# EXPERT REPORT OF HENRY BEAN

## I. INTRODUCTION

Counsel for the plaintiffs in the case, *Shosh Yonay and Uval Yonay v. Paramount Pictures Corporation*, Case No. 22-CV-03846-PA-CGS, which I am informed is a copyright infringement action, have asked me to provide my opinions to assist the Court and the trier of fact as to my literary analysis of any similarities between the Film 1983 story entitled "Top Guns" written by the author Ehud Yonay ("Yonay") and published in California Magazine (the "Story"), on the one hand, and the 2022 sequel motion picture "Top Gun: Maverick" (the "Sequel"), on the other. In so doing, I have also provided my opinions as to any similarities between the Story and the 1986 motion picture "Top Gun" (the "Film") as so much of the 1986 Film is incorporated in its legacy Sequel, explicitly and implicitly.

This report is based on the information now known to me. I reserve the right to supplement this report or revise my opinions.

## II. COMPENSATION

I am not currently receiving payment or any other form of compensation for rendering my opinions herein, nor is any compensation tied to my opinions or the outcome in this case.

## III. PRIOR CASES

I have not served as an expert witness in any prior legal action.

## IV. EDUCATION

I was born on August 3, 1945 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

I attended Yale University where I received a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1967.

I thereafter attended Stanford University where I received a Master of Arts degree in 1971.

## V. ACADEMIC POSITIONS

I have significant teaching experience relating to writing, including writing for the motion picture and television industries, which includes the following:

Adjunct Professor, **Columbia University**, Graduate Film Program, 2003-2019

Adjunct Professor, **NYU Tisch School of the Arts**, 2013-2017

## VI. PROFESSIONAL WRITING & EXPERIENCE

I have been writing as a writer of novels, stories and of theatrical film and television productions for the past five decades.

### A. Motion Pictures

I wrote and directed the following produced theatrical feature motion pictures:

*Noise* (Seven Arts/Fuller Films, 2008)

*The Believer* (Seven Arts/Fuller Films 2001)

I wrote and directed the following short/study for a feature film:

*Thousand* (Fuller Films, 1997)

I wrote the screenplays for the following produced theatrical feature motion pictures:

*Basic Instinct 2* (w/Leora Barish) (MGM, 2002; director: Michael Caton-Jones)

*Venus Rising* (I.R.S. Films, 1994; director:Leora Barish)

*Deep Cover* (w/ Michael Tolkin) (New Line, 1992; director: Bill Duke)

*Internal Affairs* (Paramount, 1990; director: Mike Figgis)

*Golden Eighties* (France/Belgium, 1985; director: Chantal Akerman)

*Running Brave* (Touchstone, 1982; director: Don Shebib)

*Showboat 1988* (Independent, 1977; director: Rick Schmidt)

I was the final writer (uncredited) hired to revise the screenplays for the following produced theatrical feature motion pictures:

*Man on Fire* (Fox, 2004; director: Tony Scott)

*Enemy of the State* (Disney, 1998; director: Tony Scott)

*Desperate Measures* (Sony/Tristar, 1997; director: Barbet Schroeder)

*Mulholland Falls* (MGM, 1995; director: Lee Tamahouri)

**B. Television**

I was a writer on the following television productions:

*K Street* (HBO 2003, chief writer)

*The OA* (Netflix 2018, 2019)

*The Case*; AMC (2023, 2024)

**C. Print Publications**

*False Match*, a novel (Poseidon Press (Simon & Schuster), 1982)
reissued as *The Nenoquich* (McNally Editions, 2023)

*The Believer*, the screenplay with essays and commentary
(Thunder's Mouth Press, 2000)

"The Virago;" (McSweeney's Quarterly, Issue 41)

"A Hole In the Sky" (Black Clock, Issue 16)

"The Sleep Deeps' Annual Photo" (Black Clock, Issue 17)

"Car Service" (Big Bridge, 15th Anniversary Edition)

**D. Awards & Recognition**

For my first novel, *False Match* I won the Los Angeles PEN America award for "First Fiction," i.e., Best First Novel.

For the feature motion picture, *The Believer*, which I both wrote and directed I won the Grand Jury Prize for Dramatic Film at the 2001 Sundance Film Festival, as well as the top prize at the Moscow Film Festival and many other awards.

## VII. OPINIONS

### A. Overview

It is not widely understood outside professional circles, and not always within them, what a film *is*, how one works, what constitutes its popular appeal, why some win large audiences while others do not, why some become 'classics' and others are forgotten. Virtually all dramatic films have a "plot" and tell a "story;" they have "characters" portrayed by actors, they have sets and costumes, the images are photographed, the sound is recorded, music is added, all this is edited together and then projected on a screen. But what audiences *experience* when they watch a film, what they remember (long after the story, the words and even the actors' faces have been forgotten) is a *feeling*, the sense of a world. *The Wizard of Oz* evokes a world as vivid and precise as a particular shade of green; *Psycho* has a very different feeling, though just as precise; *The Godfather* has yet another; *Groundhog's Day* another and so on.

Therefore, in trying to assess the relevance and similarities of source material to a finished film, it is important to note not only the concrete elements of the former as used by the latter -- the plot, characters, settings, themes and so

on -- but how these elements contribute to and determine (or do not) the feeling of the derivative film.

When one reads Ehud Yonay's *California Magazine* Story "Top Guns," as I did, long after having watched the 1986 Film, one feels at once how completely the Story generated the film. *California Magazine* (1976-1991) was a self-conscious purveyor of "new journalism;" non-fiction written with the verve, personality and distinctive voice of fiction: subjective, knowing, witty, and Yonay's story is a brilliant example. It doesn't tell us "about" the Top Gun program at the Miramar Naval Air Base; it puts readers inside that world so that we feel ourselves there -- very much the way a movie does. Take the opening paragraph:

> *"At Mach 2 and 40,000 feet over California, it's always High Noon. Yogi and Possum have a theory about hops – that is, air combat maneuvers. 'The good ones always start out good,' Yogi says, so the only thing to do is ride them through and try not to screw up. They're holding this thought as they blastoff the oil-stained strip in their F-14 Tomcat and head out to hassle bogeys – 'enemy' planes – off the coast of Ensenada. The preflight brief was short and to the point. The plane was ready, the takeoff smooth. A great beginning for a great hop."*

We are drawn at once into the subjective experience of Yogi, a Navy fighter pilot in practice combat, and the brief explanations -- that 'hops' are air combat maneuvers; that 'bogeys' are enemy planes -- do not just teach us the lingo, they draw us into that world, so we can go along on their ride. That's what Yonay's story is: a ride. And we walk away from that ride exhilarated.

> *"...[T]he weather is great, and they're floating in their glass bubble through a regulation Southern California blue-on-blue crystal morning – clear skies over clear sea – with white curls of foam swirling around La Jolla below. They float past Mission Bay and North Island, then Possum calls out a new heading and Yogi hangs left, and they're making straight for today's action."*

Even when Yogi and Possum, his RIO (radio intercept officer) are "shot down," they don't really die; it's just pretend for now, and tomorrow they'll do it all over again. The essential mood and feeling of the 1986 Film is right here in Yonay's jaunty, well-informed prose: the "pumped-up fighter jocks," the two-man crews (Pilot and RIO) with their playful callsigns (Yogi, Possum, Gringo, Heater), the dazzling aerial combat, the afterburners, the $36 million planes, the machismo, the competition, the bars, the drinking, the jocular humor and, of course, the looming presence of death – a hand to be dealt or, perhaps, to receive. The pilots the Story introduces us to will naturally be fleshed out further for the movie, given 'dramatic arcs' and woven into a narrative dispensing conflict, redemption and triumph. But the *world* of the movie – and the feeling one experiences in that world -- is so well developed in the Story that the fleshing out and weaving together of a movie is easy to imagine when reading it.

I've been informed by counsel that Paramount Pictures argues, in essence, that the "Top Guns" Story in California Magazine is just an amalgam of unoriginal and unprotectable facts reported by Ehud Yonay. This idea is possible only for someone who has not read the story.[1] What Yonay has actually

[1] I therefore reviewed with great interest Mrs. Yonay's three-column Chart of Similarities (Dkt. 21-2) comparing the alleged "facts" contained in the Story with its corresponding literary expression, and its alleged qualitative importance to the Story and Sequel. With a few minor exceptions I concur with the distinctions the Chart makes between facts and their literary expression and by and large with its similarity comparisons, and, for that reason, I incorporate them herein by reference.

done as a writer is absorb a lot of factual information, a good deal of pilot lore and gotten to know his characters rather well; and then he has *felt* his way into the heart of the material and told it back to us so that we feel it, too: the thrill of aerial combat, the terror of landing on a carrier deck at night, the longing of certain children to fly, and the way that passion for flying cuts them off from the rest of life. Yonay's writing is highly subjective and brilliantly objective; to the extent it conveys facts, those facts are expressed with the feeling of fiction. And because he knows how to pull it off, we never stop and wonder if it's true.

Having read the article several times, I cannot think of anything in it that constitutes a naked "fact," unfiltered through Yonay's sensibility. Even when he looks backward at history, every sentence is filled with wit, skepticism and personality:

> "*In 1964, just as Yogi and Possum were entering the third grade, North Vietnamese gunboats fired on the U.S. destroyer Maddox in the Gulf of Tonkin (or so President Lyndon Johnson insisted), a war flared up, and suddenly hotshot naval aviators were getting creamed by Charlie pilots who were just learning how to drive their early model MiG-15s and -17s*."

It is worth pausing here to discuss the essential difference between mere facts and a dramatic story -- or, as it is often formulated, between "incident" and "drama." This is a familiar subject in dramatic writing. An "incident" by itself, without "development" (a person, a plane, a military airbase) is static: it goes nowhere. Drama requires "movement." Thus, the expression and atmospherics of Yogi and Possum's 'hop' in the opening of Yonay's story, the pilot lingo, our airborne view of this "blue-on-blue

crystal morning, [the] clear skies over clear sea -- with white curls of foam..." are far more than mere facts and certainly cinematic, but they are not yet dramatic.

The "movie" -- the one implicit in Yonay's Story -- starts when Yogi and Possum are "shot down;" even though it's just in training. This establishes a dramatic arc familiar to cinema: the heroes' initial failure sets up a "problem," and it becomes the business of the story to resolve it, leading in the end to their triumph. We can tell that Yonay understands this dynamic, because he constructs his Story in just that pattern; taking us back into Yogi and Possum's pasts, showing what brought them to this point in their lives, following their growing mastery of combat-pilot skills and ending his story on another 'hop,' this one successful, after which they go off and lead their Squadron into active duty on the Indian Ocean. So, we see that the Story anticipates the movies and much of the fleshing out and weaving together is already implied by it. This is a great deal more than 'mere reportage.'

The more we look at the Story, the more of the Film and Sequel we find in it. It is no wonder Paramount snatched up the rights to the Story. It was a perfect blueprint for a movie.

### B. Detailed Opinions

When we turn to the Sequel, the question becomes: how much does that blueprint shape it as well. It is important to note that *Top Gun: Maverick* is not just an ordinary sequel to the 1986 Film, (i.e. the same characters at a later point in time) but what is known in the movie business as a "legacy sequel," a celebration of an iconic film (with a large and demanding fan base); thus, there are numerous references in the Sequel to the Film, references that, in effect, step

outside the actual storytelling and "shout out" to the Film. There are flashbacks to the 1986 Film, framed stills and photos of characters from the Film (on the wall of Iceman's home office); Maverick rides the same motorcycle wearing the same leather jacket and aviator sunglasses (and looks uncannily unchanged for the 36 years that have passed); Goose's son, Rooster, plays and sings "Great Balls of Fire" just as Goose did in the Film. In short, the Sequel doesn't just *follow from* the Film, it *contains* it; the two become, in a sense, one continuous movie. So, if the Film cites the Story as its source material, it is hard to imagine how it is not the source of the Sequel as well.

Below, I compare the Story's objective elements with those of the Sequel (and of the 1986 Film as incorporated in the Sequel). There are numerous and significant similarities, and they come in several varieties: There is, *first*, that which flows from the Story through the 1986 Film to the Sequel; *second*, that which comes from the Story to the Sequel without appearing in the Film; and *third*, material in the Story that appears in the 1986 Film but is then developed more fully in the Sequel.

These are useful distinctions. Whatever the Sequel owes to the Story -- whether via the 1986 Film or directly -- argues for the Story's importance to that movie; but the more the filmmakers of the Sequel turn back to the Story for material that appears only or primarily there, the more they are explicitly acknowledging the Story as their fundamental source, the "ground" of the Sequel, as well as of the first Film.

**Story Plot**

The central human conflict that shapes the Sequel evolves directly out of the plot of the Original. The two jocular flyers of the Story, Yogi and Possum (pilot and RIO) get reproduced in the two jocular flyers of the Original: Maverick and Goose, (pilot and RIO). Maverick's friendship with Goose, depicted in flashbacks remains as a key element in the Sequel. Goose's long-ago death generates the conflict at the heart of that film: the young pilot who goes by 'Rooster' (Miles Teller) is Goose's grown-up son, and he holds Maverick responsible for his father's death, as well as for his own thwarted career. The relationships are not precisely parallel -- Maverick and Rooster are not a team, don't fly together (except, at the end of the film, when Rooster succeeds Goose) -- but it grows straight out of elements of the Original, which evolved from the Story.

There are many other similarities: **In the Story**, Rear Admiral Paul "Gator" Gilchrist, a "fighter pilot's pilot," comes to the Top Gun school and restores its lost glory; **in the Sequel**, Pete "Maverick," Mitchell, a decorated combat pilot, comes to Top Gun and inspires the young pilots to complete a dangerous mission to all of their glory. Likewise, **in both Story and Sequel**, there are generational conflicts between experienced instructors and the young pilots who are supposed to learn from them. **In the Story**, an Admiral wants to "restore discipline and Naval decorum" comes to the school, and so the hot-shot pilots begin to leave; **in the Sequel** there is an Admiral who espouses discipline, resents Maverick's cocky independence and wants to do away with the hot-shot pilots altogether.

**In the Story** and in both films considerable screen time is spent showing the human side of the fighter pilots, not only their drinking and carousing, but the way their natural aggression boils over into competition with each other. **In both Story and Sequel**, there are surprising interludes on "glorious" sailing yachts. **In both the Story and the Sequel** a bullseye is used as a metaphor for a pilot's skill and ability. **In the Story**, the closer a pilot lands to the center, the greater his skill. **In the Sequel**, a hot-shot pilot shows off his precision by placing in the bullseye of a dart board three darts in a row. **In the Story** there is, also, a Big Brass Bell placed in the pilot's favorite bar. When anyone breaks the "house rules", he must buy a round for everyone in the bar. The same Big Brass Bell shows up in the Sequel *three times* and is used for the exact same purpose. Tellingly, a number of these similarities -- e.g., the bullseye, the bell, the "by the book" Admirals, the crisis in the school -- appear in the Story and Sequel, but not in the 1986 Film. Here, as in many other places, the filmmakers of the Sequel, have gone directly back to the Story for their material and inspiration.

**The Story** calls the Top Gun program "the ultimate break" for the best young pilots and highlights that the best of these best get invited back to Top Gun as instructors. **In the 2022 Sequel**, 'Maverick' (Cruise) is invited back as an instructor. This, too, is a detail of the Story that appears only in the Sequel, not in the 1986 Film.

**In the Story**, the fighter pilots are portrayed as elite "hotshots," both macho and cool; Top Gun graduates have revolutionized aerial combat. **In the Sequel**, the pilots are portrayed as elite "hotshots," macho

and cool. The Navy assembles a super-squadron of the No. 1 Top Gun graduates in each class who must accomplish an almost impossible aerial mission.

**In the Story**, we learn about Randy Cunningham, who downed three MiGs in one day, and five in his career to become the first official 'ace.' **In the Film**, Maverick shoots down three MiGs in one day, and then two more **in the Sequel** to equal Cunningham's 'ace' total.

**The Story** tells us that "in the past", Top Gun was so filled with great fighter pilots, that maybe even Randy Cunningham didn't belong there. Similarly, **in the Sequel**, when Maverick shows up as a new instructor, the Admiral suggests that he is thing of the past, a dinosaur; and despite his legendary status and three MiG day, the young pilots call him "Pops" and "Old Man."

The 200 push-ups that Maverick's student-pilots have to do for having gotten shot down, echo the 200 push-ups that the Wolfpack squadron leader in the Story does in prep for aerial "jousts"; this, too, goes unmentioned in the Film.

**The Story** describes tensions between the older, experienced pilots who have become instructors, and the younger generation of restless, ambitious up-and-coming fighter pilots. **In the 1986 Film**, Maverick is one of the young upstarts; **in the 2022 Sequel**, he is the older instructor, challenged and (briefly) disrespected by his much younger students.

**The Story** emphasizes the respect students feel for fighter jet instructors who "could speak with the authority of actual combat experience." **In the Sequel**, Maverick's extreme combat experience (in the Film he has already shot

down three MiGs in one day) is contrasted to the lack of experience of the elite young pilots he is training.

The **Story, Film and Sequel** all emphasize that the school takes on only the best "hot-shot pilots;" who are fussed and fawned over yet trained hard to prepare them for battle. The Sequel, more than the Film, and just like the Story emphasizes the arduousness of the training, pilots blacking out, their bodies "crushed" by the gravitational force of high-speed aircraft, and that all this is, indeed, "for battle."

**In the Story**, 'Yogi' and 'Possum' are described as a close "family"; Possum "will spend more hours of [his] married years with Yogi than with [his wife]. **In the Film**, 'Maverick' is part of the family of 'Goose,' Carole and their son, Bradley; **in the Sequel**, 'Maverick' and Bradley ('Rooster') are like estranged father and son.

**In the Story**, Yogi and Possum form a crew, then join other crews to form a battle-ready fighter squadron, the Wolfpack. As **the Story** puts it: "For as long as they remain in battle, the Wolfpack will be their home and family; security blanket and confessional circle." **In the 1986 Film**, 'Maverick' and 'Goose' form a crew, but more than that they become "family," then join other top crews to form a fight squadron. In truth, 'Maverick' is almost too individualistic for the squadron, often antagonizing or alienating his teammates. But 'Goose's' death changes him, makes him realize that his "family" was what mattered most, and by the time we get to **the Sequel**, 'Maverick' is helping to weld the new generation of young pilots into a tightly knit team and family.

**The Story** characterizes the Top Gun program as a critical component of U.S. national security. This is implicit, but goes virtually unmentioned **in the Film**, yet is central to the plot of **the Sequel**, which focuses on knocking out the ready-to-go-online nuclear reactor of a "rogue state." Presumably Iran.

In the opening of **the Story**, Yogi and Possum are "shot down" in a training session and feel terrible about it; in **the Sequel**. fighter crews are crestfallen when "shot down" by 'Maverick' in training sessions. A parallel situation does not appear in the 1986 Film.

**In the Story** we learn that when a fighter targets an enemy plane, "suddenly the acquisition symbol disappears" from the plane's radar screen, "and a numbered aiming circle appears around the black square--this tells you at a glance how fast, how high and in what direction the bogey is going. Pull the stick's missile release or gun trigger with your right index finger. Bingo." We see this depicted **in 1986 Film** but even more **in the 2022 Sequel**, since the Sequel is built around an actual attack on an enemy target and lethal encounters with enemy fighters.

Training is portrayed as extremely arduous and demanding. As a pilot **in the Story** puts it: "*You fight like you train, so you'd better train like you're going to fight*." Like the Story, **the Film and, even more, the Sequel** portray combat training with this rigorous intensity, demonstrating its life-or-death importance.

**In the Story**, Yonay says, as the F-5 he's riding in dives: "I had never felt so useless in my life. I had lost control of everything that was happening from one second to the next." **In the Sequel**, Maverick repeatedly teaches and demonstrates that to succeed in their mission, the young pilots need total focus

and control and must act and react instantaneously and instinctually, with no time to think.

**The Story** emphasizes that top fight training is grueling and repetitive: "There was more flying than they had ever had...one-versus-one hops (one student crew against one instructor) …then the tough two-versus-unknown hop, in which two crews take off not knowing...where the bogey [instructor "enemy" plane] will come from... when the bogey rolls in and sends them home with a simulated shot. Before long, the hops were running into each other, and Yogi and Possum noticed that something was happening to them. They were flying twice a day...edge-of-the-seat, hard flying, intense, mind-bending flying . . .They were being hammered into a team." In exactly that way, Maverick trains the young top pilots **in the Sequel**: he takes on single crews one-on-one, then two crews are flying when Maverick rolls in behind them from nowhere, sending them home with a simulated shot. This edge-of-the-seat, hard, intense, mind-bending flying continues as the squadron is being hammered into an elite team, just as expressed in the Story.

**In the Story**, Yonay says: "*Yogi and Possum were zipping along, shooting up mountains and down canyons and flying so low it was hard to keep from staring at the ground, but they had to keep looking out for bogeys*." **In the Sequel**, the mission requires the elite squadron to fly fast and extremely low to the ground down a canyon -- to avoid radar and anti-aircraft missiles -- then to quickly shoot up mountains. They train repeatedly in these conditions, and, in an important sequence, Maverick does it faster than any of them, convincing the naysayers that it *can* be done.

**The Story** emphasizes the life-or-death stakes by selectively pointing out that at high angles of flight, not enough air flows into the engines of the top fighter jet, and that this can cause them to loose control of their craft and die. **In the 1986 Film**, Goose dies when the fighter jet engine flames out due to poor air flow, forcing the jet into a fatal flat spin. Goose's death plays a crucial role **in the 2022 Sequel**, which also features scenes where engines die in the middle of a vertical flight maneuver.

**In the Story**, crews train under intense pressure and are set back if they botch training exercises. Yogi and Possum train against a ticking clock, "*And now they [Yogi and Possum] have only three weeks left to make it up*." **In the Sequel**, Maverick and his elite squad train under a ticking clock: they have only three weeks to prepare for the mission. They are under intense pressure and suffer setbacks when training exercise are botched.

**The Story** tells us that there is no way to *practice* using the jet's ejection seat by pulling on the black-and-yellow striped bars. Training can teach the required steps, but if a flyer gets in an emergency, he can only hope he remembers them. **In the Film**, Goose dies when he ejects into the cockpit canopy. **In the Sequel**, Rooster's F-14 has been shot, but when he pulls on the black-and-yellow bars, *they just don't work*.

**The Story**: *"[E]ven the greatest air battle is a series of individual duels -- that while a dozen pilots may blast off a carrier at one time, once they get up there, they are alone, hurtling through enemy air at 750 miles an hour and tilting against tiny motes of silver that zoom out of the blue to become fire-spitting machines."* In the finale of **the Sequel**, the squadron takes off from a

carrier for their mission, but as they try to make their way back through enemy airspace, they are isolated when attacked by enemy planes, and the combat is exactly as described in the Story.

**The Story** tells us that *"[w]hen you are pulling Gs--withstanding several times the force of the earth's gravitational pull--the pressure comes from everywhere. Even your eyelids weigh several times what they normally do, and the pressure on your chest is so intense you can hardly breathe*." And queries "*[h]ow do you explain 6.5 Gs . . . that you're sitting there and you weigh 200 pounds, but when you turn for that bad guy you suddenly weigh more than 1,300?*" This, too, is depicted and emphasized **in the Sequel** more than in the Film. We focus on the pilots' strained faces under gravitational pressure; one even blacks out -- at supersonic speed -- and barely escapes death when his jet plummets.

Yonay's language graphically describes this daring culture**:** "*Strapping on 25 tons of airplane*" and pulling torturous Gs at supersonic speed is what adrenaline-junky top fighter pilots love and live for. In just that vein, Maverick, in the opening sequence of **the Sequel**, takes an experimental jet up to Mach 10 (he was only supposed to go to 9) then pushes past 10 until it looks like the G-force will pull the skin off his face and everything goes black.

**In the Story**, Ehud Yonay narrates a flight he took himself: "*Taking off and flying through those fluffy white clumps was a near sexual delight. It didn't last. As we ... began dogfighting with Yogi and Possum ... Suddenly Shoes whipped the stick hard...and before I could catch my breath or brace myself . . . he pushed the throttle and sent us into a sharp climb*." **The Sequel** has scenes of

crews cruising serene skies, and suddenly the tranquility is shattered as a fighter jet appears *heading straight at them*, forcing them into a sudden stomach-churning climb.

A bit later in Yonay's flight: "Shoes suddenly pointed the nose straight down and went into a dive. I couldn't keep track of Yogi and Possum's plane, streaking by light flashes of metallic light and nothing more." **In the Film and, again, even more in the Sequel**, fighter pilots unexpectedly turn their planes nose down in a steep dive, while dueling planes streak by like flashes of light.

Again and again, elements from the Story show up in the Sequel:

**In the Story**: "*Yogi found out that his bogey had just fired a missile . . . With a heat-seeking missile heading his way*," he "*break[s] hard -- pull[s] away fast . . . to foul up the missile's tracking system . . . and head[s] up in a 7.5G climb*." **In the Sequel**, when Maverick finds out that an enemy plane has just fired a heat-seeking missile at he pulls an identical maneuver.

**The Story** describes a stunning "vertical egg," two planes chasing each other in ever-widening vertical loops. In a training scene from **the Sequel**, two planes do exactly that.

Similarly, **the Story** describes a "Blue Angel 'back-to-back' with a pilot flying upside-down, directly over and very close to another jet in parallel flight. "*Pilots demonstrate the agility and grace of their 25-ton monsters*." **In both the Film and the Sequel**, Maverick performs exactly this stunt in a huge powerful aircraft with grace and agility.

**The Story** emphasizes that the F-14s "wings can sweep back for fast flying or open to the sides like an eagle's for landing or just cruising around[.] **In the 1986 Film**, (where they mostly fly F-14s) this is not high-lighted, but **in the**

**2022 Sequel**, the movement of the wings is used as a plot device allowing Maverick to make an impossibly short takeoff getaway from a bombed-out runway.

**The Story** describes landing a fighter jet on aircraft carrier in the middle of the ocean as a "*controlled crash...if you're lucky*." **In the Sequel**, a major scene after their combat mission, shows Maverick making a death-defying landing on an aircraft carrier deck, even though his F-14's wheels have been blown out from under him.

**Themes**

The Story and Sequel have many themes in common: the 'true grit' and jocular heroism of the American military, the camaraderie of brothers in arms, the stoicism of the Western gunslinger, nostalgia for an earlier, simpler America, man vs. technology, individualism against institutional authority, the difficulty in balancing one's personal passions with duty and family, and, above all, the sheer love of speed and flying and a freedom that can only be found in the open skies.

More fundamentally, the Story and the Sequel both follow the recurring theme of the "redemption" of a hero who is thwarted by his limitations (internal and external) but finally overcomes them and triumphs. This theme is gentler in the Story: after Yogi and Possum get shot down in their initial "hop," they eventually redeem themselves in a successful final hop where they outmaneuver their opponents. It is, of course, more dramatic in the Sequel, where Maverick must overcome both the past and inner demons to lead his team to success in their mission. Yet the structure is similar in both.

**Story and Sequel** both have a recurring theme that success in aerial warfare depends, finally, on pilot's grit, courage and character, not on the technology that lets him fly fast or on his weapons of war. And it is noteworthy that this theme, which Story and Sequel share, does not appear in the 1986 Film; once again, the filmmakers of the Sequel have clearly gone back to Story for this -- as with numerous other elements -- and did not simply take what the Story gave to the Film.

**In the Story**, we learn that the elite pilot idealism of the Naval Air Station, "*this fighter pilot's Valhalla almost came to an end*" due to a new Admiral who assumed command and "*set out to restore discipline and naval decorum … and before long the hotshots began to leave*." In the Sequel this expands into the Admiral portrayed by Ed Harris who is all about discipline and is cracking down especially on independent-minded hotshots like Maverick who he views as a troublemaker and expendable.

**The Story** expresses the key theme that despite all the expensive hardware, success and failure come down to people, the quality and character of the pilots and crews. *"This is the anachronism of fighter aviation. Even in this age of remote-control, pushbutton warfare, the survival and effectiveness of the entire U.S. Pacific Fleet rests on a few dozen young men getting themselves catapulted off a flight deck and hanging in the skies against numerically superior, land-based enemy planes."* **And in the Sequel**, after the Rear Admiral tells Maverick that flyboys like him are obsolete, soon to be replaced by unmanned drones, Maverick and the squad he has trained prove the Admiral wrong. Catapulted one-by-one into the sky off the flight deck of an aircraft carrier, they defeat superior land-based enemy missiles and numerically superior

fighter jets. The mission succeeds, and Maverick demonstrates that the Navy still needs people like him.

**The Story**: The hotshot fighter crews engaging in aerial showdowns, are portrayed as audacious cowboys: *"At Mach2 and 40,000 feet over California, it's always high noon." "That's where Yogi and Possum...ride shotgun over the carrier's three squadrons of attack planes."* **In both films**, Maverick and some of the other pilots are portrayed as audacious cowboys with slick combat maneuvers -- the pilot equivalent of fast draw -- engage in one-on-one showdown duels, evoking the same Western mythos.

**The Story**: *"Really great fighter pilots are like the great gunfighters in the Old West...They didn't have to tell anybody how great they were -- all they had to do was just stand there, and the aura was such that everybody knew. It's the same here. Everybody knows."* **In the Sequel**, Maverick is portrayed like this throughout the Sequel as the most legendary of the top gunfighters. Cyclone says that Maverick's reputation as a great fighter pilot but troublemaker precedes. Maverick arrives at the bar, he is relaxed and silent, watching the other hotshot pilots show off. That's how he was as a young hotshot pilot; but he's not like that anymore. In the last scene of the Sequel, after the mission has beens accomplished, we see Marverick "just stand[ing] there" by himself, pleased with his success, at peace with himself and -- as always with the cowboy -- alone.

**Dialogue**

The "voice" of **the Story** -- at once droll, idiomatic, techy and charmingly unguarded -- appears there as both dialogue and narration. Yonay obviously

chose such dialogue to invest the reader in the Story and to further emotional themes and moods. *"You're out there supersonic going from deck to 40,000 feet and back down to the deck, simulating killing people and getting yourself killed, handling actual emergencies, and when you finally come in and land you can't even tell your wife about it."* **The Sequel**, of course, has only dialogue, but it imitates as much as possible the lingo and tone of the Story, shaping and establishing its mood. For example, **in the Story** --*"I like pulling Gs. I like strapping on 25 tons of airplane and hustling around the sky", "Fight's on," "It's Miller time," "shoot off their watches," "You fight like you train, so you'd better train like you're going to fight"* -- set a very palpable tone which informs the dialogue and tone of **both the Film and Sequel.**

Yonay writes **in the Story**, "*How do you explain. . . [that] you suddenly weigh more than 1,300? Or how if you pull too many Gs a lot of times you start to black out, ... that you were in an airplane flying around and you blacked out?"* and elsewhere "*There are no ups or downs up here, no rights or lefts, just a barely perceptible line separating one blue from another, and that line is spinning and racing like mad in the distance*." Those exact words may not appear in either film, yet one feels them informing a lot of the dizzying and dazzling aerial footage of both films, especially **in the Sequel**, where against the visual beauty of it all, the physical strain of supersonic flight on the human body are particularly powerful.

Yonay portrays aerial combat training **in the Story** as an intensely competitive world where the stakes could not be higher with dialogue like *"You wish you could do it over again ... but in the real world you're not going to get a second chance," "getting shot is synonymous with losing ... and dying"*. None of

this is "said" verbatim **in the Film and Sequel,** but it is *felt* in both of them in the powerful intimacy among the pilots, and the distance between them and their civilian lives, to which they may never return. It is in subtle, oblique ways like this that source material often influences the films made from it. It makes tracing that influence difficult, but that is why (and how) a Story like Yonay's works; it is not at all a matter of "facts;" in a writer this skillful, every fact is shaped and given subtle colors by the author's voice. For Yonay, the reportable facts are just a tool, a building block; what he's building with those blocks is a feeling.

**In the Story**, there is a striking passage where a pilot explains that flyers go out drinking together because: *"You're out there supersonic, going the deck (the lowest permitting flying altitude) to 40,000 feet and back down to the deck, simulating killing people and getting yourself killed, handling actual emergencies, and when you finally come in and land, you can't even tell your wife about it."* **Both the Film and the Sequel**, feature frat-boy-like R&R, where the pilots bond as they drink together at the noisy bar and play team sports -- volleyball in the Film, shirtless two-way football in the Sequel, and little interaction with wives or family is shown in either films.

**Setting**

**In the Story, Film and Sequel**, the Top Gun School is set at the Naval Air Station in Miramar CA, near the beach and the Pacific Ocean -- even though, by the time of the Sequel, which is set in the present day, the school had actually moved to Fallon, Nevada. Thus, the Sequel draws on the Story and the Film, not on reality.

Like the Story, both films take place in the high-tech cockpits of the fastest fighter-jets of their time, in the pilots' favorite bar, at the base in briefing rooms and on aircraft carriers, but the deepest setting in all three is, in fact, the sky, the blue dome over the blue sea. It is the place of freedom and of death, and Yonay's descriptions of it are not simply beautiful and lyrical, they are determinative; they shape both films. Early **in the Story** Yonay writes, *"There are no ups or downs up here, no rights or lefts, just a barely perceptible line separating one blue from another, and that line is spinning and racing like mad in the distance."* Those words never appear in either film, yet one feels them in similar passages informing both films, and in much of the dizzying and dazzling aerial footage, and it seems plausible that Yonay has taught the filmmakers how to see their subject. This is especially true of the Sequel.

**In the Story**, Yonay emphasizes that the Naval Air Station gate has a sign: "Welcome to Fightertown U.S.A." This announces a tone at the heart of the world Yonay creates in his Story: the cocky, good-humored belligerence of fighter pilots, especially the "elite" who make it to Top Gun. And, so, **in the Sequel** when Maverick first rides up on his motorcycle with the soundtrack blaring and enters the Naval Air Station, we cut to an on-screen close-up of a sign that says the same: "Welcome to Fightertown U.S.A" and we feel the link between Story and Sequel.

Both works bounce between intense flying from the pilots' POV in the cockpit, to quiet moments of reflection at the base, to the classroom, to R & R at the local bar and at sea.

Both the Story and Sequel portray the culture at the naval air station as ultra-competitive, often jovial and collegiate -- but with an edge of rancor. Both films take place in their respective present (Story: 1983; Sequel: 2022), but, like the 1983 Story, the both depict the Naval Air Station with 1950s post-war nostalgia. **Story**: "*At night the darkened base could be mistaken for an old From Here to Eternity set, and even earlier in the day, when the base is bustling, it is enveloped in a time warp of unreality*." Both **Story and Sequel** emphasize similar characteristics of the base; for instance, wooden plaques in an officer's room dedicated to the squadrons, and again, the big brass bell at the pilot's favorite bar.

**The Story** takes place on a naval air base with weapons of war, but instead focuses on individual characters, their backstories, passions and dreams. The same is true of both the Film and the Sequel where we sometimes feel, particularly in Maverick, the wounds and regrets that have brought the pilots into this elite fraternity. In the Story, these 'wounds' are more tempered, but still felt: "*[In time], Possum's wife, Lisa...will realize that her husband will spend more hours of their married years with Yogi than with her.*"

**In the Story**, we read about wooden plaques commemorating each squadron; **in the Sequel**, we see the plaque for Maverick's year, with Maverick and Goose listed together, one plaque features Iceman (Val Kilmer), No. 1 in that class.

**The Story** expressly portrays an aviation "caste system" organized like a target with the outer rings containing bomber pilots, then pilots who

attack ground targets and so on, increasing in skill until the "bullseye" contains the fighter elite, the "shit-hots", the best of the best. **In the Sequel**, when Maverick first encounters the cockiest and perhaps the most technically skilled of the young pilots, Hangman, he is throwing darts, landing three out of three in the bullseye.

**In the Story** and **in both films**, fierce training "dog fights" are juxtaposed against convivial R&R.

**In the Story**, the Wolfpack is taken out on "*a glorious sailing yacht*." In the Sequel, 'Maverick' is taken on a beautiful sailing yacht by his love interest. No parallel event occurs in the Film.

**The Story** views the enormous cost of each fighter jet as a factor adding to the pressure and risk of training. **In the Sequel**, a Vice-Admiral, applying pressure, complains about the cost when a top jet crashes during training.

**Characters**

As in all works of narrative or dramatic art, it is difficult to separate character from story. Classically, story should "grow out of" character. The main characters of the Story (Yogi and Possum) are young, white, American men, jocular, confident, competitive, good-humored and deeply committed. The main characters of the 1986 Film (Maverick and Goose) are the same. All of them in the Film and most of the men in the Sequel, we feel, are "men's men," more comfortable with each other than with women, more comfortable in the sky than on the ground. They live in a world that is both solitary (the fighter pilot as a lone gunslinger) and communal (the fighter pilot belongs to a squadron, a team,

a family). They address each other by playful nicknames (e.g., Story: "Yogi," "Possum," "Heater"; Sequel: "Maverick," "Rooster," "Hangman") both for comic relief and to express their intimacy.

**In both Story and Sequel**, the main characters also have similar appearances (one, good looking with dark hair, the other with wavy light brown hair and a mustache). The men of both worlds are largely depicted as adrenaline-junkies, undeterred, if not invigorated by danger, to the point of denial. Both portray pilots as courageous cowboys, dueling with slick, almost instinctual, maneuvers, reminiscent of "Western" show-downs (**Story**: "*At Mach 2 and 40,000 feet ... it's always high noon;" "Yogi and Possum ride shot gun*"). The name "Maverick" itself evokes to two famous Westerns: "Maverick" (1993) (which was based the "Maverick" television series (1957 – 1962)) and the 1952 film "The Maverick," starring Wild Bill Elliott.

**Both Story and Sequel** portray Top Gun pilots as elites with strict codes of honor, but cool, often macho, personalities and similar character motivations. They all must be "the best," even at considerable personal cost. Both feature a character that is lauded at the training shool for his actual combat experience, including famously downing "*three MiGs*" in one day, for a total of over five jets shot down—a "*five-kill line*." Both Story and Sequel introduce an Admiral who threatens the prevailing fighter-jock culture at the Naval Air Station to the dismay of its hot-shot pilots, and in both works this Admiral is portrayed as rigid and "by the book."

**The Story** singles out and focuses on two jocular, up-and-coming lieutenants, 'Yogi' a hotshot pilot and 'Possum,' his RIO, who form a team,

become close friends and compete with others to make names for themselves at the school. **The 1986 Film** focuses on two jocular, up-and-coming lieutenants, 'Maverick,' a hotshot pilot and 'Goose.' his RIO, who form a team, become close friends and compete to make names for themselves; 'Goose's' death in **the Film** haunts the older 'Maverick' in **the Sequel** and sets 'Goose's' son, 'Rooster' against him, forming the central human story of the Sequel.

**In the Story**, 'Yogi' is 26, has dark hair and movie star good looks; 'Possum,' 25, is "married to his high school sweetheart," Lisa and has wavy, light brown hair and a moustache. **In the 1986 Film**, Maverick is in his 20s, looks like a movie star, and 'Goose' is married to Carole, has wavy, light brown hair and a moustache; **in 2022 Sequel**, 'Goose' and Carole's son, 'Rooster,' has wavy light brown hair and a moustache.

**In the Story and both films**, pilots and crews are highly competitive As the Story puts it: "*moving up to the F-14 Tomcat meant crossing the magic line that separates the men from the boys*." In both films, the pilots flaunt their competitive machismo, challenging each other in the skies and back at the base.

**In the Story**, Yogi is described as extremely competitive -- "*In this business, you hate to lose*" -- since losing in actual combat means getting shot down and facing death. Maverick is exceedingly competitive **in the Film** (declaring himself "the best" of the young pilots, even before he has seen the others fly). **In the Sequel**, he is also very competitive: with his pupils in training exercises; and in pushing the physical limits of the planes themselves, or to prove that the mission can be flown in the critical time allotted.

Yogi **in the Story** "*wanted to fly ever since he was twelve*." It "*blew his mind*," "*but there was [an] admission price to the land of the giants*." And to fly the best fighter jets, Yogi had to be the best. The same is true for 'Maverick' and 'Goose' in the Film; and for 'Maverick' and 'Rooster' in the Sequel. They all wanted to fly since they were boys, to fly the very best fighter jets, and *to do that* they needed to be the best pilots they could be.

**In the Story**, "*Yogi was still in junior high school when he realized that flying straight and level might be okay for some people, but if you like yanking and banking -- the feeling of riding inside one of those storm-in-a-bottle souvenirs -- then there's just one place for you, and that's the cockpit of a fighter plane*." **In both the 1986 Film and the 2022 Sequel**, the only place 'Maverick' is truly at home, at one with himself, is in the cockpit of a supersonic fighter jet**. In the Sequel**, when the new Admiral's plans threaten Maverick's fighter pilot career, we sense the emptiness and, indeed, meaningless of his life without that central defining activity. He lives to fly.

'Yogi' **in the Story** is continually pushing and improving his fighter jet flying, combat and tactical skills. 'Maverick' does the same in both films, especially the Sequel, where he pushes an experimental jet past Mach 10, and then, as instructor, pushes his students to improve their skills.

For the pilots in both the Story and the films, the love of flying is all-consuming, and comes at the expense of personal and family relationships. **In the Story**, we're told that in time, "*Possum's wife, Lisa...will realize that her husband will spend more hours of their married years with Yogi than with her.*" **In the 1986 Film**, we see that flying costs 'Goose' his life -- and his wife and

son their husband and father. **In the 2022 Sequel**, we gather that 'Maverick' has never married or had a child and has difficulty maintaining relationships.

**The Story** emphasizes that when others die in crashes, fighter pilots have a fierce denial mechanism and just keep flying and ties this to their culture. "*That none of these accidents dampened the pilots' enthusiasm . . . is just another clue to the fighter pilot's code . . . Planes take off and land every day without accidents, so obviously it can be done*." After Goose dies in **the 1986 Film** (the 2022 Sequel's backstory) Maverick and others keep flying. **In the Sequel**, despite a near-fatal accident in training, the pilots exhibit this powerful denial and go on flying. Faced with the younger pilots' fear that their mission is impossible -- too dangerous -- Maverick acknowledges the dangers but insists it can be done. And then he impulsively proves just that in a character-defining scene.

**The Story** emphasizes that despite the pilots' "incredible denial mechanism" they take responsibility for everything that goes wrong: "accident reports that clearly demonstrate technical failures" -- causing a crash or a death -- "don't erase the [fighter pilot's] lingering doubt" that he could have done something to prevent the accident, but failed to do it. **In the 1986 Film**, after Goose dies, with Maverick at the helm, though Maverick is cleared of blame, he cannot forgive himself and believes there is something he could have done to avoid it. This guilt pervades **the Sequel**, particularly in Maverick's flashbacks and his interactions with Goose's son.

**In the Story**, some hotshot pilots are irreverent of Navy command and play games in the air. For instance "*thumping*," where "*a guy might be lying*

*straight and level without a care in the world when another would come slinking behind and below, then shoot under him and go into a sharp climb right in front of his nose - not only scaring the living daylights out of him but interrupting the air currents around his wings*." **In both the 1986 Film and the 2022 Sequel**, Maverick pulls this exact same "thumping" stunt, scaring the daylights out of other top pilots.

**In the Story**, as his jet "*escorted the [Russian] plane away, Yogi edged up so close he could look over and see the Russians in their cockpit, staring at him . . . He waved the way one does when someone is taking pictures, but the Russian didn't wave back -- not even when Yogi's backseater took their picture*." **In the 1986 Film,** Maverick flies close to and level with a Russian MiG, smiles and takes a snapshot of the Russian pilot, just as in the Story. **In the 2022 Sequel**, Maverick and his backseater, Rooster, fly very close to and level with an enemy plane that is trying to escort them away; Maverick smiles and waves with the same attitude, but the enemy pilot does not wave back.

**Sequence of Events/Pacing**

If, as is often said, "character is story," then pacing is mood. In **both Story and Sequel** passages of idyllic flying are juxtaposed -- suddenly and violently -- with gut-wrenching climbs, dives and dogfights; terror and beauty, peace and violence suddenly spring out of each other. And both works juxtapose these aerial sequences (which are, for both, the heart of the matter, their *raisons d'être*) with mundane scenes on the surface of the earth, classroom, beach, bar, officers' club.

Likewise, **the Story and Sequel** freely use flashbacks and cutaways. These are classic shortcuts for deepening our feeling for the characters, for filling in their pasts, or by retarding the flowing of action -- cutting away from something exciting before it's resolved -- building tension. Sometimes, flashbacks in the Sequel consist of footage from the Film (*see* above re: "Legacy Sequels"), in which Yonay's Story was credited as the acknowledged literary source.

This rhythmic alternation of pace and tone keeps viewers on their toes; any constant or consistent tone -- even of action-packed thrills -- will soon become monotonous. Variations of tone and pacing are a key to holding the audience's attention. Wake them up with a sudden shift of mood, sound, speed, light...anything.

In a similar way, fierce "dog fights" are balanced by scenes of debriefings or combat analysis, or by R&R scenes in bars. **In the Story**, after a protracted tour of duty in the Indian Ocean, the Wolfpack is taken for a sail on a fancy yacht; **in the Sequel**, after protracted aerial "combat", Maverick goes out on his love interest's high-speed sailboat. And this, too, like the brass bell rung in the bar, happens only in Story and Sequel, *not* in the 1986 Film.

**In The Story** failed aerial combat maneuvers are immediately followed by quiet, serious, tactical discussions in the briefing room. **In the Sequel**, all the young pilots that Maverick "shoots down" in training sessions are immediately -- following their 200 pushups -- sent to debriefing and tactical analysis in the classroom.

**Mood**

Mood is a matter of pacing, of lighting, of sound, storytelling and, sometimes, even of character.

As with pacing, the mood of **both Story and Sequel** is continually shifting between the mundane concerns of earthbound life, where up is up, and down is down, there is plenty of oxygen, and the sun is 93 million miles away -- and the clear realms of the sky, where one can move in *any* direction, but needs a helmet, an oxygen feed, and you burn $1500 worth of gasoline an hour.

And character is a feature of this as well. Fighter pilots in the Story and Sequel are like thoroughbreds, high-strung and volatile. Their mood is glorious when they're triumphant and crestfallen when they have been "shot down." In the sky, they are free of everything except the laws of physics and aeronautics, the rules of the Navy and the constant threat of death. On the ground, they are always slightly bored, calculating that soon they will be free to go up there again. How do we know so much about them? Because Ehud Yonay's Story make us feel it, and it is faithfully communicated from his Story to both films.

The mood of **the Sequel** is closer to that in the Story and differs from that of the Film in significant measure because the Sequel is both more serious and more urgent; as said above, its plot revolves around a national security threat in a way that the Film's does not. The mission Maverick's young team has to carry out is very dangerous; clearly their superiors do not expect them all to return from it, and that expectation hangs over the film -- and a similar seriousness hangs over the Story – in a way that we do not find in the Film. Mistakes here, even a botched training exercise that sets them back in their tight schedule

(echoing Yogi and Possum's setback) have a special weight, ratcheting up the tension.

**The Story** features cinematic, rather than textbook details of fighter jets. It is hard to convey in mere words, the mood "generated" by the sight of afterburners kicking in, pairs of white-hot flame shooting out the back and lifting 25-ton jets like rockets into the sky. Now *that* is mood. And there is much more of it in the Story and Sequel than in the Film.

**In the Story**, we read: "*they're floating in their glass bubble through a blue-on-blue crystal morning . . .Yogi whips the stick . . . from side to side, and the plane rolls this way and that, letting him and Possum spot anybody making for their tail . . . There are no ups and down here, not rights or lefts, just a barely perceptible line separating one blue from another, and that line is spinning and racing like mad in the distance*." **In the Sequel**, flight is depicted with a similar weightless fluidity . . . one blue hardly differentiated from the other as glistening silver fighter jets roll and rocket through the sky.

Post-World War II "nostalgia" is a prime feature and mood of Ehud Yonay's **Story**: "Like the notion of the single-combat warrior, there is something slightly nostalgic about Naval Air Station Miramar. At night, the dark base could be mistaken for an old *From Here to Eternity* set, and even earlier in the day, when the base is bustling, it is enveloped in a time warp of unreality." A very similar post-war nostalgia pervades the Film and the Sequel, which are like the old movies we used to watch when the world was simpler; just as the Film's and Sequel's politics, old-fashioned patriotism, and quaint treatment of the relations between men and women are (even by 1986 standards) throwbacks to

an earlier time. That post-World War II "nostalgia" is an essential part of the Film's and Sequel's mood, and some significant portion of *Top Gun's* success, its capacity to delight large audiences, comes from that willing suspension of modernity amid all the high-tech machinery.

**The Story**: "*There were the drinking sessions...But most of all there was flying. Glorious flying. The greatest fighter flying in the world was taking place every day...as Top Gun's [] vets set out to rewrite every single fighter aviation text ever written*." **The 2022 Sequel** is an homage to the incredible flying we witness in the crews' training and their actual combat mission. Maverick literally throws out the aviation textbook -- flamboyantly drops it in a wastebasket in front of his students -- and rewrites the rules about how low to the ground the jets can fly or how many Gs a pilot can pull on a steep ascent.

**Yonay's Creative Selection and Arrangement**

Ehud Yonay's Story, like all good writing, reflects a series of creative choices: what to write about (or not), what to emphasize or de-emphasize, how to arrange what has been selected and so on. When Yonay arrived at the 24,000 acre Miramar Naval Air Station to write a story about the Top Gun school, he could have approached the subject in countless ways; he could have started with a description of the base or with the history of the school or with the U.S. aviation problem early in the Vietnam war that led to the school or with the legends of famous fighter pilots; and, in fact, he would get to all that, but, as we know from above, he started up in the air. Or, rather, he started inside the heads of two flyers -- identified only by their callsigns: Yogi and Possum -- who

themselves are up in the air, feeling tip-top on this beautiful Southern California morning.

*That* is selection, not just of subject, but of how to approach and present the subject: restricted third person ("Yogi and Possum have a theory about 'hops'. . .") mixed with their own voices ("The good ones always start out good") and told in the present tense, not the past. All those are shrewd, knowing choices that the reader hardly notices. Yogi and Possum will remain at the center of Yonay's story (even as it zooms way out, looks into the past etc.), everything will be organized around them. And, as we have seen, their relationship will become the model for Maverick and Goose at the center of the **1986 Film**; and that relationship will feed into events and relationships at the center of the **2022 Sequel**.

And having selected Yogi and Possum for his opening and his center, he then (wisely) gives them a problem: they get "shot down", a failure they will have to overcome, which will shape Yonay's story. Likewise, Maverick and Goose will have a much more serious but structurally similar problem **in the Film**: they'll go into a flat spin, Goose will eject into the canopy and die, and Maverick will have to overcome that; and, **in the Sequel**, he will have to overcome it again, in other ways.

So, with just a couple of seemingly effortless choices and his arrangement of those choices, Yonay has not only given his Story a center, he has suggested the dramatic arc and center of two blockbuster Hollywood movies. It doesn't stop there; with the description of flying here and elsewhere in the Story(, Yonay suggests and perhaps inspires (with his vivid prose) the

visual core of both films: the aerial ballet, alternately lyrical and violent. Then he chooses to take us to the briefing room, where Yogi and Possum discuss what they did wrong and how it got them shot down. And this, as mentioned above under pacing, establishes a rhythm of noisy, exciting scenes in the sky, juxtaposed with quiet, cerebral scenes on the ground. And both **the Film and Sequel** will follow this rhythm, as well.

Yonay goes on, shaping the telling of the Story with his choices and implicitly shaping the films derived from his Story. Look how cleverly he "arranges" his elements: no sooner have Yogi and Possum absorbed their "failure" than Yonay takes us backward into their lives, into the lore of jet pilots, into the history of the Top Gun program; he fills in who these pilots are and where they come from, both personally and as members of the Navy, so that by the end of the Story, we know them much better and can feel what both their initial "failure" and ultimate "success" mean to them -- and that completes their stories. The 1986 Film similar uses the backstory of Maverick's father -- a pilot who disappeared to shape and define Maverick; and the backstory of Goose's death similarly haunts Maverick in the Sequel, leading to his redemption and the completion of his story.

The Story is the work of a very skilled writer, whether of fiction or non-fiction. In writing at this level, there is no such thing as a naked fact.

**The Cumulative Weight of the Similarities**

The totality or cumulative weight of the similarities broken down above go far beyond the necessities of the subject matter and from the outset cross into what is obviously Yonay's subjective expression of the subject. The Story, like

most, necessarily conveys factual material but does so through the lens of its author's subjective expression. Indeed, the 1983 Story was presumably valuable as the basis for the 1986 Film *because* of its unique expression as opposed to dry facts about the Naval Air Station which could be found anywhere. It was understood that the writers in in *California Magazine*, at the forefront of "new journalism," like authors of historical novels or biographies, took considerable creative freedom in drawing out their subjective view of the people, period and events depicted, just as Yonay did in his vivid cinematic Story. We see this in Yonay's extensive literary characterization of flying and aerial combat manuevers and of the pilots, instructors and naval commanders Yonay chose to feature.

I further do not believe that the Story contains stock elements or tropes just because death-defying flying scenes featuring courageous action heroes may be common in action films today. In 1983, when Yonay wrote his Story, and before the 1986 Film popularized the Story's elements, these sort of high-tech, high-testosterone aerial action scenes were by no means common. The 1983 Story gave rise to the 1986 Film, and the tremendous success of that film commercialized many of these elements, spawned and help shape the pervasive action genre we know to today. It's all too easy to look back and say "of course" but the cinematic world in 1983 was very different than today.

### C. Conclusion

What does the Sequel "owe" to the Story? Earlier I referred to three kinds of indebtedness: that which passes from the Story through the Film to the Sequel; that which passes from Story to Sequel without appearing in the Film; and that

which comes from the Story, is mentioned in the Film but is developed more fully in the Sequel.

It seems clear that even if we restrict ourselves entirely to the first category, considering only those literary elements of the Story that the Film and Sequel share equally, we face an overwhelming case that the Sequel is based on and substantially similar to the Story. It takes its entire "world" from the Story -- its focus, characters, themes, settings, mood, pace, even its nostalgia, all of which constitute and result in what I've called the ultimate "feeling" of the works, which is extremely similar. Like the Film, the Sequel is a film "about" a very special "world," and that world, and our ability to nonetheless relate to it comes from the Story. Indeed, it was *created by* the Story, by Ehud Yonay's uncanny rendering of the Top Gun school and the world of elite fighter pilots in all its objectivity and subjectivity. As we have seen, the characters and much of the plot of the Film grow out of (or are suggested by) the Story, and the characters and plot of the Sequel grow out of the Story and the 1986 Film. Given all this, I cannot imagine a dispassionate "expert" or audience member who would see it otherwise.

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