CHAPTER I

THE GENESIS OF AMERICAN DREAM AND DISILLUSIONMENT

Romanticism has been an overwhelming European phenomenon, the paternity and nature of which have engaged the ingenuity of many historians for generations. The diversity of definitions provides an inkling to the complexity and amorphous nature of its semantic concept. Literateurs ranging from Plato to the most contemporaneous, can be collected under the same banner though the intensity and proportion of the component "romanticism" varies. Essentially, then, romanticism defies definition and geographic limitation, for the phenomenon has come to mean different attitudes of mind, personality and approach to art at different times. Similar confusion surrounds the word "romantic" which has become a will of the wisp, another source of annoyance to philosophers and historians of ideas.

Arthur Lovejoy, the eminent historian of ideas, suggests that the word "romanticism" must be used in a plural sense in order to reduce the uncertainty of connotation:
The word 'romantic' has come to mean so many things that, by itself, it means nothing. It has ceased to perform the function of a verbal sign. ... What is needed is that any study of the subject should begin with a recognition of a prima-facie plurality of Romanticisms, of possibly quite distinct thought-complexes, a number of which may appear in one country. ... Only after these fundamental thought-factors or emotive strains in it are clearly discriminated and fairly exhaustively enumerated, shall we be in a position to judge of the degree of its affinity with other complexes to which the same name has been applied, to see precisely what tacit preconceptions or controlling motives or explicit contentions were common to any two or more of them, and wherein they manifested distinct and divergent tendencies.

Confused and incomplete definitions of romanticism have usually been the misleading sources doomed to failure and frustration.

In England romanticism has been connected with old romances, high-flown sentiments and exaggeration, qualities diametrically opposed to sober and rational view of life. A romance prefers to deal with action, free from the restraints of reality, free from interrelationship with the other characters that populate the fiction, free from the social organization they are placed in. The characters tend to approximate with abstractions or symbolically represent some archetypes. A romance is less concerned with the protagonist's patriarchal pedigree and more with his exploits, his suffering, survival, restoration of values or regeneration.
As Gillian Beer has put it, "the romance concentrates on ideal possibilities," and absorbs the reader into experience which is otherwise unattainable. It frees us from our inhibitions and preoccupations by drawing us entirely into its own world—a world which is never fully equivalent to our own although it must remind us of it if we are to understand it at all.\(^2\)

While amplifying the reader's experience, by introducing the ideal, a romance releases the reader from the pressures of the mundane and the immediate. A romance like "all fiction, frees us into an imaginative world."\(^3\)

The imaginative world created in a romance, Hawthorne opined, is

a neutral territory, somewhere between the real world and fairy-land, where the Actual and the Imaginary may meet, and each imbue itself with the nature of the other.\(^4\)

The neutral territory in most American fiction, in effect, is the borderland between primitivism and civilization, a mental landscape where the actual and the imaginary intermingle. That is the locale, Henry James reiterates, where experience is liberated, so to speak; experience disengaged, disembroiled, disencumbered, exempt from the conditions that we usually know to attach to it and, if we wish so to put the matter, drag upon it, and operating in a medium which relieves it, in a particular interest, of the inconvenience of a related, a measurable state, a state subject to all our vulgar communities.\(^5\)
This experience leads the readers "to the circuit of life that passes through the real and the ideal, through the directly known and the mysterious or the indirectly known, through doing and feeling."6

Columbus' letter to king Philip II is simply not a report of achievement but a veritable record of romantic anticipation. The land he touched was nothing short of a romance borderland where the imaginary and the actual have collided. The founding fathers were drawn by romantic tales of a wonderful life of adventure and freedom amidst plenty. The "Letters Home" in turn evoked frantic response to migrate over to the New World, necessitating further territorial expansion.

In England and Germany romanticism appeared as a form of revolt against the neo-classical aesthetics, projecting the superiority of nature over art. It was assumed that romantic spirit reveals itself through actions "spontaneous, unpremeditated, untouched by reflection or design, and free from the bondage of social convention."7 Thus, following nature has become a precept by preferring the irregular over the regular art, discarding refinement by the process of eliminating for a type of primitivism. The term Romantic was applied to landscapes and scenes in nature to describe mountains and forests, wild places and groves, associated with the romances of the Middle Ages and the
Gothic Novel. A "return to nature" implied a temperamental change in the mental attitude, a change from the mechanistic to an organic view. A keen "observation of nature led to the recognition of its dynamic, organic character with an ever-changing life of its own, as varied in mood as man himself." 8

Nature is found pristine, ethical, and moral qualities are attributed to it and then glorified as having restorative powers. Tragedy stems from man's straying from his innocent, idyllic "first social state" to a contaminated and avaricious civilization.

Rousseau maintained that decadence stems from civilization, particularly from the ownership of property, which resulted in inequality and thence envy and depravity. His suggested remedy was the famous 'return to nature,' to what he called the 'first social state,' a rudimentary communal organization based on sharing. . . . It led to a widespread idealization of 'innocent' society in the 'natural' state and of 'primitive' man, although these terms were interpreted in a hazy fashion. 9

The most obvious quality of the American Romanticism stems from patriotic exultation. There have been three dominant themes—the idea of sublimity, the idea of plenitude and the idea of dynamism. All is active, every thing is in abundance and all is vast—these certainly are the very attributes of deity. Everything was considered, as Jonathan Edwards did, "emanation of the sweet benevolence of Jesus Christ." American landscape itself appeared to
them as the reflection of God's general operation in and through the universe. In the wilderness of America, civilized social virtue was to rest on the concept of Christian brotherhood, but the competitive principle had led men to abuse the gifts of God and to ignore the fraternal principle. In the wilderness, brotherhood is an overwhelming concept, ignoring the seats and skins. These admirable virtues establish a solidarity of man with nature.

America was considered an asylum by two thirds of the pilgrims to the New World who had no country of their belonging. They were wanderers, driven by pinching penury, religious segregation and persecution. Religiously they were individuals with a consecrated belief in the importance of the individual soul, dangerously attacked by totalitarian governments in the European countries. The Pilgrim leaders on Mayflower drafted an agreement to restrain the rebellious members of their company who might become more untractable ashore. This preliminary plan of government based on the social compact idea, found in the separatist Church covenants, set up a "Civil body politic" to frame just and equal laws. The elevation of Land to the Primacy in England combined with increasing economic difficulties, encouraged an influx of new settlers.

Land was the hall mark of quality and a traditional
basis of wealth, rank and political power. Possession of land was determined by the biological accident of birth. Poverty in the European countries became an incentive and an obstacle for migration. Thousands sold themselves to gain passage for a number of years of service in America. The basic attractions in America for the young and healthy, energetic and courageous, were land and freedom of opportunity. Land was plentiful and cheap, shortage of labour became an advantage to those who wanted to change professions. Even in the colonies founded by dissenting religious groups, desire for land seemed to have been the primary motivation. The new-comers deliberately quit their familiar lands to commence a new life in a strange and distant land. They learnt to bury their old feuds to live together in the New World for mutual benefit. America seemed to these battered Europeans, a haven to regenerate them, as a result of which a new mode of living and a new social system were available to them. Migration to America was to them a metamorphosis from the lists of the poor to the venerable citizens of a country, from involuntary idleness, from servile dependence on the manorial lord and useless labour to the reward of ample subsistence.

In Europe men were many and land was scarce whereas in America land was abundant and men were few. The old laws governing the compact European societies, the traditional
methods of cultivation were no more relevant in the new environment. Cultural creativity lost its appeal to the settlers in America, for they burdened themselves with the task of clearing a continent—exploration had become a trait. Inherited titles and class distinctions seemed suspect; a man's worth was to be determined by his own skills, his ability to better his own lot, where there were no external controls. The opportunity to rise in social status vertically was possible in an open society rather than in older stratified societies.

Exceptional opportunities for social and economic betterment to the small propertyed individual were aplenty in America during the earlier phases of settlement, because of the hitherto untapped natural resources on the ever-expanding frontier. The unbridled passion of every frontiersman whether driven by "deficiency motivation" or "abundance motivation," is economic betterment. Every pioneer has a gambling instinct in moving to the unexplored wilderness—lure of adventure, extreme optimism and readiness to mount misfortune and adversity, and to gain satisfaction and joy.

As traditional practices were eliminated and adjustments were made to meet the new situations, the culture of the frontiersmen altered, new behavioural patterns emerged.
As man struggled to civilize the wilderness, he more or less lost his innate culture and gained in brutality: the refinements of the transplants got degraded and tended to become primitive. They had shed the "tradition-directedness" of the stabilized European society and become "inner-directed" in seeking individual gratification of success, without any regard to the welfare of the society.

From Colonial days, the merchants defied the British regulations, people demanded freedom from the governmental interference in their enterprises. They were a law unto themselves. This misconceived "rugged individualism" among the Americans led to an unhesitating acceptance of "lynching" as a means of rendering wild justice though this meant taking law into their own hands. This open defiance of the establishment might reflect the germs of the frontier civilization, as infected with germs of primitivism.

The Dutch pioneers were evidently half-savage on the Hudson. The Swedish on the Delaware seemed not only wild but were guilty of debauchery, drunkenness, lawlessness and were more irregular than the Indians. Kentucky was referred to as "Rogue's Harbor"—fights were very common, where each combatant sought to aim his antagonist by biting off a nose or gouging out an eye. Beyond Mississippi, profanity, tobacco spitting and drunkenness and carrying a
knife were common sights—more so because of the absence of law. The bulk of the advancing population which actually subdued the West was the small propertied farmers, ranchers and entrepreneurs—of very different breed and outlook than the squatters and the outlaws.

These subduers of the Wild West had a firm desire to transfer to the West their Eastern cultural institutions—they would plant a civilization with their schools and churches, newspapers and libraries. They went into the woods with a Bible, an axe and some newspapers. These frontiersmen zealously contributed and championed the cause of liberal education. Thus, two streaks can be easily discovered on the frontier—peoples approximated to barbarism as far as the physical wants are concerned and were cultural evolutionists in their leisure.

These Westerners who lived in nature and uprooted trees everyday as mercilessly as enemies are vanquished, had no supine love for the romantic effusions of the popular writers. They preferred something "real", something glorifying the new moral values—individualism, democracy, perseverance, heroism and generosity. As the social environment is less restrained than in the tradition-minded England or Europe, innovations are more acceptable in America, as is reflected in the literature.
The protagonist in American literature might not answer to the Aristotelian prescription. The American romancer-novelist preferred to envelop the pedigree of his protagonist in mystery. His character and his actions were worth noticing than his parentage. In most American fiction, the protagonist sets out into the world as in a romance, undertakes an exploit, suffers fights and triumphs or regenerates. Quest and ordeals are inevitable to the protagonists, for he intends proving his worth, to establish himself, to discover a belonging to himself. In a sense the exploits of the founding fathers on the frontier precariously existing in raw-nature, exposing themselves and over-coming the danger of the natives from whom they grabbed land, stand out as models in American fiction. The exploits of the Alger hero, creating and popularizing the myth of "rags to riches" is a natural and logical development. Most of the characters in American literature tend to over-rate their abilities and undertake a quest which might prove tragic. The quixotic urge to undertake an adventure, often fatal, has been a part of the American myth. Each character is obsessed with consideration of what Tocqueville shrewdly observed, "contemplation of a very puny object, namely, himself. If he ever looks higher, he perceives only the immense form of society at large or the still more imposing aspect of mankind. . . . what lies between is a void."
The "self" in American life and literature has an enlarged conception, because of the unabated sense of individualism. The adventurous frontier life governed by the gentlemanly code of behaviour has become infectious. The unrealizable has to be realized, and the protagonist has to gain what has been considered as "the reality of somewhere else." The institution of economic romanticism for the Americans became equivalent to the ideal of the European aristocratic tradition, demanding readiness from each individual in the martial form of life for a return of robust social stature. The fictional protagonists are an over-confident lot, each one aware of his separation from and superiority over others. The circumstances of his life or the situations created by the novelist may smack of commonness and look insignificant. There might be no battles fought and no empires crumbling in the narrative but the American protagonist has a mature and sensitive awareness to the problems or the promises of life.

The protagonists are driven by their ego-ideals and are governed by perceptual consciousness wherein the individual becomes aware of his separateness between his self and all those external objects in relation to which he has to act in this world. Man has to define himself and is alone responsible for his existence.
Individuality is what makes each one different from the others; and individuality is gained only by entering into relations with others.\textsuperscript{11}

By entering into relations with the outside world, the protagonist might retain his ego-ideal, perhaps super-imposed by romantic conception. The romantic self is a free spirit ecstatically denying all repressions to gain freedom and joy. "The romantic ideal of freedom is a form of dis-relation-ship of the self from other selves."\textsuperscript{12}

The root of the romantic ideal can be traced to the protagonist's innocence. His inchoate innocence has a moral capital in the promise of the frontier adventurism, and the romances of Adler as much as in Emerson's clarion call for self-reliance. The vistas of hope, sheer manliness and the open road, evoked by the historical American Dream, has introduced the cult of adolescence in American fiction. The adolescent, as Ihab Hassan puts it,

knows the urgency of instincts and requires the most exacting morality, he partakes of the past and looks to the future; he insists on freedom and seeks authority. . . . He appears in fact, at once innocent and guilty; hopeful and disillusioned, Arcadian and Utopian, empirical and idealistic.\textsuperscript{13}

II

The dualism in the behaviour of the American, the schism in his personality, can be traced back to the
schizophrenia generated by the unsetlement of Europe and the Puritanic pilgrims seeking refuge in the American continent. The Puritans sought to purify England of the remnants of Catholicism. The hostility from the Anglican conformists to the Puritan unwillingness to toe their line of thinking forced them to wander away to Holland, and then to set sail to the New World. The Congregational Puritans believed in the extreme powers of God, in the predestination of man to heaven or hell, and in the teachings of the Bible. They believed that a Church member must have a religious experience in which God would reveal himself and grant salvation. The Calvinists insisted on the depravity of human nature and asserted the right of private judgment and individual experience. One has to determine for oneself whether or not one is elected to the Grace of God from the working of that Grace within himself.

Thus the British Puritans, distanced from their native culture and imperilled by the extirpation of Twelve Years Truce between Spain and Netherlands and fearing Inquisition, negotiated with England for a Patent to plant a colony in America with the Virgenia Co. The first batch of the British puritans reached Plymouth from Holland. The Dutch protestant theologian Arminius opposed the Calvinistic views on Predestination whose adherents known as the Arminians had considerable sway over the American puritan
precept of "good work" bringing them closer to God. Another stream of extreme Puritanism, advocating "the Covenant of Grace" and opposing the "Covenant of works" was propagated by Anne Hutchinson, based on a direct personal apprehension of divine grace and love. Her views, loosely known as "Antinomianism" called for minimizing the role of Orthodox clergy.

Whether the Puritans in New England were swayed by Arminianism or Antinomianism, they had the immediate excruciating problem of existence on the frontier, threatened by the wild nature and the incursions of the natives whose lands they forcibly occupied depriving them of their livelihood and annihilating their peaceful existence in nature for over thirty thousand years. Religious beliefs and activity served as vital factors in providing group activity, while simultaneously strengthening individual's sense of belonging to the community. During the Middle Ages in Western Europe, unity through religion became a counterforce to social disintegration. The Church or Cathedral used to be the focal point in the community life—thus creating an emotional base for cultural affinity. The formation of religious states and the Crusades, stand testimony to the emotional bonds of human beings with religion, which must have inspired the American settlers.
They had the Medieval romances before them which displayed an uncanny awareness of the interplay between history and myth. Young men trained in the three-fold virtues of courage in battle, indifference to the physical comforts and generosity in heart, were conferred Knighthood. A Knight, as in Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* was held in great respect, for, he was not only a protector of the weak who could not defend themselves but also an up-holder of the religion. The romance which flourished in oral tradition, was a racy story, narrating the successful encounters of a warrior-hero over a formidable enemy, a dragon or a wizard, thus help restore peace and prosperity to his community.

As an off-shoot, the "Courtly or the chivalric" romances emerged, mainly dealing with stories of love and adventure. *The Lays of Breton*, for example, profusely deal with such stories that depended upon the Arthurian tradition. Prince Arthur was a legendary phenomenon around whom many fables were woven—a hero worthy of being celebrated as an ideal of manhood. His exploits were recorded and handed down to successive generations with an obvious intention of shaping young men in Arthur's mould. Arthur's court, his Round Table, exploits of his Knights, courtly love and their social behaviour became the core of many a romance. The courtly code, Gillian Beer observed,
subverted the values of feudal society by its emphasis on love without bargains, its fantasy of female dominance, its individualism and its paradoxical legalism which piquantly appropriated the language of authority while undermining authoritarian assumptions.  

A happy ending was a typical romance device the hero was reconciled, regenerated or happily married after his hazardous adventure. The religious strain in such romances as *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* was conspicuous, along with other strands like the anthropological quest pattern of the Grail legend.

If romance introduces the listeners to a wonderland where reality is relegated into forgetfulness, concentrating on the ideal possibilities and evoking admiration, for the Puritans migrating over to the New World has similar correspondences. If the world of romance is a borderland between reality and myth, the wild and virgin continent loomed as large as infinity. If a romance is characterized by the lack of logistic links in the narrative, many incongruities and inconsistencies appear in the settlement of America. In John F. Callahan's words, 

From the beginning those malcontents who sought to 'civilize' the new world set in motion through the contradictory nature of their journey a schizophrenia from which American history and literature have been unable to escape. This divided reality they owed to the baggage they brought with them—a baggage of the mind.
The Puritans in their homeland were persecuted and damned and they in turn damned others for their very survival. They fell back on the hypocritical Calvinistic theory of election on the new continent. For the sake of survival, they systematically settled on other's soil, frightened away, defeated and massacred the Indians. The visitors insisted and tried to establish their superiority by resorting to Calvinistic modes by fervently talking in terms of God or Satan, good or evil, white or black, village or nature.

Eighteenth century philosophers were convinced that ignorance and superstition can be banished only if men were free to enquire about all things in conformity with the invariable laws of Nature and the Will of God. They discovered no discrepancy in the laws of Nature and the Will of God. After creating the universe on a rational plan, God had abandoned it for human habitation and control. Man was able to achieve this for the beneficent intentions of God are revealed in the open book of Nature, verifiable by the accumulated knowledge and wisdom of man. For the eighteenth century philosophers, the universe looked less mysterious and the efficacy of human reason so obvious. They perceived that the brightness of God has been symbolically transferred to them as revealed through their white skin; and the natives have coloured skin which, for them, explains their inferiority.
These white settlers assumed Divine injunction in their zeal to establish and advance the cause of culture in America. The wilderness of nature is to be checked, by eliminating the wild animals and rooting out the trees and building towns and churches. They are ordained to civilize the natives; because they are intransigent and incapable of higher understanding, they are fit to be enslaved or decimated. Providence seemed to design extirpation of the savage Indians in order to accommodate the cultivators of culture. These Puritans claimed American soil as their own, for they are gifted and they only knew how to extract the best out of it.

The Calvinistic theory of election, they claimed, has to be determined on the basis of material success. The settlers were as much gregarious and co-operative in their endeavours for fear of being out-numbered and annihilated by the Indians. They lived in a type of commune, though individually hard-working, self-reliant, ingenious and individualistic. They cast off their adherence to traditional routine of the European farmers, establishing fruitful farms. By specializing in particular trades, they prospered in material terms. A man seemed capable of rising in wealth and social status as far as his energy and sheer resourcefulness would carry him. Industry and frugality make a man rich; if an Indian or an African refuses to prosper, it is not for the elected to save the
damned. Material advancement justifies election; the means adopted to acquire prosperity would justify the end.

Whether the Puritans subscribed to Arminianism or Antinomianism, they tended to disrespect the integrity of the other things and other beings. In fact, the Arminians with their avowed rejection of predestination, established the cult of the self-made man, the Alger tradition—demanding Grace as reward for their work: and invariably the Grace should be in terms of affluence. Another contradiction runs through the concept of equality with which all human beings are never blessed with, even in America.

"All men are created equal," Thomas Jefferson proclaimed in the Declaration of Independence. Neither Jefferson nor his ideological successors believed that all men are born equal in talent or virtue. What they meant was that the State should treat all persons alike in matters of discipline and protection. The practice of equality does not seem to have bothered them when they adopted retrograde steps in enslaving the Indians. The second aspect of "equality" is that each person should be free to develop his talents to the limits of his ability. The ideal of equality of opportunity is very much cherished in America which implies that freedom is in tension with equality. In a free society populated by men of unequal capacities, advantages and disadvantages invariably hamper
equality of opportunity. Wealth is an advantage not only to those who earned it but also to those who inherit it. Thus a millionaire's child has a distinctly greater opportunity for obtaining education or to achieve financial success than has an equally intelligent child of a small farmer.

Having failed to purify the Church of England, the Puritans reached America to lead a life of piety. Having suffered persecution, they inflicted the same on others with more zeal, they exhibited the intolerance they accused in others at home. The middle class Puritan outlook generated the concept of dignity of labour and the virtue of diligent application to one's job. In the New World, "the gospel of work" became rooted in economic reality. The chronic shortage of labour gave them the opportunity to rise from a lower to a higher economic and social status. Glorification of the puritan virtues coupled with an admonition not to waste God's precious time, for the devil is lazy, has led America to a capitalistic frame of reference.

Though Americans loudly declare in favour of liberty and equality, yet nowhere are these terms unworthily tarnished. Equality is still the idol of the mob in United States—the meanest plebian would be quite ungovernable. People of low description might accost any body on the road to familiarity or answer carelessly--
revealing the perverted concept of liberty or equality and
by implication, want of decorum in civilized life. Degra-
dation of the slaves in some parts of America by the white
community with such chimerical ideas of liberty speaks
volumes for the disparity in the American thinking and
practice. A pioneer on the frontier exemplifies in a
dramatic manner the attributes of a restless man with
nervous energy, an individual demanding practice of
equalitarianism. Liberty and equality make good slogans
but they seldom meet and blend—equality discourages
individualism and induces conformity; and liberty flouts
the principle of equality, as is evidenced by the freedom
of an individual to question the majority decision by
setting himself above others in wisdom. The "rugged
individualist" thus is in confrontation with the equali-
tarian. One is an idealistic stance and the other a
practical necessity. Egotization of the "common man"
was an ideal; an expert and an intellectual guiding them
for greater productive potential is a reality in America.

In much American history and literature the polarities
between vision and practice, imagination and reality,
precept and practice, society and the individual are too
striking to be ignored. The idealism at the conceptual
level veers to a mundane practicality, idyll gives way
to industrialization. The tension generated by the
romantic idealism when confronted with the reality of a
harshly competitive world, the personality cracks. The dichotomy is the resultant product of the tensions caused by the assumed self in confrontation with the intruding harsh reality.

Migration of the heterogeneous groups to the New World fostered the dreams of equality, wealth, leisure, grandeur of the European landed aristocracy, immigtable individualism, mobility and grace of the higher strata of the society, and religious freedom from harassment. The Pilgrims were like the protagonists in the Medieval romances, adventurously undertaking an ordeal, with an absolute faith in Providence and reliance on their own physical prowess, in search of a grail. Accidents of situation might bring him not only to the coveted destination and success in the endeavour, he may also be united with a beautiful damsel.

The new continent, then appealed to the visitors not only as a fertile soil but an intractable wilderness which has to be subdued. The frontiersman considered labour as an investment: they improved a farm and sold it at a price. It would be ridiculous to talk sentimentally about a farm he intends selling - it is a matter of dollars, and move further ahead into the wilderness for taming another speck of land. This trait of moving forth has come to stay with Americans as a national attribute. Acquisition of land
and plentiful produce was the veritable world of romance for the settlers—the beautiful forests, exotic flowers, fruit and the half-naked tattooed natives. Face to face with their problems of survival and economic advancement and human cupidity, they turned Eden to a dust bowl, Adam to an arrogant mercenary, America into a prostitute. Their devotion to aesthetic contemplation has been profaned and commercialized, they got intoxicated not with the nectar of Divine Grace but with corn whisky. Those who secured respectability were, appropriately the Robber Barons—whose medium was matter and whose aesthetes were rape, loot and violence. Horatio Alger and the myth of "rags to riches" swayed the imagination of the young generation—in fact, progress was deemed a virtue worthy of being imitated and imbibed.

In a country governed by Robber Barons and Horatio Algers whose initiation into the society was through violence and passage to youth through loot, it is scarcely possible to have the beacons of wisdom. Men endowed with sensibility could easily look through the bluff but were incapacitated either by the horror of their own history or that their serene voices were drowned by the insensitive human throngs of cupidity. It was the human enacted on the American continent—the dream of a composite personality, in perfect harmony with God and Nature. The desires at the unconscious are thwarted at the conscious by the
intrusion of reality. Reality might bring nightmarish experience, dispelling aspirations and frustrating hopes. The disillusionment at the conscious level shall not negate the worth of an individual's dreams.

Frustrated or fulfilled, the dream-content is a pointer to the proper estimate of the protagonist in the fictional representations of novelists like Scott Fitzgerald.

III

The first two decades of the twentieth century are characterized by an end to agrarian era and commencement of an age of industrialization in America. The trend toward industrialism was accelerated by heavy production and accumulation of capital during the Civil War, which ushered in an epoch of rapid expansion. By 1900 railroads considerably spanned over the continent, factories spawned the ever-growing towns, industrial tycoons have caught folk imagination and inventors are talked of with awe. Technology and science revolutionized the techniques of production, transportation which in turn transformed wage earners into salaried technicians.

The first successful air-flight by Wright brothers in 1903 resulted in air-mail transportation by 1918. Rapid expansion in air travel followed, as the government advanced aid for establishment of airports. By 1927 the
first non-stop flight from New York to Paris by Charles A. Lindbergh, a tremendous effort, created the possibility of transatlantic aerial communication. The internal combustion engine has transformed the carriages into automobiles. American social status then had come to be determined by the number of automobiles owned by an individual and the latest model became more prestigious.

Agricultural production increased while mechanization reduced the number of agricultural hands. Because of the World War I, good prices saw the farmers prosperous. The government introduced and popularised agricultural techniques through agricultural colleges and experimental stations. Though there was a temporary lull in the farmer's prosperity after the war because of the prices slumping and heavy indebtedness, the co-operatives and investments in machinery converted agriculture into a big business. Larger farms prospered heavily because of the uniform quality-supply to retail merchandizing concerns.

The invention of rockets in 1914, submarine gun in 1916, assembling helicopter by 1918 and preparation of radar detection apparatus in 1932, sky rocketed the prestige of the American Army. Every young American dream of joining the army, not in patriotic fervour but for its glamour. Fitzgerald's protagonists like Amory Blaine, Anthony Patch and the inimitable Gatsby were all
attracted by the army. Invention of photographic gun and
development of celluloid film, led to the invention of
kinetoscope which preceded the modern cinema. The
first sound moving picture with artificially arranged
scenes was made by 1900, wherein Monroe Stahr was to find
his salvation. Telephoto and television were demonstrated
in 1925, creating new avenues in entertainment.

An indigenous American contribution to architecture
was the skyscraper made possible by the availability of
cheap and abundant structural steel and elevator, and
inexpensive fire proofing. The skyscraper encouraged
architects to work out solutions, less for style and more
on function. Shortly after World War I, strong influences
from European architecture deliberately introduced what
was called "international style." Such skyscrapers not
only displayed wealth of an individual—they ultimately
turned out to be the havens for the underprivileged and
centres of moral corruption. Fitzgerald led Tom Buchanan
and Myrtle into such a skyscraper apartment.

Next to the automobile, electricity revolutionized
the country. It reduced problems of lighting, eliminated
drudgery at home by introducing automatic water pump, the
refrigerator, the washing machine, the automatic oil
burner, providing more leisure for women. More leisure
meant freedom from manual labour, particularly for women
burdened with many family cares. Women felt emancipated
and moved into the society, rather dominated the social activities; no more could they be brushed aside as unprofitable financial propositions. They tended to be more fashionable and less traditional in their apparel. Their skirts became shorter, hair bobbed and like Isabelle in *This Side of Paradise* they knew the art of kissing quite early. It had become fashionable to glibly talk in sceptic or flirtatious terms, without ever feeling shy about where their grand parents would hesitate to talk in hushed tones. The son or daughter might be busy entertaining a friend which the Puritanic parent can never approve of. Young men were invariably drawn into the economic competitive world for the glamour of marrying a beauty. The wives and pretty daughters goaded the men to dive deeper in the economic ocean for pearls which would secure entertainment for them.

Fitzgerald, who crowned the 1920's and was crowned in turn by the Jazz Age, brings home some of the characteristic features of the boom and the aftermath of World War I. Fitzgerald himself offered to participate in the exploits of the great war, along with a host of other young intellectuals of his era, like John Dos Passos, Hemingway, Malcolm Cowley, and felt cheated of his rightful sensation on the "fields of honour" for, he was never ordered to the lines - the officer's cap never worn. Their behaviour before the war, clearly hedonistic, was an excuse for the
younger generation going to the war. Those who were lucky to see or participate in the action like Malcolm Cowley discovered to their dismay that there was

despite death among the flowers, danger in spring, the sweet wine of sentiment neither spiced with paradox nor yet insipid, the death being real, the danger near at hand. . . . 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.16

The horrors of war, the din of shelling, scenes of death and destruction all around; worse still the loss of sensibility, loss of faith in the institutions, loss of faith in human values on which laboriously for centuries that culture had been built, the younger generation returned home after an uneasy truce, had been forced to descend upon the harassed world. They belonged to a new generation, Gertrude Stein's "Lost Generation," characterized by dehumanized, emotionless existence, with an exaggerated feeling of uprootedness and irresponsibility in behaviour. The new generation acquired the contagion of excessive and repeated drugging and intoxication, inviting imposition of Prohibition—which turned out to be a bill of separation between the people and their government.

Prohibition was accompanied fast on its heels by a corollary of evils, creating a new order of Barons in the country—the rumrunners and the underworld luminaries;
corrupt officials in the enforcement department and equally
gullible politicians. During the fourteen years of
prohibition, New York was infected by big-shot criminals
and crooks. Gangsters and bootleggers ruled the
metropolis—some of the most vicious thugs, Arnold
Rothstein for instance, on whom Wolfstein in _The Great
Gatsby_ was modelled, were pre-eminent in the underworld
big money.

Their main interests, however, were in rumrunning and bootlegging, and in the related fields
of murder, hijacking, narcotics, prostitution,
crooked gambling, racketeering, robbery, and
extortion. . . . In return for paying
exorbitant prices for poor food and bad
liquor, which did them little harm, the Park
Avenueers rubbed elbows with top-flight gang-
sters, which thrilled them, and listened to
the singing of Helen Morgan, Morton Downey
and the Yatch Club Boys, which amused them. 17

Those violators of law and murderers received greater and
wider publicity than even some of the top ranking officials
in the establishment. One of the evils of the booze, apart
from lowering public morality, was the heavy competitive
spirit among the shady barons for undisputed leadership
in their area of operation. Many sensational murders
were committed, ruthlessly liquidating competitors.

Crazy reporting of sensational news items like the
big murders enhanced sales and circulation of many a
newspaper and magazine. The populace in general exhibited
a hunger for sensationalism—wild deeds were always
applauded more wildly. People thoroughly enjoyed "vicarious thrill" in other's vices. The only escape from the intolerable burden of life seemed to remain in a search for and enjoying/a sensation. The Puritan concepts of work and frugality, good manners and honesty became annoying to the brutalized young generation during the Jazz Age. A parental hearth or the bond of marriage had played on their nerves. Somehow they preferred to evade "messing up" their lives and sought a "smooth life"—eating and boozing, and showing a distinct partiality for sensational music like the Jazz. The Jazz music is characterized by "a compelling lift of syncopation, the ease within an intense and relentless rhythm,"

Everything is written in four-four time, and the pace can be said to vary through twelve or fifteen standard tempos, from slow-drag to fast-jump. ... It was no mere gut-bucket, emotion without control, virtuosity without pattern, louder and faster and higher.18

Possession of wealth opened wide vistas for the pleasures and sensations of life and the lack of it reduced a large section of the society to the second class citizenry in the twentieth century American culture. Those lucky to inherit wealth, Tom Buchanan in The Great Gatsby or Brady in The Last Tycoon for instance, could indulge in brutal pleasures and go scot free, and those without the traditional bolsters had to fight their way for it. Those unwilling to risk family reputation or have inaptitude for
the physical exploits of the underworld activities, those young men with pretentions to intelligence, went into bond—business. It was a period of aggressive salesmanship, as Fitzgerald remarked, selling a variety of bonds for various corporate bodies to unwilling buyers, the customer would indeed be lucky if the offer were for real estate, for, some times, bonds for house plots two feet deep under water were sold to helpless buyers. The craze in buying and selling bonds made or marred the fortunes of many young men who desired quick results in terms of material prosperity. Carraway for instance seeks out his livelihood by selling bonds, Anthony unsuccessfully tries to become a salesman of bonds and Amory discovers himself reduced to penury overnight because of his parents investing imprudently. There seemed to be plenty of money all around that a loser did not unduly worry:

Even when you were broke you didn't worry about money, because it was in such profusion around you. Towards the end one had a struggle to pay one's share; it was almost a favour to accept hospitality that required any travelling. Charm, notoriety, were good manners weighed more than money as a social asset. This was rather splendid, but things were getting thinner and thinner as the eternal necessary human values tried to spread over all that expansion. 19

The rise in money supply was inevitably followed by a slump—the unparalleled Depression, which witnessed frantic sale of bonds. The gigantic edifice of paper economy crumbled under its own weight of speculative price in
November 1929. All the estimated paper profits disappeared into thin air; investors who gleamed with the hope of living on their fortunes found themselves again at the bottom of the ladder, many affluent families suddenly slid into debt.

"Pursuit of happiness" which was enshrined in the Preamble of the Declaration of Independence as an inalienable right of every human being, was assumed to belong to every American by natural right. Optimism, a dominant national trait, assumed the force of a moral conviction; the doctrine of perfectibility and the possibility of progress in terms of acquiring immense riches, swayed the national spirit. Quest for wealth was considered a game in which winner takes all.

Inequalities exist in every society—reflecting variations in ability, personality, ambition or endowment. Self-imposed labour is a consequence to "drives" or ambitions aimed at carving out superior positions for themselves. If social approval does not come forth for their ideals, money power is capable of seeking any sanction. Social conformity and individual aspirations are poles apart; the individual is required to adjust and readjust himself with the social requirements. Individuals in the social organization and protagonists in fiction face
the same predicament. In Fitzgerald's fictional world, the first to appear is Amory Blaine followed by Anthony Patch, who find adjustment in the society rather hard.

Amory Blaine enters the society with an assured, vain-glorious posture, arrogating to himself all the best in the world - intelligence, imagination, and leadership. His early success at a "bobbing party," romantic attitude to life during his encounters with flappers like Isabelle, confirm his estimate of himself, as an attractive young man with immense possibilities for greatness. He presumes that achievement and greatness are awaiting him round the corner, and becomes indignant with the society which cheated him of his merited success. Amory exhibits in fact no inclination for any personal advancement and grumbles and groans in utter penury, fails in effecting socialism, remains an unsuccessful lover. He simply retains the romantic profile with scars of realism defacing him. The adolescent goats and drifts forth to an imaginary phosphorescent future.

Anthony Patch, the protagonist of The Beautiful and Damned is distinctly older in age to Amory Blaine, narcissistic and priding in his own handsome looks and athletic stature, assuming superior intellectual apparatus and sure of acquiring a fabulous bequeathment. Unlike Amory, Anthony settles into marriage with an equally
vain-glory flapper-queen Gloria. Revelry and dreariness follow each other in phases, each partner hurls accusations at the other for their present misery, liquidate the little income by disposing off the bonds. Anthony exhibits an appetite for indolence and a temperamental weakness for sustained efforts in reaching at any goal. Their philosophy of life-without-work becomes their bane, their stance becomes untenable in the world where joys of life are the fruits of hard work. The successful prolonged legal battle for inheriting his Puritanic grandfather's millions betrays his skepticism. The delayed acquisition of wealth serves no beneficial purpose at the end. Anthony seems deranged, muttering something to himself and Gloria looks "sort of unclean" on board a liner. Neither of the two early protagonists of Fitzgerald's fiction betrays any inclination for the traditional virtues of hard work and frugality nor have they any inkling to the secret passages leading to the pedestals of glory. Intellectual abilities are wanting in them, personal relations are never reinforced by the spirit of understanding and sacrifice. They desired the success and glamour attributed to the Alger hero, without ever straining the muscle of a little finger. Their dreams of greatness remain at the level of adolescent illusions, narcissistic and suicidal.

Gatsby on the other hand never moaned at any disadvantage
from birth in a low farming community, nor from lack of proper education. He has been a dreamer, converting the disadvantages into profitable propositions. Endowed with sensitivity and shrewdness, Gatsby masters brutal materialism by running a chain of drug stores and bootlegging, and invests the easy money for glorification of the early, youthful dreams - leading a life of leisure and grace, to recapture the lost love, to arrest and retrieve the past into the present. His sienomographic sensitivity assures the possibility of luring Daisy away from her husband by fantastically flaunting his affluence. The "golden girl" of his dreams has the "tinkle of money in her voice" - she looms large as a possession, an article to be purchased at a bidding. Even the sensitive Gatsby could not deny the history of America, he commits the suicidal error of judgment by equating his love with material possession. The golden girl has now become a wife and a mother; the dream symbol disintegrates in confrontation with reality. His unutterable visions have no collateral equation in reality. His colossal imaginative world has broken against the malice of the materialistic society. He populates his ideal world with all the choicest feathers and believes it to be the true world. The dream of Gatsby is tragic, for, Gatsby cannot turn time back and his attempts to rival the Creator, are foredoomed to failure.
The "Comparitively good brother" Dick Diver is proud of his American heritage, progresses from rags to riches. He is obsessed with the idea of goodness and distributes his capital injudiciously to all and sundry around him, thus diffusing his own vitality till he himself touches bankruptcy. His urge is to improve others including Nicole whom he marries knowing fully well that she is a psychic patient, unable to absorb the shock of incest. Dick walks on a tight rope all the time—discharging the dual responsibility of a husband and a psychiatrist. Her sure implies liberation from Dick's control, her estrangement with him: the doctor's success entails in the husband losing his wife. Dick forsakes his creative abilities because of his preoccupation with his care for Nicole—realizes that he has been purchased by the Warren money, from which he has to salvage himself. His dream of becoming a perfect man, graceful in behaviour, rich and leisurely, shedding provincialism and puritanic aberrations to be able to become international in attitude, to cure the mentally disabled—are not necessarily American. Similar is the predilection of Monroe Stahr, gifted with imagination and aggressive urge for creativity.

Stahr is a butterfly among bulls and bears, an artist amidst materialistic sharks. He too moves vertically upward in the social status because of his hard work— he is feared and respected, he is generous and helpful, a creative artist
who never hesitates to launch an experimental movie which might be commercially disastrous. He intends transferring his visions to the screen feeding the starved imagination of many spectators, who have no ghostly chance of ever leading gracious lives of the rich. He is betrayed by the lesser luminaries like Brady, the unimaginative brutes. Stahr is presented as functioning under mistaken identities and is destroyed as a consequence. Stahr has soared so high that his fall must be precipitous. The tinsel dreams that Stahr has, are themselves unreal—depiction of unreality through an unreal medium.

Adolescent illusions of Amory and Anthony, the tragic dream of Gatsby, the penetrating dream of Dick or the tinsel dreams of Stahr, have an American locale that Scott Fitzgerald with his acute imaginative perception was able to grasp from the history and myth of America, from its founder fathers to his own generation—the eras of great hopes and depression, the age of exploration and scientific inventions, the periods of plenty and poverty, the cult of materialism and sensitivity, the concepts of democracy and equality and gangsterism, the contradictions and the innate tensions of the American Dream. The dreams embodied in the protagonists of Fitzgerald's fiction are condensed versions of the universal dream—the human dream.
NOTES


3 Ibid., p. 5.


9 Ibid., p. 31.


12 Ibid., p. 19.


18. Otis Ferguson, "Young Man with a Horn Again," in *Fitzgerald and the Jazz Age*, pp. 119-123.