Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 PRELUDE:

Social transactions are very significant transactions within a social setting that are built on anything other than money. Generally, social transactions take the form of conversations, body language, looks, passing, emails, commands, letters, smirks, questions, smiles, sneers and handshakes. In a social setting, there are always transactions going on. For instance, each time a social transaction takes place the participants change a little; they are happier if smiled upon, grumpy if yelled at, or enlightened if something witty or endearing is said. They have a tendency to occur subconsciously and on the subliminal level.

The objective of transactional analysis is to provide better understanding of how people relate to one another so that they may develop improved communication and human relationships.

In view of the above, the researcher undertakes to analyse the social transactions in American in 1920’s. As already noted in some literature, there were many changes in the social customs and day-to-day life of millions of Americans during the 1920’s. Americans created a consumer culture in which automobiles, home appliances, and other goods were purchased at an unprecedented rate. Advertising helped to fuel this desire to purchase, and the popularity of radio and motion pictures helped to create a more uniform national culture.

Further, the present thesis aims at exploring social transactions as they take place in daily situations with especial references to the fictions penned by Sinclair Lewis and Willa Cather. These two American novelists present different cultural spectrum in terms of the interpersonal and social
transactions. The realities, including the characters in their fiction betray the sinuosity of social transactions and stand as statement on the nature of cultural situations. These situations and the fictional characters perceptions, actions an reactions in their final analysis, pinpoint the failure or success of the social transactions.

Moreover, this doctoral thesis discusses the social transactions in the American 1920’s. The twenties era went by such names as "The Age of the Golden Calf," or "Political Decadence," "A Mad Decade," “Golden Age Twenties,” “Jazz Age,” “Age of Intolerance,” “Age of Wonderful Nonsense” and "The Roaring Twenties”—through the decade's real and sustained prosperity, dizzying technological advancements, and lively culture.

In order to understand what does the social transactions actually mean and how does it find manifestations in the fiction of the selected authors, it is indispensable to find out how the problem is defined and understood by the social scientists and social thinkers. This explication would also create a perspective on the fiction written by Sinclair Lewis and Willa Cather.

Dan Ariely, in his book, *Predictably Irrational*, describes and defines transactions as either social or economic. Simply, an economic transaction is one in which there is an exchange of money. People recognize these as business transactions and expect that they will be governed by rules, such as when and in what form payment will occur. They are not offended by demand for payment. A social transaction is one in which one party does a favor for another with no expectation of payment and, in fact, would take offense if payment were proffered.

Transactional analysis predicts the kind of responses our interventions may evoke from people. When people interact in assertive or non-assertive
ways, there is a social transaction in which one person responds to another. The study of these social transactions between people is referred to as ‘transactional analyses’.$^8$

Transactional analysis is a theory of personality and interpersonal communication defined as the study of moves people make in their dealings each other. It is a useful tool for helping people to understand and improve their interactions with others, both at work and in their private lives.$^9$ Transactional analyses are outgrowth of earlier Freudian psychology. Sigmund Freud was the first to suggest that there are 3 sources within the human personality that stimulate, monitor and control behavior.$^{10}$

It is also considered to be a method of analyzing and understanding behavior. Transactional analysis was developed by Eric Berne for psychotherapy in the 1950s. It was popularized by Berne’s book *Games People Play* (1964), the writings of Thomas Harris’ *I Am Ok – You Are Ok* (1960), Muriet James and Dorothy Jougeward and Abe Wagner. Jougeward and Wagner have shown how the concepts of transactional analysis can be applied to organizations.

The objective of transactional analysis is to provide better understanding of how people relate to one another so that they may develop improved communication and human relationships. Thus, transactionalism, in anthropology, was a theory first advanced by Frederick Barth in 1959 to consider social processes and interactions. Barth was critical of earlier functionalist models that portrayed an overly cohesive and collective picture of society without paying due attention to the roles, relationships, decisions and innovations of the individual. Using the examples of the Swat Pathan people in Pakistan and, later, in 1966, organization among Norwegian fishermen, Barth set out to demonstrate that social forms like kinship groups,
economic institutions and political alliances are generated by the actions and strategies of the individuals deployed against a context of social constraints.

By observing how people interact with each other, an insight could be gained into the nature of the competition, values and principles that govern individuals' choices, and also the way resources are allocated in society. Upon conducting social science experiments, Frederick Barth found that people will work harder when they are performing a social transaction rather than an economic one. They expect that the social transaction will be personally meaningful to the recipient, whether the activity is holding open a door or donating a kidney and they derive pleasure from helping. Moreover, they expect that they will be repaid in the future by an equivalent social transaction, whether directly or through karma.

Social transactions break down when people are called upon too often for too much and they begin to feel taken advantage of. Social transactions have at their heart an expectation of thanks while economic transactions are expected to provide value. People react much more vehemently to betrayals of social contracts than economic contracts. If you hire your neighbor's brother-in-law to remodel your kitchen, you may interpret his inability to show up when scheduled as a personal affront because your economic transaction is masquerading as a social contract.

Many adolescents with anxiety, depression or other mental health problems come from families that don’t eat meals together or participate in similar family rituals as often as the families of adolescents without such psychological problems, according to the results of a small study. With more interaction and emotional transactions, such problems can be resolved through social transaction. One is defined as a person, not by what one owns but by whom he interacts with, by one’s relation with others. This
yields a personal evolution. Given enough time and enough interactions, one may become a completely different person with a new set of ideas, values, philosophies, likes and dislikes all dictated by how one interact with others and vice versa. Thus, one takes a new personality.\textsuperscript{14}

Over the years, American society experienced a struggle with social change as it became an urban, industrial nation. Changes in lifestyle, values, morals, and manners increased tension and conflict. Wealth, possessions, having fun and sexual freedom - ideas influenced by the psychology of Sigmund Freud - were the new values.\textsuperscript{15} World War I triggered a number of important changes in American society: gradual and immediate. America has undergone many social changes that have aroused the longstanding needs and present-day anxieties of the people in America. These changes are in organizational life styles, concepts of human ability and intelligence, changing patterns of norms and morals, the relationship of social conditions to physical and biological environments.\textsuperscript{16}

People of the twenties – ordinary people as well as the thoughtful young – felt the impact of modernity’s infatuation with impermanence, and many of them felt it with unprotected intensity. Engrossed in the consumerism, they didn’t get time to interact with one another. This lifestyle, though attractive and mesmerizing, couldn’t help people to come close to each other.

The modernist movement in America began with a collapse of the conventional structures of family, conventional belief in religious institutions and even in the conventional notions of history, political governance and cultural configurations. The writers of this period, therefore, experimented with language, not simply as a means of communication, rather as a medium of perception. A change in literary perception that
became obvious in 1920’s was the writers’ assumption that language has failed to communicate because language miscommunicates and the war was the manifest example of the abuse of language.

Social transactions are bound by usage of language. Language fails when one is depressed; it fails when one is too happy; yet it is the only medium to communicate. This was never understood by the people of the 1920’s and which finally lead to a void inside them.

Much of the great American literature of the 1920s represented an intellectual backlash against the perceived materialism, conformity, and inauthenticity of the new mass culture. Sinclair Lewis and Willa Cather were prominent writers of this period. They wrote novels with critical depictions of American life. Sinclair Lewis, attacked America’s prevalent Protestant, middle-class, conformist morality. He produced a series of satirical novels that examined in detail the iconic figures found in every town in America: business leaders, doctors and preachers. Willa Cather wrote that the main business of The Professor’s House was to show the emptiness and futility of modern civilization when compared to ancient civilizations A Lost Lady deals with the same issues.

Sinclair Lewis’ Babbitt is about a middle-aged businessman who rebels against his safe life and family, only a manifestation of multilayered social transactions to realize that the young generation is as hypocritical as his own. The Job is about the struggle of women of the 1920’s who could chose to be either housewives or working women.

The study tries to reveal the reasons for the failures of the protagonists. The characters in all the selected novels are prone to the rapid changes around them. Nobody tries to understand why they have to change with the changing world; nobody tries to understand why the changes are
taking place and their consequences. The only thing they do is to bear the aftermaths. What are no social transactions in them? If they were there, people could communicate their issues with each other; and even communicate their fears with each other. Due to this failure in social transaction, the people of the 1920’s could not help others or themselves to get out of their restricted, unhappy lives. French speakers dubbed it the "années folles" ("Crazy Years"), emphasizing the era's social, artistic, and cultural dynamism. In spite of the impact of the war and the depression, the decade now appears to have encompassed a period of critical change in American life. From the world of fashion to the world of politics, forces clashed to produce the most explosive decade of the century. It was the age of prohibition, prosperity and downfall. Government policies, progress in technology, and a new consumer society produced a booming economy. To take full advantage of the profits to be made, businesses merged and grew ever larger.

Malcolm Bradbury claims that the American twenties was an era of vast change and experimentation within US society. He acknowledges that this was a "period of illusion between two severe political realities- The end of the First World War, which tarnished Liberal Idealism and the Wall Street crash which discredited the entire political and social action of the 'Jazz Age'. The 'Jazz Age', a term popularised by F. Scott Fitzgerald, was seen as an instrument of revolt against convention and custom. It was an integral part of the changes that society experienced. Bradbury goes on to illustrate how money was essentially the key to this change and development. He believed that the stability and growth of the economic markets allowed people to be more frivolous with money and as a result, America declined in its level of productivity as society chose to belong to the new consumer
class. This is emphasized by Michael Spindler too who, in his text *American Literature and Social Change*, confirms that the Twenties had achieved the highest standard of living that its people had ever known.\(^\text{20}\)

Writing in 1925 to his Polish translator, Witold von Hulewicz, Rainer Maria Rilke noted that the ‘Great War had completely interrupted’ his writing of the *Duino Elegies*. Begun in 1912, resumed in 1914, and then taken up again in 1922, the *Elegies* had undergone a shift. “The ‘Elegies’ show us” engaged, Rilke wrote, in the “continual conversion” of our fragile and transient earth. When possessions were few and change was slow, the transformation worked by human hands acquired certain seemliness: they created “not only intensities of a spiritual kind, but – who knows? new substances, metals, nebulae, stars.” Now, Rilke said, the nature of such conversions had been altered. To shared objects such as houses, wells and towers, as well as personal possessions, including books and clothes, our forebears added something of their shared humanity, making them signs of hope, and meditation. “We are perhaps the last” generation to have “known such things,” he added. For now, “empty, indifferent things, pseudo-things,” crowd “over from America.”\(^\text{21}\)

The need to see new techniques and new products displace old ways and old possessions touched everything, including literature, music and painting, where tradition had once counted heavily. The characteristic claim of every avant-garde movement of the twenties was that it made some earlier technique, genre, or theory “old-fashioned” if not obsolete. In short, the modern valued what it depended on – not permanence but change. It privileged the “new” or “new-fangled” over the “old” or “old-fashioned.” It counted on the unspoken promise of the “new” – the stunning promise that nothing lasts.
People of the twenties – ordinary people as well as the thoughtful young – felt the impact of modernity’s infatuation with impermanence, and many of them felt it with unprotected intensity. Like Babbitt, they felt more hurried as well as more confused, as though time were going to run out on them before it ran out on their newest gadgets.

In *A Backward Glance*, Edith Wharton describes her writing of *The Age of Innocence* (1920) as a “momentary escape,” a “going back to…childish memories of a long-vanished America,” by which she meant New York of the 1870s. In *French Ways and their Meaning* (1919), she pictures the world since 1914 as “like a house on fire,” with the lodgers standing on the stairs in disarray, their doors wide open, and their furniture exposed, and their habits revealed. In her images of haste and loss and her image of the world’s residents as lodgers, as temporary residents of changing quarters, Wharton captures the sense of the modern that reaches back to Sister Carrie and forward to Daisy and Tom Buchanan, who buy and sell mansion as well as rent flats in apartment buildings or suites in hotels. For it follows from the logic of what Wharton called the “roaring and discontinuous universe” inaugurred by the Great War that what matters the most is changing possessions, preferably by increasing their number, but if necessary simply by changing their arrangement. One response, seen more in Lewis than in Wharton, was to expose the emotional poverty of such plenty.

A second, closer to Rilke’s letter and to Wharton’s practice in *The Custom of the Country* (1913), was to decry the “invading races” of vulgarities who were displacing the rightful heirs, the “vanishing denizens,” of the world or, as Wharton does in *A Backward Glance*, to bemoan the ways in which vulgar immigrants are soiling the hitherto unnoticed “purity”
of North American English. A third, close to Cather’s practice in *Death Comes for the Archbishop* (1927), was to explore or celebrate lost worlds where tradition still mattered. And the fourth was to confront the discontinuous world directly by focusing on crippled or even ghost-like creatures who drift through attenuated lives, speaking a language like Babbitt’s, which blends archaic phrases with strained slang and empty slogans.\(^{22}\)

The Roaring twenties was a time of post-war optimism. Many people had let loose of the confining ideas of the past decades and tried to live their life as if no one had before. Ideas of hedonism and carefree disillusionment predominantly took over the larger cities. The Jazz Age had moved in and there was nothing to stop it. What came with the Jazz Age in terms of attitudes of people came a large influx of economical optimism. People were getting rich fast, and not spending enough of what they made. Kevin Rayburn describes it: Just being another decade on the timeline was not good enough for the 1920s. When its brief turn came, it had to be the biggest, the loudest, and the brightest. A calamity gave it birth, and a calamity ended it. It was a decade of giants, like none before or since. (Rayburn).\(^{23}\)

As the drive to make and spend money accelerated, conspicuous consumption and pecuniary emulation gained more authority. Freedom of choice meant the freedom to choose from an expanding range of goods, commodities and activities and the freedom to pay for them on installment plans. Soon a new “consumer ethic” and “leisure ethic” that stressed immediate gratification began to displace an older “work ethic” that stressed working and saving and the importance of self-discipline and self-restraint. Slowly and then more quickly, the value of restraint, which Coolidge
continued personally to practice, began to lose its hold as a principle allied with success and respectability. Acting on impulse, doing whatever one wanted, began to gain acceptance as a natural and therefore desirable way of achieving self-fulfillment. In the challenged ethos, self-denial preceded self-realization. In the emergent ethos, with the promise of plenty eroding the authority of asceticism, self-assertion, self-realization and even self-indulgence established themselves as respectable goals.24

With a shorter work week and with more paid vacation, Americans had more leisure time. Movies such as the Ten Commandments and the first movie with sound, the Jazz Singer, drew millions of people a week to theaters during the 1920s. Americans idolized Charlie Chaplin and other movie stars. They also admired sports figures, such as Babe Ruth25 who held, “even when you were broke you didn’t worry about money, because it was in such profusion around you…. Charm, notoriety, mere good manners, weighed more than money as a social asset…”26

Fitzgerald was not only the master reporter of the Jazz Age, he was, or he ultimately became, its most sensitive judge. He managed the reporting easily enough; in fact, it was all too easy and too much a temptation for him to report on the behavior of the decades golden lads and lasses. In one of his notebook entries under “Girls,” he wrote: “… She was lovely and expensive, and about nineteen.”27 These three characteristics summed up quiet effectively the superficial qualities of his people; and they were real enough qualities, for Fitzgerald’s great popular attractiveness was due in part to his being able to define a part of an age, the part that has led to the decade’s being called the Jazz Age.

In the early 1920’s the new psychology was of great interest because of its relationship to the cult of the self in which Jazz Age Americans were
caught up. In a remarkable reversal from an earlier day, social norms produced not only self-centered attitudes but self-indulgent behavior. To this narcissistic preoccupation the new psychology contributed both the idea of the hidden self, with its many ramifications, and a rationalization for the self-indulgent behavior. The fact is the jazz lifestyle was appealing to many. Aloof, hard-edged, passionate and distinctly urban, the jazz music appealed to many young white girls and boys hoping to escape the drudgery of rural America. It was modern, lively, improvisational, and fun.

Jazz played a significant part in wider cultural changes during the period. The birth of jazz music is often accredited to African Americans, but expanded and over time was modified to become socially acceptable to middle-class white Americans. Cities like New York and Chicago were cultural centers for jazz. Its aim was the creation of spontaneous communities of listeners and performers who engage simultaneously in active remembering and deliberate forgetting.

Jazz is sensuous and even sinuous; it is illicit, spontaneous, and unpredictable; it is ungenteel and uninhibited; it scorns pretense, endorses protest, and celebrates change. Offended by its sexuality, A. C. Ward called it a “dance of death” for Europe as well as the United States. Yet even as it celebrates the present moment of new creation, jazz evokes and echoes old words and rhythms that it treats as almost sacred. This doubleness made jazz the appropriate music of the twenties. In one mood it exemplifies a radical principle of origination. Like the United States and modernism, it is obsessed with the possibility of wholly new beginnings. It defines true artists as those able to shake themselves free of history long enough to engage in pure improvisations, and it therefore defines true art as work in which anteriority seems almost to vanish. And yet, like other forms of modernism,
it works subtly to call into question the possibility of the modern so construed.\textsuperscript{30} Moreover, it reflects the sadness of a world already black and blue; in others, it reflects the anxiety of people so uncertain of what lies ahead that they seem afraid to let the party end.\textsuperscript{31}

Living beyond one’s means, a sin to previous generations became the thing to do in the 1920’s.\textsuperscript{32} In \textit{This Side of Paradise}, Fitzgerald wrote that his generation, labeled by writer Gertrude Stein as the “lost generation,” had “grown up to find all gods dead.” Vast numbers of Americans were attracted to the culture of business. It was possible, it was felt, that an individual could start with nothing and become a millionaire.

By the 1920s innovative forces thrusting into American life were creating a new way of living. New ideas continued to inundate the country, and optimism remained high. The U.S. population delighted in the "miracles" that new inventions had brought—electric lights, airplanes, new communication systems.\textsuperscript{33}

The decade of the 1920s can certainly be seen as the beginning of the advertising age. Consumers were warned that if they wanted to live the "good life," they had to have the latest model refrigerator or automobile. People living in urban, suburban and rural areas all saw the same advertisements for products that had been placed in both national and local publications by advertising men. This helped create a universal national culture.

The levels of consumption in the US grew rapidly after the War. Many commentators saw this as part of the shift towards modernity with the rise of the 'consumer society' and their desire to buy needless goods. As Fitzgerald illustrates in his text \textit{The Great Gatsby} women were the main target audience for advertising campaigns. The figure of Dr Eckleburg in
Gatsby emphasizes the spread of advertising that plays on the vanity of society. Women all over America were being influenced by the need to be modern. Canned foods, ready-made clothing and household appliances liberated women from much household drudgery. In addition to this was the desire to belong to the society of 'it' girls. Fitzgerald's Gatsby is explicit in representing this class of consumers. The prime consumer in this text is Daisy Buchanan who is a representative of the 'it' girls. In contrast to Daisy is Myrtle Wilson. Myrtle represents a part of female society that longs to be fashionable and 'in', but is being left behind by their lack of wealth. The continual references to new wealth and mass consumption in this text, reaffirms the social condition of the early Twenties as being very consumer-orientated.

Science, medicine and health advanced remarkably during the roaring twenties. Albert Einstein was awarded the Nobel Prize in physics in 1921. An interest developed in nutrition, caloric consumption and physical vitality. With the Flapper’s focus on dieting and her popular look came a significant change in the dietary habits of Americans as a whole less fat and meat, and more fruits and vegetables. The discovery of vitamins and their effects also occurred around the same time.

Although many of Fitzgerald's disillusioned contemporaries claimed that there were no heroes in post-war America, the '20s actually produced heroes of a new type. Sports figures like baseball's Babe Ruth, boxing heavyweight champion Jack Dempsey, and football's Red Grange were household names whose exploits were followed by millions in newspapers and on the radio. Daring feats could also turn people into instant celebrities, as in the case of Gertrude Ederle in 1926 when she became the first woman to swim the English Channel. Richard Byrd's 1926 flight over the North Pole
earned him the Congressional Medal of Honor, and he received international renown for his explorations of Antarctica. Similarly, following his solo flight across the Atlantic Ocean in March 1927, Charles Lindbergh became without question the most famous person in America and perhaps the world. It seemed to capture the spirit of the age. Americans liked Lindbergh because he was brave, quiet, and handsome. He seemed to represent everything that was best about their country.

Henry Ford blazed the way with his Model T; he sold more 15 million of them by 1927. He used mass-production to lower the prices of automobile and make it more affordable. With more affordable cars the economy boomed. The automobile really changed the way people lived in the 1920's. The automobile became the backbone of the American economy. It altered the American landscape and American's society, and it was one of the several factors in the country's business boom in the 1920's.

Nothing created a more national mass culture than did the radio. KDKA in Pittsburgh was the first station to get a radio station license in 1920. Radio networks began to form (the National Broadcasting Company being the first in 1926) and brought listeners across the country news, variety shows, and at first, recreated sporting events. It brought new ideas and experiences into their own homes.

The supporter’s of consumerism view it as a material progress, a growth in the middle class, and higher living standards for all. However, not everyone benefited from technology. It resulted in waste, economic dangers overproduction, surpluses, credit buying, and self-indulgence.

The 1920’s was known for loose morals, shady business transactions, and a decline in law enforcement. Like the Civil War itself, the cultural battles of the twenties have been fought again and again. Culture of the
1920s shows a noticeable separation between the classes. The twenties was the decade when there occurred, to some extend in the country as well as in the city, the urbanization of American morals.\textsuperscript{38} 1920’s saw the end of the genteel tradition and the birth of the New Era, the defeat of Wilsonian moralism and the victory of the Babbitts.\textsuperscript{39}

There was a tremendous increase in what may be called the cultural mobility of the American population, especially in urban centers. It was the era of communication and transportation. It was an era of affluence, in the main, and one in which the moralities of a sterner Protestantism were under attack both by the winds of change and by the appearance of whole new populations that were less committed to the utopia of the sober sunday. After the 1920’s the conflicts between the alien and the native, between the urban and the rural, protestant and the Catholic, became less vivid than those between adherents to styles of fundamentalism and modernism, conflicts that cut across different religious and residence groups.\textsuperscript{40}

Paula Fass’ “The Damned and the Beautiful: American Youth” in the 1920's delves into the social and cultural climate of the 1920’s middle-class youth in America. Fass observes the multidimensional dynamics of the post-World War I society as citizens adjust to pertinent matters such as industrialization, prohibition and immigration. Amidst the ongoing social, political and economical issues of the early twentieth century, youth played an active role in contemporary life. Adolescents responded to issues through altering their habits, behaviors and viewpoints. Their responses became evident in the public setting and American culture evolved. The transformation of American culture was spearheaded by youth who questioned and went against cultural norms of past generations. Societal changes were visible through family, education, socialization, fashion and
style and dating and sexuality.\textsuperscript{41} 1920s youth used the influence of jazz to rebel against the traditional culture of previous generations.\textsuperscript{42} Young people wanted independence, their own personal identity and personal satisfaction. Buoyed by the decade’s prosperity, young people threw raucous parties, drank illegal liquor, and danced new, sexually suggestive steps at jazz clubs.

The Roaring Twenties were characterized by a unique fashion and style among American Youth. Clothing aided peers in identifying one another. Style marked the social status and was used to determine which groups and clubs a student belong to. Often, fashion and style followed current fads. Young men and women conformed to these fads and were commonly seen in the public domain. Young women did not dress as the previous generation. Youth challenged pervious cultural norms and impacted modern society. Young people turned to new leaders and values and sought unorthodox dress, recreations, and morals.

Statistics do show that both sexual promiscuity and the consumption of alcohol increased among the young during this decade. This revolution was greatly aided by the availability of the automobile, which allowed young people to get away from the prying eyes of parents. Margaret Sanger and others promoted the increased availability and usage of birth control during this period.\textsuperscript{43} The traditional bastions of American morality lamented these developments, and especially criticized the new dances and college students’ proclivity for drinking and smoking. These critics, however, soon found themselves facing much larger opposition as the older generations began to adopt some of the socially liberated practices of their children.

The emancipation of women during the post-war decade was very much a part of the great social change that America experienced. After the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment in 1920, which gave women the right
to vote, many female leaders thought that women would come to have a pronounced role in American political life. Much to their disappointment, this did not occur in the 1920s. Women did not vote in a block "as women." Yet, the overall position of women did increase in the decade. Divorces increased throughout the decade, showing that more women were leaving unhealthy married relationships. The number of women working during the decade also increased, although working women were usually single. Restrictions remained, however. Women seldom received the same pay for doing the same work as men, and women were almost never put into management positions. Most women still worked in clerical jobs, as teachers, or as nurses.

In the late 1910s during World War I attitudes were more tolerant towards working women as their husbands were off fighting to defend their country. However in the 1920s attitudes changed after the war ended. With the return of male workers, women were expected to quit their jobs. Women attended college in the 1920s, albeit not in the large numbers characteristic of modern times. The society did not expect women to aspire to professions other than teachers and nurses. According to Cornell women's historian Cynthia Grant Bowman, an education didn't necessarily mean a job. As women graduated and began to apply for jobs they often encountered disappointment in finding out those employers -- who were mostly men -- did not take them seriously as applicants.

Homemaking was still a large part of life in the 1920s for women. Society expected women to clean, cook, and produce and raise children. According to Professor Lynn Dumenil the ads for home appliances targeted women specifically, and almost anytime advertisers produced radio commercials or print ads their aim was to let women know how their new
products would make life as a housewife better. All women did not simply submit to the social mores of the day and an underlying rebellion of the status quo was occurring. The 1920s saw significant change in the lives of working women. World War I had temporarily allowed women to enter into industries such as chemical, automobile, and iron and steel manufacturing, which were once deemed inappropriate work for women. Black women, who had been historically closed out of factory jobs, began to find a place in industry during World War I by accepting lower wages and replacing the lost immigrant labor and in heavy work.

In the job market women flourished in the arts and entertainment fields. Zora Neale Hurston copyrighted her first play, "Meet the Mama," in 1925. Two years later Dorothy Arzner directed her first film, Fashions for Women, and in 1929 Mildred Wirt signed a contract to write her first three Nancy Drew mysteries. The "flapper" movement challenged the paradigm of the morally pure woman, who shunned alcohol and tobacco and remained refined.

A generational gap began to form between the "new" women of the 1920s and the previous generation. Prior to the 19th Amendment, feminists commonly thought that women could not pursue both a career and a family successfully, believing that one would inherently inhibit the development of the other. This mentality began to change in the 1920s as more women began to desire not only successful careers of their own but also families. The "new" woman was less invested in social service than the Progressive generations, and in tune with the capitalistic spirit of the era, she was eager to compete and to find personal fulfilment.

The popular image of young women of the 1920s was the “flapper”, a young, pretty woman with bobbed hair and raised hemlines. She drank
alcohol, she smoked, she thought for herself, and she took advantage of women’s new freedoms. However, the flapper lived more in the media than in reality. The flapper figured in movies, magazines, advertising, and novels, such as those of F. Scott Fitzgerald.

The flappers were essentially, "liberated women". George Mowry in his anthology *The Twenties* sums up the essence of the flapper as a woman who demands "the same social freedom for herself that men enjoyed". He goes on to state how their existence shaped new industries in cosmetics and beauty, providing the "prop" for a new mass consumer society. Many advertisements of the 1920s portrayed women as sex objects; as a result, in the eyes of many Americans, women lost their respected position as moral leaders of the family. All of these things were frowned on in rural/small-town America and in pre–World War I urban America.

According to Dumenil, society was still hostile towards women who worked for personal fulfillment rather than dire need. Although they had gained the right to vote, the prevailing attitude was that women should settle back home and quietly care for their husbands and children.

Education was another important force behind the social changes of the 1920s. Throughout the 1920s education became a focus for the American youth. With an increase in white-collared jobs and professionalism, young men and women needed education and training to secure a job. During the era, more children attended both high schools and colleges all across the country. With increased number of children registering for school, youth begin to experience school differently. *Firstly*, one room schoolhouses which instructed children ranging in ages were being replaced by multi-room learning environments that separated children by age and grade. *Secondly*, a wide range of economic classes and racial and ethnic groups
attended schools. Thus, diverse groups with differing mannerism and outlooks blended in schools. These elements were key in producing a peer culture.

The role of school in society was to provide skills and knowledge to students as well as socialize them. Students are spending more time at school and being surrounded by members of their age groups. Thus, schools and peers were the two major elements in adolescent’s social life. A peer society developed as youth created their own culture and enforced peer pressure for American youth.

The peer society was especially noticeable on college campuses around the United States. On campuses, students made connections beyond the classroom. They shaped a youth culture which consisted of their own slang, flapper fashion, fads, and music. Students were away from their home and community, so peers replaced family roles. Colleges and universities began to define the youth society. Students became consumers and mass production enabled conformity in fashion. Campus newspaper kept the youth informed on the latest trends and activities. College students were not directly supervised and enjoyed their leisure time by dancing, attending the movies, and dating. Students set morals in peer society and determined the proper way to behaviors.

In the 1920, socialization was evident in student involvement. Countless youth became involved in various extra-curricular activities and organizations depending on specific interests such as sororities, fraternities and sports. Participation in assorted clubs and organizations were a part of the social system and being involved developed social status among peers. Moreover, partaking in extra-curricular activities were a way to create bonds with individuals.49
The Roaring twenties was an era of great economic growth and widespread prosperity. The end of World War I was followed by a recession caused by the shift from wartime to a peacetime economy. Production, farm income, and exports fell. Unemployment rose, reaching twelve percent in 1921. For farmers, in particular, hardship continued throughout the decade. In other sectors of the economy, however, a period of economic recovery had begun by 1923, when Coolidge became President. The years between 1923 and 1929 were seen as a time of booming business.  

The United States augmented its standing as one of the richest countries in the world, its industry aligned to mass production and its society acculturated into consumerism. By the mid-1920s, products made in American factories were available to Americans and also in many European and other world markets. The assembly line of Henry Ford continued to be perfected to the point that by 1925 a Model T was being produced in a Ford plant every 24 seconds. During the decade, the ideas of "scientific management" first proposed by Frederick W. Taylor were utilized in businesses and factories across the country. Production was now being done more efficiently; this ultimately lowered the cost of production and the cost to the consumer. For the consumer, products that were impossible to even dream about ten years earlier could now be purchased with the installment plan. The overconfidence of these years contributed to the speculative bubble that sparked the stock market crash and the Great Depression. Very few expected the crash that began in 1929, and none suspected it would be so drastic or so prolonged.

In the early 1920s, weary from fighting a world war and disillusioned by the failure of Wilson’s plans to create a new world order, Americans sought stability. According to one journalist in 1920, Americans were
“weary of being noble” after a decade of intense progressive reform, morality, and self-righteousness. The 1920s saw a restless culture, spearheaded by America’s youth rebelling against the moral restrictions of past generations. American reporter H. L. Mencken described the national feeling this way: "The majority of Americans are tired of idealism. They want capitalism -- openly and without apology."

Popular support for republicans grew, since republicans promised a “return to normalcy.” They ceased to promise progressive reforms and instead aimed to settle into traditional patterns of Government. In 1920, after eight years under a progressive Democrat, Americans elected a conservative republican as President, the first of the decade’s three republican Presidents. It began a period of conservative thinking in both the political and social life of the nation. Elected president in 1920, Warren G. Harding promoted a "return to normalcy," which signaled a resurgence of nativism, isolationism, and rejection of the progressive era’s governmental activism. Overall, Harding’s policies reflected a conservative, laissez-faire attitude. Big business and advocates of isolationism reaped the benefits of republican rule.

Foreign policy of the 1920s was manifested by isolationism in reaction to the idealistic foreign policy of Wilson. After Wilson had helped the Allies in World War I, the United States suffered great losses with no payments in return. Thus, America isolated itself from the rest of the world. The U.S. raised tariffs to keep foreign competition at a low so consumers would only buy American goods.

The prosperity of the people influenced society, culture, politics, and foreign policy. People had increasing leisure time which accounts for the growth in culture. Isolationism conserved the wealth in the United States.
Throughout the 1920s, the Republican Party was truly dominant at the national level. Both houses of Congress were under Republican control, the three presidents of the decade (Warren G. Harding, Calvin Coolidge, and Herbert Hoover) were all Republicans, and for most of the decade the Supreme Court was dominated by Chief Justice (and ex-president) William Howard Taft. Government policies throughout the decade were almost exclusively pro-business; Republican candidates at all levels during this decade had to be acceptable to the business community.

Many presidential scholars claim that Warren G. Harding was one of the least qualified men ever nominated for the presidency by a major party in America. He finally became the Republican nominee after the party bosses determined that he would be a candidate they could control. Where Governor Cox (and his running mate, Assistant Secretary of the Navy Franklin D. Roosevelt) ran a strong and aggressive campaign, Harding was generally content to campaign from his own back porch. He ended up winning sixty one percent of the national vote. Americans found something they liked in both the message and style of Harding: his message was essentially that it was time to pull back from "schemes" to change the world (the postwar plans of Woodrow Wilson) and "social experiments" (all of the programs of the progressives). Harding's call for a period of "normalcy" struck a chord with Americans and seemed to put the final nail in the coffin of progressivism in American thought.

One of the notable appointments by Harding was the naming of Andrew Mellon, the "richest man in America," as Secretary of the Treasury. Mellon firmly believed in the traditional Republican tenet that very low taxes would ultimately encourage business investment and ensure economic prosperity. To do this, Mellon sought to reduce Government spending in any
way possible, and to reduce taxes, especially for the wealthier business classes. In the end, many of Mellon's policies increased the economic pain of the working class while benefiting the rich.

To assist American business interests, Mellon also wanted large tariff increases on imported industrial goods. The Fordney-McCumber Tariff of 1922 did increase the tariffs on industrial products. However, to appease Republicans from farm states, the largest tariff increases were on imported farm products. Little was done in the Harding administration to assist organized labor. It was clear in this decade that the interests of farmers and the interests of industrial workers were very dissimilar.

American business leaders could have had no better friend in the White House than Calvin Coolidge. His credo was that "the business of the United States is business." Coolidge did little as president, but this was largely intentional; he was convinced that the major decisions affecting American society should be made by businessmen. Like Harding, Coolidge believed in increased tax cuts for the wealthy and favored policies that would help promote American business. In 1928, Republicans nominated Secretary of Commerce Herbert Hoover. Hoover was a seemingly perfect candidate for the mood of the era. He was a self-made man, had worked his way through Stanford, had made his first million in business before he was 40, and had run relief efforts in Belgium and the Commerce Department with tremendous, although unsmiling, efficiency.

The Democratic candidate was New York Governor Al Smith, an opponent of Prohibition and a Catholic. Many Southern Democrats had obvious suspicions about him; Smith's supporters received their support by promising that the Democratic platform would say nothing about the repeal of Prohibition. The election was a landslide for Hoover, with Smith only
winning eight states. Nevertheless, the fact that many people living in the large cities of America voted for Smith showed the divisions that existed in American society in the 1920s. All the Republican Presidents favored business expansion rather than regulation. Harding was inept, a conservative; Coolidge was mediocre, worshiped business as much as he detested Government; and Hoover, an engineer, was overcome by circumstances he neither understood nor could control. He brought to the presidency (1929-33) a deep faith in the essential soundness of capitalism, which to him represented the fullest expression of individualism. Harding's campaign slogan, "A return to normalcy," aptly described American politics for the entire period. The nation turned away from the reforming zeal of the Progressive Era and the moral vision of Wilson's wartime leadership toward a government whose domestic economic policies opposed federal regulation and encouraged business expansion.

This organization provided a defense against the mongrelization of America in its opposition to blacks, Catholics, Jews, and foreigners. It promoted traditional values, such as patriotism, Christianity, and community responsibility. The Ku Klux Klan grew tremendously during the early 1920s; by 1925, the Klan's membership was over 5 million. Unlike the Klan of the Reconstruction era, membership in the Klan was not entirely from the South, although it was almost entirely from rural and small-town America (Indiana was a huge hotbed of Klan activity in the 1920s). Blacks continued to be a target of the Klan, as were other groups who appeared to be "enemies" of the rural way of life, such as Catholics and immigrants and white supporters of the blacks. Many historians see the popularity of the Klan in the 1920s as a symbol of the intolerance prominent in much of American society; several
see it as an American version of totalitarianism, which took control in Germany, the Soviet Union, and Italy during this period.

Many Americans in the years following World War I were also terrified of Bolshevism. America, to no avail, gave military aid and actual manpower to forces attempting to overthrow Lenin and the Bolsheviks in the years immediately following the Russian Revolution of 1917. Much about Bolshevism (soon to be called communism) was in opposition to mainstream American thought. Communism taught that capitalism was evil, and that worker's revolutions would soon break out in highly industrialized countries like the United States. As a result, a Red Scare developed in America in 1919. Many historians maintain that Americans were not just opposed to the ideas of communism, but that many Americans began to see everything wrong in American society as a creation of the "Reds."

Beginning in November of 1919, Attorney General Mitchell Palmer carried out raids in the homes and places of employment of suspected radicals. As a result of the Palmer Raids, thousands of Americans were arrested, in many cases for no other crime than the fact that they were not born in the United States. Hundreds of former immigrants were sent back to their countries of origin, even though it was never proven (or, in most cases, even charged) that they were political radicals. The Red Scare demonstrated the nativism present in America during the period. This was also one of the worst examples in American history of the trampling of the constitutional rights of American citizens.

American nativism also was displayed in immigration legislation that was passed in the early 1920s. Many in small-town America blamed the problems of America on the continued inflow of immigrants to the country; pseudoscientific texts published in the first part of the decade claimed that
white Americans were naturally superior to Southern and Eastern Europeans as well as blacks, but warned that these groups had to be carefully controlled to prevent them from attempting to dominate the country.

A real blow to immigration was the National Origins Act of 1924. This legislation took that number of immigrants from each foreign country living in the United States in 1890, and stated that immigration to the United States from these countries could now be no more than 2 percent of that; the Bill also stated that no more than 150,000 new immigrants could come from outside the Western Hemisphere. In addition, all immigration from Asia was halted. The intent and the effect of this legislation was obvious. Immigration from countries such as Italy and Poland was virtually halted.57

The view of the evolutionist was that as scientific knowledge grows, this theory helps provide an explanation of the development of life on earth. It is also consistent with progress. Whereas the opponents were of a view that it is a threat to religious belief and thus to American society by denying the truth of Genesis, evolutionism is a rejection of traditional values. These views were prominently vivid in the Scopes Trial.

Narrowly, the trial was about challenging a newly passed Tennessee State law against teaching evolution or any other theory denying the biblical account of the creation of man. Broadly, the case reflected a collision of traditional views and values with more modern ones: It was a time of evangelism by figures such as Aimee Semple McPherson and Billy Sunday against forces, including jazz, sexual permissiveness, and racy Hollywood movies, which they thought were undermining the authority of the Bible and Christian morals in society.

John Scopes, the 24-year-old defendant, taught in the public high school in Dayton, Tenn., and included evolution in his curriculum.
agreed to be the focus of a test case attacking the new law, and was arrested for teaching evolution and tried with the American Civil Liberties Union backing his defense. His lawyer was the legendary Clarence Darrow, who, besides being a renowned defense attorney for labor and radical figures, was an avowed agnostic in religious matters. The State's attorney was William Jennings Bryan, a Christian, pacifist, and former candidate for the U.S. presidency.

Rather than the validity of the law under which scopes was being charged, the authority of the Bible versus the soundness of Darwin's theory became the focus of the arguments. Fundamentalism promoted a solid trust in the Bible as being literally inspired by GOD; it provides a consistent answer to the evils of society. The opponents were of the opinion that it was led by self-promoting evangelists who prey on people’s prejudices and superstitions; this outmoded, antiscientific world view hinders society’s progress. Clarence Darrow and the ACLU had succeeded in publicizing scientific evidence for evolution, and the press reported that though Bryan had won the case, he had lost the argument.

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Prohibition in the United States was a national ban on the sale, manufacture, and transportation of alcohol, in place from 1920 to 1933. The ban was mandated by the Eighteenth Amendment to the Constitution, and the Volstead Act set down the rules for enforcing the ban and defined the types of alcoholic beverages that were prohibited. Private ownership and
consumption of alcohol was not made illegal. Prohibition ended with the ratification of the Twenty-first Amendment, which repealed the Eighteenth Amendment, on December 5, 1933.

The introduction of alcohol prohibition and its subsequent enforcement in law was a hotly debated issue. The contemporary prohibitionists ("dries") labeled this as the "Noble Experiment"\(^{59}\) and presented it as a victory for public morals and health. Alcoholism destroys families and weakens the fabric of society. Prohibiting the buying, selling, and transporting of liquor would reduce crime.

Anti-prohibitionists "wets" criticized the alcohol ban as an intrusion of mainly rural protestant ideals on a central aspect of urban, immigrant and Catholic everyday life and viewed it as an attempt to restrict personal liberty and caused more problems than it cured. Effective enforcement of the alcohol ban during the Prohibition era proved to be very difficult and led to widespread flouting of the law. The lack of a solid popular consensus for the ban resulted in the growth of vast criminal organizations such as unlawful nightclubs called speakeasies, bootlegging (illegal distribution of liquor), violent lawlessness including the modern American Mafia, and various other criminal cliques.

1.2 UNPOPULARITY OF PROHIBITION AND REPEAL MOVEMENT:

As early as 1925, journalist H.L. Mencken believed that Prohibition was not working.\(^{60}\) As the prohibition years continued, more of the country’s populace came to see prohibition as illustrative of class distinctions, a law unfairly biased in its administration favoring social elites. "Prohibition worked best when directed at its primary target: the working-class poor."\(^{61}\)
As Prohibition became increasingly unpopular, especially in the big cities, repeal was eagerly anticipated. Economic urgency played no small part in accelerating the advocacy for repeal. Prior to 1920, and the institution of the Volstead Act, approximately fourteen percent of Federal, State and Local tax revenue was derived from alcohol commerce. The Government badly needed income and further felt that reinstating the manufacture and sale of alcohol would create desperately needed jobs for the unemployed.62

On March 22, 1933, President Franklin Roosevelt signed an amendment to the Volstead Act known as the Cullen-Harrison Act, allowing the manufacture and sale of "3.2 beer". For many Americans, postwar life did return to “normalcy.” Yet beneath the surface, troubling political and economic problems began to develop. In the political realm, such tensions exposed themselves in isolationism and anti-immigration policies. Elsewhere in the American society, social transactions generally centered on questions of race, religion and fundamentalism.

During the 1920s the majority of Americans were able to enjoy the highest standard of living ever seen. A startling array of consumer goods was available and recreation time was enriched by the expansion of the leisure industries such as cinema, radio, and sport. America appeared affluent and unstoppable in its search for material improvement. Yet alongside these new-found riches there was poverty, intolerance, and unprecedented levels of organised crime. America was a country of stark contrasts.

1.3 THE EXPANSION OF THE US ECONOMY DURING THE 1920S INCLUDING MASS:

Millions of Americans were envious or disapproving spectators of the racy lifestyles enjoyed by the young, rich city-dwellers. The term ‘boom’ is
a generalisation and there were plenty of exceptions including agriculture and the older industries. Most Americans were not partying throughout the 1920s and most young American women remained unliberated. The “Roaring Twenties” was more an image than a reality for the majority of the population. From these sentiments came many of the great cultural battles that were at the center of American life in the 1920s.

Urban America only began to share the pain long felt in the countryside late in 1929, when the stock market crash suddenly caused billions of dollars in assets to evaporate. It is no great exaggeration to say that for rural America, the Great Depression began not in 1929 but in 1920, and it continued for an entire generation. The divide between Haves and Have Nots in the 1920s was the divide between city and country. The year 1920 was a historic watershed. In the society during the 1920s, people were distinguished by conflicts such as the liberals versus conservatives. For instance, prohibition was passed at the beginning of the 1920s, but it was not enforced.

Statistics from 1924 indicated that 95 percent of citizens in Kansas were obeying the Prohibition law, while the figure was close to five percent in New York State. For many small-town observers, alcohol, immigrants, and urban life were viewed together as one giant evil. Many small-town preachers spoke of alcohol as an "instrument of the devil" and were outraged that the law was not enforced in places like New York City.

The urban and rural/small-town mind-sets drastically differed over religion and evolution. Many in small-town America felt vaguely threatened by the changes that science had brought about, and clung to the literal interpretation of the Bible as a defense. A conflict between religion and
science was centered in the Scopes Monkey trial, which debated the right to teach evolution in the schools of Tennessee, a fundamentalist State.

In women’s fashion, there was conflict between the old Victorian fashion and more free modern fashion. The flapper movement for young women became popular. The 1920s was the rise of a variety of social issues amidst a rapidly changing world. Conflicts arose concerning what was considered acceptable and respectable and what ought to be proscribed or made illegal. The conflict quickly coalesced into one largely between the liberal urban areas against the conservative rural areas.

The Roaring Twenties characterizes the era's distinctive cultural edge. Where, there were many who were enjoying the change, growth and learning, there were also the ones who criticized the new Jazz culture. “America has become the wonder of the world.” Kenneth Burke noted in an essay in Vanity Fair in 1923, simply because it “is the purest concentration point of the vices and vulgarities of the modern world.”

To the F. D. R. liberals, who already blamed the twenties for abandoning progressivism, the period's major crime was its rejection of the Wilsonian international program. Editorial writers wondered whether the country would again fail in its responsibilities after the war. Above all, those who responded most generously to the call for the defense of Western culture feared that the literary rebels of the twenties had done great, even disastrous, damage to the nation's morale. The older generations saw jazz music as undisciplined, vulgar, and leading to increased sexuality, a bad influence on young people, saying that the rhythms of the music excited the ‘baser human instincts’ and even claiming that jazz music ‘caused drunkenness’. For the ones who defended the 1920’s, it was not a picture of conservatism but of innovation. What was called for was not a ruthless
rejection of tradition but a re-examination leading to a restatement in terms of modern life.

Most Americans approved strongly of the economic growth and improved living conditions during the nineteen twenties. They supported the conservative Republican policies of President Calvin Coolidge. And they had great faith in the country's business leaders and economic system.

Bernard DeVoto revived, earlier than many, some of the New Era interpretation of the twenties. "What truly was bankrupt was not American civilization but the literary way of thinking about it." Actually, "The nation that came out of the war into the 1920's was . . . the most cheerful and energetic society in the world." A true picture of it would have emphasized its achievements in education, medicine, humanitarian improvement, and the writing of local history.

From the 1920s to the 1930s, the economy caused the change and continuity in America. Conservative politics produced the economic boom in the 1920s and lasted the entire decade. Society became very liberal because of the wealth and the large amounts of leisure time. The great divide between low and high culture shows the divide between classes. The desire to keep the boom within America created isolationism from foreign countries. However, the 1930s was a complete 180 degrees or reversal from the 1920s. The political climate became liberal because experimentation was needed to raise the spirits of the people. Because the poor had no money to experience expensive entertainment, there was less of a difference between high culture and pop culture. The poor and overwhelming majority needed an escape.

Socially, America returned to tradition in the 1930s in continuity. Many Americans felt that the depression of the 1930s served as GOD’s
punishment for the sinning of the 1920s. Women were placed to stay at home and were forced out of jobs so men could take them have those opportunities. Unemployment reached an all-time high. Society became more conservative because there was less leisure time available. There were also fewer pretensions in the 1930s.

It seemed as though Dow Jones Industrial Stock Index would never quit increasing. Stock speculation went sky high in the bull market of 1928-1929. No one suspected that a signal of the end would occur on October 24, 1929, with the infamous stock market crash, and that more than a decade of depression and despair would follow such an era of happiness and prosperity. Until that time, American life seemed fundamentally sound. The coming storms lay unseen beyond the horizon as the twenties roared on. Writing in 1931, F. Scott Fitzgerald wrote in *Echoes of the Jazz Age*:

> It ended two years ago, because the utter confidence which was its essential prop received an enormous jolt, and it didn`t take long for the flimsy structure to settle earthward. And after two years the Jazz Age seems as far away as the days before the War. It was borrowed time anyhow — the whole upper tenth of a nation living with the insouciance of grand ducs and the casualness of chorus girls. But moralizing is easy now and it was pleasant to be in one`s twenties in such a certain and unworried time.⁶⁶

Progressives, Marxists, and neo-classicists all found the twenties deplorable, yet in writers from all these camps, and in others who wrote in the thirties, a note of nostalgia often broke through the sermon. Frivolous, antisocial, and decadent as the literature of the twenties seemed, it had to be conceded the somewhat contradictory qualities of freshness and excitement. And
nostalgia, in the thirties, extended beyond the previous decade's literature to its manners and customs.

In 1931 Frederick L. Allen performed a remarkable feat of impressionist recall of the period just over, and in 1935 Mark Sullivan brought back vividly its clothes and songs and sensations. Already in the work of these two excellent reporters the twenties appeared strange, fantastic, and appealing. They appealed with particular strength to those who did not remember them; it was the peculiar feat of these reporters to fill the new generation with nostalgia for scenes they had not seen. For the college student of the next decade, if the twenties was one half the betrayal of progress, the other half was the jazz age. Irresponsibility, to the solemn and uneasy thirties, was both deplorable and attractive. This paradoxical attitude toward the twenties continued and the paradox sharpened in the next period.67

1.4 LITERATURE REVIEW:

Since decades the American 1920’s has been vital topic of literary tradition. It has variety of aspects to be studied and explored. Its characteristics such as its culture, history, politics, have been subject to study since decades.

For too long, analyses of the 1920s in the United States have been dominated by the enormous shadows cast by the Great Depression and the various convulsions of the 1930s. In many studies of the period, the economic exuberance, consumer culture, middle-class self-satisfaction, and political complacency of the New Era took center stage, embodying, in a theatrical way, the national pride that came before the dramatic fall of the stock market and the collapse of confidence.
In the shallowest versions of the tale, George Babbitt, Model T automobiles, bob-haired flappers, bathtub gin, Charles Lindbergh, and Calvin Coolidge were collective straw men, stock characters and props to be overemphasized and then cast aside at the watershed arrival of the New Deal. In contrast to overly simplistic general assessments of the period, specialized studies over the past two decades have constructed more sophisticated understandings of the particulars of 1920s politics, culture, and society. The need for a sharper overall appraisal of the 1920s, informed by the work of the last generation of diligent scholars, has become obvious. David J. Goldberg's concise survey incorporates many of these recent insights and helps place the 1920s in its own historical context rather than as a prelude to the 1930s.

For Goldberg, unresolved problems stemming from World War One thrust conflict and uncertainty to the center of American public life in the twenties. Among those populating Goldberg's "discontented America" were: congressional opponents of the postwar international order, progressives anxious to reanimate reform sentiment, unionists battered by the open shop onslaught of 1920s business interests, African Americans building community institutions and fighting racism, Ku Klux Klansmen guarding Protestant ascendancy against immigrants and Catholics, and the proponents and critics of immigration restriction laws. The book opens with sketches of progressive reform, American involvement in World War One, postwar American foreign policy and politics. Notable in this institutional section is Goldberg's stimulating argument that the "normalcy" forecast by Warren Harding in 1920 did not become a reality in politics until 1924.

Labor unrest and the Red Scare stirred dissatisfaction at the beginning of the decade, women's suffrage and Prohibition introduced new political
issues that created trouble for the major political parties (especially the Democrats in 1924), and the economic downturn of 1920-1922 revived progressive activism and third-party hopes until Robert La Follette's defeat in the 1924 presidential election.

The richest section of the book, however, focuses on the social politics rather than the party politics of the period. Class, ethnic, and racial conflict figure prominently in Goldberg's interpretation of 1920s America. In three fine chapters, he draws on the extensive secondary literature of the past twenty years to construct able analyses of labor, African Americans, and the KKK in the 1920s. Goldberg's final chapters reconnect the ethnic, racial, and religious antagonisms of the 1920s to public policy and mainstream politics.

New Era economics, middle-class culture, and technological innovations were important aspects of American society at the time. The book gives this slight reference only.\(^68\) Ironically, the most plausible and heavily documented version of this description, and one of the most influential later, appeared only in 1932 when Adolf A. Berle, Jr., and Gardiner C. Means described the separation of management from ownership.\(^69\) It is still suggestive to see the literary rebellion of the twenties, through the 1935 eyes of Granville Hicks, as a ret fiction of the insecurity of the middle class.\(^70\) Now, in the second postwar period, some writers are converging from various directions toward a better understanding of the twenties.

Fairly recently the twenties have come to be a fair field for the dissertation and the monograph, which bring at least a different kind of knowledge. One survivor of the period says that instead of being revived, it is being excavated like a ruin, and another complains that he and his friends are already being preserved in complete bibliographies while yet, as far as
they can tell, alive.\textsuperscript{71} Disapproval and nostalgia, of course, remain. Editorials worry about the effect on Europe of the vogue there of the literature of the twenties. Professor Howard Mumford Jones has continued something like DeVoto's charges in more analytic tones, accusing the postwar writers both of brilliance and of-detachment amounting to solipsism.\textsuperscript{72} The choice of Scott Fitzgerald for revival and in some quarter's canonization indicates the perverse attraction which self destruction seems to hold for our period. Budd Schulberg's novel specifically contrasts a romantic and defeated alcoholic writer of the twenties with a crass, earnest young radical of the thirties to the latter's obvious disadvantage.\textsuperscript{73}

Professor Frederick J. Hoffman in the most thorough of many recent accounts finds the period's literature full of daring, variety, and technical brilliance. This estimate by now represents more than a cult; it is an accepted consensus.\textsuperscript{74} Another estimate that emphasizes the same qualities is John K. Hutchens in his preface to his anthology, \textit{The Twenties}.\textsuperscript{75} A critical but high estimate from the point of view of a present-day novelist is that of James A. Michener.\textsuperscript{76}

The President, Herbert Hoover, commission a group of social scientists to make a complete and semi-official portrait of a whole civilization. \textit{Recent Social Trends} was not completed and published until 1932. It is the most informative document of the twenties which we have and also a monument of the chastened social science of the thirties. It is in places a work of art as well as of social science, and it is one of the few books about the twenties that point the way toward a comprehensive understanding of the period.

Alfred Kazin's admirable and by no means were uncritical chapters on the period, which appeared in 1942, called “The Great Liberation (1918-
In the same short volume the literature of the twenties was "debilitated, capricious, querulous, and irrelevant" and yet the decade was "one of the great periods of American literature, and probably the most colorful, vigorous, and exciting period." It was a literature that was "not . . . functional in American life," but "idle, dilettante, flippant, and intellectually sterile," and yet one which had "achieved something like a charter of liberties for American writers."77

The following are more books that dealt with 1920’s:

- Twentieth Century Literary Criticism: Vol 26, p. 45-126. This TOPICS volume of TCLC is an excellent source for excerpts from critical essays on the Harlem Renaissance.
- Annals of America: Vol 11-12 contain essays by the important writers of the time, including excerpts from books listed above.
- American Expatriate Writing and the Paris Moment: Pizer focuses on 7 major writers self-exiled to Paris following WWI.
- American Literacy: 4-6 page essays on 50 books that define the American culture.
- Mass Culture: The Popular Arts in America: Important essays analysing mass culture in American history.
- Culture as History: The Transformation of American Society in the Twentieth Century: Excellent source for this topic. Events which transformed the social, political and cultural face of America in this century.

Though plenty of work has been done on various aspects of the 1920’s, but the notion of social transaction of the period has not been given its due importance. The individual is lost in the chaos around him/her. The “boom”,

the glitter, the show-off nature of the people, took them away of each other. Consumerism, selfishness took the place of togetherness, of sharing with each other. Engrossed in the consumerism, they didn’t get time to interact with one another. This lifestyle, though attractive and mesmerizing, couldn’t help people to come close to each other.

The modernist movement began with a collapse of the conventional structures of family, conventional belief in religious institutions and even in the conventional notions of history, political governance and cultural configurations. The writers of this period, therefore, experimented with language, not simply as a means of communication, rather as a medium of perception. A change in literary perception that became obvious in 1920’s was the writers’ assumption that language has failed to communicate because language miscommunicates and the war was the manifest example of the abuse of language.

Social transactions are bound by usage of language. Language fails when one is depressed; it fails when one is too happy; yet it is the only medium to communicate. This was never understood by the people of the 1920’s and lead to a void inside them.

Much of the great American literature of the 1920s represented an intellectual backlash against the perceived materialism, conformity, and inauthenticity of the new mass culture. Sinclair Lewis and Willa Cather were prominent writers of this period. They wrote novels with critical depictions of American life.

The present study will critically examine the fiction of these authors finding out the causes and effects of the failed social transactions among the people during the 1920’s.
1.4.1 LITERATURE OF THE 1920’s:

The Victorian sentiment had gone as far as it could by 1914, and the events since then have demanded basic changes, which our literary artists have been the first to describe and define for us. It is indispensable for a culture that its arts formalize the moral and social positions that we ultimately hope to assume ourselves. The complexity and depth of Jazz Age fiction are valuable because, from them, we have reached the position, the attitudes toward modern reality that it is now possible for us to take.\(^78\)

High Modernism began to dominate the world of literature and art. The roaring twenties ushered in a rich period of American writing. Fiction published during these years was distinctive. The style of form and content was re-evaluated and writers such as Stein wrote experimentalist novels that neglected standard syntax and even words were excluded or altered to create a very different text.

Along with the death of innocence occasioned by what was then heartbreakingly referred to as the War to End All Wars, the gentility of American fiction passed out of fashion by the 1920s. Those elegant writers of elegant stories like Henry James and Edith Wharton were either dead or on their way to being out of fashion and in their place arrived a new generation of artists shocked out of complacency and the uncritical acceptance of the dominant views on tradition, value and morality.\(^79\)

Perry Miller in 1950 compared these rebels of the twenties to the transcendentalists. Both of these movements spoke for the spirit against the rule of things, and both, said Professor Miller, belonged in a series of "revolts by the youth of America against American phi-listinism."\(^80\) The decade that would come to be known as the Jazz Age and the Roaring Twenties witnessed a revolution in American literary style and subjects that
began to question many of the most cherished and dearly held beliefs about what America as an idea and experiment really meant.\textsuperscript{81}

Kinds of novels written in this period:

- Expatriate novel\textsuperscript{82};
- Novel of war experience\textsuperscript{83};
- The nostalgic or retrospective novel, which is written on the assumption that the post war period was vastly inferior to the past\textsuperscript{84};
- The parodic novel. Edith Wharton & Ellen Glasgow also dramatized the view same view; the parodic novel, directed usually at the American middle class and supporting a bias most strongly presented in H. L. Mencken’s magazine, the \textit{American Mercury} and in Sinclair Lewis’s \textit{Babbitt}.\textsuperscript{85}

American literature cannot accurately be said to have come of age in the 1920s; not when it had produced everyone from Ralph Waldo Emerson to Henry Melville to Edgar Allan Poe in the previous century. But it was the 1920s and the literary reaction to a world that seemed to have gone topsy turvy if not actually insane that established American literature as a profound influence upon world literature. The names that have become legendary in the world of American literature are overwhelmingly weighted toward those writers who came of age in the 1920s, and the sheer breadth of style and subject matter of those writers is nothing less than breathtaking.\textsuperscript{86} The conflict and concern created by changing American values (also) saw expression in literature.

1.4.2 LITERARY FIGURES OF THE 1920’s:

American writers in the 1920s, rejected American culture and values because they believed there were a loss of moral and a sense of aimlessness among Americans. These writers, called by Gertrude Stein members of the
“Lost Generation”, were troubled deeply by the changes they saw. They protested the effects of technology and mass consumption. They criticized the business mentality, the conformity of the times, and the preoccupation with material things and turned their backs on the Republican political culture of the era.

Some writers, such as Ernest Hemmingway, became expatriates, leaving the United States to settle in Europe. Some of these writers ended up in Paris, while others congregated in Greenwich Village in New York City.

The writers include: Henry L. Mencken, Theodore Dreiser, William Faulkner, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Gertrude Stein, Sinclair Lewis, Sherwood Anderson, Kay Boyle, Hart Crane, Ford Maddox Ford Zelda Fitzgerald, Henry Miller, Carl Sandburg, and Willa Cather. Authors William Strauss and Neil Howe, well known for their generational theory, define the Lost Generation as the cohorts born from 1883 to 1900, who came of age during World War I and the roaring twenties.87

The Lost Generation defines a sense of moral loss or aimlessness apparent in literary figures during the 1920s. World War I seemed to have destroyed the idea that if you acted virtuously, good things would happen. Many good, young men went to war and died, or returned home either physically or mentally wounded and their faith in the moral guideposts that had earlier given them hop, were no longer valid… they were “Lost.”88 These self-exiled expatriates, looking for freedom of thought and action, changed the face of modern writing. Realistic and rebellious, they wrote what they wanted and fought censorship for profanity and sexuality. They incorporated Freudian ideas into their characters and styles. They wrote novels and short stories expressing their resentment towards the materialism
and individualism that was rampant during this era, of deep feelings of alienation from mainstream American culture.

The goal of these writers seemed to be to attack the notion of America that they had either physically or spiritually left behind. In novels such as *Main Street* and *Babbitt*, Sinclair Lewis attacked the materialism and narrow thinking of middle-class business types in small-town America. Sherwood Anderson's *Winesburg, Ohio* was another novel of alienation in small-town America.

F. Scott Fitzgerald was both a celebrant of the Jazz Age and a brilliant commentator on it; his novel *The Great Gatsby* dissects the characters of typical Jazz Age figures. Ernest Hemingway in works such as *A Farewell to Arms* expresses a deep dissatisfaction with American values, especially concerning war. Perhaps none was more direct in his criticisms of American society than journalist H. L. Mencken, who called the American people an "ignorant mob" and was especially disdainful of the "booboisie," his term for the American middle class.89

These literary figures also criticized American culture in creative fictional stories which had the themes of self-exile, indulgence (care-free living) and spiritual alienation. For example, Fitzgerald’s *This Side of Paradise* shows the young generation of the 1920s masking their general depression behind the forced exuberance of the Jazz Age. Another of Fitzgerald’s novels, *The Great Gatsby* does the same where the illusion of happiness hides a sad loneliness for the main characters.90

1.4.3 OTHER LITERATURE AFTER 1920’S:

Malcolm Bradbury describes how the writers of this time sought "above all, style, the literary and emotional economy appropriate to a new age."91 This modern style is very relevant to the way the writers conducted
themselves and their writing. It acts as response to the climate of the Twenties. Bradbury believes that it evoked a period of "behavioural experimentation" through expatriation, the idea of re-defining the self and most importantly through creating new styles of writing.\textsuperscript{92}

At the beginning of the 20th century, American novelists were expanding fiction's social spectrum to encompass both high and low life and sometimes connected to the naturalist school of realism. In her stories and novels, Edith Wharton (1862–1937) scrutinized the upper-class, Eastern-seaboard society in which she had grown up. One of her finest books, \textit{The Age of Innocence}, centers on a man who chooses to marry a conventional, socially acceptable woman rather than a fascinating outsider. In \textit{Sister Carrie}, Theodore Dreiser (1871–1945) portrayed a country girl who moves to Chicago and becomes a kept woman.\textsuperscript{93}

Even more disturbing and critical of the emptiness and even more intent on challenging the traditional views of a starkly defined morality was Theodore Dreiser's \textit{An American Tragedy}. This novel paints an even more unflattering portrait of America's obsession with upward mobility and social status. The main character, torn between his relationship with a lower class girl whom he impregnates and the upper class beauty who represents everything that Americans are taught to struggle for, results in murder as a metaphor for doing what it takes to get ahead.\textsuperscript{94} Hamlin Garland and Frank Norris wrote about the problems of American farmers and other social issues from a naturalist perspective.

More directly political writings discussed social issues and power of corporations. Some like Edward Bellamy in \textit{Looking Backward} outlined other possible political and social frameworks. Upton Sinclair, most famous for his muck-raking novel \textit{The Jungle}, advocated socialism. Other political
writers of the period included Edwin Markham, William Vaughn Moody. Journalistic critics, including Ida M. Tarbell and Lincoln Steffens were labeled The Muckrakers. Henry Brooks Adams' literate autobiography, *The Education of Henry Adams* also depicted a stinging description of the education system and modern life.


American writers also expressed the disillusionment following upon the war. The stories and novels of F. Scott Fitzgerald (1896–1940) capture the restless, pleasure-hungry, defiant mood of the 1920s. His *This Side of Paradise* (1920), is really about the “generation” whom he observed from the maturity of his twenty-four years. Other novels such as Stephen Vincent Benet’s *The Beginning of Wisdom* (1921), Ben Hecht’s *Erik Dorn* (1921), Floyd Dell’s *The Moon-Calf* (1920), and *The Briary-Bush* (1921), John Dos Passos’ *Streets of Night* (1923), and Carl Van Vechten’s *Firecrackers* (1925) and *Parties* (1930) are all about exuberant, romantic youth, whose early introduction to experience either was responsible for slyly amusing scenes or was exploited as somehow “profoundly moving.”

Fitzgerald's characteristic theme, expressed poignantly in *The Great Gatsby* (1925), is the tendency of youth's golden dreams to dissolve in failure and disappointment. Fitzgerald also elucidates the collapse of some key American Ideals, set out in the Declaration of Independence, such as
liberty, social unity, good governance and peace, features which were severely threatened by the pressures of modern early 20th century society. He criticizes the superficiality and material excess of America’s post-war culture, portraying prosperity gone wrong in wealthy New York society.

The fiction of the period ranged from Ernest Hemingway's reportorial (and overrated) tales of disillusioned expatriates in Europe to Sherwood Anderson's brilliant re-energized dissections of small town life and the claustrophobic effects upon the psychology of the inhabitants of those idealized hamlets. John Dos Passos wrote about the war and also the U.S.A. trilogy which extended into the Depression.

Ernest Hemingway (1899–1961) saw violence and death first-hand as an ambulance driver in World War I, and the carnage persuaded him that abstract language was mostly empty and misleading. He cut out unnecessary words from his writing, simplified the sentence structure, and concentrated on concrete objects and actions. He used short sentences and rough words. His style was sharper and different from traditional American writing. He adhered to a moral code that emphasized grace under pressure, and his protagonists were strong, silent men who often dealt awkwardly with women.

Hemingway’s novels pioneered a new style of writing which many generations after tried to imitate. He did away with the florid prose of the 19th century Victorian era and replaced it with a lean, clear prose based on action. He also employed a technique by which he left out essential information of the story in the belief that omission can sometimes strengthen the plot of the novel. The Sun Also Rises and A Farewell to Arms are
generally considered his best novels. He wrote about love, war, sports, and other subjects.

Full emotional and psychological values belonging to a person who has chosen to live outside his country are explored only in his so complex a book as *The Sun Also Rises* (1926). Here the full impact of postwar deprivation is seen. The characters are nervously aware of their expatriation, as well of the reasons why they should be separated from their own countries.96

There is a strain of bitter reflection on the realization that American history produced unqualified episodes of evil in much of the novels produced in this era. The leading light in this corner of the American literary scene of the 1920s was William Faulkner, especially his chronicles of several generations of members of families both poor and rich. The Civil War and its multiple inequities informs much of the tapestry of Faulkner's work and he often uses the inhumanity of that war to draw parallels with the inhumanity of World War I and how it impacted American society.97 He managed to encompass an enormous range of humanity in Yoknapatawpha County, a Mississippian region of his own invention. He recorded his characters' seemingly unedited ramblings in order to represent their inner states, a technique called "stream of consciousness". He also jumbled time sequences to show how the past – especially the slave-holding era of the Deep South – endures in the present. Among his great works are *Absalom, Absalom!*, *As I Lay Dying*, *The Sound and the Fury*, and *Light in August*.98

McAlmon focuses his post-war text *Village* on American village life before the war. His writing captures the essence of the village and his drifting recollections identify emerging cultures and transformations in
morals and values. In writing the text after the war he has become a part of the social change. His nostalgic overview reflects on these changes in their infancy such as the rise of materialism, the new methods of farming and sexual experimentation. These are shown in their early stages and it is not until his writing the text after the War that they have come fully to fruition.\textsuperscript{99} Sinclair Lewis and Sherwood Anderson also wrote novels with critical depictions of American life.

Much of the great American literature of the 1920s represented an intellectual backlash against the perceived materialism, conformity, and inauthenticity of the new mass culture. H.L. Mencken skewered the middle-class mediocrities of what he called the "booboisie", while Sinclair Lewis profiled the conformity and mindless boosterism of the salesman in \textit{Babbitt}.\textsuperscript{100}

H.L. Mencken was the journalistic counterpart to the alienated novelists, using political satire in his magazine, \textit{American Mercury}, to attack the political leaders of the day and the American "booboisie," as he called the middle class. Mencken considered most Americans to be stupid and violent fools. He attacked their values without mercy.

Of course, many traditional Americans reacted strongly to such criticism. For example, some religious and business leaders attacked Mencken as a dangerous person whose words were treason against the United States. But many young people thought Mencken was a hero whose only crime was writing the truth.\textsuperscript{101}

Sinclair Lewis, attacked America’s prevalent Protestant, middle-class, conformist morality. He produced a series of satirical novels that examined in detail the iconic figures found in every town in America: business leaders, doctors and preachers. His novel about evangelical hypocrisy, \textit{Elmer Gantry},
satirized religion which followed a con man who teams up with an evangelist to sell religion to a small town. Many of the people in his books were foolish men and women with empty values. They chases after money and popularity.102 His popular 1920 novel Main Street satirized the dull and ignorant lives of the residents of a Midwestern town. He followed with Babbitt, about a middle-aged businessman who rebels against his safe life and family, only to realize that the young generation is as hypocritical as his own. Lewis “The world broke in two in 1922 or thereabouts.” Miss Cather said in 1936, in the Prefatory Note in Not under Forty.103

Cather wrote that the main business of The Professor’s House was to show the emptiness and futility of modern civilization when compared to ancient civilizations. Cather attempted to prove her thesis that human civilization is at its best when it elevates art, history and religion above science, technology and materialism. By juxtaposing the story of her hero, Tom Outland, with that of an aging Midwestern academic, Godfrey St. Peter, Cather attempted to show in The Professor’s House that modern civilization was declining.104 The Lost Lady deals with the same issues. American drama attained international status only in the 1920s and 1930s, with the works of Eugene O’Neill, who won four Pulitzer Prizes and the Nobel Prize.

The nineteen twenties also produced the greatest writer of theater plays in American history, Eugene O’Neill. He was an Irish-American with a dark and violent view of human nature. His plays used new theatrical methods and ways of presenting ideas. But they carried an emotional power never before seen in the American theater. Some of his best known plays were "Mourning Becomes Electra," "The Iceman Cometh" and "A Long Day's Journey into Night."105
In the middle of the 20th century, American drama was dominated by the work of playwrights Tennessee Williams and Arthur Miller, as well as by the maturation of the American musical, which had found a way to integrate script, music and dance in such works as *Oklahoma!* and *West Side Story*. Later American playwrights of importance include Edward Albee, Sam Shepard, David Mamet, Wendy Wasserstein and August Wilson.  

It wasn't just long form fiction that was used to explore the darker aspects of society in post-war America. The 1920s produced much of the most powerful and acclaimed poetry in history. The ones who stand at the top of this pyramid of the new breed of verse: T.S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, Robert Frost and e. e. Cummings, T. S. Eliot, William Carlos Williams, Wallace Stevens, and Carl Sandburg. T. S. Eliot wrote spare, cerebral poetry, carried by a dense structure of symbols. In *The Waste Land*, he embodied a jaundiced vision of post–World War I society in fragmented, haunted images. Like Pound's, Eliot's poetry could be highly allusive.

Eliot virtually invented stream of consciousness poetry, strongly informed by allusions to myth and history. Ezra Pound was dedicated to the creating a poetic form from the ground up, endowing 20th century poetry with a voice uniquely its own. At the other end of the spectrum was Robert Frost, who rejected the dense, often impenetrable style perfected by Eliot to focus on deceptively simple verse that slowly revealed its amazing depth. And Cummings attacked the conventions of language itself, creatively experimenting with everything from non-traditional diction and the actual typesetting of the printed page itself. Poetry in the 1920s made the great leap toward questioning all of the established rules of the form, pushing boundaries with the same zeal as the writers of novels. Others who were
important during this decade include E. E. Cummings experimented with language (and punctuation!), Edna St. Vincent Millay expressed the defiance and desires of her generation from Greenwich Village, and Eugene O'Neill drew attention to a serious American stage and we can't leave out the beginning of the Golden Age Mysteries and introducing America's own contribution to the mystery novel, the hard-boiled, with writers such as Raymond Chandler and Dashielle Hammett and paving the way for the future.

The novels produced by the writers of the Lost Generation give insight to the lifestyles that people lead during the 1920s in America, and the literary works of these writers were innovative for their time and have influenced many future generations in their styles of writing.

Writers and artists now look back at the roaring nineteen twenties as an extremely important period that gave birth to many new styles and ideas. The changes in American society caused many of these artists much sadness and pain in their personal lives. But their expression of protest and rich imagination produced a body of work that has grown in influence with the passing years.

1.5 SCOPE OF THE PRESENT RESEARCH:

Today, social transactions take the place of economic transactions. Less and less emphasis is placed on material possessions. Industrialized countries have had an increasingly difficult time to keep economic pace. New technologies (internet, mobile devices) are placing a greater emphasis on communication and exchange of ideas, not products. The material products we do purchase are marketing as part of our personality (i.e., iPod, iPhone, iMac, Wii), the internet is becoming more 'personable' (Myspace, Facebook, Homepage, YouTube), and all aspects of our lives are being
geared towards our personalities and social interactions with each other. There is more emphasis placed on our ideas, personality, and identity over our material belongings.

To understand the twenties better it is beneficial to make use of techniques drawn from various fields. The most important developments in the decade did not take place in the realms of politics, or economics, or literature, or science alone, but in all these areas and the relation, or lack of relation, among them. If one uses one kind of sources one will inevitably emerge with one point of view, which will be inadequate to understand the others.\textsuperscript{109} By changing the unfavorable events that led to despair and continuing the benefits to society, one can understand why they happen and better the future. Therefore, to improve social relations, one has to strive for having better social transactions.

This doctoral thesis is therefore limited to the analysis of social transactions taking place in American fiction through the study of Sinclair Lewis and Willa Cather.

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