stout person with amazing strength and agility. He is a health freak, who perfectly fits into American football's ideals of physical fitness:

From a stand-still position he could do either a front or back flip, in machine-gun-like succession twenty hand springs without even winding himself; and on anyone's suggestion he would drop proudly to the floor and oblige the apartment's stunned occupants with a hundred push-up. (*FN 255-256*)

He is a successful aluminum storm-window salesman, travelling with two or three "canvassers" and was a "closer." The narrator became a very close friend and business associate of the enterprising American salesman.

Mr. Blue could talk about professional football at length, although he knew nothing much about the game. The only two things that interested him were aluminium sliding and cunnilingus "on which he expected I was an authority" (*FN 256*). His sexual fixation slowly started arousing distaste in Exley, and Mr. Blue on the other hand, found the subject wanting in persuasive powers needed for a salesman. In their sales outings, Mr. Blue and the narrator became regular visitors at a deaf middle-class housewife's place. There Mr. Blue could mouth "aloud all sorts of scabrous suggestions related to his fixation" and partially realise his "fantasy of the archetypal housewife" (*FN 274*).
Mr. Blue fails to realise his vision and renders himself grotesque. Nevertheless, he is perfectly in line with the American consciousness and his success, unlike that of the patients at Avalon, lies in his ability to acquiesce in the system.

Mr. Blue's "common-law spouse, the U.S.S Deborah" kindles interest in the subject-narrator and he understood why Mr. Blue "approached cunnilingus with such single-minded and fastidious wariness." She is a girls' high school gymnasium teacher, six feet one inch tall. Initially they lived in adjoining apartments and now "for all practical purposes hitched" (FN 278). A domineering lady, she feeds her husband with a health dinner and carrot juice.

The witness-narrator's odd identification with Frank Giford serves both as a means of parallel and contrast. Giford's success parallels Exley's failure and Exley's anonymity contrasts Giford's fame. For the witness-spectator his major anxiety is his inability to become an individual sports hero. Exley first encounters Giford face-to-face at U.S.C., where Giford is already a football hero. He wants to shout, "Listen, you son of a bitch, life isn't a goddam football game! You won't always get the girl! Life is rejection and pain and loss" (FN 65). But he does not shout, foreshadowing his later realisation that life is indeed a football game but that the game itself includes pain and rejection and loss. Giford smiles politely and says hello. He goes on to become the darling of the crowd. He actualised what Exley could only
dare to hope for him. The subject-narrator does not allow any personal intimacy with his alter ego. He witnesses the ascent of his hero from a distance, magnanimous enough to desire for the hero's survival. Exley is not interested in the ritual sacrifice of his hero. The public Gifford is his idol although coming to grips with this idolisation is slow.

Years after his university days he remembered that polite smile of Griffith, while walking toward the Polo Grounds. His subconscious mind was filled with the looming shadow of anonymity, amidst the crowd pouring into the stadium. He viewed with suspicion, every laughter and giggle, even the subconscious ones made by the fellow spectators on their way to the grounds. The message conveyed by such laughter and body language was met with a cynical apprehension. He began noticing a "redheaded family," who were moving along with him occasionally whispering to each other. Between laughs and giggles they threw stares at him, which made the narrator-fan self-conscious. But when they were at the entrance to the ground, the father offered Exley the extra ticket that he possessed. The match was between his favourite New York Giants and the superb Detroit team. The narrator-spectator went through "the most unforgettable afternoon of (his) life." When the father "in an egregiously cultivated, theatrically virile voice" to Exley's profound horror, began "commenting on each and every play" (FN 66). It is a fan's ultimate nightmare: the reality of the TEXT of the game being unfurled and directed by the subjectivity of another
reader/spectator. The father's mediation in constructing the reality/fantasy of the game was completely unacceptable for a highly perceptive reader/spectator like Exley. But he had to tolerate the proceedings as he was the beneficiary of the man seated next to him.

To all of the comments the mother, daughter and son in perfect unison exclaimed "Really!" (FN 66). Exley's reluctance to join this 'interpretive community' results in a reproaching look by the father and he had to acquiesce and parrot the 'really' to his utter frustration. The father's denial of the fellow fan's right to construct a subjective response reaches a point where the witness-subject could no longer control himself. In spite of the "terrible diffidence" that he felt "in the presence of that family," at a climactic moment in the game he "went berserk" (FN 68).

Exley could read the text of the match, leaving no blanks or gaps. Engaging this magnificent Detroit football team was not an easy task for Griffith and company. But he had a half procrastinated, half-studied reading of the narrative of the game, which told the spectator in him that the Giants would evenly match the Detroits. They would be motivated by the thought that it is the parting match of their coach, the Stout Steve Owen. Exley is not an ordinary witness-fan but a perceptive one with a 'horizon of expectations.' He believed in his hero and Griffith rose to the expectations of his subdued fan. "The Giants recovered and began to play as if they meant to win" (FN 67).
The match oscillated between advantages to both sides and in a spectacular moment of the game when Griffith was all set to move to the end zone, Exley displaying his fanatic backing of the Giants and his hero, jumped up and down and pummeled the father furiously on the back "putting them (the family) in a state of numbing senselessness" (FN 69). The Giants failed to score and lost the game. In a rare display of the subjective whim of the individual reader/spectator of the textual outcome of the game, Exley started coughing vehemently. "I was coughing only very few moments before it occurred to me that I was also weeping." The father overcome with compassion consoles Exley saying "Look here, it's only a game" (FN 69).

Exley found it hard to be consoled with these words from the father-fan; for him it wasn't only a game, but 'the last game' of Steve Owen in whom he saw a father-figure. Steve Owen had been the Giant football coach from 1931 to 1953 and the narrator-subject "links the death of his father with the professional death of Steve Owen" (Messenger, Sport 225). For Gifford, Owen was not merely a coach but a father with the Giants. Gifford's failure to present a parting gift to his mentor-father, in the form of a victory, does not however belittle him in the consciousness of the fan-spectator. For Exley, Owen was another one of those long list of potent males with whom he love to be associated with.
In New York, he continues his identification with Gifford. "Frank Gifford, more than any single person, sustained for me the illusion that fame was possible" (FN 131). He became hooked to the game and his hero, Gifford. On Sundays he purchased every newspaper on the stand, and read through the football news during his long breakfast. Later in his room he would reread those pieces about the Giants only to kill time until it is time for the match. At around noon he would get up and walk in the direction of the Polo Grounds.

The entire gamut of sports writing acts as 'frames of reference' for the average fan. It is through the reading of the pre-match analysis that the reader/spectator achieves 'naturalization' by assimilating the game to be played, with the deja-vu models. Though a perceptible spectator, Exley keeps abreast of the games' details from the dailies. But according to him "the writers were beginning to clamor ... making it difficult to isolate the real from the fantastic" (FN 131). The "secondary text" of sports journalism has always been important in understanding, and interpreting the "primary text" of the game itself. Every sporting text tells a different story to its various readers/fans. Individual matches are chapters in the long narrative that is football. In this narrative, the players tend to isolate the sportswriters and even fans as 'outsiders.' The professional football players have the same contempt as that of the artist, for the 'uninitiated outsiders.' The journalists and commentators feed on the glory and wealth created by
the players. Paradoxically, these very ‘outsiders’ are capable of making a hero of a player or breaking his career. The ambivalent relationship between the players and the outsiders strengthen the bond between the players. Male-bonding becomes a biological necessity. Every game brings the players closer to the most intimate knowledge of mortality. Poor performance, team’s loss and injuries can bring the career of a player to an abrupt end. The secondary texts attain greater importance in the face of such information passed on to the reader/spectator.

As far as the subject-spectator is concerned, every game played by the Giants and the major role enacted by his hero, Gifford is a new text to be savoured. In the Polo Grounds, during the first part of the game, he usually stands at the back of the stadium keeping an eye on the unoccupied seats. He had a motley group of fans with whom he usually formed a community, in the Sunday afternoons. It comprises an Italian, an Irishman, two or three Longshoremen; all belonging to the working class. To keep themselves warm, they chain-smoked, drank a lot of beer and jogged up and down on the concrete. Exley called them the "Brooklyn guys" and they were fond of issuing statements. "Dat guy is a pro" (FN 132), being their ultimate praise for some superb display of skill by a player.

They enjoyed each other’s company so much that as the season progressed, they decided to stand the entire game. Empty seats would split the company and mar the enjoyment of the game. "Brooklyn guys"
had a sophisticated, quietly-enthusiastic way of watching the game which made them different from Exley's "churlish, extravagant partiality to Gifford" (FN 133). For this they considered him a "freak." Braving cold winds from the back, with running noses and large laughs in between—they shared a bonding which is so characteristic of fan-spectators in the stadium. When the play was "astonishingly perfect, we just fell quiet. That was the most memorable picture of all" (FN 133). The narrative of the game attains another beautiful dimension in the minds of the spectators in such moments of blissful viewing. It is football fraternity at its best. The spectator-viewer, dazzled by the brilliance and skill displayed on the field, becomes nostalgic and thinks of his playing days in the childhood or youth. Football signifies many things for the diverse audience: nostalgia, rugged masculinity, violence etc. No single reading can represent the game's diverse audience. The community formed by Exley and the "Brooklyn guys" is best summed up in his own words:

We were Wops and Polacks and Irishmen out of Flatbush, along with one mad dreamer out of the cold, cow country up yonder, and though we may not have had the background, or the education to weep at Prince Hamlet's death; we had all tried enough times to pass and kick a ball, we had on our separate rock-strewn sandlots taken enough lump and bruises, to know that
we were viewing something truly fine, something that only comes with years of toil, something very like art. (FN 133)

Exley's moment of acceptance as a fan came in 1954, when he along with the "Brooklyn guys" witnessed an astounding catch made by Gifford. His career is characterised by a series of incredible catches. The catch which resulted in an injury to Gifford was responded with an "awesome, forbidding silence" by his band of fans. All that season, the narrator-subject waited for the "Brooklyn friends to bestow on him the name of pro." The Italian truck driver after moments of silence, theatrically proclaimed, "He's a pro" (FN 134), which was repeated by others. Tears of emotion brimmed at the subject-fan's eyes.

Exley started drawing parallels between Gifford's and his life. Both were at USC together, their having moved to the East almost simultaneously and "the unquestionable fact that we both desired fame" (FN 133). Throughout the season he cheered frantically for number 16. Gifford as hero/star is not merely a construct of the fan in the subject. Gifford possesses 'markers' of his own 'authenticity' in the football field. The skills and acrobatics displayed by him over the years, braving and sustaining injuries have played its role in mythifying his persona.
Gifford's acts within the field provide a vicarious gratification for Exley. The subject-fan explains the construct of his hero in these words:

Where I could not, with syntax, give shape to my fantasies, Gifford could, with his superb timing, his great hands, his uncanny faking, give shape to his. It was something more than this: I cheered for him with such inordinate enthusiasm, my yearning became so involved with his desire to escape life's bleak anonymity, that after a time he became my alter ego, that part of me which had its being in the competitive world of men; I came, as incredible as it seems to me now, to believe that I was, in some magical way, an actual instrument of his success. Each time I heard the roar of the crowd, it roared in my ears as much for me as him; that roar was not only a promise of my fame, it was its unequivocal assurance. (FN 134)

In his mother's davenport resting after the treatment at Avalon hospital, Exley watched the games on television. Save for football, he hardly watched any other programme on the tube. It opened up another chapter in the narrator-fan's attempt at keeping a close watch on the performances of his team and his hero. This provided Exley with a chance to reorient his view of the game. The spectators' perception of
the game is limited in the camera’s eye and it robs much of the true fans’ pleasure in making judgments. The commentator and the tube act as meta-narrative on the viewer. But it does emphasise the spectacle that is football. Heroes are transformed into celebrities and spectators into dumb witnesses, lacking imagination. Television-football, unlike spectator-football, does not appeal to the mind or emotions; it only appeals to the eye. Converting the game into one continuous action and distraction in between, in the form of advertisements and show-girl cheerleading.

In New York, at times when the subject had been unable to make it to the stadium, he discovered "Fitzgerald's saloon" where he could watch the Giants' home games with a large group of fans assembled there. The place was always crowded, but that season Gifford played in a sluggish manner. There were even rumours about his imminent retirement. Gifford, by then had grown into a celebrity, larger-than-life figure, "having his own television and radio-shows, his own newspaper column in the Journal-American, his photo in nearly every publication one put hands to ... he had wedged a place in the city's mentality: he had become unavoidable" (FN 333). He had established himself as a star with capital value. The football star is a construct in the minds of the spectators and his image is bolstered by the media hype created when he enters the field. Talent is no passport to stardom; star attains cultural value when he mediates between the real and imaginary. The
spectator's expectation is transferred on to the star and the
signification changes with the ups and downs in his career. The visual
media fetishises the persona of the star in the fans' imagination.
Gifford becomes an icon of the fans of NY Giants. Exley, the star-gazer
attains fulfillment when Gifford was "voted by the other players in the
league, the Jim Thorpe Trophy—which made him, for that year at least,
the greatest player in the world" (FN 325). The witness' perception of
the hero as the embodiment of fame is a construct of the
absence/presence paradigm. The star on field is absence made
presence and in this respect the field is analogous to the Lacanian
mirror-image with which he has a momentary identification. The
spectator in Exley then perceives his difference and becomes aware of
the lack/absence. Consequently the spectator recognises himself as
the perceiving subject, which in turn creates desire.

In those weeks Gifford and Giants were all that sustained me,
and I lived only from Sunday afternoon to Sunday afternoon" (FN 337).
Exley had a chance meeting with one of his adolescent friends, J., who
volunteers to treat him to a football game in the Yankee stadium: "a
heart-stopping, an awesomely imposing place" (FN 345). It was a game
between the Giants and the Philadelphia. They got the tickets from the
Giant's quarterback Charley Conerly. Exley had watched games in Los
Angeles' vast Coliseum and Chicago's monumental Soldiers' Field, but
the Yankee stadium was too imposing a football venue for a fan
"... where the stadium, riding as sheer as a cliff, is one quivering mass of color out of which there comes continually, like music from a monstrous kaleidoscope, the unending roar of the crowd" (FN 345). It is every fan's desire to be present at such a stadium witnessing the game and its memorable moments. Exley could hardly imagine a rookie coming for the first time, out of those dugouts before the kickoff: "When the stadium is all but brimming its great steel beams with people." Imagining himself as the rookie player, as is the voyeuristic inclination of every spectator, he wonders "whether it be all a dream which might at any moment come tumbling down, waking me to life's hard fact of famelessness. The stadium stays. The game proceeds." His inability to imagine himself as the rookie star ready to plunge into the world of stardom and fame, accounts for his life's futures. The desire for fame is still strong in his mind; his temperament and limited talents do not evenly match the desire. In his early days he believed that Fame is "an heirloom passed on from my father" (FN 30). Before long he understands the reality and resigns to submission, terminating his desires for football fame.

In a play-by-play description of the match watched by Exley and his friend J., the Giants were losing 17-10 with two minutes remaining. Gifford displayed his brilliance in the dying moments of the game, and the Giants reached the line of scrimmage, and he made a superb catch amidst the thundering roar of the crowd. Gifford entered
the end zone as "... the crowd was wild. The crowd was maniacal. The crowd was his" (FN 347). Chuck Bednarik, the Philadelphia linebacker pounded on Gifford from the back and brought him down. "For what seemed an eternity both Gifford and the ball had seemed to float weightless, above the field" (FN 348) ended in a tragedy as the play had to be carried on a stretcher out of the stadium. He was severely injured and the newspaper headlines ran

**GIFFORD OUT FOR SEASON (FN 348)**

Implying that his career was at an end. In Gifford's fall Exley had a glimpse of his own mortality.

Gifford, proved his mettle, by staging a comeback, after being laid up for almost a year nursing his concussion. By then he was thirty-three, aging for a running half-back. But his yearning to "walk out of the stadium with his legs under him and his wits functioning" (FN 375). The crowds had by then forgotten the legendary player and had their adulation and love fixed on other stars. The subject-narrator, however, remained steadfast and continued to be a devout fan of his hero. The player-hero, in turn, did not disappoint his fan and from match to match, as the season progressed, he had several incredible catches to his credit. Giants had their divisional title and reached the NFL championship game.

Exley, the witness-protagonist confronted the reality that football fame was elusive to him years after becoming a devoted fan of the
Giants and Gifford. After his marriage to Patience and fathering twin sons, he divided his life between watching football and several futile attempts at writing a novel. His professed goal was to be the Frank Gifford of the literati. Exley, the epitome of the directionless man; spent a life of indecision and inaction. Football was the only referent in his life which served as a means of purpose and certainty. He has understood what directionlessness can drive a man to: "Suicide", he says, "is the most eloquent of all wails for direction" (FN 136). Football steered clear of such thoughts and to sustain the quest for fame he commits to writing a novel.

Exley, early in his life saw fame as his birthright, but later vowed that fame will "come to me on my own terms" (FN 44). He launched his writing career in New York but the promises of the city prove illusory and it is only later in his life, after marriage and becoming a father that he takes up writing again. The subject-narrator considered marriage as a means of closure of all possibilities, not as a form of fulfillment. He hardly paid any attention to his wife and children. "If the elder father figuratively deserts the son in favor of the fans, so too does the younger—the only difference being that the new fans are readers of the novels not spectators at a football game" (Chabot 93). He fantasises himself producing the "Big Book" and imposing himself "deep into the mentality of his countrymen" (FN 99). After many attempts at writing, spending months over it in many spells he just manages to fill the
dustbin with his torn manuscripts. Realisation dawns upon him that he lacks the technical skills to write a successful book. His dreams of fame come to nothing in the face of his new-found knowledge.

The narrative of the fan-spectator, attempting to writing a novel in quest of fame results in the "eloquent wail" that is *A Fan's Notes*. He remains nothing more than a fan at the end of the narrative; faceless and superficial as the America that he witnesses throughout his life. Fulfillment in life, he understands is a mirage to be chased and emasculation becomes his destiny.

The *Field of Vision* is a fragmented, third-person narrative from the perspective of five witness-participants: the middle-aged, Mr. Walter McKee and Mrs. Lois McKee; Tom Scanlon, the eighty-seven year old father of Lois; Gordon Boyd, another middle-aged man and Dr. Leopald Lehmann, the aged psychoanalyst. The other characters in the narrative are two witness-spectators who are actively present in the consciousness of the others and also perched on the curve of the bullring in Mexico, watching/unwatching the action in the centre: the eight-year old grandson of the McKees, Gordon McKee and Paula Kahler, the silent transvestite. The narrative is set in Mexico, where the hot sand of the bullfighting arena and the highly ritualistic sport of bullfight, focalises and unifies the action through a wide range of symbolic and metaphorical associations.
The McKees; their father and grandson are one set of tourists from Nebraska in America, who meet up with Boyd, Lehmann and Paula, another group from the same place and they decide to watch a bullfight together. Sitting in the shady side of the bullring, they look at the action for two-and-a-half hours. McKee and Boyd have been friends from their childhood, but it is a chance meeting at Mexico after several years. The novel is structured into a twenty-four section division, each given over to an account of a single character's mind serially. The sequence of narrative focalisation—McKee, Mrs. McKee, Scanlon, Boyd and Dr. Lehmann is repeated four times; then the fifth cycle omits Scanlon and Lehmann and the final one starts and ends with McKee. The sequential positioning of the focalisers/spectators is highly symbolic and a logical "movement from the person least able to transform to the one who speaks for a complete transformation ..." (Waterman 35).

The bullfight witnessed by these characters is a six-bull Corrida: The sequential, dramatically progressive structuring of the ritual of the bullfight serves as a foil to the undramatic and fragmentary structuring of the narrative. The fighting of each and every bull is divided into three phases known as the three TERCIOS: The tercio of the Varas, the tercio of the Banderillas and the tercio of the Death. The six bulls and the three matadors fighting below in the ring mature, as the phase progress, and "progressively move closer to the transforming
power of art and heroic action" (Waterman 35). The metonymic and metaphoric tropes of the bullfight, intrude upon the witnesses as reenactments of past events. "They would feel and see what they had brought along with them" (FV 54). The particular literary competence the reader/spectator brings to his act of reading/spectating. The same event, the text of the bullfight, narrated in the third-person, but from the locus of character-focalisers not only means something different to each observer, but remains different to each observer. As Umberto Eco says: "The text is nothing else but the semantic-pragmatic production of its own Model Reader" (10). The dynamic character of the reading/spectating process comes into full play in the text:

This crisp Sabbath afternoon forty thousand pairs of eyes would gaze down on forty thousand separate bullfights, seeing it all very clearly, missing only the one that was to take place. Forty thousand latent heroes, as many gorings, so many artful dodges it beggared description, two hundred thousand bulls, horses, mules and monsters half-man, half-beast. In all this zoo, this bloody constellation, only two men and six bulls would be missing. Those in the bullring. Those they would see with their very own eyes. (FV 59)

Each reader/spectator transforming himself into a Model Reader, based on each one’s intertextual knowledge, every witness creates
his/her own semantic universe. The text of the bullfight generates individual narrative structures in every spectator. The 'frames of reference' created by the spectator, construct individual texts. Within the arena, the beasts and the men see and perceive only one reality—death. For the matador and the bull what is at stake is each one's life. In the ritualistic encounter between the man and the beast of utmost significance is their iron-nerve and bravery, respectively. For the bull, death is certain: either inside the ring or outside. As Ernest Hemingway puts it "... and the bull is certain to be killed. If the matador cannot kill him ... the bull is herded out of the ring ... (to) be killed in the corrals" (20-21). The matador on the other hand, emerges a hero either way. "To be gored was honorable" (Hemingway 19), and to emerge victorious, thrusting the sword into the crest of the bull's neck muscle, in the "hour of truth," is to become a hero and be honoured.

The fabula of the bullfight in the arena focuses and intensifies the witness-spectator's insight. These insights invite codes of meaning which only help them construct their past in their consciousness. Rather than constructing new semes of self-knowledge and evolving ways of transforming the self, the subject-focalisers plunge into a constant review of what they have always known. The solipsistic witnesses: the McKees and Scanlon fall into the hazards of creating "a still-bracketed possible world" (Eco 31). Finding deja-vu models the action in the ring becomes an act of forming narrative structures based
on self-focalisation. As J.C. Wilson rightly observes: "Each character has his own field of vision where the ritual is enacted and then evaluated imaginatively through the prism of his experience" (155). Mrs. McKee, the only 'true woman' character in the narrative, "unloving and unloved," remembers very clearly the one moment when she was kissed, in the porch of her house, by Boyd. Converting her fiancé McKee into a mute witness, the hero in Boyd, his childhood friend infused life into that one kiss and, "at least at the time, there in the kiss" (Booth 386), she saw life. That act of kissing was the one "moment of truth" in the life of Mrs. McKee. She had been in the company of her friend, Alice Morple and "the crazy thing about it was that he had them both—but he had kissed Alice second, so that she had a little time to prepare herself" (FV 34).

McKee, the childhood best friend of Boyd, has always been a witness to Boyd's heroics/antics. He is a man of common-sense, who had always been in awe of Boyd. The witness-hero relationship they share is intact even after several years of separation. The chance meeting in Mexico revives the memories of his hero in McKee, and it is in his initiative that they all spent two-and-a-half hours of bullfight (un)spectating. In Mrs. McKee's consciousness the 'kiss scene' remains indelible. She reminisces that "... he (McKee) had once stood, like a wooden Indian, and watched his best friend be the first man to kiss his future bride" (FV 34). The ability to generate love in the heart of the
witness is unmistakably the most enduring quality of a hero. Boyd remains deep in the psyche of the couple: while Mrs. McKee is jittery in the presence of Boyd at the bullfight, McKee has the gratification of the reassuring presence of his hero.

It is this dreamlike subjectivity that structures the life of Mrs. McKee. Her life has never made a linear progression from that 'still-point.' The organic-continuum of life that has been stunted by this kiss becomes a constant referral point in her consciousness. Dazed and unable to sleep for many nights, she would jump at the mere touch of McKee or Alice Morple. "... a current all over her body and a feeling that if she touched something it would spark" (FV 35). Unable to trust her own senses, she decided to play it safe by getting married to McKee. David Madden makes an interesting comment about their marital relationship: "Yet Boyd is the cause of any love McKee and his wife ever felt ..." (276). For thirty years, she lived frozen in that memory and when McKee met Boyd after several years in the Mexican street, the first thing he did was to ring up Lois in the hotel and asked her to guess who he ran into. "... her body had been crawling with goose-pimples before she heard. It knew, even before she did" (FV 36). Thirty years of suppressed sensuality has been aroused in the ambience of hot and exotic Mexico. But she is not the woman to give in. She methodically avoids even a cursory glance at Boyd in the stands of the bullring.
The McKees see very little of the bullfight. Mr. McKee is a matter-of-fact man. With hardly any imagination, he fails to transform himself. He misses the key moments in the bullring. He either gazes at the antics of Boyd or gets lost in his own thoughts. A beguiled witness, both in life and at the bullring, he nevertheless, provides a stable relationship to Lois as a husband. "If there had ever been anything like a real misunderstanding between McKee and his wife, it had been when he named his first son Gordon, after Boyd" (*FV* 18). According to the agreement worked out between them, if the first child were to be a son, it would be McKee’s choice of name. He had no doubts whatsoever about his son’s name. Mc Kee’s idea of maintaining a connection with the past through his childhood friend’s name seemed absurd to Lois McKee.

Mrs. McKee tired of hearing the exploits of her husband’s hero, once asks Mckee: "Why it was he never talked about himself, only about this Gordon ..." (*FV* 37). His reply was that he almost felt responsible for Gordon being half an orphan. It was the Crete family, after their own child’s death, who more or less adopted Gordon Boyd. Growing up in Omaha with them, he went on to become a playwright. "... the crazy play he wrote about the sandpit had made a big hit in New York" (*FV* 37). The McKees’ own son, the one who was named after Boyd, twenty years after the first show, went on to play the lead role.
The Oedipal tendencies in Boyd's namesake, the young Gordon McKee, started to manifest. In a deja-vu act of "brazenly kissing the girl, the fiancée of his own best friend" (FV 37) he lives up to the consciousness of his mother. But in attempting to emulate the crazy Boyd's attempted childhood act of trying to walk on water and nearly being drowned, the young Gordon falters:

Not intentionally, but with the full understanding that if he failed to walk on the water, which he naturally did, it would prove that he was not truly worthy of her ... The meaning of the play, so far as she could understand it, was that if he had managed to walk on the water he would have come back and run off with the girl he had just kissed. (FV 37-38)

Boyd did attempt to walk on water; McKee testifies this act to the utter bewilderment of his wife. He had been witness to this heroic act too. The audacity of this heroic act boosts the credentials of his becoming a hero in the eyes of the witness. It becomes another addition to his list of failures. Madden's comments are pertinent at this juncture: "The hero exists only in the lives of the witnesses ... he has almost no identity except as hero; he is only what he does" (34). Boyd tries to give permanence to this failed physical act by raising it to the level of art in his play version of the incident.
Boyd the hero was devoid of any witness/spectator since his youth. Most of his heroics he acted out in the presence of his key witness, McKee, when they were together. In the bullring his heroics are limited to snatching the "boy's Pepsi-bottle" and squirting pop "over the rail" (FV 54). Buoyed on by the wonder-struck kid's expression, he shakes the bottle again to make it fall on the sand in the runway. "One of the bullfighter's peones, leaning on the funk hole, gazed at him with admiration" (FV 54). Although zany and grotesque in his aberrant actions in the shady side of the bullring, "his psychological growth from stasis to lucidity is the only action per se" (Wilson 156) in the narrative. Boyd is the only character apart from Scanlon who makes attempts to imaginatively recreate his past. Through such grotesqueries he closes in on to "the moment of truth" and to a consequential "transformation."

The metaphor for such a transformation is the ritual enacted in the bullring, by man and the beast. Ritual in the ring gets transformed into myths, thereby rendering them timeless and eternal. He witnesses the bullfight in intervals of freedom from the captivation of his past memories. In one such look at the present:

He turned to gaze at the bullring, the parade of matadors in their suits of light, their artificial pigtails, gliding across the sand with the slinky gait of cats that had learned to walk on their hind legs. Behind them the
padded nags, with their fat-assed Sancho Panzas, the pom-pommed mules dragging. Then heavy chains, and then the proletariat prepared to endure it all—then clean it up. The head and tail, as Lehmann liked to say, of the bull himself. *(FV 58)*

When McKee wanted to know what the mules were for, he let Dr. Lehmann answer it. In the meanwhile, he turned his attention to the woman of his desire in the past/present. He wonders what thought would be passing her mind: "What had brought her to the bullfight had also brought her, thirty years before, to the edge of darkness; that twilight zone on the porch" *(FV 58)*. The analogy is that of the bull coming out of his "natural querencia"; the young Lois being lured by the capework displayed by the matador/Boyd submits to the sword/kiss of the matador. It becomes a two-bull corrida as Boyd consequently lures the other bull/Alice Morple too from its "querencia" for the ki(ss)ll. "The porch becomes 'invisible zones' like the circles in a bullring that were meant to stylise and limit the action ..." *(FV 58).*

Boyd's act of squirting the pop at the runway, splashing it on the bull's "moist snout" is essentially "transgressive." In the carnivalesque discourse of the bullfight and the witness-spectators' involvement in it, the antics of Boyd become richly dialogised. Unconventionality and playfulness are distinctive characteristic traits of the man. Among the crowd, he solely emerges a hero and his buffoonery appeals to them.
As he shakes the bottle again and streams the cola into his mouth he "heard the crowd roar behind him—Someone shouted Ole! And he turned to seep off his hat, made a bow" (FV 61). Traditional bullfight is a ritual festival enacted in front of the authority: the rulers, the aristocrats and those with the power of imposing laws. In deviating from the traditional bullfight-fan's norms, Boyd tries to hold the centre of the arena. He plays up the unofficial voices of the people against the official voices of authority. In a bullfight, between every tercia, at the beginning and ending, the toreros have to bow and seek permission from the "Presiding Authority who sits in a box high in the stands and acts as Juez or judge of the Lidia" (Lea 7). The changing of the tercios is signalled by the blowing of a bugle from his box. Boyd's pranks are at the same time acts of transformation and transgression.

Boyd "kissed the frothy tips of his fingers, blew them at the crowd. They loved it, the shouting grew louder, he gave the bottle a last frenzied shake, and then, with every eye fastened on him, he turned the bottle from the bull toward himself. Was this la suerte suprema? ... In the thunder of applause that followed he bowed, took his seat" (FV 61). The official discourse of the bullfight and the heroic gestures of the matador is parodied in the dialogised, many-voiced actions of Boyd. His exploits in the past have rendered him a man "stripped of success." All his endeavours have been failures and he had chosen "as new territory the field of failure" (Trachtenberg 50). His failure at wooing
and winning the hands of Lois and the terrible disappointment at not being able to walk on water brings him to the consciousness of the necessity for transformation during the course of the bullfight. "The clichés of success, from which he rebelled, had taken their revenge in his passion for failure" (FV 63).

McKee had been a witness to another heroic act of Boyd in his adolescence. They had gone to watch a baseball match involving the legendary Ty Cobb. They had seats along the rail, the way they sat at the bullring. The stadium was bustling with spectators and fans who had "all come out to watch Cobb play, and may be hit a home run." Ty Cobb hit a huge one: 'he did—and he didn’t' hit a home run. He never got as far as home with it: "... when he rounded third, they headed him off. I mean, I did" (FV 232). In the middle of the game Ty Cobb had hit a foul ball and Boyd made a catch in the stands. After the home run hit, Boyd rushed off over the fence to get it autographed:

I crossed the foul line between first base and home plate, and by the time Ty was rounding third, I was on the line with this ball in my hand. I had him blocked off ...

... All I know is that he came around third base, saw me with the ball, and headed for the dugout. Touring out he also saw, coming up behind me, about five hundred kids who had the same idea, half of them with new balls they had bought and autographed. (FV 233)
In the melee that followed Boyd got his hands on Ty Cobb's pant. When he kept going onward, the pocket came off, but later he came to realise that he had dropped the ball. Witnessing with an awed gaze was McKee. "In that act: hero, witness and pocket were one in a moment of transformation" (Madden 140). The talismanic pocket had ever since been part of his person. The artefact and the act of his heroism complement each other in a life of failures.

When he came to Dr. Lehmann, he was a "dedicated no-man, one who turned to failure as a field that offered real opportunity for success" (FV 61). Boyd, the self-described failure carries with him the burden of unrealised potential. He had been a young man of much promise, "whose promise was now fifty-some years old" (FV 64). Sitting by the bullring, playing upon the duality of the past and present, his sights turn into visions of transformation. His audacious acts, both past and present, stir up feelings of nostalgia in the McKees. Randall K. Albers observes that "McKee is trapped in a separation of the past and the present, the attraction of the past rests simply with its opposition to the present" (99). His heroics have been a means of vicarious pleasure for McKee. As for Mrs. McKee, she is caught in the dichotomy of nostalgia and 'past guilt'.

Dr. Lehmann "specialized in mental cases, usually female" (FV 65). A psychoanalyst/psychiatrist by profession, he is both a witness and a hero in his own respective. He is as odd as the patients who
stayed with him. Leon Howard succinctly describes the character of Dr. Lehmann and his role as spectator: "The half-clown and half-charlatan, Lehmann, could see the fights and also Paula at his side, quietly knitting and unaware of what was going on" (22). Dr. Lehmann's language is characterised by "a blend of Brooklynese, German and grunts, in proportions entirely his own" (FV 64). A German by birth, lived part of his life in Vienna and thirty eight years in Brooklyn. He is a man of imagination, who has "an arrangement of sorts with the soul" (FV 66). Madden refers to him as a "compassionate bystander" (277) who "had other people's problems, but few of his own" (FV 65). He had only two kinds of patients, those who left him and those who stayed with him. On the slightest pretext of being queried about things within his knowledge he would come up with the story, sipping his brandy, a stimulant to his poor blood circulation. Gordon Boyd had become "a Lehmann man" ever since he met him and Paula Kahler was another. "She was not so much his patient, as he often hinted, as his practice" (FV 68).

Dr. Lehmann did not take much time to analyse Boyd, when he first met the doctor without an appointment. Boyd was recognised as "The professional soldier of failure, waging the cold war within himself" (FV 68). It was the piece of flannel cloth, soiled and grass stained, Ty Cobb's pocket which did the trick for Boyd. It had fallen down from his raincoat and Dr. Lehmann took it "to be a sort of a shoe rag." He did
not pay much attention to it, but later when Boyd was about to leave he flaunted the artefact, to which Lehmann asked:

"For apful Polishink?

Ty Cobb's pocket

...

then added

Little Gordon Boyd's piece of the Cross.

(FV 68)

That sealed the fate of Boyd; for he had etched a place for himself in the consciousness of the doctor. He had been in his forties at that time and since that he has been with Dr. Lehmann:

Bringing with him his pocket, the portable raft on which he floated, anchored to his childhood, on the glassy surface of the sandpit where he had failed to walk. Something of a hero, something of a madman, something of an ass. (FV 68-69)

The success/failure antithesis worked out in the narrative is central to an understanding of the character of Boyd alone. No other character endeavours heroic acts. The McKees and Tom Scanlon have been rendered fossils and are incapable of neither imagination nor any imaginative/creative act. Lehmann and Paula Kahler live in a world isolated from the community of humans. Physically, they are with human beings at the bullring but far removed from the web of common
humanity. Perhaps Gordon, the grandson of the McKees, who is the only other witness-spectator, is capable of any heroic action or imaginative transformation.

The metaphysics of failure is consummately worked out through the character of Boyd, during his association with Dr. Lehmann. He had gone to Lehmann, "When it was clear that he had failed to fail" (FV 69). Lehmann provides an objective appraisal of the psychological condition of Boyd. From his viewpoint the discourse of failure attains philosophical and psychological dimensions. Boyd’s failure "to touch the floating bottom within himself" (FV 69) made him go back to Lehmann after his first visit, for a permanent session with the psychoanalyst. He went back with a photograph he had torn from some camera magazine. "The photograph showed a bum, seated on a park bench, sharing his last crust of bread with a squirrel" (FV 69). Lehmann smiled seeing this cover page, unaware of the fact that the bum is none other than Boyd, photographed in Washington Square. In his youth, he had gone through the realms of "success-clichés" and "had found failure a nut that refused to crack" (FV 69). Surrounded by beguiled witnesses and mute spectators he was a "wonder-boy in the theater." Lehmann refers to the prologue to a play written by Boyd, a play that was never produced. "Boyd advised his public that he hoped to fail, since there was no longer anything of interest to be gained in success" (FV 70). He became engrossed in the subject which became
most suitable to him. "This was failure" (FV 71). Through failure Boyd had hoped to reach his true self. Lehmann, the perceptive mind-reader, had understood that Boyd has been obsessed with the subject of failure. He hoped that "In his failure, at least he would be a success" (FV 71).

In adopting failure as his credo, he had undergone transformation from a hero to a witness. If the first phase was burdened with the "success-cliches," the failure phase was ridden with the "clichés of failure." Because of his "armor of cliches," Boyd had "actually failed to fail" (Trachtenberg 51). Lehmann succeeds in converting him to an observer, a witness. But the latent desire for heroism is too strong in Boyd to be suppressed.

The cliché of failure, like that of success, hung on the walls of the room he decayed in, and through the hole in the ready made frame he popped his own head. (FV 71)

If Boyd had failed to "touch the bottom," Lehmann's other patient, Paula Kahler had been there. The mute-witness Paula, blind to the events of the world and to the bullfight succeeded where Boyd failed. Lehmann corroborates to the fact that she has been successful at making 'failure a success.' "He had let Boyd, a good observer, judge the facts for himself" (FV 72). She is a patient-student of Lehmann, who is through with the subject of failure. For Boyd, Paula becomes a specimen to study and analyse the concept of failure. "The words that
Paula Kahler had made into flesh—the words, that is, and the music—called for a further transformation, back into words again" (FV 72). The first thing that she learnt was to do away with speech. Seen quietly knitting away at the wool, unmindful and oblivious to the happenings in the bullring. Wayne C. Booth's appropriate comments on the character of Paula sums up her persona:

Paul Kahler, now Paula, frustrated in his attempts, to find a meaningfully creative life as a male, 'lives' through having imagined himself, transformed himself, into a totally harmless—though ineffectual—woman. (386)

In her "brave new world," there are no males. Even in her "large collection of miniature animals" she kept no females. "The males and their aggressive ways had been weeded out" (FV 115). Stripped of her maleness, she rejects all aggression, all brutality.

In the doctor's income-tax documents, she is "a dependant, classified as his housekeeper, Paula Kahler was the woman—strange to say—in Dr. Lehmann's life" (FV 115). In transforming herself to a wo-man, she becomes the embodiment of tender love, a source of comfort and help to the doctor in his old age. "She had an aura, an air of peace about her, usually associated with genius or the simple-minded." With the feet of a man, and hands disproportionately large, she looked fragile "with the large sad eyes of a goat" (FV 72). The Paula Kahler case came to Dr. Lehmann as a consequence of the patient
strangling "the amorous bellhop in the servants' life" (FV 74). The murderous act was perfectly and quietly executed in the lift where the bellhop tried to molest the (wo)man. The next morning when the lift was opened she was seen sitting on a pile of bed sheets which she was supposed to deliver. In one of the sheets the body of the molester was neatly covered. "She had been a little bruised, physically, but psychologically undisturbed" (FV 74). Dr. Lehmann, the house physician upon examining 'the lady' found that "Mrs. Kahler, as she was known, was not a Mrs. at all." But "in her own eyes," says Dr. Lehmann, "there was no disparity between the body she had and the clothes she took off" (FV 74). In observing the female for over two years at his house, lies the clue to "the making of Leopald Lehmann, professionally. It would be of service to the troubled world, generally" (FV 75).

Dr. Lehmann discovered Mexico in a theatre, where he saw a man fight a bull. "The image of the man as part of the bull ... became fixed like a poster, in his mind" (FV 73). Having been fixated with the sport he enquired where he could witness men fighting bulls. With his patients, Boyd and Paula, he sets out to the hot, alien Mexico. An old man's witless passion for the life of action and romance. The passion lied elsewhere; he is interested in the perception of man and bull meeting and merging; "in such small compass" he perceives "so much basis for inexhaustible generalization. Man and bull. Man into bull.
Bull into man" (*FV* 73). Lehmann is the sole character in the narrative who approaches to wisdom. His task in life is to clean up the mess the others have made their life of. He symbolically witnesses this act in the ring where "the riffraff, the mules, and the men with brooms and shovels who cleaned up the mess" (*FV* 35). He sees the parade and procession preceding the bullfight as a "parable of life" (*FV* 31). With the hero in the front, mounted on a horse, cloaked in black costume, "A somber foreboding of what lay ahead in the hero's life" (*FV* 31). The bull, the horse and the man become mere playthings in the hands of fate.

"In the tragedy of the bullfight, the death of the horse is a comic episode." As Hemingway explains:

> The tragedy is all centered in the bull and in the man. The tragic climax of the horse's career has occurred off stage at an earlier time; when he was bought by the horse contractor for use in the bull ring. (6)

Death for the horse and the bull is certain; whether within the ring, or in front of the eyes of the spectators, or outside of it. The matador dominates the bull by knowledge and science. The bull should be utterly lacking in the knowledge that he is in a ring; every bullfight has as its fundamental premise that the bull has never been in the ring before. The matador exudes "a feeling of immortality," which is the "essence of the greatest emotional appeal of bullfighting" (Hemingway
This "feeling of immortality" is imbibed by the spectators, which transforms the mortal beings/witnesses in a flight of imagination to the planes of immortality in "the moment of truth."

The bullfight scenes in the narrative are mainly seen through the eyes of Boyd, the genuine witness-spectator. When Boyd closes his eyes to the past, and opens it to the present action unfolding before him:

... (he) watched the bull make his charge. The man erect as a post, heels and calves together, his entire body exposed to the horns since he held the cloth in his left hand, the bull charging from the right. A pass called the natural. The most dangerous and beautiful. No ass wiggling, no fancy footwork, no sleight of hand with the hand of cunning. A moment of grace when both man and bull were sure of themselves. The illusion of an 'irresistible' force wheeling around an immovable object. A mere nothing. A man armed with a cloth. (FV 192)

In the art that is bullfight, each and every suerte enacted by the man is a play with death. He plays at death, at immortality, at imagination and at transformation. Through this play he defers death by. The three periods of 'play' are "designed as progressive punishments to the immensely powerful neck muscle of the bull" (Lea 10).
The Schillerian sense of play points to the human potential to explore, to play up and through the possibilities of a given paradigm, to create metaphors. The matador creates metaphors out of his capework; transforming the mundane, material world into one of permanence and timelessness. "Boyd could see the still point where the dance was" (FV 192). But it is the 'still points' in the witness' past lives which make the majority of them (un)see the present action. Boyd awake to the reality of the present converts his sight into a vision. Through his 'field of vision,' his imaginative powers and yearning for transformation—he effects a deeper understanding of the nuances of bullfight:

The bull could understand movement, but not its absence, the man could understand both movement and its absence, and in controlling this impulse to move, the still point, he dominated the bull. Except for the still point there would be no dance. The cloth, not the sword, brought the bull to heel. The moment of truth was at that moment, and not at the kill. (FV 192-193)

The bull is not interested in the 'play,' the suerte; it sees only the movement and the colour in its charge. Even the man is not in its 'field of vision' when charging. A slight movement from the 'still point' becomes a 'dance of death' for the matador.

Boyd turned to look at Lehmann. The old man was damp with perspiration. "The sour prospect of murder in cold blood." Boyd recalls
the recent goring of the young matador Da Silva and the recently killed bull, Traguito. "Words" would indicate "what had happened" (FV 193). But mere words would be incapable of conveying the spectators' contemplation of the *Estocada* or "the hour of truth" after the tiring *faena* for the bull. Conversely, the goring of the matador, although honourable, evokes revulsion in the minds of the spectators. "Nerved up bullfighting is sad to watch. The spectators do not want it. They pay to see the tragedy of the bull; not the man" (Hemingway 167).

The division of the bullfight ritual into *tercios* "represents an attempt to impose order upon the chaos of existence" (Crump 116). Boyd and the other witnesses see different bullfights: "Each man his own bullfighter, with his own center, a circle overlapped by countless other circles, like the pattern of expanding rings rain made on the surface of a pond" (FV 193). The multiple consciousnesses that the narrative throws up brings the past and present experiences of four generations. From the eighty-seven year old "fossilized" blind Tom Scanlon to the "non-still point" eight-year old Gordon McKee, they represent: the turn of the century, the arid planes of Nebraska in mid-western America, trans-continental culture and the ambiguously sexed.

Tom Scanlon, Lois' father is the hermit of Lone Tree, in Nebraska. Lone Tree is a small town with a lone cotton tree, rows of tin-roofed buildings and the railroad tracks as prominent landmarks.
At the turn of the century witnessed by Scanlon, there was just a tree. "A lonely tree in the midst of a lonely plain" (FV 47). From the time of his father, Scanlon's family had been living in "The Western Hotel ... where the caboose of the westbound trains comes to a stop" (FV 46). Tom Scanlon occupied his father's old room at the rear of the hotel, sitting by the window; he spent years looking into the plains. The younger generation Scanlons have seldom seen him, "... he was the ghost in the family closet" (FV 48). Gordon Scanlon McKee, the old man's great-grandson, the spectator at the bullring, took a fascination for the "mummified effigy of the real thing" (FV 101).

The old man sitting at the ring "... couldn't believe his eyes—the ones he had—but his ears told him the worst." He could hear only the "crowd yell" Ole and the "fizzing squirt of the pop" (FV 41), for he was literally blind. The literal blindness of the old man is pitted against the "figurative blindness" of the other characters. Except Boyd and the young Gordon McKee, the other subject-witnesses who are capable of seeing do not respond to the immediacy of the sight. The "varieties of sight" manifested through the witnesses "provide the major symbols" of the narrative according to Trachtenberg. He elucidates this aspect:

... each character looking at the events of the bullfight, sees only himself; However, because they are unable go focus beyond the narrow rim of their own pasts, they do not really see themselves. Unable to see each other and
to see themselves in the eyes of each other, they are figuratively blind. Their limited vision expresses their limited self-knowledge. (47)

Each character looking at the bullfight, constructs a discourse out of the dialectic between the "reality of the text" and his own subjectivity. Every individual spectator adopts a "writerly role" in "constructing their own texts." Although blind and incapable of effecting any creative act, the plainsman Scanlon, too, symbolically sees the vast Nebraskan plains of his 'vast life'; "acts as the curtain puller on the drama of the old Midwest" (Madden 138). The sanded pit of the bullring transforms in his consciousness as the frontier plains; the desert-like terrain, the region east of the 98th meridian.

Scanlon, while witnessing the turn of the century, failed to turn with it. Not merely at the bullring, but in his yesteryear life too he shuns the present for the past. In the ring he and the matador become one as Madden points out: "... when the gored matador yells for 'agua,' Tom, dying of thirst in the desert of his imagination, calls for water" (138). He becomes conscious and physically aware of his blindness only after his trip to Mexico. The familiarity of sight, sound and smell at Lone Tree had lulled him into the thought that his sight was not altogether bad. "In Lone Tree, where nothing had changed, he saw things in their places, without the need to look at them. They were there, in case he wanted to see them, in his mind's eye" (FV 51).
Through his mind’s eye he imparted visions of the land, the country and the mythic past to his great-grandson, Gordon. He has been telling the boy about the wind, the dry river, the dusty wagon and the harvest. "... there were always wagons that kept going, and they could hear the whips when they went off" (FV 95). The wagon and the railroad for the Midwestern plainsman symbolises the trek west.

His father, Timothy Scanlon had come from the East. Scanlon’s consciousness is filled with the images of the journey "across the desert"; the symbolic journey "through the inferno of self-discovery" (FV 52). He had never been west of Lone Tree; only in his fantasies does such a journey across the desert takes place. The legend of the bizarre event is a powerful motif in the narrative and perhaps the only consistent and progressive narrative event in the novel. The symbolic scope of the journey is heightened by making the crossing an imagined act. Scanlon’s imagination is vividly sketched in these words:

The wagons were like ants in the neck of the bottle, and all along the trail, wherever you looked, they were busy putting something down, or picking something up. Everybody seemed to have a lot more than they needed, and right beside the trail, where you could reach out and touch them, were sacks of beans and sugar ... Anything that was heavy, that would lighten the wagon, they dumped out first. Some had brought along every
fool thing they owned, rocking chairs, tables and barrels of dishes, and others had big frame pictures they would like for setting up house. Some had brought along books, trunks of fine linen, all the tools they might need for building a home, and you could see what a man valued most in his life from where he put it down. Towards the last you began to see people, friends who had sworn they would never part, or relations who had got too old, or too weak, left to shift for themselves. They weighed too much. So they were just dumped like everything else. (FV 95-96)

The frontier journey narrated by Scanlon is "the divestment of civilization" as Trachtenberg calls it. The "grotesque humor" of the act encompasses "the dumping of books and the paraphernalia of civilization (as) a necessary ritual" (52).

Scanlon and Boyd represent opposed views as their conception of heroism is diametrically opposite. Scanlon is incapable of transmitting 'charge' to others around him. He fails to pass on the charge even to his children, which he received from his father. His father Tim had "put the story of the pioneer trek he led across country to Nebraska through one transformation after another" (Madden 137). Scanlon, completely devoid of any sense of the present, never cared to live for anything nor die for anything. The witness in his life is only the
scorched planes. The desert of his life and life-as-desert. When he closes his (un)seeing eyes, the bullring becomes a desert, where he gropes for water and stumbles on the body of a man lying in the sand. "One who had been dead for some time." The wind produced "a ghostly music" (FV 186), from his mouth. Upon close examination he understands that "the dead man was himself" (FV 187). Although he arrives at no moment of truth here, he unmistakably comes to terms with the reality of the loss of his self-hood. The father-Scanlon, Tim, had by then completely pervaded the imagination and consciousness, with the events of his past. "There were two men within him, and he knew for sure that one of them had died" (FV 187). His highly charged imagination fails to effect any transformation in others. Even his great-grandson turns hostile and pledges allegiance to Boyd. Madden explains that "... the old man, stranded in the wasteland of the present, recedes deep into the better world of the past and transforms himself: he becomes the past" (138). No other witness-character so much as completely withdraws from the present and falls into the abyss of regression.

Both as hero and witness, Boyd is far superior to Scanlon. As hero he attempts to hold the centre of the arena; a futile attempt akin to chasing a mirage. But he does succeed in capturing and holding the imagination of himself and others around him. For Mrs. McKee, enraptured by the kiss on the porch, thirty years back, Boyd the hero
is in her consciousness as a "... strong aggressor, the male, the bull ..." (Booth 392). The repression of sexuality and sensuality had converted her into a being of little imagination. In the "durable fragments" of her life, the "still-point" of the kiss, had converted her to an eternal state of limbo. She is yet to come to imaginative terms with that act. At the bullfight, she faints, imagining the boy who went over the fence, being hit by the bull. She puts it as "oxygen hunger." When the Mexican doctor queried: "Due to the altitude?" She said, "Well, I've been higher in my time." Alice Morple could have told the doctor that "the highest point in her life ... was on the front porch of her home in Lincoln" (FV 88). Although the altitude was nil the symptoms were the same. McKee accompanies her to the car where he would offer her a cup of Java. McKee grasps the irony of the situation: it wasn't the bull in the ring but the bull in her life which had hit the boy; the "being reminded" syndrome.

In the third night after the kiss, Lois Scanlon had a strange dream. Alice Morple and Lois were sleeping on the porch at the back of the house, on the folding bed. The bed on which they had slept for two nights collapsed. "More weight had been added to it." Somebody had spoken to her 'Open up sweetheart" and she did just that. It was as if "a man climbed to the roof—the roof of her dream" (FV 181). Only Boyd had the audacity to do that: "the brazenness to try anything" (Crump 8). Alice Morple was prone to exaggeration, but the ground beneath
Lois' feet had been shifting. She was unsure of herself "after tasting the candied apple." Aware of the fact that "a girl could be swept off her feet, and in the plainest sort of way never be quite the same again" (FV 182). Bewitched, she could neither trust her mind nor her body. For when her first child was born, the boy child did not take after McKee: "If he was like any human on earth, it was Gordon Boyd" (FV 183). In the bullring the tension between the perceived present and the imperishable memories of the past weighed too much upon Mrs. McKee. Crump's observation on this aspect is interesting:

Frozen into the stereotype of the pure woman, she has let the fire of her instinctive passion die out. Her purity is willed, not natural. The original tranquility of the American Eden, the seemingly eternal innocence of the fresh adolescent faces in the summer twilight on the front porch, was shattered by the serpent Boyd, whose kiss meant more than all years with McKee ... what is left of her passion is sublimated into the overprotective maternal fussiness she showers on her grandson. (119)

For thirty years she had suppressed the passion, moulding herself into the most conventional of America housewife.

Boyd's audacity lacks intentions; his heroics are bereft of goals. In traversing from his boyhood daredevil acts of snatching the pocket from the hero's jersey, attempt to walk on water and the bewitching
kiss; through the realms of failure to the antics of a comic-hero in the fifties of his life, he has completed a full circle. At the bullring his profile ran like this:

Profession? Hero

Situation? Unemployed. (FV 101)

But his former witnesses are his current ones too. McKee, his rapt witness, and his wife Lois have neither tread the circle nor arrived at 'the moment of truth.' Unable to transform they still remain at the 'still-point.' Boyd's buffoonery at the ring makes him a comic-hero among the spectators. A man at the ring comments: "... there's nothing the world loves so much as a goddam fool." Boyd, in all sense one of the "goddamdest" was one of the "few men in his time (who) had been so well loved" (FV 102). Although heroism, imagination and love merge in the character of Boyd, he lacks a 'cosmic vision.' His enormous power to transmit the charge of the hero to the persons he come into contact with makes him stand out from the crowd. "In his heroics a potential bungler, and in his bungling a potential hero. In him every man loved the hero in himself" (FV 102). On the clapboard house of the hero the bronze plaque would read:

Birthplace of

THE HERO

Widely Loved and Known As

A GODDAM FOOL
and a little away from this house, the board on the home of Walter McKee would be:

*Birthplace of*  
THE WITNESS

*Without whom there would not have been*  
A HERO. (FV 104)

It is the witness who benefits from the "foolhardy act of unmistakable physical courage" (Madden 265) by the hero. McKee knows that only a fool would try to walk on water, but this foolish act attains a symbolic meaning for the witness. McKee forever the man of common sense would never attempt such an act, but in his inaction he remains the same eternally. It would never be possible for him to transcend the boundaries of the mundane. In spite of the witness's inaction and lack of imagination, admiration for the hero has two manifestations: servitude and the immense capacity to love. Admiration, awe and love; qualities of a witness abound in the persona of McKee.

McKee, passionless and lacking in imagination is the embodiment of convention. His "insights are only skin-deep," the result of which is the display of most "commonplace sensibility" (Crump 118). He has been rendered into an impotent man of inaction, denying his manhood. Caught in the no man's land between the past and the present, his wife Lois exacts utmost self-discipline from him. In the narrative, McKee's nostalgia stays clear of Boyd only once. At the ring,
in the overwhelming presence of his hero, he narrates to his wife, the
event of "killing a hog," as a boy. The only significant moment in his life
happened when he visited his uncle at Texas. The hog belonged to his
uncle and at the back of his house his uncle gave him the gun and
asked him to shoot it as it reached closer. He bungled with the gun,
but the bullet did hit it. "Who had fired it? McKee himself had no
memory of it" (FV 132). Whether it was his uncle who pulled the trigger
or he himself? It remains a mystery. He hadn't killed the hog; the hog
had laughed himself to death" (FV 133). The event reviewed from the
backdrop of the bullfight—where the man and the beast join together
to transform the brute struggle into art—is merely an unimaginative
act of murder. McKee's narration of this antiheroic deed, converts him
into more of a cuckold. Spurred by the sight of heroic acts of the
matador in the ring, his attempt to impress his wife falls flat. At the
end of the narrative, McKee is seen holding a pair of imitation bull
horn. Literally and figuratively, he remains unchanged as a mute
witness, and a figure of ridicule.

The mock heroic gestures, actions and words of Boyd affect the
young witness-spectator, Gordon McKee the most. The boy comes
through transformation, as his viewpoint is substantially altered by the
personality of Boyd. Initially he valued his cap for its face value; toward
the close of the narrative he bluntly refuses to take the paper bull
bought by his father, McKee because, "It's not a bull if you buy it"
In an earlier scene, Boyd snatching the coonskin hat from the boy's head and placing it on his head, says, "It's a real hat now ... because it's been on the head of a hero. That makes it real" \((FV 226)\). The boy looks at him quizzically. Unable to comprehend the concept of heroism and failing to make a distinction between the genuine hero from the clownish one, the boy looks at the matador: "... on the runway below them, holding like flowers, the bull's two bloody ears" \((FV 228)\). The ear is presented as a trophy of honour for the matador; it is with this that he makes a circuit of the ring, receiving applause. It is the ultimate recognition that a matador receives, if he is acknowledged by the judge as a brave man and as an artist. The matador becomes the genuine hero in the boy's mind only for a few fleeting moments. Boyd, through his comic heroics, has managed to go deeper into the consciousness of the kid. Unaware of the significance of the stinky flannel pocket that the hero possesses, Gordon is curious to know what importance it has in the subject's life.

The bull, not dead yet, with "the darts waving in his hump" went "along the fence looking for what no bullring offered. A corner" \((FV 233)\). The matador's assistants and the attendants to the ring stalked the bull as the boy kept his eye on the ring and listened to Boyd. Varied visions of heroism tumble in the mind of the young Gordon: bull, baseball, slain bull's ears, Ty Cobb's pocket. "Boyd has raised the curtain on a great drama in the boy ..." \((Madden 143)\). Boyd once again
takes the coonskin hat from the boy's head and throwing it into the ring, says: "Your uncle Gordon will now bring a dead coon back to life" (FV 234). Gordon asks the young boy to get it back and helps him over the rail into the arena. Gordon McKee retrieves it. "Boyd, the dead coon, is brought back to life in the audacious boy" (Madden 143). Boyd succeeds in transforming the little McKee from an awed witness to a young hero in the making. In the process he ceases to be one himself: "Touch bottom," he said, to himself and "pushed off" (FV 235).