

THE TWENTIES: DECADE OF DISENCHANTMENT

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This thesis concerns itself with the deep disillusionment among young American artists and intellectuals during the decade immediately following World War I. This disillusionment, which caused many of them to become self-imposed exiles while America at large was spending her money and her energy on what F. Scott Fitzgerald called "the greatest, gaudiest spree in history," was nurtured and brought to fruition during and immediately following the war when America experienced a pervasive and widespread decline of idealism. The nature of this idealism and why it should so decline are subjects which occupy our first two chapters, "The American Dream" and "War and Disillusionment." The latter three chapters examine the disillusionment of the young American thinkers of the twenties in more detail. A close study is made of three selected novelists of the period--Ernest Hemingway, John Dos Passos and F. Scott Fitzgerald. Each of these writers had his own particular approach to the problems of his age, yet each concerned himself primarily with the threat to individualism in the twentieth century and the need to maintain it at all costs. It is our feeling that this concern is pre-eminently an American one and that these writers, by writing of this concern, helped greatly to keep the true American values alive in our time.

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INTRODUCTION

There is a current revival of interest in the First World War. Most books and articles being written in this field, from the popular pictorials of the Life magazine variety to more academic works such as Leon Wolff's In Flanders Fields, share a number of attitudes in common. Two of these are especially notable. There is first an awe and amazement that such a war was ever fought. From the perspective of 1964 the causes for which ten million men died seem very paltry indeed. How so many people could have been duped by flag-flourishing propaganda through four full years of useless slaughter is a question apparently unanswerable on any rational grounds. Secondly, historians now see just how far-reaching were the effects of that war. For it destroyed so many of the old institutions that the post-bellum world was in many ways an entirely new one, functioning along new lines and involving radically new ways of living. What we know as the twentieth century, an age so very different from all ages before it, did not begin on the quiet evening of January 1, 1900; it began with the roar of artillery on August 4, 1914, with the thunder of the "guns of August."

The United States of America, though her sufferings were not of the magnitude of the European nations, was greatly changed during even her brief participation in the war. The reformist idealism of the American people, so laboriously aroused and made effective by the Progressive Movement, was all but non-existent two years after the armistice. When President Wilson's dreams of a world "safe for

democracy" were destroyed at the Versailles conference table, his dreams for America, partly achieved during his two terms in office, were shattered also. America turned her back on Wilson and all he stood for, and throwing caution and Progressive morality to the winds, she embarked on what F. Scott Fitzgerald called the "greatest, gaudiest spree in history."

Among those Americans most deeply affected personally by the war were certain young intellectuals and artists whom Gertrude Stein dubbed collectively as the "lost generation." She applied this phrase to them in the middle twenties when their wartime disillusionment with the high Progressive ideals had crystallized into a permanent bitterness toward their native land, causing them to become self-imposed exiles. Yet most of them were at the same time very idealistic in temperament; this characteristic gave their social and artistic activities in the twenties the quality of a search for new values by which to live. It is the purpose of this thesis to understand the precise nature of their disillusionment and rejection of American life and to follow the course of their search for new values as it found expression in their works.

To make this study it will be necessary to take full cognizance of the effects of the war and the post-war world on the minds of these American writers. It will also be necessary to understand the nature of the American idealism that died on the European battlefields of the Great War. To do this we will consider the origin and development of a distinctively American perspective of life generally referred to as the

American Dream. So prevalent has this term become in all contemporary discussions of indigenous elements in American art, literature, theology, philosophy and political thought that no examination of American values and ideals can ignore it. The first chapter of this thesis, therefore, traces the course of American idealism from its original mythological formulation to its apotheosis (and apparent nemesis) in the socio-political ethic of Progressivism. In the second chapter we make a thorough study of the effect of the war on the social, moral and aesthetic sensibilities of the young men and women fated to become known as the "lost generation." The final three chapters study the subject in more detail by examining the works of three writers of this time, Ernest Hemingway, John Dos Passos and F. Scott Fitzgerald.

In concluding this brief introduction it is perhaps worth mentioning certain ways in which my approach diverges from those of other critics in this field. Against the admonitions of Bernard De Voto, for example, I shall readily employ what he terms the "literary fallacy," that is, I shall assume that there is a relation of some kind between American writers and America in general during the twenties. He feels that the expatriation of these writers cut them off from the really important events and movements of their times. I feel that it is precisely their intense involvement in their age that alone explains their social and artistic rebellion against the mores and institutions of their homeland. I shall also refrain from the temptation to view the writers of the "lost generation" as talented but artistically, emotionally and intellectually immature children. Too many critics do

this. And they are not all of the Westbrook Pegler variety either. Even F. J. Hoffman concludes his very laudable study The Twenties with some unfortunately condescending remarks about the "useful innocence" of people like Fitzgerald and Hemingway. To view these writers in this way is to overlook a great challenge in their lives and works. This thesis is one testimonial to that challenge.

CHAPTER I

THE AMERICAN DREAM

Western man's ancient dream of freedom took new hold over his imagination with the discovery and settling of North America. That great hope, so long unachieved for the majority of men save in the faith of a life of freedom after death in Christianity's Kingdom of Heaven, now seemed finally possible of fulfillment in this world. All that appeared necessary was a sufficient dedication to an ideal of freedom on the part of the settlers. Such dedication the original immigrants, the persecuted and the oppressed as well as the adventurous and visionary of Renaissance Europe, had in great abundance. With hope and courage they embarked from the ports of the old world for the lush, rich and barely inhabited paradise across the sea where man's perennial dream of a free, prosperous and happy utopia might well become actuality.

The American Revolution and the immediate post-revolutionary decades in the newly formed United States of America provided the impetus for a further development of this vision. Americans were able to look to a victory over the greatest power in Europe as the first event in the history of their nation. They could watch their experiment in democracy working quite well. And they could look forward to an illimitable vista of material possibilities. It was only natural, therefore, that they should begin to look at themselves as a divinely favoured species, completely new and unique, living and participating at the very inception of a new world and a new race of men. What

happened as this idea took hold is the subject of a book by R. W. B. Lewis entitled The American Adam.

America, says Lewis, came to be seen by Americans as the end result of an historical process that had begun with Adam's fall in the Garden of Eden; now here was a new Eden to be inhabited by God's new chosen people who would live in innocence and strength, free from the legacy of the original old world Adam's fall. A new language, he says, a new medium of expression was needed to express this growing national consciousness. This need produced most of the great literature of the first half of the nineteenth century in the United States. From this literature a distinctively American mythology emerged.

"A century ago," says Lewis, "the image contrived to embody the most fruitful contemporary ideas was that of the authentic American as a figure of heroic innocence and vast potentialities, poised at the start of a new history."¹ It was for him to fulfill "a divinely granted second chance for the human race, after the first chance had been so disastrously fumbled in the darkening Old World."² He goes on to say that to a Bible-reading generation, the traits they saw exhibited in this new mythological national figure naturally called to mind the image of Adam, the innocent first man standing at the very beginning of creation with his whole experience yet to come. Lewis goes on to describe this new Adam as "an individual emancipated from history, happily bereft of ancestry, untouched and undefiled by the usual inheritances of family and race; an individual standing alone, self-reliant and self-propelling, ready to confront whatever awaited him

with the aid of his own unique and inherent resources."³

That there are dangers, even evils, involved in uncontrolled individualism only too many early Americans were aware; they knew that man was also a social animal and had a need for laws, institutions and other social forms. Thus, according to Lewis, a dialogue developed, a very fruitful dialogue which found its most complex articulation in the great literature of the early nineteenth century. This literature produced "the one distinctively American narrative theme: that of the solitary hero and his moral engagement with the alien tribe. Such was to be the enduring fable of the American Adam."⁴

The character on the early American scene most clearly embodying the Adamic traits was the frontiersman. His intense individualism, his versatile dexterity, his dislike of artificial rules and regulations, and his natural virtues of courage, industry and fortitude made him the perfect physical manifestation of the national mythological image. It was, therefore, only natural that the early American writers usually used the frontiersman in some form or another as the "solitary hero" of their works; the relationship in which they then placed him to the "alien tribe" was the means whereby they could illuminate their own acceptance, rejection or ambivalence toward the pattern that the national self-consciousness was taking. Thus, the "American Adam" could be Hawkeye, Ahab or Hester Prynne depending upon who was appraising him.

Lewis' discussion relates to the American Dream as it took mythological form in literature, but it had another form, or perhaps we

should say another variation of the same form, which was applicable to the early American non-literary experience as well. Richard Hofstadter discusses this variation in the first chapter of his book entitled The Age of Reform. He calls this chapter "The Agrarian Myth and Commercial Realities." "The United States was born in the country and has moved to the city,"⁵ he says. This move, however, did not take place to any significant extent until after the Civil War; up to that event America remained a predominantly rural and agrarian nation, and what urban centers existed remained dependent on the rural life which surrounded them. This rural way of life, which was not the frontier way of life in the strictest sense, engaged the activities of the majority of early Americans. It was natural, therefore, that in such a setting the Adamic image should take on less of the qualities of the frontiersman and more of those proper to the more conventional tiller of the soil. Hence, there developed what Hofstadter calls the Agrarian Myth. Though he does not relate it specifically to the idea of the American Adam, we may examine it most profitably for our purposes in such a relation.

The Agrarian Myth finds its most explicit formulation in the philosophy of Thomas Jefferson. Here, the American Adam is a self-sufficient farmer, the frontiersman settled down. His closeness to nature, though different from that of the fur-trader or gold-hunter, gives him many of the same qualities enjoyed by the fictional Adamic hero. He is "self-reliant and self-propelling," naturally innocent and righteous, and free from the sins and evils of urban life. The popularity of Jefferson's version of the Adamic Myth throughout the

nineteenth century and, as we shall see, well into the twentieth testifies to its hold upon the American self-consciousness, a more universal hold than that of the fictional version because it was less artistic and intellectual and because it was the version with which most Americans, who were simple farmers rather than frontiersmen, could most readily identify themselves. Hofstadter discusses the growth of this Agrarian Myth in part as follows:

At first, as I have said, the agrarian myth was a notion of the educated classes, but by the early nineteenth century it had become . . . a part of the country's political folklore and its nationalist ideology. The roots of this change may be found as far back as the American Revolution, which, appearing to many Americans as the victory of a band of embattled farmers over an empire, seemed to confirm the moral and civic superiority of the yeoman, made the farmer a symbol of the new nation, and wove the agrarian myth into its patriotic sentiments and republican idealism. Still more important, the myth played a role in the first party battles under the Constitution. The Jeffersonians appealed again and again to the moral primacy of the yeoman farmer in their attacks on the Federalists. The family farm and American democracy became indissolubly connected . . . and was inherited from the Jeffersonians by exponents of popular causes in the Jackson era. By 1840 even the more conservative party, the Whigs, took over the rhetorical appeal to the common man, and elected a President in good part on the strength of the fiction that he lived in a log cabin.⁶

Thus, while in literature the American Adam was generally represented by the frontiersman, he was being identified in other areas of thought and feeling as the farmer, giving the new Eden's mythology a distinctively pastoral flavour and the farmer the highest place in the public's esteem.

However, while the mythologized national type was that of a morally perfect being, the highest ideal of mankind at that time--prelapsarian Adam, he existed in an undeveloped, imperfect

environment. Part of his function, therefore, was to bring his environment to the same level of perfection that he himself manifested. This is why, as Hofstadter points out, "the United States was the only country in the world that began with perfection and aspired to progress."⁷ However, material perfection involved a course of progression for which early America had not bargained--the growth of industry. Three decades after the close of the Civil War America had become a predominantly industrial nation, and rather than being an agrarian heaven for all, it had become a steel and iron hell for many, presided over by an oligarchy of financial giants more like the worst of European tyrants than the American Adam they had come to represent.

Had there been no Civil War in America perhaps things might have worked out differently. American industry might have grown to maturity in a more gradual, calm, far-seeing and controlled manner and the Adamic Myth might have adapted itself gradually to an industrial setting. But there was a Civil War. And to win it the North had had to speed up the development of its industry at a rapid rate. There were many who capitalized upon this military necessity and emerged from the war years with the beginnings of vast industrial and financial empires in their grasp.

Thus, with the close of hostilities in 1865, the way was clear for the emergence of a new kind of frontier and a new kind of frontiersman destined to last long after the cattleman's and the miner's

frontiers were declared officially closed in 1890. The new frontier was industry, as rugged in its own way as the ones faced by Daniel Boone or the Mountain Men. And the new frontiersmen who succeeded in controlling their environment received remuneration of far greater material worth than was ever gleaned from the forest, the plains, or the Ponderosa. Here, many of the less savoury traits of the frontiersman were not so much modified as intensified, and as if the very history of ideas itself were on the side of this new brand of frontiersman, a philosophy emerged from abroad which not only justified scientifically his way of life but congratulated him on it as well. This philosophy was the Social Evolutionary Theory of Herbert Spencer.

It is not surprising that the Americans supported, imported and made their own the scientific findings of Darwin and the ideas of Spencer before the British had really even recognized either. Spencer's philosophy coincided with the American experience and the mythology which had grown up around it on almost every count. Inasmuch as it was an almost anarchical "let-alone" philosophy and insisted on the unhampered free enterprise of the individual, it coincided with the American's hatred of rules and regulations and his natural predilection for laissez-faire politics. In that it saw the basic motivating power of the universe as brute biological force, it correlated with the American's frontier experience and approbated the essential rightness of his competitive instinct. It satisfied his empirical turn of mind by giving scientific proof for these tenets in the discoveries of Charles Darwin. And it justified the contemporary high opinion

of man and American man in particular. To the American evolutionary philosopher Fiske, "evolution made clear that the perfecting of man was the chief object of the creative activity of the universe."⁸ Americans believed in the perfecting of man.

Thus, many Americans were prepared to apply Spencer's ideas to the running of their reunited country. Social Darwinists like Sumner, Fiske, Youmans, and Asa Gray turned this preparedness into something approaching religious zeal. This was especially true of those who would benefit most from it--the Fisks and Goulds, Carnegies and Rockefellers of the day. And in the unimaginative, very trusting and rather easily impressed Ulysses S. Grant they had the ideal President to effect their ends. Washington became a "great barbecue" as Vernon L. Parrington put it, a feverish scurry of lobbying, scheming, philandering and cheating for selfish ends. And Washington was thus only typical of the prevailing tone of American life in the first decades after the Civil War. "With its rapid expansion," says Richard Hofstadter in his Social Darwinism in American Thought, "its exploitative methods, its desperate competition, and its peremptory rejection of failure, post-bellum America was like a vast human caricature of the Darwinian struggle for existence and survival of the fittest."⁹

Despite this, however, or perhaps because of it, the new Wall Street entrepreneurs became identified in the public mind with the American Adam. The physical embodiment of the mythic hero had simply moved from the frontier of Indians, buffaloes and beavers or from his self-sufficient homestead to the equally challenging environment of

stocks, bonds and financial competition. He was now a businessman, hardly agrarian to be sure, but that was competition. Had not Spencer shown that? Did not the unparalleled growth of the country prove it? Did not the fact that John D. Rockefeller taught his Baptist Sunday School Class every week indicate that nothing had really changed except that Adam had moved to a new setting, a move that was necessary in the progress toward perfection? Unfortunately, however, he was not the same American Adam of old. It was true that like the frontiersman and the farmer the businessman had to be adaptable to his environment, clever in a practical way, resilient and courageous. However, he also had to be ruthless, conniving, underhanded and adept at deceit, qualities completely foreign to the traditional image of the innocent, morally perfect American Adam of both the frontier and yeoman varieties.

Nevertheless, the majority of Americans accepted this new version of the American Adam, partly for the reasons just given but also because the Civil War had sapped so much of their idealism that they did not seem to care very much. "The Civil War," says Oscar Cargill in The Social Revolt, "waged undeniably on the strength of the passionate idealism of the combatants, had outmoded idealism and had taught, as wars always do, the cash value of opportunism. Romantic faith, as well as Romantic phraseology, died on the battlefield."¹⁰ It was an historical phenomenon on the American scene that would repeat itself a half century later after Americans had fought and seen their idealism die on an even bigger battlefield.

Finally, however, by the closing of the frontier in 1890, a cry from the west began to instill doubt in the minds of Americans, and by the turn of the century, the movement to limit the activities of the Wall Street millionaires and the evil effects of their uninhibited financial wars was fully under way. The Populists screamed and the Progressives talked more quietly, but they said the same thing--men like Rockefeller are not American Adams; rather, they have betrayed that high ideal, and we must restore it to the American people.

The new American Adam had brought something with him that Americans had not foreseen although its origin was in the initial Adamic paradox. For material progress in the nineteenth century meant industrial progress, and industrial progress in a capitalistic society meant consolidation, collectivism and monopoly. The growth of such phenomena on the American scene meant a severe blow to the American Dream.

Ironically, those who suffered most in the turbulent childhood of industrial America were those whose way of life had provided the myth upon which the captains of industry had capitalized in capturing the public imagination and approval for their activities. It was the rural folk of the South and West to whom ante-bellum America had been subservient who found themselves holding the short end of the big stick by 1890.

For the first few decades after the Civil War, western land had been a "safety valve" to let off the steam of the Gilded Age, steam

created by the Spencerian titans of finance and industry who characterized and produced the uncontrolled, money-lusting society that was post-bellum America. This 'steam' was the resentment of men who, sharing the American Dream of freedom and equality for all Americans, were beginning to react to the destruction of that vision in the gradually industrializing east. The west had provided a haven to which these men could flee when things became unendurable, but it had also saved the Horatio Alger heroes from the effects of organized revolt. By 1890, this situation had changed. The west had become as dominated by the business giants as the east, the major villains of the piece being the railroad magnates. Alfred Kazin points out in his On Native Grounds that "John Jay Chapman put it best when he said that the whole history of America after the Civil War was the story of a railroad passing through a town, and then dominating it."¹¹

Had the Jeffersonian ideal actually existed in American rural life this would not have occurred, for that ideal involved the concept of the complete self-sufficiency of the agrarian homestead. What had ironically happened, however, was that agriculture had itself become a staple crop industry, dependent on those other industries which controlled the materials and markets necessary to its existence. The Granges had tried to offset this control in the seventies and eighties, but had failed due to their inability to combat the economic superiority of the railroads and big eastern manufacturers.

It was from such an origin that Populism flashed on to the American scene in the nineties. Most history books tend to treat

Populism as a radical movement. It was that inasmuch as its tenets and activities went against the grain of the contemporary status quo of American society. But this society had become an industrial one, and in attacking it, the Populists fell back upon the original values of the Adamic Agrarian Myth. In its distrust of urban life, its fear of industry, its antagonism toward Europe and its revivalist tone it linked itself with the oldest American ideals. Too often, American historians, blinded by the excesses and defects of Populism, ignore this fact. The Populists' leftist orientation, for instance, was simply the only political expression that could come from their concern for individualism in a world where unbridled individualism for a few had meant no chance for individual self-fulfillment for the many. Nevertheless, they expressed their faith in the zealous and excessive spirit of revivalism that is typical of all downtrodden people who seek political redress for their sufferings, and this spirit frightened those who might otherwise have supported them. These others waited until the flame of Populism had devoured itself and then made their move.

Historians are fond of pointing to the apparent paradox of the demands of the rural, unsophisticated, agrarian Populists being effected by the urban, sophisticated, industrial middle class Progressives. But this is less of a paradox than it seems, for the Progressives shared the same faith as the Populists--the Adamic Agrarian faith. As Hofstadter says, the "Populist and Progressive movements took place during a rapid and sometimes turbulent transition from the conditions of an agrarian society to those of modern urban life."¹²

"The more commercial this society became . . . the more reason it found to cling in imagination to the noncommercial agrarian values."¹³ Thus, the Progressives, in their concern to restore the traditional American values to the new kind of society that America had become, were agrarian individualists despite their urban backgrounds. The "general theme" of Progressivism, according to Hofstadter, "was the effort to restore a type of economic individualism and political democracy that was widely believed to have existed earlier in America and to have been destroyed by the great corporation and the corrupt political machine; and with that restoration to bring back a kind of morality and civic purity that was also believed to have been lost."¹⁴

There is another reason as well why the Progressives should have cherished essentially the same ideals as the Populists: many of them had rural backgrounds themselves. For this was the period when the enterprising country boys were beginning to move to the cities. Though, of course, they adapted to the new way of life, they still retained vestiges of their initial shock which was that of the "rural mind confronted with the phenomena of urban life, its crowding, poverty, crime, corruption, impersonality, and ethnic chaos."¹⁵ It was this sense of shock that was the basic motivating force of the Progressive spirit. However, they could effect their ends where the Populists had not been able to, simply because they had the advantages of urban life at their disposal--higher educational standards, newspapers, magazines, etcetera. The Progressives were thus able to accomplish their agrarian aims with urban tools.

Progressivism was even less radical in terms of its operating values than was Populism, for, sharing essentially the same goals as Populism, it pursued them with greater calmness, awareness, and social and political efficiency, more in keeping with the Jeffersonian ideal of civic action. Also, it saw industry and Wall Street finance in a more objective way than did Populism, even giving due admiration to the self-made titans of steel and oil, stocks and bonds, and factories and banking houses. However, they did draw the line at the collectivism and monopoly of big business when it hurt the other average Americans' chances for complete self-development, because they believed that the traditional Adamic Agrarian values could still survive in America no matter how industrial she had become since the war.

Much that they accomplished seemed proof of the validity of this belief. For two decades, while they held the limelight in American politics, they pushed through reform after reform, eradicating most of the evils they had set out to eradicate. Pursuing their course in the highest moral tone, they came to embody American idealism. Then they made a grave mistake for themselves and a very serious one for this idealism--they went to war.

CHAPTER II

WAR AND DISILLUSIONMENT

With the inauguration of Woodrow Wilson as President of the United States in 1912, the American Progressive Movement acquired its most exemplary spokesman and leader. Highly idealistic and very determined, he effected in his eight years as President a broad, radical campaign of reform that brought the Progressive Movement to a climax. The personal quality that more than any other helped him to accomplish his purposes was his great ability as an orator. Expressing his idealism in magnificent classical rhetoric, he instilled a reformist zeal into the American people such as they had never known before. It was also his rhetoric more than anything else that kept him from losing all but a minimum of personal prestige when in 1917 he disavowed his nation's and his own isolationism and declared war on the Central Powers. Formerly he had spoken of detachment from Europe and her Great War in order to keep American honour untarnished and to maintain the United States as the haven of the individual who sought to flee the decadence of the old world for the peace, prosperity and freedom of the new. Now he spoke in even more magnificent language of keeping "the world safe for democracy"; America responded to him as she had for five years, righteously taking up the banner to follow their great leader abroad to victory. As he had been successful as a reformer at home he was now successful as the chief of a military power overseas. America turned the tide of the conflict against the Central Powers,

becoming the decisive element in the Allied victory. Progressivism had pursued yet another great endeavour to a successful conclusion.

Two years after the close of hostilities, however, America had repudiated Progressivism, Wilson and her role in the war. For by that time it had been made abundantly clear that the world had not been made "safe for democracy." They saw they had made the great mistake of assuming that international reform followed the same pattern as national reform. As Alfred Kazin points out, "when America entered it [the war], there was a popular suspicion that the Government of Imperial Germany bore a marked resemblance to Tammany Hall."¹ The naivete of this approach in the Progressive efforts to democratize the world was vividly depicted at the Versailles Conference. Wilson's plans for a just peace vanished into thin air as the vengeful European victors manipulated and duped him at will. The man who could be so effective a force in Washington was completely out of his element in the international "card game" played at Versailles. The American dream of freedom and justice showed up as a childish illusion, and America herself was treated as a very big, but woefully immature child. Thus, when the war hysteria had spent itself, Americans could be heard talking of the war as a "monstrous hoax" perpetrated upon them. Soon after they had begun to pay the price of war, says Hofstadter, the American people "began to feel that they had been gulled by its promoters both among the allies and in the United States."²

Feeling as they did they naturally reacted with hostility to the man who had led them into war. Moreover, they reacted to all he stood

for in the way of ideals. The great rhetoric that had filled them with reformist and martial zeal now became anathema to them. It was certain, says Hofstadter, "that by pinning America's role in the war so exclusively to high moral considerations and to altruism and self-sacrifice, by linking the foreign crusade as intimately as possible to the Progressive values and the Progressive language, he [Wilson] was unintentionally insuring that the reaction against Progressivism and moral idealism would be as intense as it could be."³ It is thus one of the great ironies of recent American history that the man who did more for idealism and optimism than anyone else in his time helped to destroy that very idealism and optimism. A man who was morally unimpeachable in his own generation was to be held responsible for a national moral breakdown by the intellectuals of the next generation.

It is likely that even without the deleterious effects of the war, the liberal Progressive Movement would have lost the support of the American people. The moral absolutist tone of the Reform Era had become almost hypertense by Wilson's second term. That the American people were beginning to reject this tone can be seen in the decrease in Wilson's presidential election returns in 1916; they were beginning to feel the need to return to a less stringent political morality. The immediate reason for this decline of public political enthusiasm was the success of the Progressive Movement itself. The threat of unbridled big business which more than anything else had brought the original cries for reform declined in intensity as that reform was effected. But there was another, more natural reason for the

lessening of reformist ardour. Americans were tired; they were tired of all the excessive political and civic moralizing, tired of reading only of their political and social responsibilities. They wanted a holiday, a chance to forget political and social questions for awhile. The war, though it briefly revived Progressive enthusiasm to the point that the Prohibition Amendment was pushed through both houses at home while the Hun was being met and defeated abroad, drained all that remained of two decades of American reformist zeal. "Something in American life had gone out with the war, . . ." says Kazin: "a contagious idealism, the dream of a new community in America, all the tokens of that brave and expectant fraternalism which had at one period marked the emergence of the modern spirit in America."⁴ For the war had effected an amazing change in the American psyche. As Hofstadter says, "it destroyed the popular impulse that had sustained Progressive politics for well over a decade before 1914. The pressure for civic participation was followed by widespread apathy, the sense of responsibility by neglect, the call for sacrifice by hedonism."⁵

The result of this total rejection of Progressivism was a ten-year debauch, or to use Fitzgerald's phrase, "the greatest, gaudiest spree in history," at which Americans tried to forget by consuming vast amounts of smuggled and bootleg liquor that they had ever been so stupid as to pass a law prohibiting its legal manufacture, sale and consumption. So completely did they turn their backs on the cause of reform that even when the incredible corruption of the Harding Administration was universally known and acknowledged, the Republican Party

still won a convincing majority in the 1924 elections. The economic boom, of course, made the people feel very secure in their decision to live well and let the state of the nation take care of itself. Teapot Dome seemed of no importance when the stock exchange ticker tape indicated a constantly rising standard of living and everybody seemed to be getting rich.

Although the general American repudiation of Progressivism did not take place until it was clear that Wilson had been duped at Versailles, there were those who had become deeply disillusioned with the modern world long before the war was over. These were the young American artists and intellectuals who actively participated in the war itself, some of them before America had formally mobilized. Their story is told by Malcolm Cowley in his Exile's Return.

The majority of these men were people like Cowley himself, recent college graduates whose thirst for adventure sent them abroad before the American entry to enlist their services on behalf of the Allied cause. At best their individual reasons for going were vague. F. J. Hoffman in his The Twenties cites "a sense of the need to experience danger," a feeling that other things are unimportant in time of war, and a "curiosity about matters of courage, injury, and death"⁶ as the prime motivating forces. But these are always the main reasons for youth going to war. The fact that they participated almost universally on the Allied side indicates that something else was also motivating them. They undoubtedly shared the general American hope for an Allied victory due to the strong American cultural and historical

ties with Britain and France. Also, being aesthetic in their intellectual orientation, their sympathies were more likely to be with the traditional artistic light of the world--France. American combat units such as the Lafayette Escadrille, attached to the French army long before 1917, testify to this almost universal Allied sympathy on the part of young Americans. Yet many felt that it was still Europe's war; they would help save Allied lives, but they were not ready to participate directly in the bloodbath. Thus, the majority enlisted with non-combative units like the American Ambulance Service, the Norton-Harjes unit in France and the Red Cross units in France and Italy, "college-extension courses for a generation of writers."⁷

"College-extension courses" is an apt designation for these units, for they represented nothing less than an education into the ways of the twentieth century world for those who participated in them. As Cowley points out the majority of these writers and artists had a bare minimum of this kind of education before enlisting. A mere sprig of pseudo-sophisticated college rebelliousness was about all that they had known as an alternative to the limited values and mores of their sheltered mid-western backgrounds. The war quickly changed this state of affairs:

They carried us to a foreign country, the first that most of us had seen; they taught us to make love, stammer love, in a foreign language. They fed and lodged us at the expense of a government in which we had no share. They made us more irresponsible than before: livelihood was not a problem; we had a minimum of choices to make; we could let the future take care of itself, feeling certain that it would bear us into new adventures. They taught us courage, extravagance, fatalism, these being the virtues of men at war; they taught us to regard as vices the civilian virtues of

thrift, caution and sobriety; they made us fear boredom more than death. All these lessons might have been learned in any branch of the army, but ambulance service had a lesson of its own: it instilled into us what might be called a spectatorial attitude.⁸

As well as the things Cowley lists here, this spectatorial attitude allowed them to see certain other aspects of the war more objectively than the direct participant was perhaps able to. What they observed was a vast discrepancy between what was said about the war at home and what was actually occurring. The patriotic mobilization of industry at home here meant impersonal death; the efficiency quotient of mass production was mass destruction. At home they had been brought up to believe in the Progressive theory of the progress of man. What progress they observed at Verdun fitted more with Malthus' gloomy auguries than with that expressed in Woodrow Wilson's oratorical rhetoric. They had heard talk of the courage, virtue, patriotism and nobility of the Allied soldier. They observed his courage at Caporetto, saw that any virtue, nobility or patriotism he might have possessed originally was quickly destroyed in the animal lust to survive. They had heard much talk of "Boche" cruelties and atrocities. Most of the cruelty and atrocity they witnessed took place in the Allied camp. They had heard speak of "saving the world for democracy," and of the rights of individual men and nations to seek personal fulfillment without fear of aggression and tyranny. They saw the individual become a mere cog in the military machine, and individual small nations used by the larger powers as pawns in a ghastly chess game.

Sensitive and intelligent, they could only react with horrified

indignation toward this "education." Two emotions were predominant in this reaction. There was first an immediate and extreme disillusionment with all talk of virtue and idealism. Ernest Hemingway's famous passage in A Farewell To Arms is the best example of this sentiment:

I was always embarrassed by the words sacred, glorious, and sacrifice and the expression in vain. We had heard them, sometimes standing in the rain almost out of earshot, so that only the shouted words came through, and had read them, on proclamations that were slapped up by billposters over other proclamations, now for a long time, and I had seen nothing sacred, and the things that were glorious had no glory and the sacrifices were like the stockyards at Chicago if nothing was done with the meat except to bury it. There were many words that you could not stand to hear and finally only the names of places had dignity.⁹

Even words of disparagement, condemnation or prejudice no longer had meaning when applied to individuals. This is very well illustrated in the opening passage of John Dos Passos' "The Body of an American" in his novel Nineteen Nineteen:

In the tarpaper morgue at Chalons-sur-Marne in the reek of chloride of lime and the dead, they picked out the pine box that held all that was left of
 enie menie minie moe plenty other pine boxes
 stacked up there containing what they'd scraped up of
 Richard Roe
 and other person or persons unknown. Only one
 can go. How did they pick John Doe?
 Make sure he aint a dinge, boys,
 make sure he aint a guinea or a kike,
 how can you tell a guy's a hunredpercent when all
 you've got's a gunnysack full of bones, bronze buttons
 stamped with the screaming eagle and a pair of roll
 puttees?
 . . . and the gagging chloride and the puky dirt-
 stench of the yearold dead . . .¹⁰

Both the foregoing quotations also illustrate the second major emotion experienced by these men at war--fear. This is not the traditional wartime fear of personal death (most of these men, like Hemingway, were

notoriously courageous), but a fear for the demise of individualism. The war seemed to have no place for the individual; it was the first major war of the Machine Age, and, as such, it demanded that the men participating in it become machine-like or die. All around them on and off the battlefields, writers like Dos Passos, Hemingway and E. E. Cummings observed men doing both, and they began to fear that the individual might no longer have any place, either in war or peace.

The fact that these men were Americans had much to do with the intensity of their disillusioned anti-war feelings, for more than any other participating nation America was fighting a war of ideals. A Frenchman, a German or an Italian, however much he might hate the machine-like butchery, could justify his nation's and his own participation in the war as the defence of an immediately endangered homeland. An Englishman could do the same thing to a lesser extent as well as feel that Britain's participation was in her ancient tradition of maintaining the balance of power in continental Europe. An American, however, if he did not want to believe that he was merely protecting the Morgan Loans, had to believe the war meant something extremely important to his high ideal of world-wide democracy. To find that the war had very little to do with this ideal, therefore, made it a greater shock to him than to a European. That shock was even more intensified when he saw that the war as a whole went against his strong faith in the right of each and every individual to "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness." Life, liberty and happiness were held to be very cheap in a war that could see a million men

destroyed in a single battle without an appreciable movement of the front lines.

Thus, in a variety of different ways World War I was a shock to the young, idealistic sensibilities of those American intellectuals who experienced it first hand. The immediate result in their personal lives was a sense of no longer having a place to call home. "The war had dislodged them from their homes and the old restraints," says Kazin, "given them an unexpected and disillusioning education, and left them entirely rootless."¹¹ "Life had begun with war for them and would forever after be shadowed by violence and death."¹²

The immediate social result of their wartime experience was their joining with the mass of Americans in the general repudiation of Progressivism. Most of them did not, however, then join with America in her great party. Their hatred of meaningless, idealistic language which could drive so many men to death, their fear for the individual and their personal sense of rootlessness combined to estrange them from their native land. Thus, a great many, like John Dos Passos, did not even return to America at the end of the war. Those who did, like Hemingway, discovered very quickly how completely cut off they now felt from the country of their "boyhoods." Even when the mass of the American people turned against Wilson and elected Harding as President in 1920 on a conservative Republican ticket, the young veterans felt no more at home. Their sensibilities and intellects quickly informed them that what they had come to hate in Progressivism as a result of their wartime experiences was still present in America however she

might change her political dress. If they objected to the America of meaningless moral terms, they were not likely to approve of the America of the Palmer Raids, the Ku Klux Klan and the Sacco-Vanzetti case. However, unlike the intellectuals of the generation before them, few felt urged to eradicate these evils. "Among the intellectuals themselves," says Hofstadter, "upon whose activities the political culture of Progressivism had always been so dependent, there was a marked retreat from politics and public values toward the private and personal sphere, and even in those with a strong impulse toward dissent, bohemianism triumphed over radicalism."¹³ The war had been their first "political" activity, and they were all too ready to "retreat" from it. Indeed, it had seriously shattered their belief in the value of any kind of political action at all. Their cultivation of the "personal sphere" was thus less of a compensatory activity to make up for a lack of political and social involvement as it was the only activity they honestly found worth anything. It was valuable for two reasons. First, it satisfied their need to make a moral protest against the society and the world they hated. Secondly, it was the best way for them to keep free from any other commitments than the one they felt due their art. Each of these reasons is worth examining in detail.

Their protest against American society was basically a moral one; their rebellion was a judgment. It was not so much Wall Street or Calvin Coolidge that bothered them, but what such phenomena represented together with the Palmer Raids, the Sacco-Vanzetti case and the Scopes trial--the moral failure in American life that had led to so much

bigotry, ignorance, repression and the total absence of beauty and free thought. It was a failure for which the so-called "Old Gang" was held responsible. This "Old Gang" had effected, says Hoffman, "first, a failure of communication; second, a failure of social meaning and value; and third, a failure of morality. These failures--in each case crucial because they touched closely the dominating emotional and aesthetic needs of the younger generation--while not caused by the war, were revealed by the events of the war."¹⁴ In order to protest against so much in their society they felt the need to reject it completely. What Hoffman calls his "attitude of refusal" was the post-war intellectual's "most striking quality."¹⁵ He seemed to be anti-everything--anti-social, anti-Puritan, anti-Victorian, anti-nineteenth century, anti-war, anti-Progressive, anti-bourgeoisie, etcetera. He could not, it seemed, accept any of the values of the middle-class American society that he encountered upon his return from the war or his graduation from college. The middle-class cultural bourgeoisie which he dubbed Philistine and the moral bourgeoisie which he dubbed Puritan became for him the two faces of a society embodying all that he loathed. Indeed, this society seemed to produce almost as great an affront to his moral and aesthetic sensibilities as had the carnage of World War I. "To the younger writers who began to come up immediately after the war," says Kazin, "like Fitzgerald, Cummings, Hemingway, and Dos Passos, men who felt themselves part of a tougher and disillusioned generation, writing was to seem as much a rejection of what the 'middle generation' already represented as it was a testament to their experiences in the war."¹⁶

The heaviest artillery was levelled against the bourgeoisie as Puritan. Hoffman sums up their indictment of society on this count in The Twenties: "For this the Puritan was blamed: first for having overrated morality and suppressed art; then (in his historic role as pioneer) for having exalted ambition and suppressed a normal life; and finally (as a modern businessman), for having made both morality and art servants of financial success."¹⁷ The Puritan, in all his various guises, had put a premium on conformity, repression and materialistic ambition--great and grave moral evils to the youth of the "lost generation." Because the Puritan attitude had, in their opinion, flourished and come to fruition in the former century, they looked upon that time as an age of regression rather than progress. There had certainly been material progress in the nineteenth century, but morally, spiritually and aesthetically there had actually been a reversal of progress. For these young critics, says Hoffman, "the most distasteful of American customs and naivetes had grown up and been nourished in the previous century; and the alliance of religious sanctimony with shrewd commercial practice was condemned with all the vigor they could command."¹⁸

When a large number of people in a society rebel in the foregoing way, they tend to form small societies of their own within the larger culture. Greenwich Village, in New York City, had become a colony for such rebels long before World War I. It had started to become a home for the eccentric artists, writers and intellectuals of America about the turn of the century when they began to infiltrate the quaint

immigrant section of Manhattan Island in search of an urban area where they could feel free to do their work. Before the war they never outnumbered the native population, keeping to themselves in quiet little colonies where they pursued their aesthetic ends and unconventional ways, unbothered by the forces of the conventional and the disapproving. The Village was thus a very attractive place for the rebels of the new generation, and as the war came to a close they began arriving there in droves.

However, as Malcolm Cowley points out, they did not find in the Village quite what they were looking for. There they encountered the Village doctrine, the Village attitudes and the Village gods, no less dogmatic in their own ways than those of the society with which they were at odds. The major tenets of the Village faith, says Cowley, were the idea of salvation by the child, belief in uninhibited self-expression, liberty, female equality and psychological adjustment to the moment, all sanctified by a kind of irreligiosity or paganism. The young post-war intellectuals found very little meaning in such doctrines as these. Indeed, they came to find that they had very little in common at all with the older generation there. This was because their basic reasons for going there in the first place were quite different. The older rebels had come to the Village primarily to pursue bohemianism. The younger ones had come simply to patch up their many war wounds. Bohemianism is the kind of phenomenon that makes a virtue of a necessity, the necessity of often having to suffer material privation and social ostracization in order to follow the

voice of one's individual Muse, the necessity of often having to be a Grub Streeter if one insists on being a creative writer. As Cowley puts it, "Bohemia is Grub Street romanticized, doctrinalized and rendered self-conscious; it is Grub Street on parade."¹⁹ The post-war intellectuals, he says, were just ordinary Grub Streeters, hoping to make a living from their art; they felt very little affinity with the older inhabitants of the Village. Thus, when rents rose as the Village became a fad and when it began to show signs of becoming a major tourist attraction for curiosity-seeking travellers, they decided to leave. They went east, continuing their "great migration eastward into new prairies of the mind."²⁰ They went to France.

There were many reasons why Paris was attractive to young Americans of their type in the early twenties. Established American expatriates like Pound and Stein were there, anxious to befriend any young talent that might come their way. Living was cheap there due to the post-war depression that had engulfed all of Europe. It had a tradition of the kind of artistic excellence with which they wanted to identify themselves. And, above all, it was a place that seemed to be all that America was not, a place where Puritanism, Philistinism, repression, the business ethic and all the other American evils were absent. There they felt immediately at home as they had not in the Village. Paris became their "laboratory of the spirit" as they set out, under the tutelage of Stein, Pound, the Dadaists and the Surrealists to learn the art that was to be their salvation.

Where the Progressives had emphasized the value of political

and social action and subordinated artistic endeavour to social values, the writers and thinkers of the twenties emphasized art as a valuable thing in and for itself. Art seemed to them the only sphere of human activity left where individual genius, vision and ability still mattered. This feeling developed in France into a very high sense of artistic mission. Where the old generation's heroes had been men like Bob La Follette, Teddy Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson, their heroes were men like Eliot, Joyce, Pound, Proust and Picasso--men who devoted their lives completely to their art and who tried to make that art a perfectly honest expression of their own individual visions of existence.

As most of them were writers the major rite of this new religion of art became complete obedience to the doctrine of le mot juste. The Progressive penchant for rhetoric and oration had, like the whole movement, reached its apotheosis as well as its nemesis in the Great War. The young writers knew all too well this language of national jingoism and how little it had coincided with the actualities of Caporetto and Belleau Wood. As a result they early made a sharp distinction for themselves between emotive and cognitive terms, cherishing a simple economic understatement before a flight of rhetoric. Thus, they were only too ready to listen to Ezra Pound when he talked of his Imagism and urged a basic economy of poetic expression, when he admonished writers to be above all honest, never to use a word that did not have an integral part in the work of art as a whole. Artistic form thus became for them a moral as well as an aesthetic

concern, for it was one way of combating the hypocrisy and the lies of the world around them.

The combination of educations undergone by the "lost generation" from its initiation in the war to its graduation in the Paris cafés prepared it to give to the world some of the best writing it has ever read. What is at least as interesting as the quality of the works we shall presently examine, however, is the one basic idea they all share in common, that finally the only way to live is by those values embodied in the image of the American Adam. It was to be the supreme irony of the "lost generation" that it was at bottom less estranged from the original values of its native land than was the post-war American society they rejected. What they were finally rejecting was not America, but the abortion that America had become. What they were finally searching for was a new America of the mind.

CHAPTER III

ERNEST HEMINGWAY

No one writer better represents in his life and work the experiences and attitudes of the "lost generation" than does Ernest Hemingway. Born in 1899 he came of age with the new century, encountering "most of the significant experiences of his personal and professional life before he was twenty-five years old."¹ These were not the average experiences of adolescence and young manhood, however, but experiences deeply connected with the dynamic upheaval of a new age being born, an upheaval that involved, above all, the shock to world history that is modern war.

Superficially Hemingway's youth was a sheltered one. Situated in the American mid-west, Oak Park, Illinois, with its Progressive values and upper middle-class way of life, was a very comfortable place, as free from life's nastiness as anywhere else in the world. This fashionable Chicago suburb, says Charles Fenton in The Apprenticeship of Ernest Hemingway, was "a rather limited world in the superficial sense of not presenting a variety of types and scenes. The forthcoming shock of contact with the ugliness of, for example, journalism and war would be intense and memorable for a young man raised in such a relatively sheltered world."² It did, however, provide Hemingway with an education that would stand him in good stead later as a writer. The education-minded citizens of Oak Park took great trouble to supply

excellent education facilities for their children. Graduating from Oak Park High, says Fenton, was as good as having two years of College. Hemingway made good use of this educational opportunity, working hard at his creative writing courses, editing the school newspaper and talking with the fine teachers who readily perceived and encouraged the young man's literary talent.

However, though Oak Park was no preparation for the "forthcoming shock" of war, Hemingway was not completely unprepared psychologically for this experience. This was due to many summers he spent as a youth in Northern Michigan, an environment that presented ample opportunity for an adventurous young man to find out something of what life was all about "in our time." A story like "Indian Camp" in In Our Time testifies to this. In this story young Nick Adams, whose adventures so parallel Hemingway's own, observes his doctor father perform a caesarean operation with a jack-knife on an Indian woman. Unable to bear his wife's pain any longer, the woman's husband slits his throat while the operation is in progress. Nick's immediate reaction is the shock one would expect from a young boy observing this horror. Assuming then, that Hemingway himself had similar experiences as a young boy in Michigan, the "forthcoming shock" of war was to become a culmination of his youthful experience with violence, as much as an initiation to it on a larger scale.

Upon leaving high school, Hemingway went to Kansas City where he worked for a brief time with the Kansas City Star and acquired much invaluable training for his future profession as a writer. All the

time he was working there as a reporter, however, he was burning to get overseas with the American troops who were leaving every day for continental Europe as a result of America's entry into the war in 1917. He was consistently rejected by recruiting boards, however, due to defective eyesight in one eye, the result of his youthful passion for boxing. Despite this set-back, he was finally successful in fulfilling his martial ambitions when, early in 1918, he encountered the Red Cross Ambulance Corps. Although we have discussed "ambulance service" in Chapter II, it is important to stress again the idealism that was at its heart, an idealism Hemingway shared. Charles Fenton says of it:

The American Field Service . . . testified to the humanitarian impulse which was so strong a factor in American attitudes toward, and participation in, World War I. The impulse has been obscured by the subsequent disillusion of that generation In reality, whether they went overseas with such advance units as the Field Service and the Red Cross, or whether they enlisted in more conventional military units, the bulk of Hemingway's generation travelled east in the crusading idealism of their President.³

For proof that Hemingway shared this same idealistic zeal, he says a little later:

Hemingway, according to Frederick Spiegel, another young Chicagoan with whom he shared several ambulance assignments, was "extremely conscious of the war as a 'crusade for democracy,' and burning with the desire to have a share in it." His behavior . . . documented such testimony.⁴

This "behavior" was not manifested as soon as he arrived on Italian soil, however. He found himself somewhat bored with the Red Cross once overseas; it did not provide much opportunity to "get into the thick of it." Feeling that he would never see any real action as an ambulance driver Hemingway managed to get a position in a canteen

close to the front lines. From there he would bicycle to the trenches with food, candies and cigarettes for the troops. Seven days after his admission to the trenches in this way he was wounded very seriously in the legs while exhibiting much heroism in an attempt to save the life of a wounded Italian soldier. After he had convalesced he managed to get himself attached to the Italian infantry as a foot soldier in which capacity he served out the two months until the Armistice. It was a brief period of war by any standards, yet one in which Hemingway saw enough and felt enough with his sensitive nature to leave him badly wounded psychically as well as physically at the war's end. According to those who remember him immediately after the war, like Carl Edgar, his military experiences had wrought serious havoc to his mind as well as his legs. Both needed mending. This mending was finally only achieved through his writing about what he had seen and known.

But Hemingway found he could not write just anywhere, least of all in North America. Like Krebs in his short story "Soldier's Home" Hemingway found life intolerable in his home town immediately after the war. As a result he left Oak Park soon after returning from Italy and spent the immediate post-war years living in Toronto where he worked for the Toronto Star and in Chicago where he edited a publication of the Co-operative Society of America, one of the innumerable shady, get-rich-quick enterprises of the post-war decade. Though these years had some value for him as a writer--the Toronto Star gave him great scope to exercise his originality as a story teller, and he met writers like Sherwood Anderson in Chicago--he became more and more critical of

North American life. He began to find oppressive, as did others, the values and habits of American life as it embarked upon the golden age of the twenties. Much of this attitude is brilliantly presented in "Soldier's Home" which we shall examine later. The end result of this feeling was a growing desire on the part of the young writer to return to Europe, and he did so when many of his contemporaries were still trying to adjust to American life in places like Greenwich Village. Yet in returning to Europe as an overseas correspondent for the Star he returned to, among other things, another war and a greater realization of how little individual death and misery seemed to matter in the twentieth century.

This new experience with war began for Hemingway in September, 1922 when he was sent to cover the Greco-Turkish conflict in the Middle East, one of the first catastrophic results of the Versailles farce. This war, though relatively insignificant when compared to the recent blood-bath of World War I, was adequate testimony to the fact that that earlier, greater war had solved nothing. As Fenton points out, the "cynicisms of diplomatic maneuvering made dismal reading to the generation which was bitterly realizing that it had not fought itself out of the pre-1914 entanglements."⁵ For Hemingway this realization was made more intense and painful, because he was actually at the scene of the fighting itself. Fenton goes on to describe part of his reaction as follows:

This spectacle of refugee misery, beyond all the rest of what he saw in Asia Minor, left the most permanent scar on Hemingway. In his creative work he made far more use of what he learned from the military catastrophe; he told Malcolm Cowley, in fact, that he

"really learned about war" in the Near East.⁶

From this "refugee misery" Hemingway returned to Paris and to the indifference to human suffering he found there. The pretentious young bohemians, sitting around the cafes, talking about what they were going to write or paint, seemed unable to care about any misery but their own. This insensitivity to what people were suffering on the part of those not directly involved was brought home to Hemingway even more forcefully when he attended the Lausanne Conference soon after his return to Paris from Greece.

The Lausanne Conference was really the second conference he had attended since arriving in peacetime Europe. Earlier he had been present at the Genoa Economic Conference to which he had reacted in a far less optimistic manner than many of his fellow reporters, sensing as he did and they did not the real threat of Italian Fascism. But Lausanne was an even more bitter experience for him if only because he had just returned from the scene of the conflict with which it was concerned. What he felt while observing the political games being played at Lausanne as the refugees were still slogging along the roads of Greece can be read in a satirical poem he composed at the time entitled "They All Want Peace - What is Peace?" At the ripe age of twenty-three Hemingway was as cynical of the sincerity and worth of international politics in the twenties as is any historian today who looks back and sees the seeds of yet another world war being sown throughout the decade. Though still a very young man he had seen more human suffering and death and more insensitivity to misery than most



see in a lifetime. All of his major writing as a young man reflects this personal experience with war and with the aftermath of war. It is in these writings that we can read the full extent of his disillusion and his determination to find a new code for living in a new and terrible age.

In Our Time and A Farewell To Arms were written on the basis of Hemingway's war experiences in Italy and Asia Minor and coloured by his disillusion with the world's attitude to war as it was reflected in conferences like Lausanne. In Our Time, the title of which Philip Young thinks Hemingway took from the Anglican prayer "Give peace in our time, O Lord.", is a series of fifteen short stories relating the experiences of a certain Nick Adams in Michigan, wartime Italy and post-war America and Europe. Interspersed between the stories are very brief "chapters" which depict with journalistic simplicity the nature of modern life, a life that sees little peace. In the stories and vignettes of In Our Time, moreover, the famous Hemingway style may be observed in all its early maturity, the style which, in its deceptive simplicity and perfect objectivity, induces in the reader a strong sense of actually being present and personally experiencing whatever Hemingway is depicting at the moment, be it the wounding of Nick in the spine, the execution of the cabinet ministers in Asia Minor, one of whom must be propped up against the wall because he is too sick to stand up for his death, or Nick's fishing trip to the Big Two-Hearted River. The terse and rigid style contributes much to the final effect on the reader of In Our Time--the great surety that there is not and is

not likely to be much "peace in our time."

Four years elapsed between the publication of In Our Time and that of A Farewell To Arms. The latter work, a novel, parallels many of the stories and sketches of In Our Time, both being based on Hemingway's own war experiences as they are. A Farewell To Arms, however, fills out the picture of war that is only seen in tantalizing glimpses in the earlier work. Furthermore, it provides a better understanding of the causes of the disillusionment depicted in In Our Time and The Sun Also Rises, Hemingway's first novel which was published two years earlier than A Farewell To Arms. According to Lillian Ross in her article on Hemingway for The New Yorker entitled "How Do You Like It Now, Gentlemen?" Hemingway said later in his life, "'I can remember feeling so awful about the first war that I couldn't write about it for ten years.'"⁷

To Ray B. West Jr. A Farewell To Arms "is a parable of twentieth-century man's disgust and disillusionment at the failure of civilization to achieve the ideals it had been promising throughout the nineteenth century."⁸ To Maxwell Geismar Hemingway is portraying in this novel of love's death in war "the cumulative degeneration of the human temperament under the conditions of war."⁹ Others explain the main theme of the book in slightly different terms. All agree, however, that whatever the basic intent of A Farewell To Arms might be, it is certainly not a tale about the glory of combat or the honour of martial death or the historical worth of a just war. Rather it depicts the very opposite kind of military experience--the destruction in modern war

of all the old values and the desperate need to find new ones if a man is to survive as an individual of worth and integrity. Words that used to mean something to a soldier are now just "embarrassing" as the quotation from A Farewell To Arms in our second chapter illustrates. Individual being and individual worth no longer mean anything to the "world":

If people bring so much courage to this world the world has to kill them to break them, so of course it kills them. The world breaks everyone and afterward many are strong at the broken places. But those that will not break it kills. It kills the very good and the very gentle and the very brave impartially. If you are none of these you can be sure that it will kill you too but there will be no special hurry.¹⁰

The tone of the whole novel is set in the oft-praised closing sentence of the opening chapter; its heavy irony presages the irony of life in modern war that the rest of the story is to depict: "At the start of the winter came the permanent rain and with the rain came the cholera. But it was checked and in the end only seven thousand died of it in the army."¹¹

The disillusionment expressed in the foregoing quotations is not entirely the attitude of the narrator and chief protagonist, Frederic Henry, at the beginning of the novel. In the beginning he does not fully understand the war. He exists in it as in a kind of limbo, where life is a sensual matter only. It is a life of drinking and furtive love-making and waking up "drunk, when you knew that that was all there was."¹² Early in the story, however, this situation begins to change when Henry meets an English nurse named Catherine Barkley whose fiance has been killed in France. She tells Henry of it: "'Yes,' she said.

'People can't realize what France is like. If they did, it couldn't all go on. He didn't have a sabre cut. They blew him all to bits.'"13

Nevertheless both Henry and Catherine have yet to learn that there is no reason in war. At first Henry does not like the war, but he is willing to put up with it because he feels it has nothing to do with him.

"Well," he says, "I knew I would not be killed. Not in this war. It did not have anything to do with me."¹⁴ He is yet to learn that the war does not kill people because they have something to do with it. He is also yet to learn that, as one of the ambulance drivers tells him:

"There is nothing worse than war."¹⁵

His education really begins on the night of the first big Italian offensive. He and the other drivers are waiting for work to do and eating supper:

I ate the end of my piece of cheese and took a swallow of wine. Through the other noise I heard a cough, then came the chuh-chuh-chuh-chuh--then there was a flash, as when a blast-furnace door is swung open, and a roar that started white and went red and on and on in a rushing wind. I tried to breathe but my breath would not come and I felt myself rush bodily out of myself and out and out and out and all the time bodily in the wind, I went out swiftly, all of myself, and I knew I was dead and that it had all been a mistake to think that you just died. Then I floated, and instead of going on I felt myself slide back. I breathed and I was back. The ground was torn up and in front of my head there was a splintered beam of wood. In the jolt of my head I heard somebody crying. I thought somebody was screaming. I tried to move but I could not move I sat up straight and as I did so something inside my head moved like the weights on a doll's eyes and it hit me inside in back of my eyeballs. My legs felt warm and wet and my shoes were wet and warm inside. I knew that I was hit and leaned over and put my hand on my knee. My knee wasn't there. My hand went in and my knee was down on my shin. I wiped my hand on my shirt and another floating light came very slowly down and I looked at my leg and was very afraid. Oh, God, I said, get me out of here. I knew, however, that there had been three others. There were four drivers. Passini was dead. That left three. Some one took hold

of me under the arms and somebody else lifted my legs.

"There are three others," I said. "One is dead."¹⁶

This celebrated passage of Henry's wounding is, as many critics have realized, integral to Hemingway's understanding of war. "The symbolic wound has affected a large share of Hemingway's fiction," says Hoffman. "Its distinguishing features are the shock of the actual experience, the sudden cutting away from past experience and securities (which do survive, but only in fragmentary form), the mystery and impersonality of its source, the anger, fear, and helplessness that are part of the reaction to it."¹⁷ He goes on to say that the wound is always "unreasonable." There is no rationality in Henry's being hit. He is not even there to fight, simply to help the wounded. The first psychic effect of the wound on Henry, besides the "shock of the actual experience" detailed above, is an inability to sleep at night (he was wounded at night) in the hospital in Milan where he is sent to recuperate. Even when very tired he cannot doze off until the daylight comes. This is the same trouble Nick Adams has in a short story entitled "Now I Lay Me"; unable to sleep he remembers all the streams he has fished and performs other such "rituals," as Malcolm Cowley puts it, to while away the time till dawn and to keep from thinking. This need to keep from thinking about the past, about the wound, and about death by performing rites is for Hemingway one of the major effects of being wounded in modern war. All through A Farewell To Arms, after he has been wounded, Henry tries to keep from thinking by drinking, making love, reading the newspapers and generally living in the sensations of

the present as much as possible. The need to keep from thinking is not just a phenomenon of the night, although it is worse then for the wound itself is a thing of the night, but of the daytime as well. There can be what Cowley calls "nightmares at noonday" as well as nightmares at night. Sport provides one of the outlets for the daytime non-thinking rituals of the Hemingway heroes and for Hemingway himself--boxing, bull-fighting, hunting, and fishing the streams one will re-fish imaginatively at night. Hemingway's predilection for sports that involve death has always troubled many people who would otherwise admire him. This kind of criticism would be valid if the sports were indulged in solely for their sporting value. But their main value in the Hemingway cosmos is therapeutic--the sportsman is able to deal with his preoccupation with death in an objective manner. As Philip Young says, it "is probably better to shoot a kudu than to shoot yourself."¹⁸

The occasion of the wounding of Nick Adams in Chapter VI of In Our Time is very similar to Henry's in many respects; there is even a Rinaldi, the name of Henry's doctor friend, in the earlier sketch. There is a difference, however, in the immediacy of Nick's response to the "unreason" of the wound:

Nick turned his head carefully and looked at Rinaldi. "Senata Rinaldi. Senata. You and me we've made a separate peace." Rinaldi lay still in the sun breathing with difficulty. "Not patriots." Nick turned his head carefully away smiling sweatily. Rinaldi was a disappointing audience.¹⁹

Nick makes his breach here with the war and with the society of the war immediately upon being wounded. Henry's "separate peace" comes later. Nevertheless, the wound has already belied for Henry one of his former

sureties, that he would not be killed "in this war." "I knew I was dead," he says, describing the wounding. "The injury," as Hoffman points out, "when it comes, is a form of death whether the victim survives it or not."²⁰ Speaking of his own wounding to Cowley, Hemingway is reported to have said much the same thing. "'I died then,' he . . . said, 'I felt my soul or something coming right out of my body like you'd pull a silk handkerchief out of a pocket by one corner. It flew around and then came back and went in again and I wasn't dead any more!'"²¹

Whether it comes immediately as in the case of Nick, or later as in that of Henry, this death by wounding that does not necessarily kill physically causes the wounded man to sign a "separate peace." This idea of the individual's capacity to make a personal armistice with the forces of destruction in the world is integral to Hemingway's thought, and deserves some detailed attention at this point in our discussion of A Farewell To Arms. Henry makes his "separate peace" almost the same day he returns to the front from his convalescence in Milan. Though, as we have said, the wound is the basic cause for his estrangement from the war, there is a more immediate one in the novel--the retreat from Caporetto. The battle that leads to the retreat begins in the rain, itself an ominous fact, for by now the reader understands that rain is a prelude to disaster if only because Catherine earlier tells Henry that she fears the rain because she sometimes sees herself dead in it. From the moment the rain begins to fall the battle and the retreat form an unbroken series of ugly events rising to a crashing

climax with Henry's desertion. First, there are the two young Italian girls that the drivers pick up and begin treating in an obscene manner. Then a truck gets stuck in the mud, and Henry shoots an engineer that refuses to help free it. Bonello, one of the drivers, finishes him off. "'I killed him,' Bonello said. 'I've never killed anybody in this war, and all my life I've wanted to kill a sergeant.'" ²² The truck will not move, so they set out on foot. Aymo, another driver, is shot dead. Bonello slips away to surrender. Then, while he is trying to cross a bridge with hundreds of other soldiers and civilians, the "Battle Police" pick Henry out of the crowd. Henry watches them question an old lieutenant-colonel while awaiting his own turn to be questioned:

The questioners had all the efficiency, coldness and command of themselves of Italians who are firing and are not being fired on.
 "Your brigade?"
 He told them.
 "Regiment?"
 He told them.
 "Why are you not with your regiment?"
 He told them.
 "Do you not know that an officer should be with his troops?"
 He did.
 That was all. Another officer spoke.
 "It is you and such as you that let the barbarians onto the sacred soil of the fatherland."
 "I beg your pardon," said the lieutenant-colonel.
 "It is because of treachery such as yours that we have lost the fruits of victory."
 "Have you ever been in a retreat?" the lieutenant-colonel asked.
 "Italy should never retreat." ²³

The lieutenant-colonel is taken outside and shot. Henry realizes the same thing is to happen to him. He has an accent. He must be a spy. He breaks past the guards, leaps into the river, and gets away to

safety. He has deserted. "I had made a separate peace,"²⁴ he says later.

Frederic Henry has made a "separate peace" with the world of the "unreasonable" wound, the world of meaningless death. It is a world to which none of the old values apply. This is not only true of martial values--glory, sacrifice, patriotism, honour, etcetera--but of other, more domestic and civilian values as well. Religion, perhaps the greatest value of the old world whether it was at peace or war, has no meaning in the new world of which Caporetto is a symbol. The St. Anthony Catherine gives to Henry just before his being wounded is stolen at one of the dressing stations. The priest is only the butt of the officers' dirty jokes. Belief in God and fear of God are relegated to the night when one cannot sleep; there is no love of God. It is also a world in which marriage has no place, and love has no fulfillment save in death. One of Catherine's fellow nurses says to Henry and Catherine when they are contemplating the possibility of marriage even though marriages by service people on the same front are forbidden: "'Fight or die. That's what people do. They don't marry.'"²⁵ She is proven correct. It is this world, this religionless, loveless world of hopeless, meaningless death, controlled by ignorance and all that is the opposite of reason with which Henry makes a "separate peace" and from which he hopes to escape. The only trouble, as Henry learns, is that you cannot escape this world, for it is not only the world of the trenches but the world away from the trenches as well. The war is not a cause of all he suffers; it is only a symptom of the real cause

which is not just relegated to the battlefields of the twentieth century but is the very upheaval of a new age being born. Henry senses something like this while thinking about his "separate peace": "Then I realized it was over for me. But I did not have the feeling that it was really over. I had the feeling of a boy who thinks of what is happening at a certain hour at the schoolhouse from which he has played truant."²⁶

The "schoolhouse" is still there; one can deal with it by playing truant, but one has to deal with it anew each day, and continued truancy will inevitably end in severe punishment. Better still, the "biological trap" is still there. When Catherine knows she is pregnant she asks Henry if he feels trapped. "'You always feel trapped biologically.'"²⁷ is his reply. "'Biologically,' in the Hemingway world," says West in "The Biological Trap," "covers just about everything;"²⁸ It cannot, therefore, be escaped. Thus, Henry's desertion does not solve anything in the sense that it saves Catherine and him from the effect of the war on individuals in love. "The war is not over," West goes on to say. "Even after the successful effort to leave Italy and enter Switzerland, the war (which is really a symbol for the chaos of nature--the biological trap) catches up with Frederic and Catherine."²⁹ After a brief period of idyllic happiness in the Swiss Alps, the rains again come, and in the end both Catherine and her child lie dead in a Lausanne hospital. Henry prays in desperation that Catherine might be spared, but it is hopeless. "Frederic's hope that he could prevent her from dying is as illusory as his belief that he could escape the war by signing a separate peace."³⁰

This does not mean that the "separate peace" is without value. True, it means nothing as escape; the world will still kill the "very good and the very gentle and the very brave" whether or not they sign a "separate peace." But it does mean something as protest. One must die, but one can die protesting against impersonal death, refusing to accept it as "reasonable." Man has this much freedom left. Perhaps it was all the real freedom he ever had. It is the freedom that is being exercised by Nick, Henry and Hemingway when the latter writes of the former two making their "separate peaces." The "separate peace" embraces much more than the Italian front; it embraces "the woods of Michigan as well as Caporetto," says Maxwell Geismar, "the activities of normal times as well as war, and even at last the ordinary purposes of the individual's life within his society, as well as the collective purposes of society as a whole."³¹

But this "separate peace" must be made anew each day. It cannot be made once and forever. Each day, each moment man must face the absurdity of his imminent death and in so doing face his freedom, the freedom to protest or surrender. This is the only real peace for our time, this existential "separate peace," what John Killinger calls the "tenuous half-peace which can be won only by the individual and must be won over and over again."³² Hemingway's belief that the "separate peace" which he has Nick and Henry make on the battlefield is only the beginning of an infinite number of such protests is beautifully illustrated in one of his greatest short stories "Soldier's Home." This story, published earlier than A Farewell To Arms in In Our Time,

is more understandable when read after the former novel. Krebs, the ex-soldier and chief character of the story, returns to his Kansas home town from World War I in continental Europe. He had left for the war, we read in the first sentence, "from a Methodist college in Kansas."³³ The college and all it symbolizes--the illusion that normal living and "ole time religion" have meaning in an age of stupid destruction and statistical death--is still there upon Krebs' return from the war. Everything is the same. Even his father's automobile, which Krebs is now generously offered for the occasional spin, is the same. "Nothing was changed in the town except that the young girls had grown up."³⁴ Though Krebs desires the "young girls", he cannot bring himself to enter the series of complications and lies necessary to fulfill his desire. In the war he had learned, as had so many others, to live life simply. He would like to make love to a girl and leave it at that. "He did not want any consequences. He did not want any consequences ever again."³⁵ One recalls the consequences of Henry's and Catherine's love upon reading this line. But it does not matter anyway; Krebs knows he could not communicate with the girls in any way even if he took the trouble to enter their complicated web of pretense and illusion. He lives in a different world, the world of the soldier who knows the war did not end on Armistice day, that the war is still going on and on and on and that one must learn to live simply and cleanly and without complications in the face of it, that to live otherwise is to live in a world of lies. Yet he is forced to tell lies to his family. He is forced to pretend that getting the car for an

evening and not "mussing" the morning paper before his father has read it are as important to him as they are to his parents. He is forced to tell his mother that he loves her when he does not know what love is just to keep her from breaking down. He is forced to kneel beside her while she prays that the Lord will give him a purpose in life and make him a "credit to the community." He is forced to lie and thereby complicate his life when all he wants is that it should "go smoothly." It is doubtlessly a situation encountered by many young men upon returning from war, from being face to face with death for months and years, to a world in which they must resume all their old pre-war activities. Most adjust, however, either by accepting anew the values of the society, values they know to be meaningless, or by living some kind of dual, false existence, either by deceiving themselves, or by deceiving others. But any kind of deception is intolerable to Krebs. So he does all he can do. He leaves, as Hemingway left Oak Park, to find work in some large city. He makes a "separate peace" with his home. Like Hemingway, too, he will very probably go through his life making "separate peaces," keeping from getting "connected up," for when you are "connected up" they kill you. They kill you as an individual which is as real a death as being blown up at Belleau Wood or Vimy, for the individual is the "only genuinely vital entity of existence."³⁶

In the light of all this one can better understand Hemingway's obsession with war and with sport involving death and approximating the conditions of war. To him life itself is war, a continual struggle to survive as an individual. Musing to himself in A Farewell To Arms

Henry once thinks: "Maybe it was another Hundred Years' War."³⁷ He is right inasmuch as his own life will be a continual war. He, like all the characters in Hemingway's early stories--Krebs, Nick Adams, Jake Barnes--will follow the pattern of life that Young sees in Hemingway's work--"complicity, bitterness, escape."³⁸ "Hemingway's world, ultimately," says Young again, "is a world at war"³⁹ It is a world of pain, of death, of strength and courage and endurance, of brief encounters and briefer loves, of physical, moral and mental destruction, of pragmatic morality, of sensations rather than ideas, of the constantly reaffirmed "separate peace," of war. It is life in our time.

Though life is a continual struggle for survival, Hemingway still believed one could do something of lasting value, even while engaged in the actual struggle itself. This "something" can be discovered and achieved through art, art in the sense of a way of life as well as a means of expression. This he learned as an American expatriate in Europe, especially in Paris. For him Paris was truly "the laboratory of the spirit" that Ezra Pound called it. There, under the tutelage of Pound and Stein early in the twenties, he learned to perfect the art that has made him famous. Though Hemingway got there before the general mass of expatriates from America, he is very much representative of the best of them. He represents, as do his characters, the retention of the American dream through self-enforced expatriation. Expatriation represented a last frontier to the young artists of the twenties, a last chance to live with individualism as the highest virtue and to develop one's own spirit in freedom. This was the motivation of the

expatriation Hemingway exemplified. Unfortunately there was another kind of expatriation in the twenties, the false kind which imbibed the glamour of the real expatriation while making a mockery of it to the public at large. Hemingway declared open war on this kind of expatriation and bohemianism early in his life. The following is an excerpt from an article for the Toronto Star Weekly entitled "American Bohemians In Paris A Weird Lot":

They are nearly all loafers expending the energy that an artist puts into his creative work in talking about what they are going to do and condemning the work of all artists who have gained any degree of recognition. By talking about art they obtain the same satisfaction that the real artist does in his work. That is very pleasant, of course, but they insist upon posing as artists.⁴⁰

This and all the other things Hemingway disliked about phoney American expatriates, as well as those things he found valuable in expatriation, can be seen in his other major novel of the twenties The Sun Also Rises. The character, Robert Cohn, is a good example of what he did not like. At the beginning of the novel we are told by Jake Barnes, the narrator and chief protagonist, that Cohn has had some success as a novelist which has given him a high opinion of himself. However, though living in Paris has given him the chance to write, he dislikes Europe and wants to leave. An incorrigible romantic he feels he might find the end of his rainbow in South America. Jake tries to straighten him out: "'Listen, Robert, going to another country doesn't make any difference, I've tried all that. You can't get away from yourself by moving from one place to another. There's nothing to that.'" ⁴¹ But Cohn does not understand what Jake is talking about;

expatriation for him is a romantic pose. He does not understand the true expatriates of the book--Jake, Bill Gorton, Brett and her retinue. The full extent of Jake's and Hemingway's irony is heaped on him as a result. After Cohn has been given a particularly savage barrage of insults, Jake remarks: "There are people to whom you could not say such insulting things. They give you a feeling that the world would be destroyed, would actually be destroyed before your eyes, if you said certain things."⁴² Later he says: "Cohn had a wonderful quality of bringing out the worst in anybody."⁴³ However, Cohn serves as more in the novel than simply a means of pointing out the difference between the true expatriates and the phoney ones. It is at this point that a deeper level of irony in the novel reveals itself. Though Cohn with his outmoded romantic idealism is simply silly in the world of Jake and his friends who have seen idealism die along with ten million people between 1914 and 1918, he also shows up their world as essentially little better than his own. True, Hemingway sees great merit in Jake's ability to control his emotion and his suffering, but other than this his facing of reality has no more value as a way of life than Cohn's deluded vision of the world he lives in. The direction of Cohn's life may be illusory and false, but Jake's life has no direction at all. Jake knows that Cohn's way of life is wrong somehow, but he does not know which way is right in any positive sense. "'You must get to know the values,'"⁴⁴ says Count Mippipopolous, one of the characters in the book. The theme of the novel as a whole is Jake's education in these "values."

It is important to point out here that though Hemingway sees much that is wrong with expatriation as it finds expression in the way of life of both Cohn and Jake, he is by no means condemning the idea of expatriation as a means of finding oneself in a world at war. His attitude toward those who share the ignorant, pedestrian attitude toward expatriation is clearly expressed in Bill Gorton's ironic jibing at Jake while the two are on the fishing trip in Spain:

"You're an expatriate. You've lost touch with the soil. You get precious. Fake European standards have ruined you. You drink yourself to death. You become obsessed by sex. You spend all your time talking, not working. You are an expatriate, see? You hang around cafes."⁴⁵

This speech of Bill's contains enough truth to be applicable as is illustrated by our earlier discussion of the false expatriates, but it is also a satire on the attitudes of ignorant Americans who feel that nothing good can come of losing contact "with the soil." This is especially the case in terms of the novel, for at the very moment Bill is making his remarks, he is fishing with Jake and, as we shall see, thereby making contact with the soil in the best sense. There is much that is wrong with expatriation in the book, but there is even more that is wrong with patriation and with those who represent it such as silly American tourists who pop in and out of the story. Expatriation is certainly the lesser of the two evils and for Jake a means of finally finding purpose in existence.

Much of what we have said about A Farewell To Arms is applicable as well to The Sun Also Rises, a book which in its own way is as much a war novel as the former. In a sense it is a continuation of A Farewell

To Arms, taking up the story of Frederic Henry a few years after he has walked back to the Lausanne Hotel in the rain. The locale has changed from Italy to France and Spain, but essentially it is the same world. For instance, in neither world does traditional religion have any significance. For Henry, God was something to fear sometimes in the night. For Jake He is someone to ask that the bull-fights be good. For Brett being in church is just uncomfortable. Religion is only one of the things that Henry learns no longer applies to the modern world. In The Sun Also Rises the characters have lived with this knowledge long enough to take it for granted. But this does not make less urgent their search for new values by which to live. For both Jake and Henry the old world began to fall apart with their woundings--Henry's leg wound (and perhaps more important for him, the death of Catherine) and Jake's emasculating wound. In The Sun Also Rises we see the wound staying with the wounded one as a kind of living death long after the war in the trenches is over. His wound makes Jake very different from such men as Robert Cohn who have never known this kind of experience. As Hoffman says: "The man who survives violence is often quite remarkably different from the man who has never experienced it."⁴⁶ One difference, for instance, and it was Henry's experience as well, is the inability to sleep at night. "It is awfully easy to be hard-boiled about everything in the daytime," Jake says, "but at night it is another thing."⁴⁷ For all of these reasons it will be valuable, I think, to consider The Sun Also Rises in this thesis and in the following discussion of the novel as a continuation of A Farewell To Arms even though it was

written earlier than the latter book. This is easily justified, I think, if only by the fact that A Farewell To Arms deals with the war proper and The Sun Also Rises with its aftermath. More important, however, is the fact that the two novels read in this reverse order give a unified history of the Hemingway protagonist throughout the post-war decade-- Henry's life at war helps us to understand better Jake's after the war.

Early in The Sun Also Rises Jake picks up a prostitute named Georgette. When it becomes obvious to her that he wants nothing more than her company, she asks him if he is sick. He answers in the affirmative:

"You're not a bad type," she said. "It's a shame you're sick. We get on well. What's the matter with you, anyway?"

"I got hurt in the war," I said.

"Oh, that dirty war."⁴⁸

With this occasion, very early in the story, the connection between Jake's wound and the impossibility of love in the modern world is already being established, an impossibility directly due to the "dirty war." As the story progresses his wound becomes a symbol for all the various kinds of impotence and sterility, sexual and otherwise, in the world around him. This world is a kind of Eliotic Waste Land, and Jake becomes a type of Fisher King, presiding over a world of loveless love-making. As Spilka points out, all the major characters in the novel have been "desexed" somehow by the war. Jake's case is obvious. Brett's is less obvious, but she has had her sexuality destroyed as surely as Jake's. Her lover had been killed in the war, as had Catherine's before she met Henry. In her search for a lover to replace

him, she has become promiscuous, gradually destroying all hope of lasting love for herself. In her promiscuity she becomes the equal of the men around her; she wears her hair short and dresses and looks like a man, thus disclaiming her feminine sexuality which, after all, is the only sexuality she has. Some feel that Jake's and Brett's love for each other is the only sign of hope in the book, because it is a love which does not have sex in it and is therefore clean and fine. Indeed, Jake and Brett give the impression at times of feeling this themselves. The story, however, shows this to be self-delusion. They are able to delude themselves into thinking that if Jake had not been wounded as he had, everything would be wonderful. It is not until the very end of the novel that we learn that Jake has found out otherwise, that his wound is only a symbol for the whole emasculating war, and that the war would have prevented their love in some way even if he had not been wounded or wounded in a different manner. Spilka points out that this is the meaning of the last lines of the book:

"Oh Jake," Brett said, "we could have had such a damned good time together."

Ahead was a mounted policeman in khaki directing traffic. He raised his baton. The car slowed suddenly pressing Brett against me.

"Yes," I said. "Isn't it pretty to think so?"⁴⁹

The policeman with his baton may be seen to represent, says Spilka, the war. By raising his baton he stops the car and throws Brett against Jake in an embrace impossible to fulfill in love-making. "As Barnes now sees," says Spilka, "love itself is dead for their generation. Even without his wound, he would still be unmanly and Brett unable to

let her hair grow long."⁵⁰ By this time, however, Jake can live with this knowledge, for he has learned "the values." These values are best discussed in the context of an examination of Hemingway's feelings about his own "lost generation."

Many critics consider The Sun Also Rises to be the textbook of the "lost generation." This is to miss a deep subtlety in the book. True, as we have seen, Hemingway sees a lot that is wrong with expatriation, but he also sees a lot that is right with it; he does not, however, see any point in Gertrude Stein's remark about a "lost generation." That this is so a glance at the two epigraphs at the beginning of the book will help to show. Beneath Stein's remark about a "lost generation" Hemingway has placed the famous passage from Ecclesiastes from which the title of the book is taken. It begins: "One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh; but the earth abideth forever . . ." The purpose of the book is not simply to depict the aimless meanderings and strange "code" of a group of wounded expatriates, not simply to portray a "lost generation," but to show that there is no such thing as a "lost generation"; all generations are lost; one passes away and another comes; all is vanity, and a generation's ambition, direction or lack of purpose is vanity as well. But the individual within a generation can find himself if he lives his life in harmony with that which truly abides forever--the earth. If anything is unique about Jake's generation, it is probably the fact that history has made this truth obvious to it.

In one place, Jake says: "Perhaps as you went along you did

learn something. I did not care what it was all about. All I wanted to know was how to live in it. Maybe if you found out how to live in it you learned from that what it was all about."⁵¹ Later, while driving through the Pyrenees, Jake observes a particularly beautiful scene; he turns around to Bill and Cohn in the back seat of the car. "Robert Cohn was asleep, but Bill looked and nodded his head."⁵² Bill and Jake notice, because they are looking for something they are beginning to find as they drive through the mountains; Cohn sleeps, because he feels secure in his delusion. It is not some kind of "pathetic fallacy" that Hemingway is propounding here, some kind of nature-loving cure-all in the romantic sense. It is a response to nature motivated by a deep experience with suffering and the vanity of man in our time. On the fishing trip with Bill, Jake learns the value of being in tune with that which is eternal in any age. Indeed, the earth is the source of Hemingway's famous "code" of living and writing. His work is never far from the earth, from the sense of a particular place. He took great pains to get the sense of place into his writing, for he learned early that "only the names of places had dignity." Like Turgeneff, whom Jake reads and enjoys in The Sun Also Rises, Hemingway knew the great artistic value of rendering a sense of the particular locale in his work--it gives the work the permanence of the earth itself. But the earth is more, of course, than a literary technique. As Spilka says, "the great outdoors is chiefly a state of mind, a projection of moral and emotional values onto physical arenas,"⁵³ Thus, "the abiding earth is the novel's hero."⁵⁴

The earth finds a human expression in the story in Romero, the bull-fighter, the man of the earth, the human hero of the novel. Jake has been looking for a way of life that will have meaning in the face of ever-present death (he faces death every time he realizes his wound), and that way of life he finds in Romero's "absolute purity of line" in the bullring. He faces death every day in the ring with a perfect grace of movement, keeping his fear of death under control. "In this interpretation of the novel, of course," says Frohock, "Romero becomes even more than a man who pursues a dangerous trade with integrity; he becomes a symbol for integrity itself."⁵⁵ However, Romero's way of life is not immediately seen for what it is by the group of touring expatriates. Though romantic idealism of the Cohn type has been killed for them in the war, they have found nothing to replace the direction in life formerly provided by idealism. This is the reason they tolerate Cohn's presence even though they hate him. Having what they have rejected constantly before them provides them with the illusion that they have something Cohn does not when in reality they have progressed no farther than rejection of his way of life. As a result they have stagnated at the point of simple negation. Having lived at this level of existence for so long they do not immediately recognize the way of life for which they have been searching when confronted with it. Brett's seduction of Romero and Jake's complicity in the act underline this fact--their negative way of life is being imposed upon the positive one they really want. Things are cleared up, however, with the fight between Cohn and Romero, between the romantic

idealist and the man of realistic integrity. Though Romero is beaten up physically, it is Cohn who loses the fight in the moral sense.

Though badly beaten Romero can still go into the bullring the next day

and display his usual bravado of linell. Cohn can only go away and

Voto, for example, I shall readily employ what he terms the "literary fallacy," that is, I shall assume that there is a relation of some kind between American writers and America in general during the twenties. He feels that the expatriation of these writers cut them off from the really important events and movements of their times. I feel that it is precisely their intense involvement in their age that alone explains their social and artistic rebellion against the mores and institutions of their homeland. I shall also refrain from the temptation to view the writers of the "lost generation" as talented but artistically, emotionally and intellectually immature children. Too many critics do

The standards of living that Romero represents to Brett and Jake in The Sun Also Rises represented the same things to Ernest Hemingway. As Frohock says: "What Romero accomplishes with the sword and muleta is precisely what Hemingway wants to accomplish with words."⁵⁸ He wanted to control life with words just as Romero controlled it with cape and sword. Hemingway saw an analogy between life in the bullring and the life he knew. Both involve the threat of mutilation and death, but one can make death pay dearly for one's end by facing it with courage, control and "purity of line," by going right over the horns in the moment of truth with consummate grace. If one must die, then how one lives is important, and living is above all facing death in life while being in complete control of oneself.

This world view and its implications for his art is illustrated by an examination of the Hemingway style. The style developed at the same time as the world view--immediately after the First World War when Hemingway was searching for values to replace those he had seen shattered in the war and its aftermath. Life for him was a wild, erratic, seemingly meaningless and deadly affair. For him to live with it he had to control it, and, says Young, "the place where it could best be mastered was under the disciplined pen."⁵⁹ Life, "which is the material, must be constantly forced under the most intense and rigorous control, and held in the tightest of rein, for it is savage and can get out of hand."⁶⁰ By writing about life truthfully as he saw it, Hemingway was able to live with it. For him literature was as cathartic for the author as for his audience. Thus, his literature is a

perfect gauge of his own life and attitudes; its biographical quality is obvious to anyone who takes a look at his life. And this life and the reflection of it in his art is much closer to the general experience of the twentieth century than many like to think.

Delmore Schwartz grants the value of Hemingway's attitude to life, but he feels that life for Hemingway was a very limited affair. He says: "It is a morality, to repeat, for wartime, for sport, for drinking, and for expatriates; and there are, after all, a good many other levels of existence, and on these levels the activities in question fall into place and become rather minor."⁶¹ He goes on to cite one of these "other levels of existence" as "family life." However, in the last fifty years an estimated seventy millions of people have been uprooted or killed by war alone, to say nothing of the countless millions of others who have been mutilated or have lost loved ones. "Family life" has not been pleasant in the twentieth century. Millions have known our time as an age when all gods are dead, when, says Killinger, "man is thrown back upon himself with the responsibility of forging his self out of a private ethics and a private aesthetic."⁶² Such a man was Ernest Hemingway, and the significance of his life and work has not escaped these millions, despite the objections, and there have been many, of men like Schwartz.

This was certainly true for Hemingway's generation in the twenties. When The Sun Also Rises was published it was an immediate success; somehow it had struck a chord in a whole generation. It was a generation living in an age of prosperity and apparent purpose for

Americans, but whatever American life was like on the surface in 1925, underneath it was a world desperately seeking for new values after the old ones had gone up in smoke in the trenches and with the incredible lack of integrity displayed at Versailles. The refusal of this generation to accept the old values anew and their willingness to live without values until the right ones came along was reflected in the apparently purposeless wandering of the British and American expatriates in The Sun Also Rises. Its concern was that generation's own and its presentation --simple, honest and realistic--was one they could accept and admire.

Our generation knows it too. Although we have our own literary heroes now, Hemingway still speaks to us much as he spoke to our parents. Indeed, he has very much in common with many of our present day writers as can be seen by a glance at John Killinger's Hemingway and the Dead Gods: A Study in Existentialism. Killinger sees in Hemingway's works the same basic concerns that the Existentialists write about--the individual, freedom, death, simplicity and, generally, what it means to exist in the age of the computer. Like the Existentialists, Hemingway provides no ultimate answers to the problems of our time, but he does show a way of living honestly and well with the questions. "Love the earth, for there is nothing beyond."⁶³ This "stern code of our time" is the Hemingway legacy.

CHAPTER IV

JOHN DOS PASSOS

John Dos Passos' wartime experience and his immediate reaction to it was very similar to Hemingway's in many ways. Like Hemingway, he despaired for the individual in the twentieth century as a result of what he saw and felt during the Great War. However, he was more pessimistic than Hemingway regarding the individual's chances for survival as we shall see in our discussion of Three Soldiers. Hemingway at least saw the possibility of individual survival in his concept of the "separate peace." For Dos Passos the "separate peace" was valuable solely as a gesture of protest. The individual could not save himself in any way; he could only assert himself and perish.

As he grew older, however, he modified his pessimism somewhat. He saw that the individual, however lonely he might feel, was not alone. There were others like him, and together they might do something. They might still only be able to protest, and they might still perish for that protest, but society had to take heed when that protest was a collective one. As a result Dos Passos' later work, especially his trilogy U.S.A., is much more broad in its scope than anything of Hemingway's. What Hemingway studied in such minute detail on the purely individualistic level--the possibility of "grace under pressure"--Dos Passos examined on the social and political levels as well. He cannot, therefore, be easily ignored in any study of the twenties, for he treats, more than any other writer of his period, the

state of a nation and of a people as a whole.

Three Soldiers, published in 1921, was not his first war novel. He had already published One Man's Initiation the year before. But this latter story of the aesthetic Martin Howe's rather immature rebellion against the destruction of architecture during World War I lacks the breadth of vision and depth of power of Three Soldiers.

In some ways Three Soldiers is typical of the many anti-war novels throughout the history of European and American letters. A Tolstoy or a Stephen Crane can easily be imagined depicting and condemning the horrible and wasteful slaughter of the First World War. Scenes such as the unfeeling non-commissioned officer's maltreating of the very young, frightened and dying Stockton, or the colonel suggesting the men think twice about taking prisoners, or the picture of the pathetic, mutilated men in the army hospital are not new to war literature, although Dos Passos brings a singularly vivid descriptive talent to such subject matter. What is new to war literature as of 1921, however, is Dos Passos' idea that one necessarily dies at war, even when there is physical survival. This new idea grew from his observations of a new kind of warfare--the machine warfare of the twentieth century.

Next to "butchery," "treadmill" is perhaps the most oft-repeated noun in the book. It is significantly a word one ordinarily uses with regard to machinery, but Dos Passos consistently employs it with regard to the lives of men at war. For he saw that World War I, rather than bringing out the most individual traits of particular men as war

might have done in the past, smothered all traces of individualism in its participants. It was the first great war of the Machine Age; machines fought it and machines won it and where it involved men, those men had to be machine-like to be effective. The very titles of the first four parts of the novel follow the process of machine-making-- "Making the Mould," "The Metal Cools," "Machines," and "Rust."

The business of machine-making begins the moment a man enlists or is drafted into the army. All his basic training is to the same end, that he be made to fit the "mould," thereby becoming identical to all the other soldiers, without thoughts or feelings of his own. He must be taught to respond automatically, in the same manner as his comrades, to whatever order may be given, whatever lever may be pulled. For John Andrews, the major protagonist of the book, this early training is chiefly represented by the innumerable windows he must wash, hour upon hour, until his mind becomes a blank and he works like a robot. "He kept remarking to himself how strange it was that he was not thinking of anything. In the last few days his mind seemed to have become a hard meaningless core."¹ While he washes he listens to "all the men whose feet he could hear tramping on the drill field, whose legs were all being made the same length on the drill field."²

It might be worthwhile, however, for men like Andrews, to become such automatons for a time if it were necessary in order to stop some evil foe. This thought sustains many of the more sensitive soldiers through the first stages of the machine-making process. It is not until the "foe" is actually met face to face that the men who still

retain some vestiges of individual thought and feeling realize that he is not the real enemy. There is a powerful dramatization of this fact when Chrisfield, Andrew's friend, comes across a dead German in the forest as his company moves toward the front:

He kicked the German. He could feel the ribs against his toes through the leather of his boot. He kicked again and again with all his might. The German rolled over heavily. He had no face. Chrisfield felt the hatred suddenly ebb out of him. Where the face had been was a spongy mass of purple and yellow and red, half of which stuck to the russet leaves when the body rolled over. Large flies with bright shiny green bodies circled about it. In a brown clay-grimed hand was a revolver.

Chrisfield felt his spine go cold; the German had shot himself.³

The dead, "faceless" German is a symbol here for all the spiritually dead and faceless involved in the business of killing one another for no good reason. It does not matter that he does not have a face; he is recognizable by the uniform he wears. Being able to identify the particular brand of machine is adequate to the purposes of modern warriors. The dead German represents something else as well--the basic fear of life soldiers develop when they have become machines only and all traces of their individual humanity has vanished. The German has shot himself, contributed to the process of his own destruction as a person. John Wrenn comments further on this passage in the following manner:

The reader never really knows, after he has read this brief episode, whether Chrisfield's experience was real or a dream, or whether it was a dream within a dream or a dream of an earlier real experience. That, finally, becomes the point. War, servility, uniformity were not life. They were an empty existence, a waking nightmare whose only end was death. Life was "not an empty, and very unpleasant dream." It was individual, spontaneous, free; but it took nerve to live it.⁴

Few, however, possess the necessary "nerve." The three main protagonists of the novel all fail in varying ways to exercise the "nerve" required to stay alive in any real sense of that word. Fuselli, the young Italian American from San Francisco, has a great native capacity for giving and receiving affection, but he fails to keep these qualities alive in himself by mutely accepting the hierarchical structure of the army and his own miserable place in it. When his French girl, Yvonne, is unfaithful to him with his sergeant, he accepts it without protest, reminding himself that, after all, "the top sergeant was the top sergeant" and that it "would never do to get in wrong with him."⁵ By the end of the novel he is in a disciplinary battalion in Paris, suffering from a serious venereal disease which is all his capacity for love has come to.

Chrisfield, the hot-blooded mid-western boy, fares no better than Fuselli. His personal qualities of passion and rich earthiness are perverted in the army setting into a murderous hatred for a particular sergeant who has insulted him. He finally kills the sergeant in the confusion of battle. But this single gesture of individualism, valuable as an individual gesture however criminal it may be, is a meaningless one in the end, for Chrisfield returns to his company to take refuge in the thoughtless, automatic world of mindless marching. "Chrisfield looked straight ahead of him. He did not feel lonely any more now that he was marching in ranks again. His feet beat the ground in time with the other feet. He would not have to think whether to go to the right or to the left. He would do as the others did."⁶ His murder of the

sergeant, however, comes to torment him, and he finally deserts to live a life in back rooms and dark streets, waiting for the inevitable arrest.

Both Fuselli and Chrisfield, then, lose or pervert their basic health and value as individuals by letting the army's terms become their terms. Each makes an individual gesture, Fuselli with his girl, Yvonne, and Chrisfield in his killing of the sergeant, but neither has the courage, the "nerve" to follow through, to risk all in order to remain self-respecting human beings. They accept the army's terms and end by having nothing of value except those terms.

The case of John Andrews, however, is more subtle. For he is an example of tremendous courage in the book in his eventual desertion and refusal to wear a uniform any longer. The real nature of the army is apparent to him from the beginning. Sensitive and intelligent he sees it as the destroyer of individuals that it is, the institution which in his own case prevents him from composing the music he feels growing within himself. He thinks that if he could just express what he feels about the army in his music, "express these thwarted lives, the miserable dullness of industrialized slaughter," then "it might have been almost worth while."⁷ But he cannot do this while he remains in the army, constantly being ordered about and treated as a "slave." So he finally makes the supreme gesture of complete desertion, only to be eventually apprehended by the military police and taken off to prison as the first pages of his musical composition blow symbolically away. It might seem that at this point Dos Passos is saying that there is no way one can

fight the system and survive. But he is not. For Andrews, though he does desert in the end, had already failed to exercise his "nerve" by joining the army in the first place, accepting its terms from the beginning. Early in the novel he is thinking of this:

It was in this that he would take refuge from the horror of the world that had fallen upon him. He was sick of revolt, of thought, of carrying his individuality like a banner above the turmoil. This was much better, to let everything go, to stamp out his maddening desire for music, to humble himself into the mud of common slavery.⁸

In his better moments, though, he knows that this is the wrong attitude, and that his decision to no longer carry "his individuality like a banner above the turmoil" represents a failure, a failure of "nerve." He speaks of this to Chrisfield:

"No, I'm your sort, Chris," he said over his shoulder, "only they've tamed me. O God, how tame I am."⁹

And later:

"Learnin' sure do help a feller to git along in the world."
 "Yes, but what's the use of getting along if you haven't any world to get along in? Chris, I belong to a crowd that just fakes learning. I guess the best thing that can happen to us is to get killed in this butchery. We're a tame generation It's you that it matters to kill."¹⁰

Thus, Andrews is possessed of a self-knowledge Fuselli, Chrisfield and all the other soldiers lack, yet it is a self-knowledge that is crippling, preventing action rather than guiding it in the proper direction. Like the early Hamlet, he can only curse his fate. For this reason his final gesture is only that; he too has contributed to his own destruction by initially accepting something he knows he should not accept.

Yet none of us are without sin, and gestures, Dos Passos is saying, are perhaps all we can ever make in wartime, however futile such gestures may be. For whatever one does, one cannot escape some kind of death in modern war. This was the main fact of Dos Passos' 1914-1918 education. He learned that, as Wrenn puts it, the "war spared only the dead, or those who had not yet begun to live."¹¹ If one must die in such an environment, one may at least do so as John Andrews does--with a gesture of protest.

However, the war is over when at the end of the book, Andrews is arrested and taken off to prison. Indeed, even his final desertion from the prison camp in which he has been mistakenly incarcerated takes place after the armistice has been signed for some time. The implication of this, of course, is that the drudgery, hopelessness and destruction of individuality does not stop with the formal cessation of hostilities. Dos Passos prepares us for this idea in the middle of the novel when the first premature rumour of an armistice reaches the men in the hospital where Andrews is recovering from a leg wound. The men cheer for joy and begin their own pathetic, wounded celebration only to have a major burst in with a thundering "'Attention!'" and: "'If I hear any more noise from this ward, I'll chuck everyone of you men out of this hospital; if you can't walk you'll have to crawl The war may be over, but you men are in the Army, and don't you forget it.'" ¹² In other words, the real war, the war Andrews is trying to find the courage to fight, is not over; and he begins to wonder if it will ever be as, back with his battalion, he waits each morning for the sound of

the bugle to throw "the warm sentient bodies into coarse automatons who must be kept busy, lest they grow restive, till killing time began again."¹³

This idea of the essential war between individuals and a way of life that would destroy them all continuing on after the actual physical fighting has stopped is developed further in the fifth section of the book, ironically entitled "The World Outside." In this part of the novel Andrews goes joyfully off to Paris at the close of the war, having managed to get himself assigned to the Sorbonne Detachment. For a brief while he lives again, having love affairs with two Parisiennes, laughing and talking with men similar in outlook to himself such as the wildly adventurous, yet deeply wise Henslowe, and generally beginning to feel like a human being again. But it is not to last. Perhaps it never really begins as the symbolism in one brief passage hints.

Andrews is in a major's office to apply for a discharge:

The major's office was a large white-painted room, with elaborate mouldings and mirrors in all four walls, so that while Andrews waited, cap in hand, to go up to the desk, he could see the small round major and his pink face and bald head repeated to infinity in two directions in the grey brilliance of the mirrors.¹⁴

As he steps up to the desk his own figure becomes "repeated to infinity" in the mirrors, and countless John Andrews salute in perfect unison. That John Andrews is more than the reflections of himself that appear in the mirror, that we know this and that he knows this is immaterial. The major and what the major represents is in charge here and outside as well, and all the major sees is a figure in a uniform "repeated to infinity." Later in the day Andrews is out in the

country, talking with a young French boy; he is brooding about the experience of the morning:

In those office buildings, with white marble halls full of the clank of officers' heels, in index cards and piles of typewritten papers, his real self, which they had power to kill if they wanted to, was in his name and his number, on lists with millions of other names and other numbers. This sentient body of his, full of possibilities and hopes and desires, was only a pale ghost that depended on the other self, that suffered for it and cringed for it. He could not drive out of his head the picture of himself, skinny, in an ill-fitting uniform, repeated endlessly in the two mirrors of the major's white-painted office.¹⁵

The vision of himself in the mirror has made Andrews realize that all his recent feeling of being free is illusory; what is real is what is in the mirror, his other, "cringing" self.

With this in the book it hardly comes as a surprise to the reader when Andrews is arrested due to a mechanical error and marched off to prison as a deserter before he can make the military police understand that such a thing as the Sorbonne Detachment exists. In prison he now realizes that the war he thought he had escaped is still going on, that the Great War was only one aspect of a larger war, a war that seems somehow an integral part of our time. He has become greatly cynical about any attempts to change the world, to make it once again a fit place for men to live. Just before his arrest he is sitting in a Paris cafe, staring at a Renaissance house opposite:

And he thought of the great, sudden wind of freedom that had blown out of Italy, before which dogmas and slaveries had crumbled to dust. In contrast, the world today seemed pitifully arid. Men seemed to have shrunk in stature before the vastness of the mechanical contrivances they had invented. Michael Angelo, da Vinci, Aretino, Allini; would the strong figures of men ever so dominate the world again? Today everything was congestion, the scurrying of crowds; men had become ant-like. Perhaps it was inevitable

that the crowds should sink deeper and deeper in slavery. Which-ever won, tyranny from above, or spontaneous organization from below, there could be no individuals.¹⁶

So the world has come to look to Andrews and not without justification. Nowhere was it so obvious as in modern war that men "seemed to have shrunk in stature before the vastness of the mechanical contrivances they had invented." "Mechanical contrivances" dominate modern war, and modern war dominates the twentieth century; political ideologies, which, after all, are based on the fact that individuals exist, have become meaningless.

Nevertheless, Andrews comes to the conclusion in prison, the same conclusion he had come to in the beginning but then did not have the courage to act upon, that it would be better to risk everything, to die as a human being rather than to live any longer as a thing. Like Huck Finn before him and Frederic Henry later he takes to the river to escape, to wash away the horror of it all in one magnificent gesture. He makes it back to Paris and then to the little French town where his girl is living. She, however, does not understand what he has done and turns him away. He stays just the same, beginning work finally on his musical composition "The Soul and Body of John Brown," "a madman who wanted to free people."¹⁷ He manages to finish only the first movement before he is captured, ending the novel.

Thus ends the story of the three soldiers:

Each had made his own first motion toward fulfillment: to establish within himself the conditions of truly human life. Each had begun to know and to mould the pattern of his own existence. But the anti-human conditions of the outside world proved too strong; its pattern was too rigid to admit of others than its own.

In that pattern perception meant only pain, courage meant only frustration or death, and the only admissible arts were those of war and the management of men. John Andrews could only begin the symphony which was to be his masterwork. "The Soul and Body of John Brown" could reach only its first movement; in such an environment they could be united only in the grave.¹⁸

As Three Soldiers indicates Dos Passos emerged from his ambulance service in France and Italy during the war as a deeply pessimistic man, more pessimistic in his outlook than Hemingway, for he saw less hope for the individual than did the latter writer. Hemingway's Frederic Henry at least manages to make his escape good, despite the enormous personal loss it entails; Dos Passos' John Andrews can only taste freedom for a few days before he must begin a long imprisonment. Dos Passos' cynicism was perhaps the more complete, because he himself recognized during the war, more than he ever had before, his own deep alienation from any kind of tradition. Born the bastard son of an eminent American lawyer of Portuguese descent, he had spent his early years travelling around the world with his mother. He thus felt no familial ties of any great strength, especially as both his parents were dead by the time he entered the war. And he felt no strong patriotic ties with America either as a result of his spending so much of his life out of that country. Thus, while Hemingway at least went home to Illinois for a short time upon his discharge from the army, Dos Passos took his discharge in Europe, content to begin his search for a home there.

A small book entitled Rosinante to the Road Again grew out of this search for a home abroad. It is based on the travels in Spain of

one Telemachus. As it was for Hemingway, Spain, with its old ways and simple, strongly individualistic people, was very attractive to Dos Passos after his two year experience with "industrialized slaughter." Unlike Hemingway, however, Dos Passos' interest in Spain had more obvious qualities of a search for a home. The fact that he chose an Iberian setting for this search had not a little to do with his own Portuguese blood; and the fact that the major character of Rosinante to the Road Again is called Telemachus is also very significant, for it is the name borne by that other, ancient father-searcher. What is more significant, however, is that Dos Passos did not stay in Spain for long, or anywhere else in the old world for that matter. Though he travelled much during the twenties and wrote books on other countries as well as Spain his real interest gradually became centered on this side of the Atlantic. While Rosinante to the Road Again marks his search for a home abroad, Manhattan Transfer marks the beginning of his arrival to his final home--the United States.

Manhattan Transfer is generally considered the original stylistic prototype of U.S.A. and Dos Passos' best work before The 42nd Parallel, the first novel of the latter trilogy. The use of songs and newscasts interspersed throughout the narrative and the brief prose poems at the beginning of each chapter were to become the "Camera Eyes" and the "Newsreels" of U.S.A. So also the parallel narrations of a number of different stories connecting at certain points is the original form of the narrative technique brought to fruition later in the trilogy. The power of this technique is openly admitted and

discussed by all. Through the use of it in Manhattan Transfer the city of New York becomes an experienced reality for the reader as it does not in any other American work. The giant metropolis' infinite, seething variety of human life and experience comes vividly alive under Dos Passos' pen. Appearing and disappearing as people appear and disappear in a New York crowd are all the individuals and types that make up a large American city during the first quarter of the twentieth century: here are the titans of Wall Street, the wobblies and labour leaders, the bootleggers and petty criminals, the writers and artists, the immigrants and deportees, the sick, the weary, the homeless, the rebellious, the thwarted, the stifled, the frustrated, the perverted, and the countless others, all vitally, almost tangibly alive.

In terms of the subject matter itself we can see in Manhattan Transfer the basic traits of Dos Passos' vision of American life which he gave full expression in U.S.A. There is first the dichotomy between the haves and the have-nots, the George Baldwins and Bud Korpennings. Secondly, there is the similarity between the haves and the have-nots--their mutual unhappiness and frustration; Bud Korpenning may commit suicide in his despair, but George Baldwin destroys himself too by slowly allowing the world to kill all the human decency within him. Thirdly, there is the sense of America as a constantly moving impermanence. There is much in the novel about the continual growth and change of the city of New York, the arrival of immigrants and departure of deportees in the harbour; and fire, the destroyer of the old is ever-present, demolishing indiscriminately the people and buildings of

"Ninevah." Lastly, there is Dos Passos' deep concern for the individual in the twentieth century, the same concern we have already examined in Three Soldiers. The two main protagonists, Ellen Thatcher and Jimmy Herf, manage in their own ways to retain some individuality, though for Ellen it is at the cost of any permanent personal relationship in her life. The man she most deeply loves in the novel, Stan Emery, much more of an individual than she herself, is completely destroyed by the world around him, ending with drunken attempts to commit suicide. Jimmy Herf fares better, but only because he finally leaves New York, alone and penniless, but free, free to grow. His friend Congo, the opportunistic French immigrant, also manages to keep his basic integrity untarnished, remaining an anarchist in thought and spirit through all his many legal and illegal enterprises, assumed identities and eventual great wealth. For both of these people, Jimmy and Congo, individual integrity is maintained by their keeping on the move, keeping pace with fast-moving America herself. For Congo it is keeping pace economically and socially; for Jimmy it is keeping pace geographically, moving west in a manner reminiscent of the American Adam of old. Near the beginning of the novel Jimmy arrives in New York as a little boy, having been out of the country as was Dos Passos himself for the first few years of his life. At the end he is leaving New York as a mature adult, closing the novel by closing his own long stay in that great city. So, says Wrenn, "New York emerged as a point of transit only--as Manhattan Transfer; a way-station and point of entry to the U.S.A."¹⁹ Just as New York became only a "point of entry to the

U.S.A." for Jimmy Herf, so for Dos Passos himself, his writing of the city in Manhattan Transfer marked his own, final spiritual arrival in the country. In his next three novels, he attempts to come to terms with this country he has finally chosen for his home.

The U.S.A. trilogy is Dos Passos' greatest artistic achievement in every respect. The technique and style approach perfection as they are presented through the "Camera Eyes," "Newsreels," "Biographies" and the fast-moving narrative. This form of presentation suited Dos Passos' purposes very well. He wanted to get down in a word picture all the vastness and diversity of America, to impose some sort of unity on the whole fluid mass. To achieve this he used the materials at hand, America's own tools of self-expression--the mass-circulation newspaper, the movie camera and the radio. In doing so he was, as Alfred Kazin remarks, "the first to bring the novel squarely into the Machine Age and to use its rhythms, its stock piles of tools and people, in his books."²⁰ The result in the trilogy is the most complete and unified picture of America as a whole in her literature, an aesthetic e pluribus unum. The "Newsreels," interspersed between passages of the narrative proper, keep the reader constantly aware of the events of the time and the enormous diversity and contradictions in America and American life. The "Camera Eye," Dos Passos' autobiographical tool, in its disjointed, poetic prose provides a line of communication between reader and writer and a sense of the work's being grounded in immediate, felt experience. The "Biographies" allow the reader to see the progress and state of a large nation in what is

perhaps the most sure way--through the treatment it accords its talented men. The narrative, centering around the character J. Ward Moorehouse, an entrepreneur typical of the time, depicts the lives of hundreds of Americans over a third of a century with a completeness of detail that is the rival of Proust's work at its best. Generally speaking these techniques and this style provide Dos Passos with a means of examining and commenting upon America from a great many points of view. His judgment of the nation, therefore, is a remarkably sound one.

The America Dos Passos shows us in the trilogy is not a pretty picture. None of the people of the narrative can be said to fulfill themselves or achieve happiness of any kind. "When she was small she hated everything," begins the story of Eleanor Stoddard in The 42nd Parallel.²¹ She never stops hating "everything," including herself, throughout the rest of the trilogy. In this way she is typical of almost all the major characters who begin life in an unhealthy familial environment and continue it to the end in a spirit of hopelessly sick egotism. Even Dick Savage, who for some time is a wholesome gauge by which we can judge the varying degrees of unhealth in the others, finally prostitutes his talents in the service of J. Ward Moorehouse. Dos Passos depicts them all "hurtling through a third of a century, propelled by events and by complex needs and stimuli, travelling too fast to get their bearings or even to know where they stood."²² The more admirable types, the have-nots, all workers and mostly leftists, Mac, Ben Compton, Joe Williams, Mary

French, do not fare much better. Where they do make an attempt to change the ugliness of their world they are constantly thwarted.

But the narrative, powerful as it is throughout the trilogy, is in itself the least interesting aspect of U.S.A. It is Dos Passos' use of the real events of the times in the "Newsreels" and "Biographies" and of his own experience as it is embodied in the "Camera Eyes" that gives to the work its vast richness and incomparable vitality. Through the use of these techniques he bears out Balzac's idea that the novelist, using the tools of his profession, is better able to bring history alive than is the historian himself.

Each of the three novels deals with a different era in the history of America and the world. The 42nd Parallel opens with the beginning of the twentieth century. "The twentieth century will be American," the first "Newsreel" quotes Senator Albert J. Beveridge as saying. "American thought will dominate it. American progress will give it color and direction. American deeds will make it illustrious."²³ "American thought" does dominate the twentieth century as Dos Passos shows us, but whether it gives "color" and "direction" and is "illustrious" or whether it is colourless, confused and paltry he lets the rest of the trilogy decide for us.

The first novel presents the first decade and a half of the new century in fascinating factual and fictional detail, catching the sense of unbounded energy in America as it speeds blindly through the years of Progressivism and The New Freedom to the brink of war with the Central Powers. Nineteen Nineteen, the second novel, is much like

Three Soldiers in as much as its subject matter is the same. It is, however, broader in its scope, following the lives on non-combatants like J. Ward Moorehouse, Eveline Hutchins and Eleanor Stoddard as well as soldiers like Dick Savage. The events on the home front are not neglected either, especially the incredibly brutal treatment of leftists and conscientious objectors. The beating of Ben Compton and his fellow workers by the police and the castration and lynching of Wesley Everest in the "Biography" "Paul Bunyan" are two of the most chilling things in American literature, presented in the novel as examples at home of the "democracy" for which men are dying abroad. Dos Passos reiterates his feelings about World War I itself in the closing passage of the novel, "The Body of An American," an imaginative depiction of the life of the Unknown Soldier. Again, as in Three Soldiers, there is the brutality and the horror, again the meaninglessness of it all, again the idea that men as individuals with individual desires, thoughts, hopes, and dreams are out of place in modern war, unknown.

The Big Money, the last and the best novel in the trilogy, deals with the economic madness and the wild, high living that was America in the twenties. It is in this novel that Dos Passos becomes most bitter, mercilessly bringing all his characters to pitiful ends and exposing the real nature of the American democracy so many fought and died for during the war. The presentation of the America behind the big words and gallant phrases of the newsreels and speeches, put forth in counterpoint throughout the whole of the trilogy in the stories of Mac,

Joe Williams, Ben Compton and Mary French and in the "Camera Eyes," is brought to its climax in the passages dealing with the liberal attempt to save the lives of Sacco and Vanzetti in the late twenties. Dos Passos himself worked indefatigably to save the two anarchists. Kazin discusses his efforts as follows:

More perhaps than any other American writer who fought to obtain their freedom, it can be said, Dos Passos was really educated and toughened, affected as an artist, by the long and dreary months he spent working for them outside Charlestown Prison. For many writers the Sacco-Vanzetti case was at most a shock to their acquiescent liberalism or indifference; for Dos Passos it provided immediately the catalyst (he had never been acquiescent or indifferent) his work had needed, the catalyst that made U.S.A. possible. It transformed his growingly irritable but persistently romantic obsession with the poet's struggle against the world into a use of the class struggle as his base in art. The Sacco-Vanzetti case gave him, in a word, the beginnings of a formal conception of society; and out of the bitter realization that this society - the society Martin Howe had mocked, that John Andrews had been crushed by, that Jimmy Herf had escaped - could grind two poor Italian Anarchists to death for their opinions, came the conception of the two nations, the two Americas, that is the scaffolding of U.S.A.²⁴

"Camera Eye (50)," based on Dos Passos' own efforts on behalf of Sacco and Vanzetti is at once the key passage in the whole trilogy and one of the most eloquent pleas for liberalism in American letters. It is worth quoting in its entirety:

they have clubbed us off the streets they are
stronger they are rich they hire and fire the poli-
ticians the newspapereditors the old judges the small men
with reputations the collegepresidents the wardheelers
(listen businessmen collegepresidents judges America
will not forget her betrayers) they hire the men with
guns the uniforms the policecars the patrolwagons
all right you have won you will kill the brave
men our friends tonight
there is nothing left to do we are beaten we
the beaten crowd together in these old dingy school-
rooms on Salem Street shuffle up and down the gritty

creaking stairs sit hunched with bowed heads on benches
and hear the old words of the haters of oppression made
new in sweat and agony tonight

our work is over the scribbled phrases the nights
typing releases the smell of the printshop the sharp reek
of newprinted leaflets the rush for Western Union
stringing words into wires the search for stinging words
to make you feel who are your oppressors America

America our nation has been beaten by strangers who
have turned our language inside out who have taken the
clean words our fathers spoke and made them slimy and
foul

their hired men sit on the judge's bench they sit
back with their feet on the tables under the dome of the
State House they are ignorant of our beliefs they have the
dollars the guns the armed forces the powerplants

they have built the electricchair and hired the execu-
tioner to throw the switch

all right we are two nations

America our nation has been beaten by strangers who
have bought the laws and fenced off the meadows and
cut down the woods for pulp and turned our pleasant
cities into slums and sweated the wealth out of our people
and when they want to they hire the executioner to throw
the switch

but do they know that the old words of the immi-
grants are being renewed in blood and agony tonight do
they know that the old American speech of the haters of
oppression is new tonight in the mouth of an old woman
from Pittsburgh of a husky boilermaker from Frisco who
hopped freights clear from the Coast to come here in the
mouth of a Back Bay socialworker in the mouth of an
Italian printer of a hobo from Arkansas the language
of the beaten nation is not forgotten in our ears tonight

the men in the deathhouse made the old words new
before they died

If it had not been for these things, I might have
lived out my life talking at streetcorners to scorning men.
I might have died unknown, unmarked, a failure. This is
our career and our triumph. Never in our full life can we
hope to do such work for tolerance, for justice, for man's
understanding of man as how we do by an accident

now their work is over the immigrants haters of
oppression lie quiet in black suits in the little undertaking
parlor in the North End the city is quiet the men of
the conquering nation are not to be seen on the streets
they have won why are they scared to be seen on

the streets? on the streets you see only the downcast
 faces of the beaten the streets belong to the beaten
 nation all the way to the cemetery where the bodies
 of the immigrants are to be burned we line the curbs in
 the drizzling rain we crowd the wet sidewalks elbow to
 elbow silent pale looking with scared eyes at the coffins
 we stand defeated America²⁵

It is clear in this passage just what finally Dos Passos considers the U.S.A. to be. It is not the nation that kills Sacco and Vanzetti, nor the nation that goes to war over some false idea of democracy, nor the nation whose greatest men are the J. P. Morgans and Andrew Carnegies of the "Biographies." It is the people who, remembering what the nation was founded upon, stand in the rain and the cold in silent protest against the legal murder of two unfortunate immigrants until they are "clubbed . . . off the streets." It is the unknown soldiers forced to fight and to die as machines and to rest in lonely graves unremembered as human beings. It is the truly great men of the "Biographies" like Eugene Debs, Big Bill Haywood and Robert M. La Follette who end their lives without honour in their own country. It is the America of the young man in the epilogue "Vag" who has nothing but "wants," an uneasy stomach and a dream of freedom. It is the "other America" that is Dos Passos' final home, the "other nation" that is the real United States.

Thus, U.S.A. is at once the most complete and severe judgment of America in contemporary literature and an acceptance of America as "home." To criticize Dos Passos by saying that he makes it easy for himself to both condemn and accept by breaking America into "two nations" has no validity whatsoever. America is "two nations," just as

all countries are; it has always been so and it is not likely to be different for some time. This idea of an almost universal "two nations" is something Dos Passos hints at in his thought as early as Three Soldiers. John Andrews is talking to Genevieve Rod, the girl he loves, at the end of the novel:

"It seems to me," he said very softly, "that human society has been always that, and perhaps will be always that: organizations growing and stifling individuals, and individuals revolting hopelessly against them, and at last forming new societies to crush the old societies and becoming slaves again in their turn . . ." ²⁶

There are always the defeated and it is to these, whatever their race, colour, or political ideology, that Dos Passos gives all his affections. For it is these that most surely cherish the same dream that he cherishes, the dream of freedom and justice for all men.

At least in America one has a country the basic principles of which are still revered by the "defeated America" despite how much those in power have misused and perverted them. These are the principles in which Dos Passos believed and finally found best embodied for him in the world of "defeated America." They are those principles of democracy and self-determination that are based on a profound respect for the individual and his right to determine and fulfill his own destiny. They are the principles of the American Declaration of Independence.

With the publication of U.S.A. in 1938 Dos Passos had made America his home once and for all; "he had carved out his niche and made himself a citizen."²⁷ Since then he has been more of an historian in the literal sense than a novelist, diligently examining the historical

sources of the democratic way of life in which he believes. Many find it troublesome that he is now well within the conservative sphere of American political action while once he was such a crusading liberal. The explanation for this is simple I think; when conservatives are in power Dos Passos will be a liberal, and when liberals are in power Dos Passos will be a conservative. As a writer his sympathies are always with those who are the underdogs, so as a citizen his allegiance is always to the minority point of view. It is his style as a man to represent at all times the opposing, minority position and to see that it is heard by the majority. What could be more consistently democratic? What could be more consistently American in the best sense of that so-misused word?

CHAPTER V

F. SCOTT FITZGERALD

Hemingway and Dos Passos spoke for the American "exiles" of the twenties, the young men whose traumatic war experiences had cut them off from the mores and traditions of their native land and cast them into the world, adrift and disillusioned, to seek for new values by which to live. There were others, however, who did not participate in the war proper, who experienced its effects indirectly and in a less painful manner. Indeed, they had reason to be glad of the war, for it destroyed many of the old traditions they had found restricting as young men and women. With the close of hostilities in 1918 they felt a new freedom, a freedom to experiment for themselves in all areas of life. It was not until the middle and late twenties that disillusionment came fully upon them, for by then they saw that their experimentation had given them nothing of lasting value and that all they really had left was their waning lust for that experimentation. In many ways theirs proved to be a more severe form of disillusionment than that experienced by so many others during the war, mainly because they had no one to blame for their state but themselves. Their story, the story of the riotous, hard-drinking "flappers" and "sheiks" of the Jazz Age, is the tale told in the novels and short stories of F. Scott Fitzgerald, their self-appointed leader and spokesman.

In an essay entitled "The Crack-Up" Fitzgerald noted that "the test of a first-rate intelligence is the ability to hold two opposed

ideas in the mind at the same time, and still retain the ability to function."¹ If this is true, then Fitzgerald must be considered a first-rate intelligence. All of his writing life he was of two minds about everything within his ken, simultaneously applauding and condemning every aspect of American life in the years immediately following World War I. In his early work the applause generally drowns out the condemnation; typical of his work in this period is his first published novel This Side of Paradise. Later, from the perspective of the thirties, his judgment of the twenties and his own life in those years is very severe; a novel like Tender is the Night and essays such as "The Crack-Up" are the best examples of this condemnatory writing. Yet in both these periods the "opposed" idea is always present, qualifying either the exuberance of the applause or the severity of the judgment. In his best work, The Great Gatsby, Fitzgerald's opposing points of view toward his subject matter exist in creative tension, each giving the other greater depth and power and combining to make what is perhaps the finest single statement of any kind on the condition of the American Dream in the twentieth century.

As with Hemingway, however, Fitzgerald's work cannot be fully appreciated unless some consideration is given at the outset to the historical events of his particular time and place to see what part they played in his life and work.

Fitzgerald, unlike Cummings, Hemingway and Dos Passos, was never very interested in writing of World War I itself. Only one or two of his stories like "May Day" and "I Never Got Over" can be called

war stories in any sense, and neither of these have anything to do with actual battle situations. "May Day," the structure of which is in the Dos Passos tradition of apparently unconnected stories gradually coalescing into a single tale, tells of the lives of a number of people on May 1, 1919. The story begins with a description of an unnamed nation celebrating a martial victory. The tone is classical, almost biblical. The first sentence reads: "There had been a war fought and won and the great city of the conquering people was crossed with triumphal arches and vivid with thrown flowers of white, red, and rose."² We are to hear, the author tells us, of the adventures of certain young people of this happy land on this happy day, young men "pure and brave, sound of tooth and pink of cheek" and young women who are "virgins and comely both of face and of figure." These lovely youth, however, turn out to be a very despicable lot. The majority are either ignorant private soldiers whose main joy in life is joining mobs to assault "Bolsheviki" or ostensibly civilized members of an American moneyed class who display only one consistent quality--utter indifference to the sufferings of their fellow men. Fitzgerald leaves no doubt in the minds of his readers that these types of humanity, in their animality and indifference, are responsible for war, and that war is to some degree responsible for them. The irony here is hardly subtle. By making such people the representatives of the comely youth mentioned in the prophetic language of the introduction Fitzgerald clearly reveals his own feeling that the war and all the glorious talk of it was one great pack of lies from beginning to end. In this

respect, though he was not a veteran of actual warfare himself, he was of one mind with Hemingway, Dos Passos and Cummings.

Other than "May Day" and the occasional passages in other works, however, Fitzgerald was content to leave the war unexamined. He was more interested from the beginning of his career in writing of "the greatest, gaudiest spree in history" which followed the war and about which "there was going to be plenty to tell."³ His ambition was to be first among those who were going to do the telling, and he was already doing so while many of his contemporary colleagues were still recovering from their physical and psychical battle wounds.

He began his tale in 1920 with the writing and publication of This Side of Paradise. As we noted earlier the tone of applause for the post-war world is predominant over any judgment of it in this first novel. This is something most critics overlook when discussing This Side of Paradise. It is usually examined as the original novel of the desperate "lost generation" of the twenties. Generally cited in support of this interpretation are such things as the book's apparent rebellion against old codes of morality and the statement of lack of faith in anything at its close. To say this and nothing more is to miss something very important about the novel. If the young man who writes of "Victorian mothers" having no "idea how casually their daughters were accustomed to be kissed"⁴ is rebelling against old codes of morality, he is doing so more in a spirit of adolescent glee than one of desperation. Similarly, in the famous passage at the end of the novel depicting the "new generation" as having "grown up to find all

Gods dead, all wars fought, all faiths in man shaken"⁵, there is more of a tone of joy at being free from restriction than one of fear at being "lost." Amory Blaine, the hero of the book, is glad that in this new post-war age he is free to begin by knowing himself and nothing more.

This impishly exuberant nature of This Side of Paradise, generally overlooked by present-day critics, is what made for the book's immediate success in the early twenties. The hosts of young Americans who, for awhile, made This Side of Paradise their bible were full to bursting with youthful energy at the close of the war and "restless" to fling themselves headlong into the seemingly endless possibilities for new experiences that the post-war world in America proffered to them. They wanted to drink deep from life, "roam, grow, rebel, sleep deep through many nights" ⁶ They were a "whole race going hedonistic, deciding on pleasure."⁷ And Fitzgerald, by expressing their decision in This Side of Paradise, established himself as the guiding literary light of this new "race." His success was immediate and complete. Speaking of this in an essay entitled "My Lost City" he commented that he "was pushed into the position not only of spokesman for the time but of the typical product of that same moment."⁸ This "moment" was to last a number of years and to become known as the Jazz Age, an age that made Fitzgerald its prince. Speaking of the Jazz Age in 1931 he said that it was now as "dead as were the Yellow Nineties in 1902. Yet the present writer already looks back to it with nostalgia. It bore him up, flattered him and gave him more money than he had dreamed of, simply for telling people that he felt as they did, that something had

to be done with all the nervous energy stored up and unexpended in the War."⁹

Thus, in both his life and work in these early years it is the applauding Fitzgerald who predominated over the judging one. He aligned all his inner, subjective ambitions and dreams with those of the Jazz Age as a whole, becoming that age's chief spokesman. Yet the side of Fitzgerald that was eventually to condemn so much in this era was already there, peeping through his exuberance. This can be seen in This Side of Paradise where it exists as a kind of baseless unease, a nameless fright, sometimes appearing simultaneously with the "adolescent glee." An example of this takes place as Amory Blaine concludes one of his youthful "affairs." "She slipped her hand into his," we read, "her head drooped against his shoulder. Sudden revulsion seized Amory, disgust, loathing for the whole incident."¹⁰ Later in the novel we find out more about this "revulsion." Amory and a friend are in a room drinking with two women when Amory has a vision of the devil in the form of a dead friend's ghost. The implication is that, deep down, Amory connects the excesses of his fun-loving group with evil, evil that frightens him terribly. Thus, while the note of exuberant glee dominates the novel, there runs with it throughout the book a minor key counterpoint, a fear that all the free thinking, living and loving is somehow very wrong. It is only a vague fear, however. Neither Amory nor Fitzgerald seem to have any real idea why it should be wrong and why they should fear it at the same time as they welcome it. This unknown fear is the thing which contributes more than anything else to

making This Side of Paradise what Edmund Wilson calls "little more than a gesture - a gesture of indefinite revolt."¹¹ It is clear that Fitzgerald meant the book to be taken as a statement of revolt of some kind, but very unclear just what it was he was revolting against.

The explanation for this is to be found, I believe, if we go further in examining the qualities of the American world after Versailles. The war, while it gave Fitzgerald and his enthusiastic followers the world of their dreams, took away all means of measuring the various aspects of that world in any significant moral sense. The old moral frames of reference, nurtured so carefully during the Progressive Era, had proved themselves useless on the battlefields of Europe, fine for the America of the nineteenth century, but inapplicable in the twentieth. In the early twenties no other moral basis had as yet been developed to replace the one lost during the war. Fitzgerald's own, inbred need for a moral frame of reference, whereby he could see his world clearly even while intensely involved in it, felt this lack of a moral measuring stick even as he celebrated in his early work the demise of Victorianism. In This Side of Paradise it finds expression as a vague, indefinite "restlessness," but as he grew older it took on a more solid and clear form in such stories as "May Day" and "The Diamond as Big as the Ritz." In these short stories he was able to come to terms with a given aspect of his experience, the war in the case of "May Day" and immense wealth in "The Diamond as Big as the Ritz," and make a consistent appraisal of it. But he had not yet found the means of appraising his whole world in the form of a

novel. The Beautiful and Damned, written in 1922, attempts to achieve this, but it fails miserably. Though technically an improvement over This Side of Paradise, it is less convincing a work. This Side of Paradise might be unabashedly "about nothing," but it has a force and dynamism and a kind of consistency of youthful enthusiasm for life that The Beautiful and Damned does not. I believe that the problem is simply that Fitzgerald did not at the time see life as the meaningless fiasco he depicts it in the latter novel, and hence it has a basic note of insincerity that makes it an inferior work. Somehow Fitzgerald would have to learn how to balance the two elements of his nature, those "two opposed ideas," the one which threw him wholeheartedly into the gay post-war party and the one that found that party self-destructive and evil. He would have to do this before he could discover for himself the deeper implications of these two attitudes.

Paul Rosenfeld, in an essay written in 1925 just before the publication of The Great Gatsby, noted that though he had a great natural talent "the world of his subject-matter is still too much within Fitzgerald himself for him to see it sustainedly against the universe."¹² He goes on to make the following prophetic statement:

Should Fitzgerald finally break his mold, and free himself of the compulsions of the civilization in which he grew, it might go badly with his popularity. It will be a pathetic story he will have to tell, the legend of a moon which never rose; and that is precisely the story a certain America does not wish to hear. Nevertheless, we would like hugely to hear him tell it. And Fitzgerald might scarcely miss his following.¹³

Fitzgerald did "break his mold" to write The Great Gatsby, "the legend of a moon which never rose," and by doing so he was able to make

one of the finest statements about America in her literature.

As Rosenfeld saw in 1925 and as we have pointed out already the problem for the early Fitzgerald was to find some means of balancing his subjective involvement in the Jazz Age with his need to understand the moral implications of such involvement. Not only did he need this personally, but his writing needed it as well if it was ever to achieve the stature of greatness. To some degree this was a problem of form which he overcame in The Great Gatsby with the deceptively simple device of employing the first person narrative technique and choosing for his spokesman a reasonably involved, yet sufficiently detached and impartial observer. It is no secret that Fitzgerald learned much from Conrad and his Marlow in creating his own Nick Carraway. Nick, like Marlow, has characteristics that make him ideally suited as a judge of the Long Island world of Gatsby and his retinue, the kind of world Fitzgerald knew so intimately and wished to see in moral perspective. At one point in the book, Nick remarks: "I was within and without, simultaneously enchanted and repelled by the inexhaustible variety of life."¹⁴ "Life" here means eastern life which to a westerner like Nick is attractive for its "inexhaustible variety" of superficial pleasures which are unattainable in the west; it is repulsive when his inbred "sense of the fundamental decencies"¹⁵ comes face to face with the basic corruption of this land of pleasures. The repulsion is predominant over the attraction as Nick, now back at home in the west, begins his story: "When I came back from the East last autumn I felt that I wanted the world to be in uniform and at a sort of moral

attention forever;" ¹⁶ But Nick's deep moral condemnation of the east, stated like this at the outset, is balanced by his honesty: "Every one suspects himself of at least one of the cardinal virtues, and this is mine: I am one of the few honest people that I have ever known." ¹⁷ But neither his sense of morality nor his honesty would be enough if Nick was a naive innocent, and Fitzgerald takes great pains to show that he is not. He does this in overt ways such as having Nick's association with eastern life involve a love affair with the immoral Jordan Baker. And he does it in many subtle ways such as making Carraway an ex-World War I combatant, quite aware that the war he participated in had little to recommend it as anything more than the "delayed Teutonic migration" ¹⁸ he so cynically calls it. These traits, then, simultaneous involvement in and detachment from the world he is depicting and judging, a solid mid-western "sense of the fundamental decencies," honesty and, above all, the awareness of the world that makes for maturity combine to make Nick Carraway the ideal commentator for Fitzgerald's purposes. Let us see what his comments are.

At the beginning of the book Nick makes the following long statement:

Only Gatsby, the man who gives his name to this book, was exempt from my reaction - Gatsby, who represented everything for which I have an unaffected scorn. If personality is an unbroken series of successful gestures, then there was something gorgeous about him, some heightened sensitivity to the promises of life, as if he were related to one of those intricate machines that register earthquakes ten thousand miles away. This responsiveness had nothing to do with that flabby impressionability which is dignified under the name of the "creative temperament" - it was an extraordinary gift for hope, a romantic readiness such as I have never found in any other person and which it is not likely I shall ever find

again. No - Gatsby turned out all right at the end; it is what preyed on Gatsby, what foul dust floated in the wake of his dreams that temporarily closed out my interest in the abortive sorrows and short-winded elations of men.¹⁹

We shall make our examination of The Great Gatsby in the light of this passage, to see what is meant by Gatsby's "romantic readiness" which made him turn "out all right at the end" and to understand fully just what constitutes the "foul dust" floating "in the wake of his dreams."

Jay Gatsby is an incorrigible dreamer, a first-class romantic. At an early age he developed a childish, adolescent self-image, and when we first meet him this self-image has not changed in any way, nor has Gatsby ever seen any reason to change it. Nick discusses this as follows:

The truth was that Jay Gatsby of West Egg, Long Island, sprang from his Platonic conception of himself. He was a son of God - a phrase which, if it means anything, means just that - and he must be about his Father's business, the service of a vast, vulgar and meretricious beauty. So he invented just the sort of Jay Gatsby that a seventeen-year-old boy would be likely to invent, and to this conception he was faithful to the end.²⁰

With this "conception" of himself Gatsby lives a life as the supreme romantic seeker, an American Ponce de Leon, searching after some fountain of perpetual youth and perfection. In keeping with this romantic self-image he invents a past for himself made up of a fantastic concoction of half-truths and incredible imaginings. At one point in the book he delivers this mythic "life story" to Nick.²¹ He implies that his family is rich and aristocratic and that as a result he has a great deal of money. Then he goes on to describe a life as "a young rajah in all the capitals of Europe," as a collector, as a big game

hunter, as a painter, as an Oxford man, and as a great warrior decorated by "every Allied government . . . - even Montenegro, little Montenegro down on the Adriatic Sea!"²² He produces just enough articles of proof to convince for the moment even the skeptical Nick of the truth of what he says. Those more gullible than Nick do not even need such "proof" to invent all manner of speculations about Gatsby's past. "'I'll bet he killed a man,'"²³ says one of the innumerable guests at his weekly house parties. As Nick points out with regard to this, it was "testimony to the romantic speculation he inspired that there were whispers about him from those who had found little that it was necessary to whisper about in this world."²⁴ He can inspire people this way, because he takes his own self-image, fictitious as it is, very seriously; he even believes in it in the literal sense at times. Nick suggests this in a passage devoted to Gatsby's real past:

But his heart was in a constant, turbulent riot. The most grotesque and fantastic conceits haunted him in his bed at night. A universe of ineffable gaudiness spun itself out in his brain while the clock ticked on the washstand and the moon soaked with wet light his tangled clothes upon the floor. Each night he added to the pattern of his fancies until drowsiness closed down upon some vivid scene with an oblivious embrace. For a while these reveries provided an outlet for his imagination; they were a satisfactory hint of the unreality of reality, a promise that the rock of the world was founded securely on a fairy's wing.²⁵

A part of Nick which remembers and cherishes the world of the child must approve this quality of supreme romanticism in Gatsby. It is this that he sees as "all right."

Before we can understand how the "foul dust" comes in here, it is necessary that we examine in specific terms just what it is that

Gatsby wishes to achieve. It is one of the ironies of the novel that Gatsby's remarkable self-image has been created for one end, the same end towards which his "extraordinary gift for hope," his "romantic readiness" is directed--the possession of the merely mortal, albeit very beautiful, Daisy Buchanan. She is the green light out towards the sea to which Gatsby is beckoning in that unforgettable scene when Nick and the reader first see him. Five years before this time he had lost Daisy to Tom Buchanan when, as a poor soldier, he was unable to keep her through lack of funds. At that point all his romantic dreaming became centered on winning her back, and money, the thing for which she refused him, became for Gatsby the golden key that would some day open his paradise to him. With money he would change the past.

But to get the money necessary to construct his "universe of ineffable gaudiness" Gatsby has had to become a prohibition bootlegger of the grand type, working with people like Meyer Wolfsheim, "the man who fixed the World's Series back in 1919."²⁶ As much as this bothers Nick, however, it bothers him less than the people Gatsby associates with socially, feels he must associate with in order to gain access into Daisy's world. These are the shallow, thrill-hungry New Yorkers who descend uninvited on his home every weekend to eat his food, drink his liquor and generally have a very inebriated time. He tolerates these leeches and their "corruption" and conceals "his incorruptible dream"²⁷ from them in the hope that Daisy might some night be among them. But all these things are only minor particles in the "foul dust" cloud floating "in the wake of his dreams." The greatest mass of the

cloud is made up of exactly the thing to which Gatsby attaches his dreams--Daisy and the world she represents.

This world is finally much more corrupt and foul than the world of those who attend Gatsby's parties or that of Meyer Wolfsheim and company. It is the brutal, cruel and hypocritical world of the American rich, as shallow and sick as all the others, but hiding its illness under a cloak of money and letting its members drift "here and there unrestfully wherever people played polo and were rich together."²⁸ This is the world of men like Tom Buchanan who reached "an acute limited excellence at twenty-one"²⁹ on the football field thanks to his body, "a body capable of enormous leverage - a cruel body."³⁰ Except for his body and his money he has absolutely nothing else to recommend him. His mind is a silly affair, fastening onto ridiculous ideas and prejudices in the vain hope of convincing itself that it exists. Perhaps this quality of utter ignorance makes him a little less blameworthy than Daisy who does have a mind but has perverted it until it serves as nothing more than a crutch for her false image as a woman of some worth. One brilliant passage in which Nick reveals to the reader Daisy's hypocrisy and corruption is worth quoting in its entirety:

"You see I think everything's terrible anyhow," she went on in a convinced way. "Everybody thinks so - the most advanced people. And I know. I've been everywhere and seen everything and done everything." Her eyes flashed around her in a defiant way, rather like Tom's, and she laughed with thrilling scorn. "Sophisticated - God, I'm sophisticated!"

The instant her voice broke off ceasing to compel my attention, my belief, I felt the basic insincerity of what she had said. It made me uneasy, as though the whole evening had been a trick of

some sort to exact a contributory emotion from me. I waited, and sure enough, in a moment she looked at me with an absolute smirk on her lovely face, as if she had asserted her membership in a rather distinguished secret society to which she and Tom belonged.³¹

And this is the woman that Gatsby wants, a cynical, hypocritical snob as unlike him as sincerity is unlike insincerity! But though this is the Daisy Nick sees and the reader sees, it is not the Daisy Gatsby sees. For he sees his own image of her, and in that image she is as perfectly good as she is in fact perfectly bad. That she gave him up for Tom and his money five years earlier does nothing to hurt Gatsby's picture of her; he simply adds money to that picture as the final perfect ingredient. This is illustrated later in the novel. After Gatsby has managed to meet Daisy again through Nick's efforts on his behalf, he and Nick and the Buchanans are starting out on a trip to the city; Daisy says something that elicits a comment from Nick:

"She's got an indiscreet voice," I remarked. "It's full of - " I hesitated.

"Her voice is full of money," he said suddenly.

That was it. I'd never understood before. It was full of money - that was the inexhaustible charm that rose and fell in it, the jingle of it, the cymbal's song of it High in a white palace the king's daughter, the golden girl³²

What is significant about this passage is that while Gatsby has the insight into the origin of Daisy's charming voice--money, it is typical of him not to see it for the enormous shallowness it indicates but simply as the golden key that will open the "white palace of the king's daughter, the golden girl" He never really sees the Buchanans for what they are, as "careless people" who "smashed up things and creatures and then retreated back into their money or their vast carelessness, or whatever it was that kept them together, and let other

people clean up the mess they had made"33

The "foul dust" that is the world around Gatsby, to which even his dream pays ultimate tribute, finds a beautiful symbolic expression in the novel in the "valley of ashes" that one must pass through going to and from West Egg and New York City. Looking down on this "valley of ashes" is a large billboard advertising spectacles; the advertisement depicts nothing more than the huge eyes of one Doctor T. J. Eckleburg. Within this "wasteland," brooded over by its indifferent god, lives Tom Buchanan's mistress, Myrtle Wilson, and her husband. It is here that the climactic event of the novel takes place when Daisy, who is driving Gatsby's car, runs down and kills Myrtle. Later, Wilson, thanks to Tom Buchanan believing that Gatsby was at the wheel of the death car and directly responsible for his wife's death, sets out from the "wasteland" to avenge her. In this way Fitzgerald at once connects Tom and Daisy directly with the "foul dust" represented by the ashes and gives poetic utterance to the truth that it is the very object of Gatsby's dream that is the eventual destroyer of that dream and of Gatsby himself.

What we have, then, is Gatsby who is "all right" but who is forced to live out his life and dreams in an environment of "foul dust." But having understood what this means on the narrative level, we can now go on to something more significant. For Gatsby stands for more in the novel than his own particular dream; he is also a mythological figure, a twentieth-century rendition of the American Adam, the incarnation of the American Dream. This idea emerges clearly from the

narrative itself. At one point in the novel when Nick and Gatsby are discussing Daisy's former love for Tom the following passage occurs:

Suddenly he came out with a curious remark.

"In any case," he said, "it was just personal."

What could you make of that, except to suspect some intensity in his conception of the affair that couldn't be measured?³⁴

That is it exactly; Gatsby's conception of everything is of an intensity greater than the conceptions of other people, for he is a mythological figure. "'Mythic' characters are impersonal," comments one critic on *The Great Gatsby*. "There is no distinction between their public and their private lives."³⁵ Gatsby is the American Adam of old, now in the dress of a twentieth-century man, still keeping his ancient Dream inviolate. One critic, Richard Chase, discusses this idea in the following manner:

But he is also of the company of Natty Bumppo, Huck Finn, and Melville's Ishmael. For although he is treated with more irony than they, as befits a later worldliness, he shares their ideal of innocence, escape, and the purely personal code of conduct. Like them he derives his values not from the way of the world but from an earlier pastoral ideal.

But Gatsby lived too late. He is made to die sordidly in his swimming pool, shot by a garage proprietor. He cannot, like Huck Finn, light out for the territory. He cannot achieve even the dubious rebirth of Ishmael in the far Pacific. He cannot die full of years, facing the setting sun, and attended by the primeval prairie gods, like Natty Bumppo.³⁶

It is "too late" for Gatsby, because there is no longer any place in America for the American Adam. Nick hints at this near the end of the novel when, musing about his home in the mid-west, he goes on to say:

I see now that this has been a story of the West, after all - Tom and Gatsby, Daisy and Jordan and I, were all Westerners, and perhaps we possessed some deficiency in common which made us subtly unadaptable to Eastern life.³⁷

Traditionally the American Dream is associated with the west and the frontier. But in the twentieth century this frontier no longer exists in the geographical sense, and the institutionalized society traditionally associated with the east is now as much a part of California as of New York. In fact, the west in many ways has more of the traits than the east of the way of life the American Adam has always shunned--a way of life involving puritan dogmatism and a communal insistence that the individual conform to the rules of institutionalized society. In the east, at least, people tend to be sophisticated enough to be able to smile at the more rigid demands society makes upon them and thereby achieve a kind of freedom from those demands. The result in our time is that the traditional American Adam type, the man who wishes to escape the personal lack of freedom of a rigid society and to achieve for himself the promise of the American Dream--complete self-fulfillment as an individual--begins to look to the east where the sophistication so long associated with institutionalized life and considered as one of its great evils is now the promise of freedom from that life. But he is from the west and not the east, and he is therefore incapable of this sophistication which requires an eastern upbringing to achieve. He remains "subtly unadaptable to Eastern life." At this point three things can happen. He can, like Daisy, Jordan and Tom, succumb to the worst aspect of sophistication--indifference. Or, like Nick, he can learn from the east and return home edified. Or, like Gatsby, he can retain his basic innocence, keep his dream inviolate and be crucified by the east. For although the east offers a certain

kind of individual freedom in the twentieth century that the west does not, it is still antagonistic to the American dreamer of the Gatsby variety who will not compromise his vision. Thus, the American Adam no longer has a place in America. The "foul dust" is even more than the Daisys and Toms of Gatsby's world; it is the very age which spawns such types, the twentieth century, an age that forces the American Adam to compromise his innocence and goodness by associating with gangsters and dreamless people and finally chokes him to death in its dirty ashes if he refuses to compromise enough.

But we can perhaps go even further than this in identifying the "foul dust." Nick, musing about what Gatsby's feelings must have been just before he was shot to death by Wilson, says: "He must have looked up at an unfamiliar sky through frightening leaves and shivered as he found what a grotesque thing a rose is and how raw the sunlight was upon the scarcely created grass."³⁸ What Fitzgerald is saying here is that finally the "foul dust" is simple reality, the reality which Gatsby can never change no matter how grand his dream nor how hard he tries, the reality against which his dreams must inevitably smash up. For Gatsby, with his timeless, immortal dream, is still a mortal, existing in time and very subject to it. This, of course, is something he refuses to acknowledge himself. At one point Nick cautions him:

"I wouldn't ask too much of her," I ventured. "You can't repeat the past."

"Can't repeat the past?" he cried incredulously. "Why of course you can!"³⁹

But as everyone knows, you cannot change the movement of time.

Gatsby does not see this, because he lives completely within the world of his dreams, dreams which ask too much of the real world and the mere mortals in it. Daisy certainly cannot give him what he wants, but ends by helplessly crying: "'Oh, you want too much! . . . I can't help what's past.'" ⁴⁰ And nothing else can "help what's past" either. By thus insisting on changing the very structure of the real world, Gatsby's dream and Gatsby himself must perish.

As we have seen, however, Gatsby's dream is the American Dream. Thus, as John Henry Raleigh has noted, "the novel would suggest finally that not only had the American dream been corrupted but that it was, in part anyway, necessarily corrupted, for it asked too much. Nothing of this earth, even the most beautiful of earthly objects, could be anything but a perversion of it." ⁴¹ Marius Bewley makes the same point in slightly different terms when he says that "the essence of the American dream whose tragedy Gatsby is enacting is that it lives in a past and a future that never existed, and is helpless in the present that does." ⁴² Fitzgerald's final statement, then, is that to be an American dreamer in any time is necessarily to be destroyed in the end, for it is a dream so incredible that it can never be fulfilled in this world.

Perhaps once, he says at the end of the book, for one moment it achieved something like fulfillment:

And as the moon rose higher the inessential houses began to melt away until gradually I became aware of the old island here that flowered once for Dutch sailors' eyes - a fresh, green breast of the new world. Its vanished trees, the trees that had made way for Gatsby's house, had once pandered in whispers to the last and greatest of all human dreams; for a transitory enchanted moment man must have held his breath in the presence of this continent,

compelled into an aesthetic contemplation he neither understood nor desired, face to face for the last time in history with something commensurate to his capacity for wonder.⁴³

But it was over the moment the Dutch ship touched the shore and the Dutch sailors found the inevitable "frightening leaves" and "grotesque" roses of reality, and it has never come back.

Yet, and we must always come back to this other of the two ideas Fitzgerald kept opposed in his "first-rate intelligence," it is worse not to dream at all than to dream as Gatsby does. For dreaming is the affirmation of life through hope, the wish and the will that man's "capacity for wonder" has more meaning than his capacity for indifference. Gatsby exists for that affirmation alone; for that reason he is "worth the whole damn bunch put together,"⁴⁴ and is truly "great."

Fitzgerald's popularity as a writer began to decline with the close of the Jazz Age in 1929, the year in which somebody "blundered and the most expensive orgy in history was over."⁴⁵ Even the publication of Tender is the Night in 1934, a book that is easily the stylistic equal of The Great Gatsby and a better story than most of his works, did not regain for him much of his former reputation. By this time America was deep in the Great Depression, and though Tender is the Night is as severe a denunciation of the "horror and waste" of the twenties as anything in her literature, America wanted to forget those years, just as a decade earlier she had wanted to forget the Progressive Era and the war.

Nonetheless Fitzgerald never again matched his achievement in The Great Gatsby, never again counterpointed and related his two

opposing ideas of America so perfectly. The story of Dick Diver's deterioration in Tender is the Night, a deterioration similar to his own as Fitzgerald saw it, is told with a precision and objectivity that is the keynote of all his highest art; yet it lacks something The Great Gatsby possesses. In Jay Gatsby's tragic tale, dark and sad though it is, there is a spirit of hope typical of all great tragedy. In Tender is the Night this spirit of hope is gone, replaced by a subtle note of bitterness. As in his early writing his subjective optimism predominated so now in his later work objective cynicism is the stronger attitude; the time has passed when he could keep the two in creative tension.

Many feel that in the last one or two years of his life Fitzgerald was "pasting together" his "crack-up" enough to begin writing a novel as good, if not better than The Great Gatsby. But because The Last Tycoon is unfinished much of this must be regarded as sheer speculation in which we shall not indulge here.

In 1941 he died, and one of the most meteoric of writing lives was over. One must mourn this death even now, for Fitzgerald was still a young man who might have gone on to say many more fine things. Yet there is a poetic correctness about his death in this year that leaves one with what is almost a sense of satisfaction, a feeling that the Fitzgerald legend "turned out all right at the end." As his Hollywood friend Bud Schulberg wrote just after his death, "it seems almost too contrived that Scott should have chosen this year in which to die. For it is altogether fitting that Scott's career should begin where one

world war ends and end where another begins."⁴⁶ "His life was an allegory of life between two world wars," says Mark Schorer, "and his gift lay in the ability to discover figures which could enact the allegory to the full."⁴⁷

Today, Fitzgerald has regained his rightful place as a man of letters. He is no longer read, except perhaps by the very immature and the very nostalgic, in the shallow manner of the twenties and the thirties--as the golden boy speaking of the golden girl seen through martini-inspired eyes. Now he is read for the great universal statement which all his work struggles to make and which The Great Gatsby in particular makes with consummate dynamism. "Fitzgerald's theme in its full complexity," says Charles Weir Jr., " - the futility of effort and the necessity to struggle - seems to me a noble one and one which perhaps forms the basis of all great tragedy."⁴⁸ This, therefore, if we are to label him as anything in the realm of the arts, is what we must call Fitzgerald--a great American tragedian.

CONCLUSION

At the end of our discussion in Chapter II we left the post-war intellectuals roving the streets of Paris, their new-found home. As the subsequent examination of their works has shown, however, it was never really their home, nor was anywhere else on the other side of the Atlantic. All the while they were developing and living the international myth of the "lost generation," their main concern was America. Like the Russian expatriates of the nineteenth century, their estrangement from their native land had many of the qualities of a lovers' separation, the result of a lovers' quarrel which started sometime between 1914 and 1918. It was as though they could not live with America and could not live without her. The great value of expatriation for them was that it gave them a chance to see their separation from contemporary American life in perspective, to examine the quarrel in an objective manner. As a result of this examination they were eventually able to make their peace with America, not the America of the Puritan and the Philistine (they would always be at war with that world), but the real America, the nation that had been founded on a dream of freedom and equality for all individuals. In the middle and late twenties many of them began, like John Dos Passos, to return to America in body as well as spirit; the prodigal sons were coming home.

Like their biblical counterpart, too, they were welcomed rather than chastised. The reason for this was that contemporary American society had always been closer to them in spirit than they might have

guessed. In his book of collected lectures on the literature of the twenties entitled The Literary Fallacy, Bernard De Voto severely denounces those critics of the same literature who assume that the literature of the "lost generation" is in some way a barometric guide to understanding the basic spirit of the American people at large in this period. Yet it is just such a guide, and a very good one too. De Voto never once asks himself why it was that such unmitigated criticism of the American "booboisie" as that of Sinclair Lewis and H. L. Mencken should become the favourite reading matter of thousands of members of that very social class. Nor does he ever wonder why F. Scott Fitzgerald should have become a national hero. Nor does he ever consider why the Hemingway character and the legend of Papa himself should have so dominated the public imagination. The answer to all these questions is that the "lost generation" writers were only part of a greater "lost generation" that numbered most Americans in its ranks. What is finally so significant about these writers is, in the words of Alfred Kazin, "that they were able to convince others that in writing the story of their generation, they were in some sense describing the situation of contemporary humanity."¹ In their feeling that the old political, social and moral ideals of America and of the world at large were now meaningless and dead, they were reflecting the conscious or unconscious sentiments of most people, Americans in particular, in the post-war decade.

They did more than reflect attitudes, however; they also taught. They taught their nation and their world something very great and very

wise. They told them that history and society, dreams and victories, and all the other accoutrements of the human condition are meaningful only when they are closely linked to a deep respect for the individual human being, that they had become meaningless by 1918 precisely because America and the world had forgotten the individual in the mass age of the twentieth century. They tried on their own part to revive and keep alive the individual's worth in this new age, and their expatriation, mistakes, excesses, failures and triumphs were all testimony to the seriousness with which they took their self-imposed task. Disillusionment was there certainly, but in the end there was new vision too. It was the vision embodied in the Nick Adamses, the Jay Gatsbys and the Mary Frenches of their literature, the vision of the old American Adam maintaining his identity and his integrity, whatever the cost, in the radically new and more terrifying frontier of the twentieth century.

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