CHAPTER I

O life unlike to ours!
Who fluctuates idly without term or scope,
Of whom each strives, nor knows for what he strives,
And each half lives a hundred different lives,
Who wait like thee, but not like thee in hope.

(Mathew Arnold)
CHAPTER I

The Age, The Genre, The Artist

Background of the Age

On one side lies America predominantly agricultural concerned with domestic problems; conforming intellectually at least, to the political, economic, moral principles inherited from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries....

On the other side lies the Modern America, predominantly urban and industrial, inextricably involved in a world economy and politics, troubled with the problems that had long been thought peculiar to the old world; experiencing profound changes in population, social institutions and technology trying to accommodate its traditional institutions and habits of thoughts to conditions new and in part alien.¹

The world of the nineteenth century, filled with change, teeming with developments, was bent on upsetting the fundamental nature of the social order itself. As the century entered its last two decades, a fundamentally utopian vision took hold of the American imagination and a mythic view of some distant future engaged the mind which was preoccupied with the legend of the "second chance" crystallised in the Civil War.

What makes America unique is the quality of its typical institutions and character shaped by the Frontier which remained inexhaustible since the possible search for the vanquished geographical frontier became a viable ideological force in the twentieth century. There were drastic and far-reaching socio-economic changes personified in "Big Business", and at the turn of the century, America emerged as the materialistic business civilization. However, the American attitude to wealth is said to be different from that of the Europeans. George Santyana says:

The American talks about money because it is the symbol and measure he has at hand for success, intelligence and power; but as to money itself, he makes,
loses, spends and gives it away with a very light heart.  

Thus, it was not important in itself but it could perfect individual and social morality. It is perhaps for this reason that they dislike the idle rich, in whose hands, shorn of its philanthropic ends, money becomes tainted with acquisitiveness; they are "the malefactors of great wealth". America lost its innocence yielding to experience and enhanced adult responsibilities; as Henry May said, "our times had been separated from a completely vanished world". Not only that, there was a discontinuity between a remoter and more recent past:

At some point, if not an instantaneous upheaval, there must have been a notable quickening of the pace of change, a period when things began to move so fast that the past, from then on, looked static.

4. Ibid., p.303.
A cultural revolution was imminent, and it accompanied the intellectual and social discontent that exploded in the 1890s and reverberated till the 1940s. However, World War I acted as a further catalyst and America got involved in all the realities that she had sought to avoid; she was torn from that security in which her domestic life was determined by self interest and political expediency; and became "not only mechanised and urbanised and bureaucratised, but internationalised as well."^  

Another factor responsible for internationalisation was immigration:

While the relatively homogeneous American culture of the mid-nineteenth century was, like all other national cultures of that period seriously affected by the rise of modern industry..., mass immigration added something additional to the destructive impact. The break between cultures of the 1870s and that of the 1920s was thus greater in the United States than it was in England or France.^  

Different institutional forms were shaped by this new phenomenon: the entire economic order catapulted America into a nation of potential entrepreneurs with a new social and ethical outlook; the "new economic man" was moulded as a major social type out of the fusion of capitalism and liberalism. The old world and culture were naturally overtaken by the emerging socio-economic order ushering in a new era; values and ideals too underwent a change, and American culture was polarised.

What remained was nostalgia for the golden age and a yearning for the innocence and promise that had been blown away by the winds of change. America looked to Europe as a symbol of its past. However, America had chosen its "manifest destiny", and what the Europeans could only dream and romanticise, America had actualised. American civilization was given a new orientation which continued and shaped America of the twentieth century. In this period of cultural transition mythopoesis of the past became an artistic necessity, and the artists were compelled to reorganise and reassert values that had crumbled in the aftermath of War. The relationship of the artist and society had been dislocated, and a distraught generation was drifting with the current towards fragmentation and chaos.

The artist and intellectual had to stabilize the situation and restore confidence in secure traditional moral values. For this they looked to the past with new and meaningful insights; though it could not entirely obliterate the dismal, bleak prospects, it was the "greatest well of inspiration.... greatest hope of freedom." Thus, as the present dissipated into meaningless, self-invalidating reality, the past became hallowed and was raised to mythic proportions.

Though the certainty, and the close identification of this idea with a total moral awakening had gradually receded, progress as an article of faith did not perish and continued in a fundamentally agrarian pattern of life till the last quarter of the nineteenth century. When industrialism impinged itself with an impact that seemed to open "vistas of progress" while simultaneously revealing "the spectres of inescapable problems lurking backstage making a way of life evaporate abruptly. The material forces that were transforming America had propelled the placid social stability of the pre-war era into confusions and complexities inherent in industrialism and urbanism, so it was not just the war that obliterated ideas though of course it can be called a sharp and harsh beginning. The framework of the American society set by the Civil War and Reconstruction was based on the dynamics of economic growth
and revolutionary progress, and continued permitting unrestrained exploitation and degradation of the masses depriving them of their legitimate economic and social heritage. This agrarian hostility to industrial capitalism and ignoble economic motive of the big businessmen created:

a set of avaricious rascals who habitually cheated and robbed investors and consumers, corrupted government, fought ruthlessly among themselves, and in general carried on predatory activities comparable to those of the robber barons of medieval Europe.\(^7\)

The businessman became the power symbol wielding the might of the large corporation even though he had no place among the existing institutions or sanction for it in the hierarchy of traditional American values. The businessman - millionaire was given a niche in the American Senate enhancing his political prestige and power so that David Graham Phillip dubbed that august body as the "Rich Man's Club" and "House of Dollars." Monopolistic business became the sign of progressive economic maturity and was more to prevent disastrous competition than to plunder; Andrew

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Carnegie contended that "objections to the foundations upon which society is based are not in order because the condition of the race is better with these than any other which has been tried." William Graham Summer maintained that the phenomenon of growth should be a reason for congratulation rather than alarm. This classical economics that justified untrammeled pursuit of self interest as the highest means of attaining social good was an outgrowth of the English commercial and industrial revolutions. The advance of progress and poverty was paradoxical and simultaneous; as liveried carriages appeared so did barefooted children:

Where population is densest, wealth greatest, and the machinery of production and exchange most highly developed --- we find the deepest poverty, the sharpest struggle for existence, and the most enforced idleness.

Movements were initiated to curb the momentum and pervasiveness of corporate wealth so that an altruistic

society could be formed. Henry Lloyd and others, in the muckraking journalism, exposed corruption in business monopolies and rapacious practices of industrial organisations relegating their social responsibilities. The ruthlessness, injustice, inhumanity and crass materialistic barbarism displayed by the titans of wealth was unravelled. Government control and socialisation of wealth were remedies suggested in the national interest which would have the best minds formulate plans for positive government action, resuscitating democratic traditions.

The city was the point of concentration for much of the explosive energy unleashed during this period. It was the new symbol of the dramatic emergence of modern America. The city was not only the complex of social and moral disaster but was also symbolic of the breakdown of community institutions, as also of the passing away of the older American world of grace and charm, of virtue and dignity. The new urban culture had vitality and excitement of change. It created a fresh sense of optimism and energy for economic prosperity and contentment. Though it could not be the substitute for the many problems and complexities of urban existence in the cities of "dreadful night", its most significant impact was the revolution in traditional American customs, mores and manners, a status revolution in which the prime dynamic force was fear and resentment of the
old established aristocracy of business and profession against upheaval in their status, and not as much of economic deprivation. They saw themselves shorn of their traditional wealth and power by the new rich, the social parvenu creating disruption in the well-entrenched social norms and values. The new status and new desire meant a rejection of the traditional social pattern which seemed inevitable. The new frontiers of opportunity created a new climate of materialism and moral cynicism, and a new breed of men with vaulting ambition for power:

The acquisition of wealth had ceased to interest old aristocracy. The new men were a tougher breed; their goal was not money, but power. To suppose that they worshipped money was a delusion. They respected money less than Europeans did; wasted it more relentlessly, endured its loss more easily. Like social position it was merely a symbol, an index of power. In terms of money their stakes were fantastically high, higher than ever before played for. The pursuit of power absorbed them completely.¹⁰

The American society had always deemed money having an end other than itself. Its concept of money had an ethical and pious Protestant sanction:

The love of money is the root of all evil. He who tries to attain unto it too quickly, or dishonestly will fall into many snares, no doubt about that. The love of money. What is that? It is making an idol of money, and idolatory pure and simple everywhere is condemned by the Holy Scripture and by man's commonsense. The man that worships the dollar instead of thinking of the purposes for which it ought to be used, the man who idolises simply money, the miser that hoards his money in the cellar, or hides it in his stocking, or refuses to invest it where it will do the world good, that man hugs it until the eagle squeals, has in him the root of all evil.11

Henry James, the indefatigable observer of the social scene never questioned the American ideal though he was critical of luxury, privilege and actual abuses of money and leisure. He dreamt of an aristocracy of talents and money wherein were reconciled two opposing American ideals. However, though Industrial America had produced great wealth and undreamed prosperity there was:

a constant dialectic between innocence and guilt, hope and disenchantment, love and work, expansiveness and recoil. One side is the American Dream, the other ... not quite a Nightmare.12

The progressive intellectuals revolted and made efforts to articulate the modern version of an older, lost and distanced dream of America, reactivated political sensitivities through its inquiring, critical spirit and adopted principles of positive and social democracy directed back to their primitive ideal. They committed themselves to a new age that they did not comprehend. However, progressivism finally:

emerged as a redemptive element in the American democracy, and banded together in crusades to transform an individualistic and competitive society into something approximating a welfare state.\textsuperscript{13}

The War and its aftermath virtually destroyed the humanistic, cosmopolitan spirit of the pre-1914 era. With it was destroyed the traditional American confidence of assimilating people of diverse ethnic and cultural origins into a national cohesion. The war paradoxically brought an era of isolation: internal because of prejudice that led to racial and social conflagration, and external since America became completely cut off from any participation in its international obligations. The break with the past seemed inevitable even without the war because already the permeating socio-economic conditions brought about a sharp cleavage in the traditional American values and assumptions. The war simply helped to complete the process of disintegration:

It destroyed faith in progress.... It made clear to perceptive thinkers that they had misread the progressive era and the long Victorian reign of peace, the

violence prowled underneath man's apparent harmony and rationality.¹⁴

Out of the post-war upheaval was emerging a New Era and a new civilization soon to plunge into a deplorable interlude of reaction and disintegration. The war did force into open the invalidation of old ideals as having no relevance to contemporary reality. The sanctified values of an earlier age had lost their significance. The culture, resultant upon these values had become bankrupt. This was the past that the generation of the Twenties felt to have been cheated by. The war generation had become cynical, and disillusioned, but not revolutionary. It no longer believed in great causes nor could it exhaust its emotions on the outbreak of moral indignation. But it did seem alienated from the prevailing order for the whole generation was in a state of nervous stimulation not unlike the big cities behind the lines of war. Maxwell Geismar said:

The year 1919 was a breaking point in American life. It marked the end of an epoch of social reform which had sprung from the Populist and Progressive Movement at the turn of the century. It

opened a decade of social anarchy under the mark of normalcy -- of pleasure-seeking and private gain, of material success and trivial moral values.  

No doubt the break was disruptive, and it was normal for the generation tired of the failing idealism of war to plunge headlong into profligacy and self indulgence. Warren Harding defined the mood of his generation in a speech in May, 1920:

America's present need is not heroics, but healing; not nostrums, but normalcy; not revolution, but restoration; not agitation, but adjustment; not surgery, but serenity; not the dramatic, but the dispassionate; not experiment, but equipoise; not submergence in internationality, but sustainment in triumphant nationality.

Thus, inspite of the booming prosperity and economic gains, the mood of the Twenties was one of disenchantment and articulate discontent. The changes were so drastic that it often seemed to violate the sense of decency and decorum to


a generation accustomed to a way of life governed by Christian ethical precepts. What replaced these values was a deliberate hedonistic pleasure seeking, blind cynicism and crass materialism.

The traditional America had been made to lose its identity in the mores and morals of a metropolitan culture. The shackles of American materialism had become so hardened that old puritan, ethical concepts had almost become obsolete or failed to get assimilated into the new social order. The structure of this new mechanised society had become impervious to frontier optimism and individualism. The sense of loss, of novelty and variety of life of old America was typified in the mood of nostalgia evoked in such an image as Lindberg's flight across the Atlantic which expressed a longing for a way of life free from urban uniformity and institutionalisation. It seemed significant that while Europe had collapsed as a centre of stability and become a centre of disorder, America was moving inexorably towards an immense all-pervading disillusionment. An important dominant feature of the Twenties was the extensive mythicising of various modes of thought and behaviour. The myth of the Jazz Age found its appropriate expression in American indulgences and ballyhoos, orgies of irresponsible dissipation and iconoclasm, savage destruction of past tradition and inordinate freedom from social and moral restraints
unleashed by the war. According to Robert W. Nash it was indeed "a nervous generation", cynical and alienated. In terms of cultural reorientation the American Twenties have been variously described as the "Roaring Twenties", the "New Business Epoch", The "Age of Leisure", the "Great Spree", The "Era of Wonderful Nonsense", the "Age of the Flapper", the "Dry Decade", the "Lawless Times", The "Jazz Age", all connoting different aspects of its excessive materialism, wild frantic, youthful abandon, social and moral orders, and its indulgence in strange fads and fashions. The era of the "Big Change" was spurred by a dramatic surge of unprecedented affluence and in turn a profound cultural transformation and social stress when the contours of contemporary America emerged clearly, the revolutionised newer modes of living which threatened to end regional, local and ethnic diversity.

The American mass society and metropolitan culture emerging simultaneously, spread their tentacles into the rural backwaters destroying its traditional isolation and tearing apart old values and pieties that had flourished in the agrarian society and were now being threatened by forces of modernism and replaced by new moral standards and attitudes that challenged and transformed time-sanctioned social cohesiveness. It imposed novel, unfamiliar patterns of inter-personal relationships and new cultural codes and
directions that were reshaping life and thought of urban America. Apparently, the rapidity and radicalism of social change implied a:

rejection of all those nineteenth century values that culminated in the smoke of World War I. Idealism, progressivism, and communal concerns appear to have given way to materialistic cynicism, reaction, rugged individualism, xenophobia, and iconoclasm. A new zeitgeist was ushered in as old and tried moral issues were corroded by the "acids of modernity." 17

The war certainly helped to intensity and crystallise the revolution against the old Puritan morality. With the bursting of pre-war idealism "Americans drifted toward some vague redefinition of self-identity, disillusioned and spiritually exhausted" 18 because underneath the superficial froth of irresponsible hedonism and blind cynicism ran currents of discontent deeper and more portentous. In the


wake of ideological derailment and collapse of established values the intellectuals revolted against the puritanical, materialistic absolutism on American civilization, deploring its repressive insistence of conformity. They tried to explore the meaning of individual freedom and glorified such exotic romantic emotions and social patterns as ran counter to the repulsive unfeeling industrial America and its material, mechanical civilization. It was a revolt against the cold lethal simplicities of American business culture.

The most obvious manifestation of this social revolution was in the morals and manners which under pressure of war-time conditions, seemed quite indefensible. The historic Christian standards of morality, of idealised family relationship, premarital chastity and marital fidelity were eroded. The new attitude to sexuality made pleasure an integral part of the pursuit of happiness. With the breakdown of moral barriers under wartime excitement, new sexual freedom for women, the automobile extending the possibility of love-making beyond the sitting room, the widespread teaching of Freud's ideas on free expression of the libido, all led to the weakening of inhibitions and ubiquitous neurosis; Freud observed:

A whole race going hedonistic, deciding on pleasure. The precocious intimacies
of the younger generation would have come about with or without Prohibition. ¹⁹

Another manifestation of changing mores was the rise of new forms of ballroom dancing, waltz, fox-trot, Charleston, jitter-bug which the Americans considered an evidence of the erosion of sexual mores. In 1931, Fredrick Lewis Allen thought it to be "impure, polluting, corrupting, debasing, destroying spirituality, increasing carnality", though the morals would survive inspite of the close embrace and frenzied rhythms of the new dances.

The continuing social revolution had a still deeper significance in the changed status of women that became possible with the increased expansion of economic opportunities which undermined male supremacy in an area in which the woman's role was traditionally subservient. With her economic and social emancipation, moral barriers crumbled and women began to demand equality with men. Smoking and drinking in public became her prerogatives to shed whatever crippling signs of feminity remained:

The first casualty of feminine independence was the traditional dress that covered the neck and arms and assiduously hid the ankle from masculine view. The average skirt was about six inches from the ground in 1919. From this time on the ascent was spectacular, until the skirt had reached the knees or even above by 1927. At the same time women discarded their corsets and de-emphasised the upper reaches of their anatomy, usually with fearful results. Finally to complete the defeminisation women sheared their tresses and wore their hair straight and short. But there was no curious exception to this trend. The shorter the skirts and hair became the more women used cosmetics — lipstick, rouge, and mascara. It seemed as if the face had become the last refuge of the feminity. 

The post-war hedonistic dissipation had led to a diffused and glamourised naturalistic attitude toward sex. The availability of leisure had stimulated sexual revolution.

against "the absurdity of an 'outmoded and impractical' morality" which led to mass repression because "the absurd, exorbitant moral demands which society had made upon its victims had culminated in a national neurosis", and only a full, wholesome, primitive expression of natural impulses could restore sanity. The price of such irresponsible promiscuity was untrammeled freedom:

The past-war woman said to the man "You are tired and disillusioned, you do not want the cares of a family or the companionship of mature wisdom, you want exciting play, you want the thrills of sex without their fruition, and I will give them to you." And to herself she added, "But I will be free." 21

The woman was free and had energies and emotions to burn -- she had ripeness and readiness for revolution. She had Freudian libidinal gospel for an uninhibited sexual life. Then there was the automobile for distant "petting parties" which virtually offered an almost universally available means of escaping temporarily from the supervision of parents and chaperons or from the influence of neighbourhood opinion; Fredrick Lewis Allen Calls it a "house of

prostitution on wheels." The sex magazine and confessionals further aggravated the situation. One movie advertisement said:

brilliant men, beautiful Jazz babies, 
champagne baths, midnight revels, 
petting parties in the purple dawn, all 
ending in one terrific smashing climax
that makes you gasp.22

Perhaps the most charismatic and intriguing of decades, the Twenties were "the best of times, the worst of times", an age of acute incongruities and enigmas, cultural fragmentation and social dislocation. It was a collectivised society out to smother individual vision and feelings, paralysed by the shock of recognition of its spiritual loss and absence of moral and emotional moorings; a social and moral order virtually starved and spiritually vacuous. The contrast seemed stunningly unnerving seen from the vantage of an earlier age, and the hopes and faith it symbolised to the European mind; Anatole France told Waldo Frank:

Make no mistake, Europe is a tale that has been told. Our long twilight is

22. Ibid., p.261.
before us. But I believe in your American dream.\textsuperscript{23}

The youth was eager to desert the culture not because something was wrong with the culture as V.W. Brooks opines but because the rebellious youth hankered after what was imaginative, adventurous and artistically creative. The age had surrendered itself to something pernicious and it culminated in a final upsurge of demoralised apathy and disillusionment in the very moment of its immense outpouring of luxury born of material prosperity and the continuing debauching of the American dream and innocent expectations. And yet the despair of its fascination:

\begin{quote}
It was an easy, quick, adventurous age, good to be young in; and yet coming out of it one felt a sense of relief, as on coming out of a room too full of talk and people into the sunlight of the winter streets.\textsuperscript{24}
\end{quote}

Then came the Great Crash. The economic disaster and financial panic shook the nation, depriving it of its customary exuberance, optimism and resilience of spirit. The

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{23} Quoted, V.W. Brooks, \textit{The Days of the Phoenix} (New York, 1957), p.23.
\item \textsuperscript{24} Malcolm Cowley, \textit{Exiles Return}, p.309.
\end{itemize}
The Twenties found the nation full of bouncing ebullience, fearful of nothing, and certain that in its commercial ingenuity it had found the philosopher's stone; the Thirties saw that bounce gone and the populace terrified as the businessman's supposed magic formula turned out to be only another disastrous experiment by a sorcerer's apprentice.25

If the Boom was a period of realignment of material values to social change, then the Crash was a period of readjustment to new economic realities. The jitters of Depression urged new hope and a new reckoning though the typical American normalcy had no hopes of bouncing back:

The frustrated hopes that followed the War, the aching disillusionment of the hard-boiled era, oily scandals, its spiritual paralysis, the harshness of its gaiety: they would talk about the

good old days .... What was to come in
the Nineteen Thirties?
Only one thing could be sure of. It
would not be repetition. The stream of
time often doubles on its course, but
always it makes for itself a new
channel.26

The Depression was as shattering an experience as the War
and plunged Americans into a frozen attitude of regret for
the irrecoverable past. Rich Americans were reduced to
destitution and despair; Will Rogers observed, "We are the
first nation in the history of the world to go to the poor
house in an automobile."27

The far-reaching social consequences were the loss of the
earlier ebullient self-confidence, hopeful exuberance of
imagination and experience, virtual rout of faith in
progress, lack of gusto for bolstering up the sagging morale
leading to social and moral stagnation. And added to all
this was the fear of the gathering storm of World War II
which crushed all idealism. The average American seemed
"lost", and was beginning to realise that his country had

27. Quoted, Paul Goodman and Frank Gatell, America in the
travelled far from the America he had known in his youth, and that once embarked on a Titan's journey, "You can't go home again".

The American Social Novel (1900-1940)
The modern metropolitan commercial culture provided new literary impetus and excitement. The journalism of the Muckrakers found it an easy propagandist target. The imaginative literature too found the system of industrial capitalism and concentration of social and political power in business magnets a fascinating subject for creative exploration. The Utopian novelists like Winston Churchill, Upton Sinclair and others inspite of using disturbing social reality as an aspect of literary exploration, tended to share the very impressions and express the very sentiments and prejudices of the Muckrakers. No doubt, they are dated but they offered an interesting, fresh and poignant insight into the persistent frustrations and fantasies of the new urban, industrialised society and the historical transformation that victimised innocent people. Henry James visualised a business tycoon who would represent the actual experience of contemporary business life:

An obscure but not less often an epic hero seamed all over with the wounds of the market and the dangers of the field,
launched into action and passion by the intensity and complexity of the general struggle, a boundless ferocity of battle-driven above all by the extraordinary, the unique relation in which stands to the life of his lawful, his immitigable womankind. 28

What caused popular reaction was the peculiar economic and social situation in which the middle-class found itself, and the intellectual and moral climate of the age with the significant clusters of prejudice that characterised the enlightened, progressive minds. Frank Norris diagnosed the need for "great strong harsh brutal men -- men with a purpose", the change makers who were tempered with the ethics of the social gospel, dedicated to the social good.

The progressive ambivalence would conceive a return or revulsion to certain elementary forms of common sense, of simple rural institutions of the past, something close to Howell's Utopia combining new, urban industrialism with a concern for human values by men who would be protective of morality and originators of progress in a new system of ethical socialism. The expanding industrial and commercial city became the creator of good life, a place of excitement.

and extended opportunities for progress. Novelists like Theodore Dreiser did not consider the countryside to be a refuge from inclement natural environment, rather essentially inhospitable to man. Others found the city an answer to providing avenues of opportunity and work especially New York which held a childhood fascination for many. But to the majority of progressive reformers, the city remained a "devilsberg of crime", sucking into its corrupt vortex the simple and trusting young men from the Western farms, turning them into human robots like the machines they tend "hard, brutal strung with a crude, blind, strength, stupid and unreasoning." The big cities poisoned the springs of creative life and took away the very qualities that made him an American, the real American who could do something honest and valuable. This intense anti-urbanism tended to idealise the pioneer, agrarian past. The agrarian romanticism became a strong impulse because of urban alienation, a phenomenon which appeared with the "indigestible" alien the "undesirable foreign element" from Europe; as the immigrant tide welled stronger each year, the native spirit that had been so obviously a part of the mental complex increased in intensity. But, equally, the metropolis was disliked for its enormously excessive predatory wealth which was as much an enemy of civilization as exploitative poverty. Such great extremes of economic circumstances were a precondition of change from a rural
agrarian to urban commercial culture, also being responsible for the guilt complex in many minds.

The anti-materialist attitude of the prosperous middle-class was because of "a reduction less in income than in outlook." However, more than them, it was the elite of the older stock who suffered greatly the loss of economic prestige and social status. "The turbulent and revolutionary waves of the new industrialism and finance had washed up on such polished shores some exceedingly rough gravel." The Rockfellers, Goulds and others had seized power as their ladies had laid siege to formal society being without restraints of culture, experience or even inherited pride of class or rank; they were called the "new barbarians" and supplanted the American patrician culture. The old world vanished and was soon forgotten; it was industrialism for individual avarice which was being descried, but not when it proved incidental to national progress. Great wealth had something corrosive about it since men were made to sacrifice their moral values to the over-riding considerations of material ambitions. The fiction of this era bears witness to this subsequent "sloughing off of morality." Yet in the less ordered, practical world the millionaire remained idle, vulgar.

vicious, unredeemed, trapped by the very ethical norms which he employed to amass his colossal fortune. However, people began talking of a classless state, "Square Deal", "New Deal", "Fair Deal", all referring to the state being an arbiter of morally desirable distribution of wealth to socially desirable ends.

The realist impulse in American Literature was not simply an outgrowth of the commercial culture owing to changed economic and social conditions. It depended equally on "the actual broadening of taste and practice.... The breakdown of arbitrary and irrelevant barriers, the deepening capacity to express actual feeling.... The renewed openness to Europe and the major intellectual currents of the times."\(^{30}\) The novel was an expression of a "rapidly growing, sprawling, changing, untidily society, in which the older forms of cultural pattern were disappearing."\(^{31}\) It had operated on two extremes of literary culture, sensational gossip and social documentary truth, appropriate as an artistic mode to record the "direct impressions of life" and what would hold the imagination of the reader.


Thus the American novelists construed realism of entailing descriptions of social and human environment with its particular actuality of American connotations, a literary genre rooted in local colour which the American creative imagination desperately needed. American literary realism came into its own with Mark Twain (1835-1910), Henry James (1843-1916) and William Dean Howells (1837-1920) who in their own way grappled with the actuality of their own environment and reduced it to literary terms. In Henry James American metropolitan realism found its most articulate expression. The outward details of realism recreate the irresponsible world of the rich to point to the moral ugliness and violence perpetrated by them. Such a view of moneyed evil made him "The extremely critical champion of luxury and privileges." He indicted the rich for their careless irresponsibility although he did not question the aristocratic ideal sustained by great inherited fortunes.

Emily Zola was determined to go beyond the realism of Flaubert and Balzac, and expounded his theories of Naturalism in 1871. This became a dominant literary movement in America in the first two decades of the Twentieth Century. It intensified realism and insisted on dispelling superstitions and idealisation; there was the application of scientific objectivity to literary subjects with a closer observation of reality and inclusion of greater details. Prof. Lar Ahnebrink defines it in the following terms:
Naturalism is a manner and method of composition by which the author portrays life as it is in accordance with the philosophical theory of determinism. In contrast to a realist, a naturalist believes that man is fundamentally an animal without free will. To a naturalist, man can be explained in terms of forces, usually hereditary and environment, which operate on him.\textsuperscript{32}

The American naturalist writing with Garland, Norris, Crane, London and Dreiser had become firmly rooted in the American segment of reality and experience, and was not entirely dependent on the French influence except with regard to technique and method. It had acquired its own flavour and distinctive features. The post-war American fiction was concerned with a perceptive portrayal of human condition within the rigorous limits of circumstances created by the war. It offered Hemingway and others a sense of liberation from the limitations of subject matter. It turned out to be a battle against the genteel critics which had begun at the turn of the century. The war novels used the theme of

violence and physical action, and attempted to "make immediate experience real." In an endeavour to get at the truth, the novelists reached for their own singular experience as the possible means of understanding their own times as well as recreating reality in terms of their moral experience, leaving the impression that they "have not so much chosen their characteristic themes and occasions as been chosen by them."

With World War I America entered "a wider graver world." The artist's attempt to put imaginative order upon that anarchical, chaotic and alienated society met with resistance. A qualitative transformation of culture took place and pointed to "that grand outburst of literary energy [in] that curious, wonderful, and exasperating decade that subsequent decades have constructed into a transcendent metaphor, the Twenties." The war became the historical hiatus for imaginative literature, and the intensity with which the artist and writer responded to the agony of the war and deep anguish of the "flawed peace" in its aftermath tended to blur reality and explode the uses of tradition and the past. The American participation and experience of war compared to Europe was spectatorial, a war of non-

participants, almost a remote, peripheral engagement in experience because it was always somebody else's war they were fighting. It "created in young men a thirst for abstract danger, not suffered for a cause but courted for itself.... more eagerness for experience and retained the curious attitude of non-participants."\(^{34}\) Seen from this perspective, their involvement in the experience of the war and their self-conscious sense of being a "lost" generation, "la generation perdue" seemed rather affected as the dictum had no validity either for American society or its contemporary literature. Yet there was a sense of nostalgia for a world untarnished by the ravages of war, a "nostalgia for America" implied in their acute feeling for expatriation. The sense of "lost" connotes a sense of deprivation which Hemingway had self-consciously put to scrutiny. "Lost" did not mean incompatibility or a lack of experience and incompetence to deal with the present predicament, but more significantly, a change in sensibility owing to the experiences of war or their own beliefs in a pre-war past, as well as

The revelation in life and above, all in art, of areas of existence, moral attitudes, and views of society that the

deprived older generation could not understand or accept.\textsuperscript{35}

It also "implied a heroic abandonment of certainties" of the earlier pre-war generation in favour of a larger horizon of experience.

The loss was ultimately redeemed in expatriation for a peculiar phenomenon of post-war America was the unprecedented emigration of younger American intellectual voyeurs to Europe. Between 1910-30 because of its puritanism and commercialism, America seemed:

actively hostile to the artist and intellectual [and] the expatriation, brief or extended, of many of our artists and writers [was] used as an indictment of American civilization.\textsuperscript{36}

It was their search for hedonistic pleasure, for "freedom to be irresponsible" which was their own way of desperate escapism into free passion, love and intoxication or as Charles Wales in Scott Fitzgerald's story "Babylon Revisited" queries:

35. John McCormick, \textit{The Middle Distance}, p.3.

How many weeks and months of dissipation to arrive at the condition of utter irresponsibility. 37

But they were artists and writers first, and if as Malcolm Cowley claimed, "One might say the Ambulance Corps and French military transport were college extension courses for a generation of writers" then France was the haven for Americans who had escaped from the "cultural wasteland" to find in European cities the meaning of their exile:

We dreamed of escape into European cities with crooked streets into Eastern islands... We felt a bashful veneration for everything illicit, whether it was the prostitute living in the next block or the crimes of Nero or the bottle of blackberry cordial.... We felt a certain humility in the face of life, a disinclination to make demands on the world around us. Art and life were two realms; art was looked down upon by the ordinary public, the lifelings, and

justly so, since it could never have any affect on them. Art was uncommercial, almost secret, and we hoped to become artists.38

However, the mass expatriation was not simply a consequence of the war but of deeper, profounder changes in the American social order in which the intellectuals became more alienated from society and its crass materialism, stern puritan morality and intolerance of the Mid West. The lure of moving still further East to Europe was only a mirage for they soon became disillusioned and got lost in their new environment.

The American social novel entered a new phase and there came an unending stream of great authors and an equally impressive array of new writings of lasting merit and unique literary heritage. The fictional efflorescence found its most pronounced articulation in a distinguished galaxy of writers, Sinclair Lewis, John Dos Passos, Ernest Hemingway, Scott Fitzgerald, William Faulkner and others. By opening the floodgates of creative energy they had brought forth the second flowering of the American Renaissance socially more vigorous, coherent and purposive even than the first

brought about in 1850-55 by Emerson, Thoreau, Hawthorne, Melville, Whitman and others.

The "lost generation" writers possessed a "rich fund of common emotions" and shared purpose as they also showed greater eagerness for experience. In that they truly reflected the modern sensibility, ironical, introspective and more self-questioning; it came to represent the impoverishment and sheer exhaustion of moral and spiritual resources of a generation under the impact of European War. But the early flowering of their astonishing literary careers failed to find new source of power and depth. Almost all the important novelists of the period lost talent for imaginative creativity in midstream, as it were, sunk into the mire of disillusionment and were disaffiliated, so to say from their age. Malcolm Cowley attributed it to a lack of capacity for renewed growth after middle age which deprived them of second careers, a rare capacity for writers of the first American Renaissance.

The Author:

Mr. Fitzgerald in his life and writings epitomised 'all the sad young men' of the post-war generation. With the skill
of a reporter and ability of an artist
he captured the essence of a period when
flappers and gin, "the beautiful and
damned" were symbols of the carefree
sadness of an age.39

The Fitzgeralds, Scott and his wife Zelda, found themselves
cast as models for the new worship of youth. They soon
accepted their roles as pioneers. But though they regarded
themselves as eponymic figures which they did become, it
will be erroneous to blame them for the excesses of the
Twenties. In the conflicting drama of manners and
aspirations that was going on, Scott Fitzgerald was not only
the leading actor but the audience as well; he not only
lived in his great moments but stood apart and reckoned the
causes. He was simultaneously within and without,
participating and observing. He lived more intimately than
any writer the life of his times and it became the material
he dealt with in his works. This is his double vision or
irony. Amidst the echolalia and tom-foolery there was a
quest for values operating in his work. He later admitted to
his daughter:

Sometimes I wish I had gone along with
that gang [musical comedy, writers], but

39. Quoted, Mathew J. Brucolli, Some Epic Grandeur, p.4.
I guess I'm too much a moralist at heart, and really want to preach at people in some acceptable form rather than entertain them.  

His contemporary readers frequently acknowledged the effectiveness of his social presentation. He did not use extensive documentation, but relied on evocative details. He was a social historian that chronicled the manners of an age, the mood of a people, the psychological conditions of a decade, and the history of a consciousness. Talking of The Great Gatsby, Lionel Trilling says:

It keeps fresh because it is so specifically conscious of its time.... Its continuing power comes from the courage with which it grasps a moment in history as a great moral fact.

And this is true of all his best works. He began as a spokesman of the Jazz Age but became its symbol, its totemic figure, "its Prince Charming, its fool." The events of his

40. Correspondence of F. Scott Fitzgerald, ed. Mathew J. Brucolli and Margaret M. Duggan, p.63.


42. Mathew Brucolli, Some Epic Grandeur, p.133.
life have been identified with the history of his times; they duplicated the national moods of Boom and Doom. The Jazz Age:

Bore him up, flattered him and gave him more money than he had dreamed of simply for telling the people that he felt as they did, that something had to be done with all the nervous energy stored up and unexpended during the war.  

Later Gertrude Stein wrote to him:

You are creating the modern world much as Thackeray did his in Pendennis and Vanity Fair and this isn't a bad compliment. You make a modern world and a modern orgy strangely enough it was never done until you did it in This Side of Paradise.  

Fitzgerald considered the novel as

43. F. Scott Fitzgerald, Echoes of the Jazz Age, p.178.
44. Quoted, F. Scott Fitzgerald, The Crack Up, p.308.
The strongest and supplest medium for conveying thought and emotion from one human being to another.45

But writing short stories paid him better than any other literary work. His publishers used to bring out a collection of Fitzgerald's stories one or two seasons after the appearance of his novels. It was a wise custom in a way because the stories clustered around the novel that was written during the period; they served as potboilers to sustain the author during the financially fallow years between the novels. However, Fitzgerald was often willing to sacrifice a whole story, sometimes a good one, for the sake of a sentence or two that might strengthen a scene in a novel. He did not include "One Trip Abroad", "The Swimmers", "Jacob's Ladder" in any collection because he borrowed from them heavily for the novel Tender Is The Night. "Absolution" too was considered to be a Prologue to The Great Gatsby i.e. the boy Rudolf Miller was intended to be a childhood picture of Jay Gatsby but Fitzgerald changed his mind and preferred to preserve a sense of mystery surrounding Jay Gatsby, and the story was salvaged from a discarded version before he began the novel from a new angle. Malcolm Cowley calls the

stories "disguised autobiographies" because they spoke not only of their times but their author where the heroes:

were never himself as he was in life, but himself as projected into different situations, such as might have been encountered by members of his spiritual family.46

Taken together, they compose not only an informal history of two decades in American life, or rather of one decade and its aftermath, but a sort of journal of his whole career, a struggle against defeat and the sort of qualified triumph he earned by the struggle. A list of his works follows; the novels have been underlined:

March 1920: This Side of Paradise
Sept. 1920: Flappers and Flappers
March 1922: The Beautiful and Damned
Sept. 1922: Tales of the Jazz Age
1925: The Great Gatsby
1926: All the Sad young Men
1934: Tender is the Night
1935: Taps at Reveille
1941: The Last Tycoon

46. Ibid., p.xviii.
For some years after his death Fitzgerald was a much underrated and almost forgotten writer but Edmund Wilson, Malcolm Cowley, Arthur Mizener and others have laboured to correct what was undoubtedly a false image. As a result he has been the beneficiary of a revival of interest in his life and work resulting in a popularity equal perhaps to and perhaps even greater than he enjoyed in the 1920s. In 1945 John O'Hara stated:

All he was our best novelist, one of our best novellaists, and one of our finest writers of short stories.47

By 1951 the Fitzgerald revival was in full swing and by 1960 the revival had become a resurrection so that as Brucolli says:

F. Scott Fitzgerald is now permanently placed with the greatest writers who ever lived, where he wanted to be all along, where he belongs.48

47. The Portable F. Scott Fitzgerald, ed. Dorothy Parker, p.xiv.

Notwithstanding his own life-experience underlying his creative endeavours, it can be safely assumed that his impulse to autobiography was hardly ever an aspect of his conscious artistic intentions. His creative art was an autonomous achievement even though the autobiographical element lends an extension of meaning which is unique and an inalienable part of his artistic apprehension; but this primarily purports to his exceptional artistic needs. The possible life equations as found in his imaginative writings were indicative of his persistent efforts to seek his own identity as an American in the very social types that he created. Therein he sought to understand that very historically shaped image of his own self which was a composite of variable national elements. This multiplicity of American image was manifestly present in the attitudes and characteristics of the businessmen, debutantes, tycoons and college boys whose actions made for him a composite portrait of American values and morality.49 It seems that he was making an effort to subject the entire range of contemporary American culture to an assessment of its validity in terms of American history and its ability to survive as a living shaping reality in the American consciousness. This imaginative reiteration of the American past, through the golden haze of nostalgia as Wright Morris perceived "an aesthetic contemplation that made nostalgia

that snare and illusion, a work of art",50 while still dreaming of that forbidden paradise, that brave new world which "flowered once for The Dutch sailor's eyes", the mythical America of the imagination, soaring above the sweep of history. The romanticised America of his imagination adding "aesthetic proportions to the past" provided direction to the material autobiographical in his fictional art making him exclaim, "For me the past is forever."51 It was an almost similar urge that informed his idealistic literary pursuits, the romantic quest for a terrestrial paradise which his fictional heroes were perennially struggling to reach, either to refashion the world in the ideal image of their own imagination or to achieve a meaningful success "in which the flood of money gained will wash [them] on to an enchanted shore of brilliance and gaiety and endless invulnerable youth",52 in which the rich inhabitants are really "different from you and me", as Fitzgerald wrote in "The Rich Boy". Such was the lure of the American Dream that the heroes' romantic expectations were hinged on the ever-receding Golden West, that iridescent paradise of eternal youthful splendour which invariably eluded the grasp.

Fitzgerald's quest for the "golden girl" found its idealised life-image in Zelda Sayer, the American girl who lived the American dream and was maddened and ruined by it, the girl whose physical possession became the symbolic fight for happiness against time. Fitzgerald was to idealise and romanticise her to the last possibility apparently for her "total self-centredness and overwhelming instinct for conquest", as perhaps equally for her potentiality for promoting ruin; the femme fatale was symbolic of the quest. Moreover, as, he admitted, she was "the faultiest girl" he'd ever met, and he never wanted to change her because he too had the same faults; instead she had a strong effect on him; she made him want to do something for her, to get something to show her:

They both had started with good looks and excitable temperaments and the rest was the result of certain accessible popular novels and dressing room conversation culled from a slightly older set.... He waited for the mask to drop off, but at the same time he did not question her right to wear it.53

About the time when Fitzgerald had all but lost Zelda because he did not have money or social status to marry her and had sunk into his deepest despair, the promise of his life having been blighted as he imagined, she had written to him consolingly and with sad tenderness:

> Theres nothing in all the world I want but you -- and your precious love -- All the material things are nothing. I'd just hate to live a sordid colourless existence -- because you'd soon love me less -- and less -- and I'd do anything -- anything -- to keep your heart for my own -- I don't want to live -- I want to love first and live incidently -- Why don't you feel that I'm waiting -- I'll come to you lover, when you're ready.... And then when we are alone, I want that you can't do anything without me.\(^5^4\)

This extraordinary perception of Scott and his relationship to herself and to money was to become inextricably woven into Zelda's imagination. In later years it would

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crystallise into a tenuous pattern of self-destructive impulses spelling their doom. That she, from those early beginnings, could perceive this fatal link in their destiny was remarkable considering that her impulses seemingly were to the contrary. Even though it was always Scott who was far exceedingly aware of the corrupting power of money and its utter meaninglessness, it was always he who wanted to be "drunk with the excitement of money", to treat it with utmost contempt and indifference once he possessed it, thus recapturing his moments of acute poverty and dispossession of money and the possibility of loves almost doomed to failure for that reason. Long afterwards, when his affluence had been squandered into material and spiritual bankruptcy, and the meaning of his cracking-up had been fully unravelled, Fitzgerald recalled:

During the long summer of despair I wrote a novel instead of letters, so it came out alright, but it came out alright for a different person. The man with the jingle of money in his pocket who married the girl a year later would always cherish an abiding distrust and animosity towards the leisure class -- not the conviction of a revolutionist but the smouldering hatred of a peasant.
I have so many things dependent on its success -- including of course a girl -- not that I expect it to make me a fortune but it will have a psychological effect on me and all my surroundings and besides open up new fields. I am in that stage where every month counts frantically and seems a cudgel in a fight for happiness against time.  

He could thus make her yield, and she confessed, "I don't want to be famous and feted -- all I want is to be very young and irresponsible and to feel that my life is my own -- to live happy and die in my own way to please myself."  

She was the perfect image of the flapper, bright, gay, vivacious and irresponsible; he need not invent his "flapper", and provoked by criticism of her, he wrote:

No personality as strong as Zelda's could go without getting criticism ....  
I've always known that any girl who gets stewed in public, who frankly enjoys and tells shocking stories, who smokes

57. Ibid., p.157.  
constantly and makes the remark that she has 'kissed thousands of men and intends to kiss thousands more'; cannot be considered beyond reproach even if above it.... I fell in love with her courage, her sincerity and her flaming self respect and its these things I'd believe in even if the whole world indulged in wild suspicion that she wasn't all that she should be .... I love her and that's the beginning and end of everything. You're still a Catholic but Zelda's the only God I have left now.59

Success was thus identified with the accumulated aggregate of fame and fortune, the dream world of eternal youth, the golden girl and wealth to spur his intense longing and desires, what money could bring to life in terms of personal fulfilment. The symbolic quest had been mythicised into there being "something enchanted, as if predestined, about the coming together of this pair whose deep similarity only began with their fresh, scrubbed beauty." In Zelda, Fitzgerald had found:

a girl whose uninhibited love of life rivalled his own and whose daring originality, and repartee would never bore him. With Ginevera part of the attraction had been the society she came from; with Zelda it was she alone who made an overwhelming appeal to his imagination. She pleased him in all the surface ways, but she also had depth he fell in love with, without understanding why.60

Remembering these ecstatic moments with Scott, in after years, Zelda wrote:

There seemed to be some heavenly support beneath his shoulder blades that lifted his feet from the ground in ecstatic suspension, as if he secretly enjoyed the ability to fly but was walking as a compromise to convention.61

They were young and life had not yet caught up with them.

60. Quoted, Andrew Turnbull, *Scott Fitzgerald*, p.94.
Zelda was the composite "flapper" that he married "after a grand reconciliation", and thus made his dream girl the symbol of an era, the apotheosis of an age whose triumph and tragedy she so appropriately represented. This interchanged role of life and fiction made possible Fitzgerald's telescoping his vision of the waste of enthusiasm and dedication, the blight of expectations of innocence, into the vision of his fictional characters, a vision that continued to haunt him till the end of his life as is revealed in his letter to his daughter:

You are doing exactly what I did at Princeton. I wore myself out.... From your letter I guess that you are doing exactly the same thing and it just makes my stomach fall out to think of it. Amateur work is fun but the price of it is just simply tremendous. In the end you get "Thankyou" and that's all. You give three performances which everybody promptly forgets and somebody has a breakdown -- that somebody being the enthusiast.62

This moralistic intention wells up with persistent reiteration throughout his life. Writing to his daughter a few years before his death he observed:

I simply don't want you in danger and I don't want you to do anything inappropriate to your age. For premature adventure one pays an atrocious price. As I told you once, every boy I know who drank at eighteen or nineteen is now safe in his grave. The girls who were what we called 'speeds' (in our stoneage slang) at sixteen were reduced to anything they could get at their marrying time. Its in the logic of life that no young person ever 'gets away with anything'. They fool their parents but not their contemporaries. It was on the cards that Ginevera King should get fired -- also that your mother should wear out young.63

Such moral preachings seemed essential aspects of his artistic conscience, and what he thought in the end would preserve him against the ravages of time and social

63. Ibid., p.30.
misadventures: "I think that despite a tendency to self indulgence you and I have some essential seriousness that will manage to preserve us." 64

His first novel, *This Side of Paradise* (1920) represents his early attempts to reconcile his adolescent experience to his moralistic intentions. Inspite of its surface frivolity and youthful profligacy his artistic perceptiveness was of a high moral order. It was immensely popular and a critical success. He had written to Edmund Wilson, "I really believe that no one else could have written so scathingly the story of the youth of our generation." 65

Fitzgerald's second novel, *The Beautiful and Damned* came out in 1922. By this time he had fame, fortune, money and the golden girl, what the youth of his age could not easily command. He could feel like his "brother", Anthony Patch:

The fire was bright and the breeze sighing in through the curtains brought in a mellow damp, promising May and the world of summer. His soul thrilled to remote harmonies; he heard the strum of far guitars and waters lapping on a warm

64. Ibid., 30.
65. Ibid., p.343.
Mediterranean shore -- for he was young now as he would never be again, and more triumphant than death.66

However, his sober glamourising of youth now changed to somber speculation on what he saw in the post-war mood of disillusionment, impairing of traditional values and imminent deterioration of American society. The interim following This Side of Paradise added fresh insights and moulded his attitude to the observed reality of the contemporary scene:

While I took little time off, a fresh picture of America began to form before my eyes. The uncertainties of 1919 were over -- there seemed little doubt about what was going to happen -- America was going on the greatest, gaudiest spree in history and there was going to be plenty to tell about it. The whole golden boom was in the air.... All the stories that came into my head had a touch of disaster in them -- the lovely young creatures in my novels went to ruin, the diamond mountains of my short stories

blew up, my millionaires were as beautiful and damned as Thomas Hardy's peasants. In life then things hadn't happened yet. But I was pretty sure living wasn't the reckless careless business these thought -- this generation just younger than me.67

He was obviously looking for an explanation of a world that had crumbled in the upheaval of World War I and which showed no apparent signs of stabilising.

Scott and Zelda had become symbolic of the romance of the youthful, the insensitive and irresponsible hedonists with their inexhaustible, incandescent vitality for pleasure. Their lives seemed to be drifting close to that of the Patches:

The magnificent attitude of not giving a damn altered overnight; from being a mere tenet of Gloria's it became the entire solace and justification of what they chose to do and what consequences it brought. Not to be sorry, not to lose

one cry of regret, to live according to a clear code of honour toward each other, and to seek the moment's happiness as fervently and persistently as possible.68

Apparently, they were an amiable couple, charming and innocent, with an aura of success clinging to them like "gold dust." But their lives drifted aimlessly, lacking centrality emotional and spiritual moorings: finding no nucleus to which we could cling, we became a small nucleus ourselves and gradually fitted our disruptive personalities into the contemporary scene of New York."69 It was obvious how swiftly the undercurrents of discontent were seeping into the surface charm and gaiety of their lives; Zelda observed years later with nostalgia, "It might have been Nemesis incubating." Their lives had been changing into pathetic but appropriate symbols of the American decadence for it appears as if the course of Fitzgerald's life, as of the Twenties, ran parallel in the accidents of circumstances which led to their soaring prosperity in that era of boom and their equally swift decline before the decade ended. Thus The Beautiful and Damned is an unedited odyssey of his personal and artistic life, of his demonic love and literary

69. F. Scott Fitzgerald, The Crack-Up, p.27.
failure. No wonder then, that the early working titles of the novel had been "The Demon Lover", "The Diary of a Literary Failure", "The Flight of the Rocket" and "The Beautiful Lady Without Mercy." The events of the novel have close resemblance to Zelda and Scott, and the early years of their marriage, its haunting, lingering honeymoon and how "he and his beautiful young wife are wrecked on the shoals of dissipation" as he admitted to Scribner. However, besides being completely absorbed in Zelda and being influenced by her ideas, the new point of view was largely shaped by the realist writings of Theodore Dreiser, Frank Norris and Harold Fredrick. He wrote to Maxwell Perkins in 1920:

I've fallen lately under the influence of an author who's quite changed my point of view.... I've just discovered him -- Frank Norris... There are many things in Paradise that might have been written by Norris -- Those drunken scenes, for instance -- infact, all the realism.70

In the same letter he lamented the agitation against Dreiser:

70. Letters, p.162.
I don't know what I'll do now -- what in hell is the use of trying to write decent fiction if a bunch of old women refuse to let anyone hear the truth.\footnote{Ibid., p.162.}

Norris' *Vandover and The Brute* (1914) impressed Fitzgerald and he wanted to create an authentic novel on its pattern thus, both in its naturalistic treatment of love as well as its closeness to the Twenties. *The Beautiful and Damned* resembles *Vandover*, and besides "the carnival of disaster" and the unabated, continuous perversities that Anthony Patch and Vandover share, the two novels portray pervasive moral decay. However, Patch is also "the victim of an implacable fate" and the novel was not the naturalistic kind of fiction that Fitzgerald had contemplated. In the novel he also found a ground for battle against commercial desiccation of contemporary culture.

In his artistic endeavours, Fitzgerald wanted to move beyond the realism and achievement of *This Side of Paradise* and *The Beautiful and Damned*. That is why he was thinking of the epical romance of the American Dream and its final failure and collapse in the very fulfilment of its promise of material possibilities and surfeit of success. The theme of the American Dream being destroyed by its own excess seemed...
implicit in his "final decision about America." He was moving towards *The Great Gatsby* (1925). The love affairs of Scott Fitzgerald with Ginevera King and Zelda Sayer formed the basic material of the novel. Of the former he complained to his daughter years later:

She was the first girl I ever loved and I have faithfully avoided seeing her up to this moment to keep that illusion perfect, because she ended up by throwing me over with the most supreme boredom and indifference .... but Ginevera had a great deal besides beauty. 72

Such emotional depths of his adolescent experience were largely confined to his unrequited love and his unfulfilled dreams of "poor boys shouldn't think of marrying rich girls", thus wealth was sought not only to remove class distinctions, replace aristocracy but to repossess the golden girl. The particular problem that he dealt within *The Great Gatsby* was the ill-begotten, unmerited wealth of the nouveau riche the social parvenu who suddenly climbs to great fortune amassing mysteriously heaps of soiled money, the masquerading plutocrats who achieved social status

72. Ibid., p.34.
through financial power only to be destroyed at the end. Fitzgerald achieved his ambition of being a great writer and artist and for years was associated only with *The Great Gatsby*.

From May 1924 to December 1931, Fitzgerald spent intermittently in Europe. These years constituted conspicuous failure for him, both personal and artistic; he seemed to have lost his artistic vitality and did little writing; he experienced moments of imaginative sterility both because love and money were losing their charisma and fascination; their relations were strained and she had become coeval with his artistic aspirations and the squandering of his hard earned money, and a futile and wasteful life of parties and sprees of drinking bouts. Years later, when he had been fully educated into the meaning of "the authority of failure", he would relive his memory of Zelda with all the remorse and nostalgic grief for the happy days that had turned into a prolonged agony and nightmare; in a mood of lingering pathos and kindness, he recalled in 1935:

Do you remember, before the keys
turned in the locks,
While life was a closeup, and not
an occasional letter,
That I hated to swim naked
from the rocks
While you liked absolutely
nothing better?
Do you remember many hotel bureaus
that had
Only three drawers? But the only
bother
Was that each of us got holy,
then got mad,
Trying to give the third one to
the other.
East, West, the little car turned,
right or wrong
Up an erroneous Alp, an unmapped
Savoy river.
We blamed each other in cadences
acid and strong
And in an hour, laughed and
called it liver.
And though the end was
desolate and unkind
To turn the calendar at June and
find December
On the next leaf; still, stupid-got
with grief, I find
These are the only quarrels that I can remember.  

Fitzgerald paid heavily for this profligacy in moral and material resources. The youthful senility of those years would overtake Zelda with lunacy and he would suffer the spiritual remorse for the rest of his life. Recalling those years of his European sojourn, he ruminated, "I had fair years to waste, years that I can honestly regret, in seeking the eternal carnival by the sea."  

While he lingered in his self-imposed exile in Europe mostly in France and Italy, where The Great Gatsby had been largely written he remained a perceptive observer-participant of European life and manners. But more than Europeans, it was the Americans in Europe, like that of Henry James' novels that Fitzgerald had chosen to portray in his new novel. He would write about the American rich who regularly wintered in the salubrious climes of French and Italian Rivieras both because moral laxity of European life offered an escape from the rigours of puritan morality that most Americans unconsciously feared, as well as the new freedom, as a result of material riches that gave them a new status and a privileged position.

73. F. Scott Fitzgerald, "Lamp in the Window", F. Scott Fitzgerald in His Own Time, ed. Mathew J. Brucolli and Jackson R. Bryer (Kent, Ohio, 1971) p.73.

74. F. Scott Fitzgerald, "Early Success", The Crack-Up, p.89.
in the war-devastated Europe. The Riviera had become the symbol of waste in his mind, and as he disclosed to John Peale Bishop from France, "I am beginning a new novel next month on the Riviera". He had known most of the rich Americans who flocked to Europe and Antibes, the Riviera resort midway between Cannes and Nice; most of them were the American writers of the post-war generation, Hemingway, Archibald MacLeish, Dos Passos, Max Eastman, Gerald Murphy and Rex Ingrams. In fact, the people and setting of *Tender is the Night* was already rooting itself in his mind. It was Fitzgerald's personal response to experience and the interpersonal relationships between his wife Zelda and the many people around that formed the basic material. As a portrait of an age and its fashionable life and frivolities and the nostalgic moments of its importune indulgences, it transcended the mere documentation fit only for historical curiosity and moved into an area of experience where it acquired a critical and imaginative value, all its own. He had reoriented his entire thinking over the novel and planned altogether a new one based on their lives, and to be a kind of defence of his point of view against what Zelda had written in *Save Me The Waltz* about their marriage. Zelda had taken almost exactly a decade, 1920-30, from her marriage to Scott to her lapsing into schizophrenic insanity in Paris. The Flapper of the Twenties had been battered by

her own excesses. The high price she paid for inordinate freedom of access to male prerogatives, the order she imposed upon her shattered and shambled past. Her novel expressed the haunting, agony and ecstasy of a woman's waxing and waning marital love.

The nine long years that slipped between *The Great Gatsby* and *Tender Is The Night* proved a "costly lapse and an ignominious failure." The time lag was not as significant as the material and attitudinal changes that effected Fitzgerald's critical reputation as a writer between these years. With *The Great Gatsby*, he came to "his full maturity as a novelist", and for his next novel he set even a higher and unrealistic aim of finding "something really new in form, idea and structure -- the mode for the age that Joyce and Stein [were] searching for, that Conrad didn't find",76 a novel that would excel in its scope and variety all contemporary writers, even the ones who had been the models for his earlier novels. He hoped that once the novel was completed and published, "I shall be the best American novelist."77 However, *Tender Is The Night* lacked the quality of *The Great Gatsby* and could not be the great work that Fitzgerald had hoped; inspite of its excellent prose,

76. Ibid., p.201.
77. Ibid., p.212.
beautiful and limpid, and all the surface charm of its presentation, it had been discarded by the reading public.

With The Crack-Up essays in 1936, Fitzgerald emerged to be "a writer because that was my only way of life, but I would cease any attempt to be a person -- to be kind, just or generous..... I have now at last become a writer only." He made efforts to retrieve his physical and mental loss and launched into being a serious and responsible writer. The motion pictures had taken over as a powerful medium for disseminating culture so he wanted to strengthen the novel as an art form:

I saw that the novel which at my maturity was the strongest medium for conveying thought and emotion from one human being to another, was becoming subordinated to a mechanical and communal art, that whether in the hands of Hollywood merchants or Russian idealists, was capable of reflecting only the tritest thought the most obvious emotion. It was an art in which words were subordinated to images. Where

78. F. Scott Fitzgerald, "Handle With Care", The Crack-Up, p.83.
the personality was worn down to the inevitable low gear collaboration. As long past as 1930, I had a hunch that the talkies would make even the best novelist as archaic as silent pictures.... There was a rankling indignity, that to me had become almost an obsession in seeing the power of the written word subordinated to another power, a more glittering, a grosser power. 79

Ironically, he himself would become a screen writer for Hollywood. However, the "crack-up" was his coinage for his crisis of self-confidence, a state of emotional bankruptcy which began during the years following the publication of Tender Is The Night, a state induced partly by his realisation that he had failed as a writer and could not cope with the demands upon his talents. Besides, he was piqued by Zelda's affair with a French aviator, Edourd Jozan. This occurred when he was working on The Great Gatsby, and he used the theme of betrayal and infidelity in etching out the character of Daisy Buchanan. In the summer of 1935 he himself had one such intense experience:

I have just emerged not totally unscathed. I'm afraid, from a short violent love-affair.... I had done much better to let it alone because it was scarcely a time in my life for one more emotion. Still its done now and tied up in cellophane and -- may be someday I'll get a chapter out of it. God what a hell of a profession to be a writer. One is simply because one can't help it.80

The Crack-Up neatly sums up the drama of his quest for self-identity. It has three acts so to say: "The crack up" when his old self faced destruction and he "cracked like an old plate". "Pasting it together" cleared the stumbling debris that came in the way of self-renewal, "Handle with Care" completed the process of self-construction. The new Fitzgerald emerged but all such resolves needed psychological readjustment to the new set of circumstances without which the promise of his artistic accomplishment would fail to materialise. These problems became central concern in the articles compiled under Afternoon of an Author.

The financial predicament persisted and events were crowding in to urge him toward his last chance, the beckoning West, the symbol of pioneering pursuit of wealth and security; but more meaningful was the promise that the West held out for a symbolic resurgence of his creative imagination. However, he secretly dreaded going to Hollywood; he had warned himself, "Never any luck with the movies. Stick to your last, boy."\(^81\) But he could not resist the lure of movies much as he hated to be in Hollywood:

I'd have gone to Hollywood a year ago last Spring. I don't think I could do now but I might. Especially if there is no choice. Twice I have worked out there on other people's stories .... It simply fails to use what qualities I have.... It would be hard to change my temperament in middle-life. No single man with a serious literary reputation has made good there.... I'm afraid unless some such break occurs I'd be no good in the industry..... It simply isn't in me to do my duty blindly. I

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have to follow my fate with my eyes wide open.\textsuperscript{82}

Though he "sincerely hated the place", a month later, in June 1937 he left for Hollywood on a screen-writer's assignment at the studios of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer. Twice before he had failed to make a way for himself in 1927 and 1932 but he thought he'd better make it once more, "and I have every reason to think that he will come through. He'd better."\textsuperscript{83} Though he had noted "I left my capacity for hoping on the little roads that led to Zelda's sanatorium", a new vista was opening before him.

His contract ran out in January, 1939 and it was not renewed because he had not done enough to get proper film accreditations. His reputation and experience as a novelist seemed of no avail in making him a good screen writer, and in a mood of bitterness he wrote to Joseph Mankiewicz:

\begin{quote}
I guess all these years I've been kidding myself about being a good writer. For nineteen years with two years out for sickness, I've written
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{82} Letters, p.420.

best selling entertainment, and my dialogue is supposedly right up at the top. But I learn from you that it isn't good dialogue and you can take a few hours off and do much better.84

Such disappointments came very close to closing the hopes of a new career in the movies for him. But in the Hollywood atmosphere of traditional conviviality Fitzgerald was constrained to maintain his surface calm and bland optimism. Against his customary social boisterousness of early years he much preferred his privacy. Though he was compelled by an inner necessity to take on the character of a "double life", in no way more significant than in his outward life as a screen-writer and his secret life as an artist planning to re-emerge someday as "a butterfly from a cocoon."

Sometime during the autumn of 1938, Fitzgerald started casually talking about the Hollywood movie world to Sheilah Graham with a view to turning into a novel what he found in that "expansive world". His circumstances, intellectual maturity and events, all brought a sense of urgency and spurred his artistic ambition to write. Moreover he had noted, "show me a hero and I will write you a tragedy." Hollywood stood out as a new powerful symbol of recreated

84. Letters, p.583.
relevance of art, and provided Fitzgerald with a new emotional and intellectual cohesiveness. The Hollywood movie had become the precise metaphor for what he remarked at the end of The Last Tycoon. "There are no second acts in American lives." He would himself prove the fallacy of the statement of concentration of his intellectual energies and efforts towards making the second act succeed in a measure where the first had failed. He also saw the medium of the movie having possibilities of serious art, even perhaps "the strongest and supplest medium for conveying thought and emotion from one human being to another." However, his essential artistic effort was to be in the direction of the novel no matter what he might be able to achieve as a screen writer. The Last Tycoon (1941) epitomises a Hollywood that stood for the entire sociological and moral implication of America "going West" in quest of a vision of good hope and greater, innocent expectations, Monroe Stahr can be conceived as the archetypal heroic figure of American society, the man who rises to the top with nothing to back him (no wealth, no family, no social status) except sheer dint of courage, intelligence and a tenacious will to struggle and attain the highest. At the same time he

85. F. Scott Fitzgerald, The Last Tycoon, p.78.
86. F. Scott Fitzgerald, "Pasting It Together", The Crack-Up, p.78.
contains within himself the tragic possibilities implicit in the mythical dream that pursues him from the start.

To Fitzgerald "the wise and tragic sense of life" implied the sense that life is essentially a cheat and its conditions are those of defeat, and the redeeming things are not happiness and pleasure but the "deeper satisfactions that come out of the struggle." This conviction helped him to order his experience in the light of what his imagination seized as the essential sadness of life. In 1936 he wrote to his daughter, Scott i.e.:

A whole lot of people have found life a whole lot of fun.... I have not found it so. But I had hell of alot of fun when I was in my twenties and thirties: and I feel it is your duty to accept the sadness, the tragedy of the world we live in, with a certain esprit.  

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