CHAPTER IV

THE LONG MARCH:

REBELLION IN YT3

The Long March published in 1953, was Styron's first marine corps story. Stingo in Sophie's Choice refers to it as a "taut, searing book eviscerating the military in a tragi-comedy of the absurd" (SC 548). The story centers round a forced march in the Marine Corps consisting mainly of reserve personnel called back because of the Korean conflict.

Colonel Templeton, a career officer arranges the thirty-six mile march in order to strengthen their "esprit de corps". Captain Mannix is outraged at this meaningless, callous, arbitrary order from the impersonal symbol of authority - Templeton. But Culver accepts passively. His motto seems to be "Obey or perish". Before the march is over, the tension between Templeton and Mannix erupts and Mannix faces a court-martial. This is the bare outline of the plot. What makes the novella interesting is the style, the tone, the metaphorical undercurrents. Friedman remarks, "This novella is a contribution to the literature of violence and is comparable in scope, despite its length, to almost any of the more ambitious literary reactions to World War II or Korv" (182).

The pointless explosion which shatters eight young recruits at the beginning of the novella, sets the tone. Eugene McNamara points out that "a sense of acute frustration, of questioning, of anguished wait" (268) pervades the novel. The world presented is indeed existential. Death haunted, chaotic,
accident prone, war is the natural condition of man. Lieutenant Culver is driven to retrospection and contrasts the six years of peace before his recall with the anguish of the present. He ponders over the place and nature of heroism in the modern context. The book deals with the necessity of rebellion and endurance in a world without God. And its central metaphor according to Fossum is that "seemingly senseless and laborious walk through the night that all men must take until they finally disappear into the universal darkness" (Fossum 20).

Rebellion is the motivating force in The Long March. In this Styron is like Camus who believes that to rebel is to exist. This need to rebel against a system which stifles the individual is a recurrent theme in Styron's fiction. Styron moves away from the hopeless despair of his first novel. Faith in the self holds out promise of ultimate triumph. Ruderman remarks:

The Long March also stands as the prototype of several of Styron's later longer novels. Besides the thrust and crisis of rebellion on which the book is based, we also find the bifurcated hero, the observant witness, and the participant rebel. ... Such dialectal characters include Ishmael and Ahab in Moby Dick, Nick Carraway and Jay Gatsby in The Great Gatsby, Coverdale and Hollingsworth in Hawthorne's The Blithesdale Romance and more recently Compson and Thomas Sutpen in Faulkner's Absalom Absalom. (50)

This is the pattern in Styron's later novels like Set This House on Fire, and Sophie's Choice. Peter Leverett and Stingo are the observer-narrators
through whose eyes we see and get a perspective on the action of the novels. Cass Kinsolving and Nathan Landau are a further development of Mannix, the rebel.

By his own admission The Long March is largely autobiographical. Like his two main characters Lieutenant Culver and Captain Mannix, Styron served in the Marine Corps during World War II and as a reserve officer, he was recalled to serve in the Korean War in 1950. He himself had participated in a long march and the action of his second book is based on that. Though it is only one hundred and twenty pages long, The Long March is neither simple documentary nor what Malcolm Cowley calls a "tiny room in bedlam". It is an outcry against the ceaseless war, the destruction of persons, and the secularizing of spiritual authority in our time. As Fossum points out it raises the timeless question as to what a man should do when confronted with "apparently irresistible forces that would not only control his body but break his will, subdue his spirit, and reduce him to robot-like obedience" (20).

Though it can be interpreted as a criticism of the authoritarianism of military life, many critics see it as depicting the human condition. They see it as an allegory of the human predicament. Irving Malin comments brilliantly on the symbolic dimensions of the story. He points out that Captain Mannix's first word in the tale is "Jesus" (181). This is the beginning of the symbolic identification of Mannix with Christ. Peter Hays has explored the religious implications of the story (70-74). Eugene McNamara has seen Mannix as the old Adam, Templeton as the priest, and Culver as the potential convert. But McNamara is of the view that obedience is imperative in an absurd world. He
fails to see the necessity for individual rebellion (272). As his name suggests, Templeton is a god figure, Mannix is as Maxwell Geismar suggests "mix-man or, in other words, recalcitrant mankind who participates rebelliously in the show run by Templeton" (LM 248). Mannix is Styron's first portrait of the rebel. He illustrates the necessity to rebel against dehumanising, oppressive totalitarian institutions. Here it happens to be the Marine Corps.

The novella is made up of two main acts. The accidental killing of eight recruits by a short-fired shell and the thirty-six mile forced march of a flabby middle aged battalion of soldiers whom Templeton suspects of "doping off". The reserve officers are resentful of having to go through the absurdity of yet another war just six years after the absurdity of an unasked for war. Richard Pearce points out that this is a world in which "man is surprised, ambushed, senselessly assaulted - not to the end of defeat or destruction, not to any end at all (201). The meaninglessness of the universe is emphasised at every point.

John Kenny Crane observes that the opening of The Long March is similar to all Styron's openings up to Sophie's Choice: "The emphasis is on loss, on something that happened which is the dead opposite of what should have happened" (71). Accident and violence underline the uncertainty of the human condition. Both Culver and Mannix learn among other things, that man is "lost in the night, astray at mid-century in the never-endingness of war" (LM 117-118).
The opening scene is surrealistic:

One noon, in the blaze of a cloudless Carolina summer, what was left of eight dead boys lay strewn about the landscape, among the poison ivy and the pine needles, and lob-lolly saplings. It was not so much as if they had departed this life but as if, sprayed from a hose they were only shreds of bone, gut, and dangling tissue to which it would have been impossible even to impute the quality of life, far less the capacity to relinquish it. (LM 2)

The shocking scene contrasts with the Carolina landscape. The accidental mortar fire stands for irrational violence lurking beneath the calm surface of life. Mannix and Culver are shocked into realization of disorder and violence beneath the smooth system and order. S.Laxmana Murthy sums it up succinctly: "The contrast of order and disorder, of war and peace, and of violence and compassion, operates throughout the novel" (81).

The irrational world of The Long March is epitomized in the first scene, a scene that is to haunt Culver and Mannix throughout and make the single day in which the book’s action takes place seem absurd and unreal. The scene indeed illustrates the weird way in which chance plays havoc with our lives. The existential emphasis on contingency of human life is illustrated tellingly. A group of young marines while finishing their noon meal have been hit by a short round of mortar fire. The scene presents "the slaughter of the innocents". It is this incident which is central in illuminating the characters of the three important figures in the novelette. Culver is literally nauseated by the bizarre nature of the incident and the waste of it all. Whereas Mannix in frustration,
torment and rage breaks down emotionally and cries "Won't they ever let us alone" (LM 63). He is plunged into rage against the system. Colonel Templeton alone reacts to the scene as if it were a routine occurrence. He betrays no emotion because he feels none. He is the typical organization man, committed to values of strength, efficiency and obedience. The three characters reveal different attitudes to the situation. Crane comments that Colonel Templeton has "found an amoral role in an amoral situation, Mannix recognizes the amorality and makes a personal gesture against it; and Culver, the eyes of the reader is ultimately trapped between them" (71).

Lieutenant Culver is the center of consciousness in the novella. He is an alert, thoughtful observer. He has to put the pieces together and make some pattern out of the chaos, if only to survive. Culver identifies with the fifteen or so surviving marines who barely escaped death and his initial response at seeing the eight dead, establishes his humanity and wins our sympathy:

And the slick nude litter of intestines and shattered blue bones, among which forks and spoons peeped out like so many pathetic metal flowers, made a crazy insulting impact at Culver's belly like the blow of a fist. (LM 5)

This made him realize that "he was too old, he was no longer an eager kid just out of Quantico with a knife between his teeth. He was almost thirty, he was old and he was afraid" (LM 5). He recalls contented evenings spent at home and the image of two lovely little girls playing tennis and waving out to him as in a dream kept haunting him like a Haydn passage.
It was one happy and ascending bar that he remembered a dozen bright notes through which he passed in memory to an earlier untroubled day at the end of childhood. There, like trembling flowers against the sunny grass their motions as nimble as music itself, two lovely little girls played tennis, called to him voicelessly as in a dream, and waved their arms. (LM 19)

This vision of an idyllic past is repeated three times in the novella and each time it contrasts with the anguish of the present --- the Marine Corps, the Cold War, the Carolina Swamp, the raging tropic summer, the long march and especially the eight dead boys.

One boy's eyes lay gently closed, and his long dark lashes were washed in tears, as though he had cried himself to sleep. As they bent over him, they saw that he was very young, and a breeze came up from the edges of the swamp, bearing with it a scorched odour of smoke and powder and touched the edges of his hair. A lock fell across his brow with a sort of gawky tousled grace as if preserving even in the black and mindless repose, some gesture proper to his years, a callow charm. (LM 3)

This is characteristic of the anguish and suffering the present offers. Culver has to come to terms with it. Despite the torment he experiences, he has a sneaking admiration for the Colonel. He ponders over the Colonel's nature: "In men like Templeton all emotions - all smiles, all anger - emanated from a priestlike, religious fervor, throbbing inwardly with the cadence of parades and booted footfalls. By that passion rebels are ordered into quick
damnation but simple doubters sometimes find indulgence. "The Colonel was devout and inclined towards mercy. He was not a tyrant" (LM 30). But Culver feels uneasy as he has observed the look of fury and suffering on Mannix's face. When Mannix describes the reasons why the forced march would be sheer hell, Culver begins to experience disorientation in space and time. He has nightmare visions of being imprisoned in a "windowless box". "All time and space seemed for a moment to be enclosed within the tent, itself unmoved unhelmed upon a dark and compassionless ocean" (LM 35). Culver feels a nameless dread invade his bones, and the sheer loneliness of man's condition begins to weigh heavily on him. He had begun to feel uneasy about the new fears associated with his advancing age - "a new awakening, an awareness" (LM 36).

After a spell of six years of orderly life, he found it difficult to be in "this new world of frigid nights and blazing noons, of disorder and movement and fanciful pursuit. He was insecure and uprooted and the prey of fears" (LM 36). The inhuman squawks and howls coming through the radio appear like cries of the damned in hell and the tent itself appears like a coffin to him. Culver suddenly remembers the Colonel's instructions and begins to speak into the mouthpiece. "This is Bundle three calling Bundle Able. This is Bundle three calling Bundle Able. Do you hear me? Over...." (LM 42). There was no answer and he starts over again only to stop abruptly when he recalls Mannix's reaction to the radio code and realizes the absurdity of it all. "To Mannix they were all a part of the secret language of a group of morons, morons who had been made irresponsibly dangerously clever" (LM 43). He reflected on how Mannix had also hated the other side of
it too. "The sweat, the exertion, and the final danger. It had been he, too, who had said, "None of this Hemingway crap for me, Jack". (LM 43)

Yet, the more Culver reflected on matters heroic, the more he realized that Mannix was a hero despite his protestations. It was by virtue of his suffering that he was heroic. "On his shoulder there was a raw deeply dented, livid scar, made the more conspicuous, and, for that matter more ugly, by the fact that its evil slick surface only emphasized the burly growth of hair around it. There were smaller scars all over his body" (LM 43). Mannix was neither proud nor modest about his wounds but only frank about them. It was obvious he had suffered and this suffering had "given him an acute if cynical perception about their renewed bondage, and a keen nose for the winds that threatened to blow up out of the oppressive weather of their surroundings and sweep them all into violence". (LM 45)

Suffering is the motif of The Long March and Mannix the Jew from Brooklyn becomes the emblem of that suffering. Mannix's company was composed largely of men who had seen urban life for six years and were recalled during the Korean war. Untanned and soft they were in no condition for a forced march of any length. Colonel Templeton, however demanded the march as establishing 'esprit de corp' and he was firmly convinced it had nothing to do with "courage or sacrifice or suffering". Given such polar opposites, the conflict between Templeton and Mannix is bound to result in deadly confrontation.

Fossum observes that the religious substance that might have illuminated the dark universe of The Long March is replaced by "a profane
parody—belief in the supreme efficacy of military power" (22). The corps is the institution that supports this theology of war and Templeton is the high priest. His actions are beyond the ordinary categories of good and evil. He demands implicit obedience and gets it from officers such as Major Lawrence, regulars like Hobs and O'Leary who seem to have no existence outside the system. Compared to these, Mannix is a heretic and has to bear the brunt of Templeton's wrath.

We watch the growing conflict between the Colonel and Mannix through Culver's eyes. During the confrontation in the tent, Mannix was the only one to protest against the long march and Culver perceives the latent antagonism between them and comments: "In this morbid, comfortless light they were like classical greek masks made of chrome or tin, reflecting an almost theoretical disharmony: the colonel's fleeting grin sculpted clearly and prettily on the unshadowed air above the captain's darkened downcast face where, for a flicker of a second, something outraged and agonized was swiftly graven and swiftly scratched out" (LM 29).

This scene epitomizes the contrast between authority and rebellion. The cold impersonal force of the army as an institution which imposes its will on the individual is seen in "Rocky Templeton" a good example of this military type. On the eve of the long march Culver finds himself reflecting on Templeton and Mannix. The shock of the explosion had set something off in him and Mannix was vague and unpredictable. His mood alternated between bellowing orders at one moment then falling into profound and moody silence. In sharp contrast to him stood the colonel. "Neat, almost jaunty, in new
dungarees and boots. On his head there was a freshly clean utility cap with a spruce un tilted bill and a shiny little silver leaf. At his side he wore a pearl-handled. 38 revolver, glistening with silver inlay" (LM 66-67). This was a kind of "emblematic prerogative". It was part of the act like his nickname "Old Rocky". But while Culver looks on him with understanding and acceptance, Mannix is repelled, "Look at the little jerk. He thinks he's gonna have us pooped out at the halfway mark ---. ... Well he's not. He's a little sadist, but he's not gonna have Al Mannix crapped out. I'll walk anywhere that son of a bitch goes and a mile further" (LM 68). Mannix rebels against the absolute authority of the system as represented by Templeton. His is a spontaneous protestation. Despite the nail in his boot which pierces his heel and makes him limp most of the way, Mannix endures and completes the march, to spite the system. It is his determination to express his free will against the forces that would suppress it that makes him very much like the Hemingway heroes he does not believe in. He is, as Peter Hays, points out "a son of man" to "Templeton's Caiphas, an-all-too-human Christ on a crutch" (LM 40).

The March turns out to be as horrible as Culver had imagined it would be. Styron's aim seems to be to describe the suffering that human beings must endure. "Life becomes a long march, full of accident, anxiety, dread, exhaustion, pride, loneliness and panic, filling the individual with a sense of outrage and violation locked into robotized routine" (Ruderman 51).

For Culver and Mannix life at the camp is a wasteland experience. Temple stood for the petrified system. He is the characteristic example of
Dehumanization at its worst. Life at the camp only exacerbates a feeling of nullity.

Not for days but for weeks, it seemed the battalion had been on the trail of an invisible enemy who always eluded them and kept them pressing on across swamps and blasted fields and past indecent, alien streams. This enemy was labelled aggressor on maps highly spattered with arrows and symbolic tanks and guns, but although there was no sign of his aggression he fled them nonetheless and they pushed the sinister chase sending up shells and flares as they went (LM 36-37).

When not involved in the usual chase, they spent their leisure in the officers club comically named "Heaven's Gate". Mannix compared it to a prison where everything was available excepting happiness. Mannix and Culver fled to the beach on weekends. "When in that setting of coast and sea and lugubrious solitude they felt nearly peaceful, in touch with a tranquil force more important and more lasting (or so it seemed on those sunlit afternoons), than war" (LM 56).

Then one afternoon Mannix described an incident which could be considered a symbol of man's condition in the modern world. "I was only afraid once. Really afraid I mean" (LM 56). He describes the incident when in a drunken fit two of the group held him by his heels and dangled him upside down stark naked in space outside a tenth floor window of the hotel. "I just remember the cold wind blowing on my body and that dark, man, infinite darkness all around me, and my ankles beginning to slip out of their hands."
I really saw Death then" (LM 57-58). This image captures vividly man's helpless condition in an unstable world. The absurdity of the human condition is depicted forcefully. Through this image Culver gets a different insight into the soul of Mannix. "He seemed no longer the man who could sicken himself with resentment, but relaxed, pliable even, like a huge hairy baby soothed by the wash of elemental tides, ready to receive anything, all into the great void in his soul which bitterness and rebellion had briefly left vacant --- all --- the finality of more suffering, or even death" (LM 59). Suddenly Culver experiences a hot wave of anguish brought on by loneliness and homesickness and also by fright. The memory of two little girls playing on the summer grass fades and instead he feels "like Mannix, upturned drunkenly above the abyss, blood rushing to his head, in terror clutching at the substanceless night..." (LM 60). Culver feels adrift upon a dark and endless sea and the single light in his tent is "as naked as the light in an execution chamber" (LM 24). Mannix too feels he is caught in a dark and chaotic universe.

Suddenly Mannix and Culver stare at each other in embarrassment and common understanding. Culver reflects:

So Mannix had felt it, too: not simply fear of suffering, nor exhaustion, nor the lingering horror, which gripped both of them, of that bloody wasteland in the noonday heat. But the other: the old atavism that clutched them, the voice that commanded, once again, you will. How stupid to think that they had ever made their own philosophy". "They were as helpless as children. Another war, and years beyond reckoning, had violated their
minds irrevocably. For six years they had slept a cataleptic sleep, dreaming blissfully of peace, awakened in horror to find that, after all, they were only marines, responding anew to the old commands. They were marines. Even if they were old".... They could no more not be determined to walk the thirty-six miles than they could in the blink of an eye, turn themselves into beautiful nymphs. Culver was afraid he wasn't going to make it, and now he knew Mannix was afraid, and he didn't know what to feel - resentment or disgust - over the fact that his fear was mingled with a faint, fugitive pride (LM 69-70).

Culver at this point feels that he and Mannix were not free at all, they were "marines" unable to take the choice of dropping out of the march. But Styron shows us clearly that Culver's mind is confused due to exhaustion and pain. To drop out would be as Camus would say to court "negation", renunciation as well as refusal. Mannix's will to resist makes him more than a marine. It makes him a man. It makes him a hero. Fossum says "the wounded but defiant look on his face suggests his kinship with other, more magnificent rebels. His nail-bruised heel, his refusal to honor the religion of the Corps, the great emptiness in his tormented soul, the 'smoking bonfire' of his hubris-smitten spirit-all of these imply that he is a type of Satan or Old Adam to "Templeton's God" (23-24).

Culver is dismayed to find Mannix almost bullying his men to complete the march, "not because the hike was good or even sensible but out of hope of triumph like a chain-gang convict who endures a flogging without the slightest
whimper only to spite the flogger" (LM 72). Culver realizes that Mannix's attitude was one of "proud and wilful submission, rebellion in reverse" (LM 73).

We see the march through Culver's eyes. He admires the pace set by the Colonel. "The Colonel pushed ahead in front of him with the absolute mechanical confidence of a wound-up, strutting tin soldier on a table top" (LM 74). "Culver stumbled along after the dauntless Colonel, thinking, "Christ on a crutch" (LM 75-76), as he thinks of Mannix whose words continue to sting and flay the men on to complete the march. Culver reflecting on the first few hours of the march recognizes the transformation in Mannix. Instead of his familiar friend, he has become a shape, a ghost, a horror - a wild and threatful face...' (LM 78-79). He is shocked into recognition of the paradox that Mannix in rebelling against Templeton had become a tyrant like him.

As the two take a ten minute break, Culver tries to advise Mannix but he had taken the march as a challenge and it is now an obsession with him. He is determined to make his men cover the thirty six miles despite exhaustion and pain. The obsession helps him carry the burden of his great weariness. It is the memory of the eight kids lying shattered that holds him up; he feels he owes it to them to carry out the march.

Mannix's huge voice dominated the night: "All right, godammit, move out! We got sand here now. Move out and close it up! Close it up, I say, godammit! Leadbetter, get that barn out of your ass and close it up! close it up, I say!" (LM ). This acts as a spur and Culver continues following the colonel
"like a ewe who follows the slaughterhouse ram; dumb and undoubting, too panicked by the general chaos to hate its leader or care" (LM 85).

Culver was sobbing with exhaustion at the end of the second hour and Mannix was in deep trouble with the nail in his shoe. While they were debating as to how to cover the nail, the colonel hovered over them almost benevolently. "He looked still not so much the soldier but the priest in whom passion and faith had made an alloy at last, of only the purest good intentions, above meanness or petty spite. He was leading a march to some humorless salvation, and his smile - his solicitous words, too - had at least a bleak sincerity" (LM 87-88). But the gesture he makes fills Culver with disgust and hatred. It was not the man he hated, but the marine.

He didn't hate him for himself, nor even for his brutal march. Bad as it was, there were no doubt worse ordeals; it was at least a peaceful landscape they had to cross. But he did hate him for his perverse and brainless gesture; squatting in the sand, gently almost indecently now, stroking Mannix's foot, he had been too long conditioned by the system to perform with grace a human act. Too ignorant to know that with this gesture - so nakedly human in the midst of a crazy capricious punishment which he himself had imposed - he lacerated the captain by his very touch (LM 89-90).

His words made matters worse. "May be you'd better ride in one of the trucks". "No sir, I'll make this fragging march", was Mannix's uncompromising reply. The episode closes with Mannix's final rejoinder to the colonel's remark.
"I think you're going to regret it", he said, "with that foot of yours". Mannix replied "Who cares what you think?" (LM 90).

The March had become disorganized, more spread out. "The night had simply become a great solitude of pain and thirst, and an exhaustion so profound that it enveloped his whole spirit, and precluded thought" (LM 92). The few soldiers still continuing the march looked like "zombies in drenched dungarees" shambling along. Culver's only aim was to attain the microscopic bliss of ten minutes rest and a mouthful of warm water. Both Culver and Mannix struggle to complete the march as men who refuse to be intimidated by what they regard as senseless authority. Galloway remarks: "The long march offers a bleak panorama, and at each turn Styron reminds his reader that this world whose aim is to keep alive the sufferings of war is, in fact, a world of absurdity" (90).

Mannix refuses to be lulled to sleep by this world but determines instead to fight, regardless of personal consequences. Mannix becomes a true rebel by challenging the absurd universe with intensity and determination. One recalls Camus' remarks on rebellion "In every act of rebellion, the rebel simultaneously experiences a feeling of revulsion at the infringement of his rights and a complete and spontaneous loyalty to certain aspects of himself" (The Myth of Sisyphus 21). Mannix is prepared to rebel no matter what the cost - Tetanus or court martial - as his most important loyalty - that to himself has been challenged.
Culver reflects

No, perhaps Mannix wasn't a hero anymore than the rest of them, caught up by wars in which, decade by half-decade, the combatant served peonage to the telephone and the radar and the thunderjet --- a horde of cunningly designed, and therefore, often treacherous, machines. But Mannix had suffered once, that "once" being, in this own words, "once too goddam many, Jack". And his own particular suffering had made him angry had given him an acute, if cynical perception about their renewed bondage, and a keen nose for the winds that threatened to blow up out of the oppressive weather of their surroundings and sweep them all into violence. And he made Culver uneasy. His discontent was not merely peevish, it was rocklike and rebellious, and then this discontent seemed to Culver to be at once brave and somehow full of peril. (LM 45-46)

Culver is torn by feelings of frustration and rage at himself. He loathed himself "for not being man enough to say to hell with it and crap out himself". Culver walks on finally feeling neither thirst nor pain, hallucinating about the eight dead bodies and patiently walking on. At one point he runs into Mannix coaxing an exhausted soldier to go on. Culver interferes finally and gets Mannix to admit "to hell with them all", and he goes on with the march alone. Culver watched Mannix limp away feeling you just couldn't win with old Al. "Old great soft scarred bear of a man" (LM 107). He knew Al had his fury to see him through to the end. Yet Culver knew it would destroy him. Mannix
moved, "with an awful hobbling motion up the road, face screwed up in pain and eyes a squint like a man trying to gaze at the sun. He moved at a good speed but his gait was terrible to behold - jerks and spasms which warded off, reacted to, in vain tried to control great zones and areas of pain" (LM 108-109).

Culver watched desperately as he saw the two - Mannix and Templeton confront each other. He saw clearly that the colonel didn't care. He was no coward and for him the march was only a task to be performed. Mannix was too blind with rage and pain to realize the colonel had not crapped out of the march. He accuses him of that only to be told that he would be tried for gross insubordination. He was to be court-martialled. Undaunted, Mannix keeps on like a "Communicant in rapture, offering up breaths of hot desire to the heavens" (LM 114). Mannix suddenly turned to Culver and uttered the words "what the hell", he whispered, "we've made it" (LM 114).

Culver comes to recognise the similarity between the Colonel and Mannix. The march had turned Mannix into a bully and made him as impervious to his mens' sufferings as the Colonel was. Unable to sleep Culver decides to go to the water cooler only to find Mannix inching his way towards the shower room, "his face with its clouded eyes and taut, drawn down mouth was one of tortured and gigantic suffering" (LM 118). Just then a black maid appeared on the scene. Seeing Mannix she exclaimed "oh my, you poor man. What you been doin'? Do it hurt? "Do it hurt? Oh, I bet it does. Deed it does!" Mannix looked up at her across the short yards that separated them, silent, blinking. Culver would remember this: the two of them communicating across the chasm of one unspoken moment of sympathy and understanding ..." (LM
The towel slowly fell from Mannix's waist, and he had no strength to retrieve it. He smiled apologetically at the woman and uttered words "not with self pity but only with the tone of a man who having endured and lasted the war was too weary to tell her anything but what was true". "Deed it does", he said (LM 119-120). The black maid with her awareness of suffering succeeds where old Rocky Templeton fails to get Mannix to confess his pain. "We see Mannix again as a man of flesh and bone; scarred and naked as Odysseus on the Phaeacian shore" (Ratner 68). He is now born again through suffering. His purification through suffering is symbolised by the bar of soap he holds in his hand while facing the black maid. We see Mannix now shorn of his mask and in full possession of his humanity.

Geismar Maxwell points out "The Long March is also to be sure, a little thematic and abstract. It is even something of a propaganda tale, embodying the 'individual' protest which William Styron believes to be so hopeless today. It is a tour de force on the side of the angels, so to speak, and against the demons of industrial, scientific and militarist twentieth-century American life" (249-250).

Mannix fits Camus' description of the absurd hero as "a man who persists in his demands for truth in a universe that says truths are impossible" (Galloway 12). It is not a question of defeat or victory but it is the struggle itself which is significant. Mannix succeeds in affirming his own humanity by his rebellion. "The call to revolt is a call to humanize, to transform the inhumanity of the world" (Galloway 15). Mannix is purified by his suffering. He endured pain even after endurance has become purposeless. It is his
struggle with the mortal condition that imposes human meaning upon that which would be meaningless otherwise.

Mannix is the 'underground man' who is agonizingly aware that neither he nor we have to live in the hells we make for ourselves. He speaks against the crippling forces in our society incessantly. Raney Stanford’s comments on the role of the underground man is relevant here. "The underground man always responds humanly against the challenge of the world around him, moving against his fate, though futilely in such a way as to dramatize much that is important to others who have neither his capacity to protest and reveal, nor his extremities of situation, but are shares of them all" (234).

Thus Culver finds himself yearning for the extreme sense of commitment that Mannix displays. He is not a victim of the social environment but affirms the human spirit despite all odds. "Almost all of the significant heroes of twentieth century fiction embody some of the characteristics of the underground man - alienation, loneliness, hatred of self and others, and above all, a desire for significant love outside of the inevitable self" (Stanford 234).

Mannix does feel alienated, as he has been recalled from six years of peace and urban life to train for the Korean war which seems more meaningless than the Second World War. "The modern hero also has to deny his heroic quality as part of his i.ard won honesty" (Stanford 236). But such a demand does not exclude heroism. The contemporary hero always feels a bit of a fool because of his realization that action is at once necessary and absurd, but this realization is part of heroic wisdom. Raney Standford is certain that the novel will depict the individual acting in all the ways left to him that affirm his individual
humanity no matter what the pressures put upon him. Mannix's rebellion becomes a means of survival not a means of revenge. He may have to face court-martial for "gross insubordination" but that is the price he was prepared to pay for salvaging dignity of self.

Jerry Bryant commenting on the modern hero in fiction says "The rebel or victim, the hero is at odds with his environment. He is at odds with himself. His energy is the energy of opposition. He remains an alien to society a misfit" (96). Mannix is "at odds with his men, to whom he usually had shown the breeziest good will". He becomes a bundle of raw nerves" (LM 66). He is a modern hero because he accepts the absurdity of things "the clash between the individual and his society between the self and its limits - is the condition of our existence, perhaps even the warrant that we are alive. In this view, we are most human when we are most conscious of the clash" (Bryant 78). Mannix struggles to maintain his integrity by rejecting the "authoritative form" of Templeton's order while at the same time not withdrawing from society. "It is only by remaining within the framework of this apparatus that the self can realize meaning and prepare his life..." says Bryant (78). Mannix chooses to take up the long march and complete the thirty six miles despite his badly hurt foot. His action reveals" expanded consciousness". Mannix has faith in his own novel world-center in being in the world" in its own unique way and on its own unique terms, independent of any transcendent validity standard" (Bryant 264). Mannix knows that only man gives existence meaning, and by surviving the suffering of the flesh, by choosing to rebel in the only way possible, he upholds his humanity --- the human value that emerges here in Mannix's act of rebellion that affirms himself as a human being.
But the weakness of all rebellion is that the rebel comes to adopt some of the strategies of the oppressor and this is self-defeating. Mannix's fury transforms him into a despot like the Colonel. To cheat the system on its own terms, Mannix is forced to bully his men to complete the march. Laxmana Murthy remarks "The inescapable ambiguity of his situation makes his predicament pitifully tragic" (92).

August Nigro analyses Mannix's pride in terms of Greek *hubris*. He identifies Mannix with Achilles because of the wound in his heel (107). But treating pride as a tragic flaw narrowly confines Mannix's tragic stature. It is Mannix's unwillingness to remain passive that is the source of his strength and it raises him above the common man and gives him tragic dignity. Mannix's defiance helps him endure and vindicate his human worth. His resistance makes him more than a marine, it makes him a man.

However the portrait of Mannix is ambiguous. His suffering maybe seen as conferring greatness on him but in a system where men were reduced to marines, where individuals were seen as cogs in a wheel, individual protest would be seen as futile. "Born into a generation of conformists, even Mannix (so Culver sensed) was aware that his gestures were not symbolic, but individual, therefore, hopeless, may be even absurd, and that he was trapped like all of them in a predicament which one personal insurrection could, if anything, only make worse" (LM 55-56). Yet his rebellion is the gesture that makes him human and Culver realizes that at the end. His relentless will to endure keeps Culver and his men from giving up on themselves. This is how Mannix spurs his men on to complete the march, despite his own agony and
pain. Fossum points out that "the thirty six mile march, marked at each station by increasing pain in Mannix's foot, recalls Christ's journey to the cross. When the Colonel finally condemns him to court-martial for overt insubordination, his face takes on the look of a 'Communicant in rapture'". At this point Mannix has accepted the suffering implicit in finitude" (24).

But Eugene McNamara has a different point of view. He explores the plot movement, narrational mode and patterns of metaphor of The Long March and concludes that "Once we accept the essential absurdity of the modern situation, obedience becomes not only desirable but imperative" particularly in the context of the inevitable choice between obedience and destruction (267). He feels that individual rebellion is doomed to disaster and only obedience would bring peace. He comments:

The universe of childhood is indeed gone. It is replaced by the hard acceptance, by the awareness that we live in a world in irrevocable choices, made even more anguishing and evident by the thermo-nuclear disaster which hovers over him. Peace is a dream. A new kind of peace can be attained through obedience but the rebellion on an individual level can only mean disaster (272).

However, his view disregards the worth of man's fight in a closed world. It renders all rebellion futile. In direct contrast we have Peter Hays on the theme of rebellion in The Long March. He feels the central concern of the book is with the conflict between the stable social order that negates freedom and
the rebel who wants to change it all "for the sake of change". Mannix represents" indomitable will inspite of pain and suffering" (73).

August Nigro also recognizes the necessity of rebellion. He observes that the encounter between the hero and the world dramatizes the discrepancy between American dream and American nightmare. But in his concern with the "encounter between the expansive hero and the contained world", (107) he has overlooked the growth of the protagonist from rebellion to affirmation.

Wylie Sypher in Loss of the Self in Modern Literature and Art comments on the tendency of the universe to go into a state of entropy or inertia. He explains, "This is another way of saying that the behavior of things tends to become increasingly random, and in any system tending towards the random there is a loss of direction" (73). This principle is helpful in illuminating the world of The Long March. The accidental explosion that killed eight recruits at random set the tone of the absurd world. As Sypher explains "We seem to be moving towards no enchanted future, but towards a darkness from which comes no meaning. Entropy is evolution in reverse" (74). Mannix's rebellion is a 'rebellion in reverse' as he is out to prove the meaninglessness of the color.el's long march by ultra-obedience. Sypher goes on to compare Meursault's indifference which cancels out all heroism as a sign of entropy (75). But in this respect Mannix is different. His rebellion is heroic. It is a one man rebellion to stem the dehumanized system from taking over. The arbitrary order of Colonel Templeton exhibits 'entropy' - a random order only to fulfil the whims of the Colonel. Mannix is the rebel who fights against such entropy and in rebelling finds his 'self'. He stops organization man from taking over his soul
as it were. As Fossum points out ‘Refusing to submit’ to his own exhaustion he had endured and ended as a man’ (25). He has also impelled Culver to complete the march. Mannix is the existential man par excellence. He prevents his self from being annihilated and discovers a way of maintaining his integrity in society. This is existential freedom. Sypher observes that the existential quest for authenticity is different from the romantic quest. Existential authenticity is "a kind of confidence in the self while the self feels an earthquake underneath, while one has ‘nothing to hold on to’ after fear and trembling have shaken the foundation of reason" (Sypher 66). It is Mannix's passionate faith in his own identity that helps him to hang on despite agony and exhaustion.

Camus' statement "I rebel - therefore we exist" (The Rebel 28) is very relevant here. Mannix's rebellion establishes his humanity, it helps "affirm the human against the inhuman" (Hassan 31). Ibab Hassan observes that "Rebellion is therefore an aspiration to order, a means of lifting pain and evil from personal to collective existence" (30). Mannix does succeed in carrying his men along to almost completing the March. Atlas-like he completes the superhuman task. His gesture attests to the durability of the human spirit" (Ryderman 77). Styron suggests the heroic nature of Mannix by allusion to Achilles, Atlas, Moses and Christ. The book is in line with the heroic and rebel tradition of literature. Mannix's defiant obedience to the system which he detests because of its rigid regimentation reminds one of Sisyphus. He would never give up his right to be human. He is indefatigable in urging his men and himself to completing the march. His rebellion sets the world in order at least for the time-being. In order to emphasize the mortal, vulnerable nature of the
man, Styron draws attention to his body. One is made aware of his mortality time and again. He is described as massive and hairy. He bears numerous scars, he is almost a mass of wounds, and what is more, he is matter-of-fact about it all as if to say that is what being alive means. He is a man and not a marine. In the final scene of the novella, this is made very clear. Mannix is shown with only a towel draping his nakedness, dragging his maimed leg, clutching the wall for support. he is suffering personified. But he responds spontaneously to the genuine concern and caring shown by a fellow sufferer - the black maid. The communication between them is perfect. Ruderman's remarks are very apt here "Tomorrow Mannix may be court martialed, his world turned topsy turvy again. But for today he had made it, though vulnerable and suffering as ever but still standing and that, at least for now, is triumph enough" (78).

Styron's comments in this context are revealing:

I began to understand as I wrote that even in the midst of an ultimate process of dehumanization, the human spirit cannot be utterly denied or drowned; against all odds faces emerge from the faceless aggregate of ciphers, and in the middle of the march I was creating. I found Captain Mannix slogging and sweating away, tortured, beaten but indomitable. A hero inspite of himself or me, he endures, and in the midst of humanity retains all that which makes it worthwhile to be human. I myself cannot be sure, but possibly it is the hopeful implications derived from this mystery - this kind of indefatigable man - which are all an artist
can pretend to suggest, however imperfectly in his struggle to comprehend the agony of our violent, suicidal century" (West 188-189).

Styron's thesis is that rebellion redeems the humanity in man. He was to explore this in greater depth in his next novel *Set This House on Fire* where Cass is faced with choice between Being and Nothingness and ultimately opts for Being. Thus the novel ends in affirmation of the human spirit. Mannix's rebellion anticipates Cass's responsibility for being what he is. The existentialist quest is always for authenticity no matter what the price.