

AMERICAN LITERATURE*Prof. Fiorenzo Iuliano***MODULE A: The roaring Twenties? 1: memory and the present**

The module will focus on literary production in the United States in the 1920s. Special emphasis will be given to the themes of memory, with reference to the trauma of World War I, and of the rejection of the past and the consequent elaboration of new social and cultural myths.

1. T.S. Eliot, *The Waste Land* (1922)
2. Edith Wharton, *The Age of Innocence* (1920)
3. Francis S. Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby* (1925)
4. Ernest Hemingway, *A Farewell to Arms* (1929)

Students **who have attended classes** regularly might get a deeper knowledge about American history and literary history in the 1920s by referring to the following texts.

Non-attending students are required to study the texts given in the following bibliography:

1. Susan Currell, *American Culture in the 1920s*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2009 ("Introduction: The Intellectual Context", ch. 1 "Fiction, Poetry and Drama, ch. 5 "Consumption and Leisure," pp. 1-70, 169-196).
- 1A. Tom Streissguth, *The Roaring Twenties*, New York, Facts on Files, 2001 ("Appendix C: Maps, Graphs, and Tables," pp. 428-55).
2. Stephen Orgel "Introduction", in Edith Wharton, *The Age of Innocence*, Oxford, Oxford UP, 2006, pp. VII-XXV.
3. Robert Mcparland, *Beyond Gatsby: How Fitzgerald, Hemingway, and Writers of the 1920s Shaped American Culture*, Rowman & Littlefield, Lanham-Boulder-New York -London, 2015 ("Preface," "Introduction: The 1920s," pp. xix-xli; "Beyond the Wasteland: T. S. Eliot and the Postwar World," "Ernest Hemingway and F. Scott Fitzgerald: Friendship and Rivalry," pp. 1-44).

MODULE B: The roaring Twenties? 2: the outcasts

The module will focus on figures and categories that, in the imagery of the 1920s, were cast to the margins of the US society. Among the themes addressed, particular importance will be given to the South and to African American literature, with special emphasis on the Harlem Renaissance.

1. Claude McKay, *Home to Harlem* (1928)
2. William Faulkner, *Soldiers' Pay* (1926)
3. From Alain Locke, ed., *The New Negro* (New York, Simon & Schuster, 1925):
 - Alain Locke, "The New Negro"
 - Albert C. Barnes, "Negro Art and America"
 - Alain Locke, "Negro Youth Speaks"
 - Alain Locke, "The Negro Spirituals"
 - James Weldon Johnson, "Harlem: the Culture Capital"
4. Langston Hughes, "The Negro Artist And The Racial Mountain," *Nation*, 3, 1926.
5. Nella Larsen, *Passing* (1929)

Students **who have attended classes** regularly might get a deeper knowledge about American history and literary history in the 1920s by referring to the following texts.

Non-attending students are required to study the texts given in the following bibliography:

1. Susan Currell, *American Culture in the 1920s*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2009 (“Introduction: The Intellectual Context”, ch. 1 “Fiction, Poetry and Drama, ch. 5 “Consumption and Leisure,” pp. 1-70, 169-196).
 - 1A. Tom Streissguth, *The Roaring Twenties*, New York, Facts on Files, 2001 (“Appendix C: Maps, Graphs, and Tables,” pp. 428-55).
2. Robert Mcparland, *Beyond Gatsby: How Fitzgerald, Hemingway, and Writers of the 1920s Shaped American Culture*, Rowman & Littlefield, Lanham-Boulder-New York -London, 2015 (“Preface,” “Introduction: The 1920s,” pp. xix-xli; “William Faulkner: A Southern Voice in the Age of Modernism,” pp. 45-63).
3. George Hutchinson, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to the Harlem Renaissance*, Cambridge, Cambridge UP, 2007 (George Hutchinson, “Introduction,” Jeffrey C. Stewart, “The New Negro as Citizen,” Emily Bernard, “The Renaissance and the Vogue,” Michael A. Chaney, “International contexts of the Negro Renaissance,” pp. XI-XX, 1-54).

American Culture in the 1920s

Susan Currell

Edinburgh University Press

In memory of Vivien Hart

© Susan Currell, 2009

Edinburgh University Press Ltd
22 George Square, Edinburgh
www.eupublishing.com

Typeset in 11/13 pt Stempel Garamond by
Servis Filmsetting Ltd, Stockport, Cheshire, and
printed and bound in Great Britain by
CPI Antony Rowe, Chippenham and Eastbourne

A CIP record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN 978 0 7486 2521 5 (hardback)
ISBN 978 0 7486 2522 2 (paperback)

The right of Susan Currell to be identified as author of this
work has been asserted in accordance with the Copyright,
Designs and Patents Act 1988.

Published with the support of the Edinburgh University Scholarly Publishing Initiatives Fund



Arts & Humanities
Research Council

Contents

List of Figures	vi
List of Case Studies	vii
Acknowledgements	viii
Chronology of 1920s American Culture	ix
Introduction: The Intellectual Context	1
1. Fiction, Poetry and Drama	35
2. Music and Performance	71
3. Film and Radio	103
4. Visual Art and Design	135
5. Consumption and Leisure	169
Conclusion: The Cultural Legacy of the 1920s	197
Notes	203
Bibliography	235
Index	247

Figures

I.1	Women in Ku Klux Klan demonstration	31
1.1	Paul Robeson in <i>The Emperor Jones</i> (1933)	50
2.1	Kid Ory with his Original Creole Jazz Band	76
2.2	<i>The King of Jazz</i> (1930)	82
2.3	<i>Our Dancing Daughters</i> (1928)	97
2.4	<i>The Jazz Singer</i> (1927)	100
3.1	Colleen Moore	111
3.2	Clara Bow	114
3.3	<i>Son of the Sheik</i> (1926)	115
3.4	<i>Sunrise</i> (1927)	117
3.5	Harold Lloyd in <i>Never Weaken</i> (1921)	118
4.1	Charles Demuth, <i>My Egypt</i> (1927)	140
4.2	Georgia O’Keeffe, <i>The Radiator Building – Night, New York</i> (1927)	153
4.3	Lewis Hine, <i>Power House Mechanic</i> (1920)	165
5.1	‘Calvin Coolidge Plays for Big Business’	170
5.2	Coney Island Beach	185
5.3	<i>New York Times</i> headline reporting Charles Lindbergh’s successful transatlantic flight	194

Case Studies

Introduction	
Fordism and Culture	6
The Scopes Trial, 1925	16
<i>The Rising Tide of Color</i> (1920)	22
1. Fiction, Poetry and Drama	
F. Scott Fitzgerald, <i>The Great Gatsby</i> (1925)	41
Eugene O'Neill	48
Jean Toomer, <i>Cane</i> (1923)	61
2. Music and Performance	
Bessie Smith	79
The Harlem Renaissance Jazz of Henderson and Ellington	85
The Charleston	94
3. Film and Radio	
Clara Bow and <i>IT</i> (1927)	112
<i>Nanook of the North</i> (1922)	119
Oscar Micheaux and 'Race Movies'	124
4. Visual Art and Design	
Machine Art Exhibition, 1927	143
Paul Strand and Charles Sheeler, <i>Manhatta</i> (1921)	148
Georgia O'Keeffe's Skyscraper Aesthetic	154
5. Consumption and Leisure	
The Culture and Business of Prohibition	176
<i>Middletown</i> (1929)	181
Charles Lindbergh's Transatlantic Flight (1927)	191

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the University of Sussex and the Arts and Humanities Research Council of Great Britain for funding the research leave that made this book possible. Thanks also to series editor Martin Halliwell for his patient encouragement and unstinting support, and also to Nicola Ramsey and staff at Edinburgh University Press. I am grateful to my colleagues and friends at the University of Sussex who supported this research and helped me at various stages, either by honouring my leave, taking over my teaching or giving constructive advice. Thanks also to Berit Potter at the Whitney Museum of American Art, and Judy Lopez at the O’Keeffe Museum. My other thanks go to all the friends and family who enquired after my progress and the numerous enthusiasts who have taken time to make documents, music and films from the 1920s available over the internet.

My greatest debt is to Warren Pleece, who has done more to support the writing of this book than I can begin to describe. I dedicate this book to you and our amazing sons, Frank and Georgy Pleece: your gracious tolerance and generosity towards this book has been truly humbling.

Chronology of 1920s American Culture

Date	Events	Criticism	Literature
1920	<p>Republican Warren G. Harding elected. Women granted national franchise. Prohibition of alcohol begins. 4,000 suspected communists and radicals arrested, including Nicolo Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti. Marcus Garvey's First International Convention of the Negro Peoples of the World. Deaths of Hollywood actresses Olive Thomas and Virginia Rappe.</p>	<p>George Santayana, <i>Character and Opinion in the United States</i> Thomas Stearns Eliot, <i>The Sacred Wood</i> Van Wyck Brooks, <i>The Ordeal of Mark Twain</i> Lothrop Stoddard, <i>The Rising Tide of Color</i> Sigmund Freud, <i>Beyond the Pleasure Principle</i> John Dewey, <i>Reconstruction in Philosophy</i> First tabloid newspaper, <i>New York Daily News</i>, published</p>	<p>F. Scott Fitzgerald, <i>This Side of Paradise</i> and <i>Flappers and Philosophers</i> Ezra Pound, <i>Hugh Selwyn Mauberley</i> Edward Bok, <i>The Americanization of Edward Bok</i> Carl Sandburg, <i>Smoke and Steel</i> Sinclair Lewis, <i>Main Street</i> Edith Wharton, <i>The Age of Innocence</i> Zane Grey, <i>The Man of the Forest</i></p>
1921	<p>Emergency Immigration Act creates selective immigration quotas. Einstein arrives in New York. American Birth Control League founded. Lie detector invented. First Miss America contest held.</p>	<p>Little magazines <i>The Double Dealer</i> and <i>Broom</i> founded Sigmund Freud, <i>Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego</i> Anne Shaw Faulkner, 'Does Jazz Put the Sin in Syncopation?'</p>	<p>John Dos Passos, <i>Three Soldiers</i> Sherwood Anderson, <i>The Triumph of the Egg</i> Booth Tarkington, <i>Alice Adams</i> Ben Hecht, <i>Erik Dorn</i> Dorothy Canfield, <i>The Brimming Cup</i></p>

Performance	Film	Music and Radio	Art and Design
Eugene O'Neill, <i>The Emperor Jones</i> Zona Gale, <i>Miss Lulu Bett</i> Martha Graham dances in 'Xochitl'	<i>Why Change Your Wife?</i> (Cecil B. DeMille) <i>The Flapper</i> (Alan Crosland) <i>Within Our Gates</i> and <i>The Brute</i> (Oscar Micheaux)	Mamie Smith records 'Crazy Blues' Paul Whiteman records 'Whispering' and 'Japanese Sandman' George Antheil's <i>Symphony no. 1</i> Radio Corporation of America (RCA) founded First licensed radio broadcast from KDKA in Pittsburgh Presidential election results announced on radio	Edward Steichen's <i>Time/Space Continuum</i> Joseph Stella, <i>The Voice of the City of New York Interpreted</i> (1920–22) Charles Sheeler, <i>Church Street El</i>
Eubie Blake and Noble Sissle, 'Shuffle Along' John Alden Carpenter, 'Krazy Kat' Fletcher Henderson begins at the Roseland Ballroom	<i>The Kid</i> (Charles Chaplin) <i>The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse</i> (Rex Ingram) <i>The Affairs of Anatol</i> (Cecil B. DeMille) <i>Never Weaken</i> (Harold Lloyd) <i>Manhatta</i> (Paul Strand and Charles Sheeler) Clara Bow wins 'The Fame and Fortune Contest'	Jack Dempsey beats Georges Carpentier in the first boxing match broadcast on radio First radio coverage of the World Series broadcast by WJZ Van and Schenck, 'Ain't We Got Fun?' Irving Berlin, 'All by Myself' and 'Say it with Music'	Ralph Steiner, <i>Typewriter Keys</i> Charles Demuth, <i>Incense of a New Church and Business</i> Stuart Davis, <i>Bull Durham</i> and <i>Lucky Strike</i>

Date	Events	Criticism	Literature
1922	<p>Wage cuts cause 600,000 coal miners and 400,000 railroad workers to strike.</p> <p>Aimee Semple McPherson becomes first female radio evangelist.</p> <p>Tutankhamen's Tomb discovered by British archaeologist Howard Carter.</p> <p>Vitamins D and E discovered.</p> <p>Copies of James Joyce's banned <i>Ulysses</i> destroyed by US Post Office.</p>	<p><i>Secession</i> (to 1924) and <i>The Fugitive</i> (to 1925) founded</p> <p>Harold Stearns (ed.), <i>Civilization In the United States</i></p> <p>William Fielding Ogburn, <i>Social Change with Respect to Culture and Original Nature</i></p> <p>Walter Lippman, <i>Public Opinion</i></p> <p>Margaret Sanger, <i>The Pivot of Civilization</i></p> <p>John Dewey, 'The American Intellectual Frontier'</p> <p><i>Reader's Digest</i> begins</p>	<p>T. S. Eliot, <i>The Waste Land</i></p> <p>James Weldon Johnson, <i>The Book of American Negro Poetry</i></p> <p>Sinclair Lewis, <i>Babbitt</i></p> <p>F. Scott Fitzgerald, <i>The Beautiful and the Damned</i> and <i>Tales of the Jazz Age</i></p> <p>T. S. Stribling, <i>Birthright</i></p> <p>Claude Mckay, 'The White House'</p> <p>Harry Leon Wilson, <i>Merton of the Movies</i></p>
1923	<p>President Harding dies; Calvin Coolidge assumes presidency.</p> <p>Teapot Dome scandal emerges.</p> <p>First birth control clinic opens in New York.</p> <p>Tax cut from 50 to 40 per cent for the rich.</p> <p>Émile Coué makes his first tour of the US.</p>	<p>First issue of <i>Time</i> published</p> <p><i>Opportunity: A Journal of Negro Life</i> first published</p> <p>Marcus Garvey, <i>The Philosophy and Opinions of Marcus Garvey</i></p> <p>D. H. Lawrence, <i>Studies in Classic American Literature</i></p> <p>Upton Sinclair, <i>The Goose-Step</i></p>	<p>Jean Toomer, <i>Cane</i></p> <p>William Carlos Williams, <i>Spring and All</i> and <i>The Great American Novel</i></p> <p>Wallace Stevens, <i>Harmonium</i></p> <p>Waldo Frank, <i>Holiday</i></p> <p>Langston Hughes, 'The Weary Blues'</p> <p>Gertrude Atherton, <i>Black Oxen</i></p>

Performance	Film	Music and Radio	Art and Design
Eugene O'Neill, <i>The Hairy Ape</i> George White's musical revue 'Scandals of 1922'	<i>Nanook of the North</i> (Robert Flaherty) Will Hays becomes Director of the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America (MPPDA) Grauman's Egyptian Theater opens in Los Angeles	Louis Armstrong moves to Chicago Duke Ellington moves to New York with 'The Washingtonians' George Antei, <i>Jazz Sonata and Death of the Machines</i> First pre-assembled radios go on sale Fiddlin' John Carson first plays on Atlanta's WSB	Paul Strand's <i>Double Akeley</i> Charles Sheeler, <i>Skyscraper</i> and <i>Offices</i> Gerald Murphy, <i>Engine Room</i> Ralph Steiner, <i>Always Camels</i> John Howells and Raymond Hood win the Chicago Tribune Tower competition.
Elmer Rice's <i>The Adding Machine</i> Musical revue 'Runnin Wild' introduces 'The Charleston' to mainstream America Alma Cummings wins the first American dance marathon	Harold Lloyd in <i>Safety Last</i> <i>Flaming Youth</i> (John Francis Dillon) <i>The Covered Wagon</i> (James Cruz) <i>The Ten Commandments</i> (Cecil B. DeMille) First 16mm camera produced	Bessie Smith records 'Downhearted Blues' and 'Gulf Coast Blues' Billy Jones' 'Yes, We Have No Bananas' a hit song King Oliver's Creole Jazz Band, 'Chimes Blues' Bix Beiderbecke forms the Wolverines The A&P Gypsies becomes the first band created by a radio sponsor	George Bellows, <i>Between Rounds</i> Charles Sheeler, <i>Bucks County Barn</i> Paul Outerbridge, <i>Jello Mold in Dish</i> Man Ray, <i>Object to be Destroyed</i> Louis Lozowick, <i>Pittsburgh, Chicago and Cleveland</i>

Date	Events	Criticism	Literature
1924	<p>Richard Loeb and Nathan Leopold found guilty of murdering Bobby Franks.</p> <p>National Origins Act increases immigration restrictions.</p> <p><i>Buck v. Bell</i> makes forcible sterilisation constitutional.</p> <p>Ku Klux Klan reaches height of popularity with 5 million supporters.</p> <p>Senate votes to bar all Japanese immigrants to the US.</p> <p>J. Edgar Hoover becomes head of the Bureau of Investigation.</p> <p>Hitler publishes <i>Mein Kampf</i>.</p>	<p>H. L. Mencken and George Nathan begin <i>The American Mercury</i></p> <p><i>Saturday Review of Literature</i> founded</p> <p>W. E. B. Du Bois, <i>The Gift of Black Folk</i></p> <p>Ford Madox Ford founds <i>The Transatlantic Review</i></p> <p>Gilbert Seldes, <i>The Seven Lively Arts</i></p> <p>Lulu Hunt Peters' <i>Diet and Health</i> becomes non-fiction bestseller</p>	<p>Edna Ferber, <i>So Big</i></p> <p>John Crowe Ransom, <i>Chills and Fever</i></p> <p>Marianne Moore, <i>Observations</i></p> <p>Julia Peterkin, <i>Green Thursday</i></p> <p>Walter White, <i>The Fire in the Flint</i></p>
1925	<p>John Scopes convicted of teaching the theory of evolution.</p> <p>KKK rally 40,000 in Washington DC.</p> <p>Electrical condenser microphone introduced.</p> <p>Pickwick Club in Boston collapses.</p>	<p>Irving Babbitt, <i>Democracy and Leadership</i></p> <p>Bruce Barton, <i>The Man Nobody Knows</i></p> <p>Frederic Thrasher, <i>The City</i></p> <p><i>The New Yorker</i> first published</p> <p>Alain Locke (ed.), <i>The New Negro</i></p> <p>Marita Bonner, 'On Being Young, a Woman, and Colored'</p>	<p>F. Scott Fitzgerald, <i>The Great Gatsby</i></p> <p>John Dos Passos, <i>Manhattan Transfer</i></p> <p>Sherwood Anderson, <i>Dark Laughter</i></p> <p>Willa Cather, <i>The Professor's House</i></p> <p>Ernest Hemingway, <i>In Our Time</i></p> <p>Gertrude Stein, <i>The Making of Americans</i></p> <p>William Carlos Williams, <i>In the American Grain</i></p> <p>Theodore Dreiser, <i>An American Tragedy</i></p> <p>T. S. Eliot, <i>Poems 1909–1925</i></p> <p>Ellen Glasgow, <i>Barren Ground</i></p>

Performance	Film	Music and Radio	Art and Design
Maxwell Anderson and Laurence Stallings, <i>What Price Glory?</i> Eugene O'Neill, <i>Desire Under the Elms</i> Paul Whiteman's first 'Experiment in Modern Music' Flagpole sitting fad begins	<i>The Thief of Bagdad</i> (Raoul Walsh) <i>The Iron Horse</i> (John Ford) <i>Manhandled</i> (Allan Dwan) <i>Greed</i> (Erich Von Stroheim)	Al Jolson, 'California, Here I Come' Photographs transmitted by wireless between London and New York National conventions of the Republican and Democratic parties broadcast nationally for the first time	George Bellows, <i>Dempsey and Firpo</i> Gerald Murphy, <i>Odol and Razor</i> Paul Rosenfeld, <i>Port of New York: Essays</i> American Radiator Building completed Georgia O'Keeffe, <i>Dark Abstraction</i> Debut of <i>Little Orphan Annie</i> comic strip
'The Coconuts' starring the Marx Brothers with songs by Irving Berlin John Alden Carpenter, <i>Skyscrapers</i> Paul Whiteman's 'Second Experiment in Modern Music'	<i>The Gold Rush</i> (Charles Chaplin) <i>The Big Parade</i> (King Vidor) <i>The Phantom of the Opera</i> (Rupert Julian)	Louis Armstrong and Bessie Smith record 'St Louis Blues' Bessie Smith records 'Lonesome Desert Blues' George Anteil, <i>Jazz Symphony</i> Louis Gruenberg, <i>Jazzberries</i> and <i>The Daniel Jazz</i> Warner Brothers begin radio broadcasting from KFWB in Los Angeles	<i>Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes</i> in Paris Georgia O'Keeffe and Alfred Stieglitz move to the Shelton Hotel Georgia O'Keeffe, <i>New York with Moon</i> Aaron Douglas, <i>Invincible Music: The Spirit of Africa</i> Man Ray, <i>Clock Wheels</i> Arthur Dove, <i>Miss Woolworth</i>

Date	Events	Criticism	Literature
1926	Tax cuts from 40 to 20 per cent for the wealthy. Great Miami Hurricane causes \$100 million damage and ends land boom. Gertrude Ederle swims the English Channel. Rudolph Valentino and Harry Houdini die prematurely. Vitamin B1 discovered.	Langston Hughes, 'The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain' Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston, Wallace Thurman, Aaron Douglas, Bruce Nugent, Gwendolyn Bennett and John P. Davis publish <i>Fire!!</i> H. L. Mencken, <i>Notes on Democracy</i> <i>New Masses</i> magazine founded Book-of-the-Month Club founded	Ernest Hemingway, <i>The Sun Also Rises</i> Langston Hughes, <i>The Weary Blues</i> Carl Van Vechten, <i>Nigger Heaven</i> William Faulkner, <i>Soldiers' Pay</i> Hart Crane, <i>White Buildings</i> Elizabeth Madox Roberts, <i>The Time of Man</i> Frances Newman, <i>The Hard-Boiled Virgin</i> Anita Loos, <i>Gentlemen Prefer Blondes</i>
1927	Charles Lindbergh flies non-stop from New York to Paris. Sacco and Vanzetti executed. Henry Ford's production line opens at the River Rouge factory. First long-range television signal transmitted from Washington DC to New York. Babe Ruth hits his 60th home run of the season (a record unbroken until 1961).	Charles Beard, <i>The Rise of American Civilization</i> Vernon L. Parrington, <i>Main Currents in American Thought</i> Judge Ben B. Lindsay and Wainwright Evans, <i>The Companionate Marriage</i> Joseph Wood Krutch, 'The Modern Temper'	Sinclair Lewis, <i>Elmer Gantry</i> Langston Hughes, <i>Fine Clothes to the Jew</i> Willa Cather, <i>Death Comes for the Archbishop</i> Ernest Hemingway, <i>Men Without Women</i> James Weldon Johnson, <i>God's Trombones: Seven Negro Sermons in Verse</i> Elizabeth Madox Robert, <i>My Heart and Flesh</i> Thornton Wilder, <i>The Bridge of San Luis Rey</i>

Performance	Film	Music and Radio	Art and Design
Eugene O'Neill, <i>The Great God Brown</i>	<i>Don Juan</i> (Alan Crosland)	Louis Armstrong records 'Heebie Jeebies'	Harmon Foundation holds first annual art exhibition of Negro Art
The Savoy Ballroom opens in Harlem	<i>What Price Glory?</i> (Raoul Walsh)	William Grant Still, <i>Levee Land</i>	Archibald John Motley Jr, <i>Cocktails</i>
Mae West, <i>Sex</i>	<i>The Son of the Sheik</i> (George Fitzmaurice)	National Broadcasting Company (NBC) founded	Chrysler Building started
Paul Green, <i>In Abraham's Bosom</i>	<i>The Black Pirate</i> (Albert Parker)	Jelly Roll Morton, 'Black Bottom Stomp'	Georgia O'Keeffe, <i>City Night</i>
	<i>Ella Cinders</i> (Alfred Green)	Vincent Lopez, 'Always'	Edward Hopper, <i>Sunday</i>
	<i>Moana</i> (Robert Flaherty)		
e.e. cummings, <i>Him</i>	<i>The Jazz Singer</i> (Alan Crosland)	Duke Ellington begins at the Cotton Club	<i>Machine Art</i> exhibition in New York
Jerome Kern and Oscar Hammerstein, <i>Show Boat</i>	<i>Sunrise</i> (F. W. Murnau)	Victoria Spivey, 'T. B. Blues'	Charles Sheeler photographs Ford's River Rouge factory
George Anteil, <i>Ballet Mécanique</i> and <i>Jazz Symphony</i> performed in Carnegie Hall	<i>Underworld</i> (Josef Von Sternberg)	Irving Berlin, 'Blue Skies'	Georgia O'Keeffe, <i>The Radiator Building - Night, New York</i>
James Price Johnson, <i>Yamekrazu</i>	<i>IT</i> (Clarence Badger)	Duke Ellington, 'Black and Tan Fantasy'	Arthur Dove, <i>George Gershwin - Rhapsody in Blue part I and II</i>
	<i>Flesh and the Devil</i> (Clarence Brown)	NBC links fifty stations across twenty-four states for an all-day live transmission of the Lindbergh medal award listened to by thirty million people	Edward Hopper, <i>Automat</i> and <i>The Drug Store</i>
	Buster Keaton stars in <i>The General</i> (Clyde Bruckman)	Radio Act regulates the radio industry	
	The Roxy opens in New York		

Date	Events	Criticism	Literature
1928	<p>Republican Herbert Hoover defeats Al Smith in a landslide election for the presidency.</p> <p>Ruth Snyder's execution pictured on front page of the <i>New York Daily News</i>.</p> <p>Alexander Fleming discovers penicillin.</p> <p>Vitamin C discovered.</p> <p>Great Okeechobee Hurricane, Florida, causes 2,500 deaths.</p>	<p>Margaret Mead, <i>Coming of Age in Samoa</i></p> <p>Zora Neale Hurston, 'How It Feels to Be Colored Me'</p> <p>Franz Boas, <i>Anthropology and Modern Life</i></p> <p><i>American Literature</i> journal started</p>	<p>Allen Tate, <i>Mr Pope and Other Poems</i></p> <p>Claude McKay, <i>Home to Harlem</i></p> <p>Djuna Barnes, <i>The Ladies Almanack</i></p> <p>Nella Larsen, <i>Quicksand</i></p> <p>Jessie Fauset, <i>Plum Bun: A Novel Without a Moral</i></p> <p>Upton Sinclair, <i>Boston</i></p> <p>Vina Delmar, <i>Bad Girl</i></p>
1929	<p>First coast-to-coast airline created.</p> <p>The stock market crashes in late October; twenty-nine million shares sold in five days.</p> <p>Gastonia Strike.</p> <p>St Valentine's Day Massacre kills six gangsters and a bystander.</p>	<p>Walter White, <i>Rope and Faggot: A Biography of Judge Lynch</i></p> <p>Robert and Helen Lynd, <i>Middletown</i></p> <p>John Dewey, <i>The Quest for Certainty</i></p> <p>Joseph Wood Krutch, <i>The Modern Temper</i></p> <p>James Truslow Adams, <i>Our Business Civilization: Some Aspects of American Culture</i></p>	<p>Ernest Hemingway, <i>A Farewell to Arms</i></p> <p>Wallace Thurman, <i>The Blacker the Berry</i></p> <p>Thomas Wolfe, <i>Look Homeward Angel</i></p> <p>William Faulkner, <i>Sartoris and The Sound and the Fury</i></p> <p>Agnes Smedley, <i>Daughter of Earth</i></p> <p>Nella Larsen, <i>Passing</i></p> <p>Dashiell Hammet, <i>Red Harvest</i></p>

Performance	Film	Music and Radio	Art and Design
Sophie Treadwell, <i>Machinal</i> Eugene O'Neill, <i>Strange Interlude</i> Martha Graham performs <i>Immigrant: Steerage, Strike</i> George Gershwin's <i>An American in Paris</i> premieres at Carnegie Hall The Marx Brothers star in <i>Animal Crackers</i>	<i>The Crowd</i> (King Vidor) <i>Our Dancing Daughters</i> (Harry Beaumont) <i>The Wedding March</i> (Erich Von Stroheim) <i>Speedy</i> (Harold Lloyd) Walt Disney produces first Mickey Mouse cartoon, <i>Plane Crazy</i> , followed by his first sound animation <i>Steamboat Willie</i>	Louis Armstrong, 'West End Blues' Ruth Etting, 'Love Me or Leave Me' Helen Kane, 'I Wanna Be Loved By You' Will Rogers Program broadcast to millions on NBC First car radios manufactured	Demuth, <i>I Saw the Figure 5</i> Margaret Bourke-White, <i>Niagara Falls Generators</i> Edward Hopper, <i>Manhattan Bridge Loop and Night Windows</i> Charles Sheeler, <i>River Rouge Industrial Plant</i> Buckminster Fuller introduces his Dymaxion House
Elmer Rice, <i>The Subway: A Play in Nine Scenes</i> Eugene O'Neill, <i>Dynamo</i>	<i>Black and Tan</i> starring Duke Ellington <i>St. Louis Blues</i> starring Bessie Smith <i>Hallelujah</i> (King Vidor) <i>The Broadway Melody</i> (Harry Beaumont)	Fats Waller and Louis Armstrong, 'Aint Misbehavin' The Rounders and The Brox Sisters, 'Singing in the Rain' Bessie Smith, 'Wasted Life Blues' <i>Amos 'n' Andy</i> radio show first broadcast on NBC	Alexander Calder, <i>Circus</i> Charles Sheeler, <i>Upper Deck</i> Thomas Hart Benton, <i>Georgia Cotton Pickers</i> Museum of Modern Art founded Hugh Ferriss publishes the <i>Metropolis of Tomorrow</i>

The Intellectual Context

In his reflection on the decade in 1931, the writer F. Scott Fitzgerald described the 1920s as ‘the ten-year period that, as if reluctant to die outmoded in its bed, leaped to a spectacular death in October, 1929, [which] began about the time of the May Day riots in 1919’.¹ Patterns in culture never begin and end quite so clearly, but the 1920s are neatly encased within two major events – the end of World War I and the Wall Street Crash – that give distinctive boundaries to those years. These two events consolidated, accelerated and confirmed intellectual responses to modernity that had begun much earlier and continued well beyond the 1920s. Despite this, ideas about culture and society operate in relationship with the political and social environment of the time, making it possible to describe the culture of the 1920s as distinct as well as part of longer-term trends. The introduction of new mass communications, notably radio programming and sound on film, the unprecedented prominence of racial and nativist ideologies in public culture, the popularisation of psychoanalysis, female suffrage and the prohibition of alcohol rendered the decade clearly different from others that had come before. Ideas about these social, technological and scientific changes emerged in the philosophies and ideologies that developed over the period; this book examines the part that those ideas, both old and new, played in the cultural productions of the 1920s.

The rejection of tradition and the celebration of the new was a pervasive cultural theme beneath Fitzgerald’s comment that the 1920s refused to die ‘outmoded’ and ‘old’. Historians have identified this tension between progress and tradition as a central paradox underlying American history and culture.² Although not exclusive to it, the decade after the Great War until the onset of the Great Depression highlighted this tension more clearly than any other decade. While

often characterised as an era of apolitical individualism, an era of business culture, hedonism and political retreat, the period can more accurately be seen as an era of cultural renaissance created from the very ambivalence, the irresolvable tensions, over ideas about the past and the possibilities of the future.

This combination of despair and possibility was highlighted by an iconoclastic autobiographical work that received a Pulitzer Prize in 1919: *The Education of Henry Adams*. The book charted Adams' struggle to reconcile traditional ideas with the transformations of modernity, examining his 'unlearning' of thought in the face of technological and cultural change.³ In the aftermath of World War I, Adams' confusion and disorientation resonated with the rapidly changing intellectual and social environment in which Americans found themselves. With the cessation of hostilities, the old rules that cohered society no longer applied – some attempted to find (and enforce) new rules, and others worked to embrace and shape a new experimental culture without fixed rules. The schism that these ideas revealed made culture a furious battleground where ideological commitments were developed in a crucible of uncertainty and change.

Cultural Decline

What was clear was that the end of the war presented America with a host of new problems to address. The pre-war experimentalism in culture had relied on a booming optimism about the future and progress, but the war exposed the bankruptcy of such idealism. Economist Thorstein Veblen claimed that America had 'gone into moral and industrial eclipse', while revisionist histories quickly dismantled the illusion that either peace or democracy had been successfully restored by the peace treaty.⁴ Theologian Reinhold Niebuhr stated in his diary in 1923 that '[g]radually the whole horrible truth about the war is being revealed. Every new book destroys some further illusion'.⁵ Poets and writers expressed their disillusion and the intellectual impasse it caused in their work: in *Gerontion* (1920), T. S. Eliot expressed the 'Thoughts of a dry brain in a dry season', asking 'After such knowledge, what forgiveness?' In his poem *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley* (1920), Ezra Pound expressed the collapse of ideals and trust in democracy that rocked intellectual discourse for the decade, writing of soldiers who had 'walked eye-deep in hell/ believing in old men's lies, then unbelieving/ came home, home to a lie,/ home to many

deceits', having wasted their youth, 'For an old bitch gone in the teeth,/ For a botched civilization'. To Pound, civilisation died alongside soldiers, fighting 'For two gross of broken statues,/ For a few thousand battered books'.⁶

Few intellectuals could see any hope in the political or economic establishment and the old ideals of freedom and democracy appeared to be in shreds. The battle for world democracy had entailed a sharp curtailment of individual freedoms for Americans: **the Bolshevik revolution in Russia in 1917 had led authorities to suppress domestic radicalism for fear of similar turmoil, and legislation such as the Espionage Act of 1917 and the Sedition Act of 1918 prevented open criticism of or opposition to the political establishment. Yet the end of the war only unearthed further class and race tensions as the rising cost of living and mass immigration led to huge waves of strikes, protests and race riots. For African Americans the first few years of 'peace' were the most violent in their history since slavery had ended, with over twenty-five race riots across the country causing hundreds of deaths and thousands of injuries. African American soldiers' experience of vicious attacks, lynching (at least 456 people were killed by lynch mobs between 1918 and 1927) and race riots in the 'Red Summer' of 1919 highlighted the absurdity of their wartime fight for American democracy.**⁷

Those who questioned democracy were increasingly considered dangerous to postwar stability and order. In 1919 Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer – a former liberal and advocate of women's suffrage and child labour laws – sanctioned violent 'Palmer raids' on union members, communists, anarchists and other radicals as industrial and social unrest literally exploded around the country. Celebrated anti-communist investigator J. Edgar Hoover began his career in the Department of Justice during the Palmer Raids, later becoming head of the FBI in 1924. **Intellectuals, scientists, feminists and civil libertarians were all scrutinised for anti-American sentiments** and the investigation of radical activities as criminal ones persisted under Hoover's leadership for the next four decades. **The 1920 arrest of two Italian-born anarchists, Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti, symbolised the extent of the oppression by the political establishment.** Although arrested and tried for robbery and murder, the case appeared a witch-hunt by an extremist establishment rather than a fair criminal investigation. **The case became a cause célèbre among intellectuals and artists, and their execution in 1927 became a symbol of civil and political repression throughout the decade and into the 1930s.**

While the Red Panic of 1919 subsided, the restoration of faith in democracy took far longer. The inadequacies of the Treaty of Versailles alongside America's military interventions in Russia and Latin America in the early 1920s created an overwhelming sense of continuing world and domestic instability. Even though the rest of the country was experiencing an economic downturn, 42,000 new millionaires had emerged from wartime business profits, exacerbating class tension and resentment.⁸ In 1919, when Democrat President Woodrow Wilson suffered a stroke, the country appeared debilitated by chaos and conflict. In a pre-election speech in 1920, Republican Presidential candidate Warren G. Harding offered an appealing vision of returning stability and calm to the nation: 'America's present need is not heroics, but healing; not nostrums, but normalcy; not revolution, but restoration; not agitation, but adjustment'.⁹

Despite this, 'normalcy' and 'adjustment' did not mean a return to pre-war ideals or traditions, but a huge expansion in business freedom and capitalist acquisition that unwove the progressive reforms and ideals of the previous two decades. The election of Harding in 1920 marked the true beginning of the business era, most notably with the appointment of Andrew Mellon, a wealthy businessman, as Secretary of the Treasury. Mellon cut business and income tax and halved federal spending over the decade. While much of Europe rebuilt itself or experienced severe depressions and social turmoil, from 1922 economic activity boomed in the United States; having expanded industrial production during the war, it increased peacetime production to an unprecedented degree. As a result America became the most productive and prosperous nation in the world.

This rise of business culture, with its associated materialism and anti-intellectualism – and later corruption – heralded a new detachment from politics for the intellectual and artist: 'These rulers of America, as they were called in magazine articles, showed little interest in books or ideas'.¹⁰ Fitzgerald claimed that '[t]he events of 1919 left us cynical rather than revolutionary . . . [i]t was characteristic of the Jazz Age that it had no interest in politics at all'.¹¹ He summarised the intellectual retreat from politics as part weariness from 'Great Causes' and part greed in the postwar boom, claiming that artists and the intelligentsia sold out when 'we began to have our slices of the national cake'.¹² The idealism of the war diminished into financial gain as Fitzgerald suggested that 'maybe we had gone to war for J. P. Morgan's loans after all'.¹³ For some of the 'lost generation' of writers,

cultural retreat from this philistine world of business existed only in Europe.

Machine Culture

The boom in business was fuelled by progress in new technologies and methods of mass production, which caused further anxieties over human culture. Calvin Coolidge's statement that 'the man who builds a factory builds a temple' only served to underline that business had become the new national religion.¹⁴ Like Henry Adams, many believed that new scientific ideas had overthrown governing philosophies, and even modernists expressed ambivalence about what this meant for the future. Lewis Mumford, a moderniser and city planner, claimed that American culture had become narrower because 'business, technology, and science not merely occupied their legitimate place but took to themselves all that had hitherto belonged to art, religion and poetry'.¹⁵ To Mumford, this 'sinister world' needed replacement with the synthesis, not separation, of art and science, based upon a 'criticism of the past and the rejection of stereotyped interests and actions'.¹⁶ Modernisers such as Mumford called for a new reinterpretation of culture, one that was practical and scientific but also spiritual and creative.

Mumford's optimism for the new scientific future was glaringly absent from the criticism of the past that prevailed in much of the intellectual pessimism of the decade, in which intellectuals saw themselves as besieged defenders of culture against a tide of philistinism. This, however, did not mean a retreat into the past: in the collection of essays *Civilization In the United States* (1922), Harold Stearns claimed the past to be irrelevant: 'We have no heritages or traditions with which to cling except those that have already withered in our hands and turned to dust'. Yet the present offered few compensations: 'the most moving and pathetic fact in the social life of America today is emotional and aesthetic starvation' characterised by the spiritual poverty of a regimented, shallow, materialistic industrial society.¹⁷ These anxieties reflected ubiquitous concerns over the changing notion of 'the human' in relation to science and the machine during the early twentieth century – and Henry Ford's methods of mass production and welfare capitalism became the prime cultural metaphor of the shallow, regimented age.

Fordism and Culture

In 1900 there were 8,000 automobiles in the United States; by 1926 there were twenty million. Henry Ford was at the forefront of a manufacturing revolution and his methods became synonymous with modernity throughout the world. By 1920 half of the cars in the world were Model T Fords.¹⁸ In 1914 Ford's Highland Park Factory alone produced 240,700 Model Ts; by 1923 this number had risen to 2,055,300.¹⁹ Ford's production methods were premised on two central ideas: the assembly line and the uniformity of a product. Ford then linked efficient production to workers' wages by introducing the legendary five-dollar, eight-hour day in 1914.²⁰ The pay-off for the increase in wages and lower working hours was that workers had to submit to greater control over their non-working lives as well as in the workplace. The Ford Sociological Department, created to administer the five-dollar wage, sent field agents into the community to visit workers at home to make sure that they were living sober and moral lives before their wages could be raised. Thus, the activities of workers outside of work became directly connected to their income and the profits of the company.

Ford's empire consisted of towns, factories, hospitals and schools dedicated to the purpose of maintaining the smooth running and profitability of his business. Owning rubber plantations, hydroelectric dams, and steel, iron, coal and forestry works ensured the supply of raw materials. His ownership of railroads and shipyards ensured effective transportation of those materials. Over the 1920s, gangsters aiming to control the distribution of alcohol emulated Ford's method of 'vertical integration' as the perfect business model.

Ford's lesser known activities, however, indicated that he was as interested in streamlining workers as streamlining the industry for vast profit: running welfare programmes, hospitals, schools and colleges ensured a supply of healthy, trained and rationalised productive bodies. Along with this, his activities in radio programming, publishing and education over the 1920s illustrated the extent to which Ford aimed not just to produce goods, but to control the production of workers themselves.

This increased surveillance and control, along with an apparent mechanisation of the worker's mind and body, was noted by the Italian political theorist and activist Antonio Gramsci, in his now famous essay 'Americanism and Fordism', written from prison in 1929.²¹ Gramsci saw that Henry Ford's system was not just a smoothly running factory but had become an ideology uniquely associated with 'Americanism' itself. Gramsci claimed that, in America, 'rationalization has determined the need to elaborate a new type of man suited to the new type of work and productive process', and that the concern of industrialists with the leisure-time behaviour of their workers indicated a new form of psychological, sexual and social conformity, which appeared to originate with the worker himself in the form of self-control.

Concerns over the humanity of these types of production methods are reflected in the aesthetics and cultural debates of the period. As indicated

by Gramsci, the increasing dominance of mass-produced culture went hand in hand with the emergence of a culture of increased social control, mechanisation and conformity.

Ford was not only 'producing' workers: the flip side of mass production was mass consumption. The growth of middle-class America – made up increasingly of people living in suburban houses, commuting, socialising and shopping using automobiles – fuelled intellectual concerns over the disappearance of 'authentic' culture into one that was mass produced, created to distract and depoliticise the consumer. Lewis Mumford's reaction to the mechanisation of culture was thus not unusual: 'The movies, the White Ways, and the Coney Islands, which almost every American city boasts in some form or other, are means of giving a jaded and throttled people the sensations of living without the direct experience of life – a sort of spiritual masturbation. In short, we have had the alternative of humanizing the industrial city or de-humanizing the population. So far we have de-humanized the population'.²²

In 1927 Henry Ford's production line switched to the River Rouge factory, the largest manufacturing facility in the world. Abandoning the Model T for the Model A, the switch also signified Ford's capitulation to consumer fashion and the culture of abundance, while the appearance of this futuristic plant, designed by architect Albert Kahn and photographed by precisionist artist Charles Sheeler, paradoxically coincided with Ford's increasing nostalgia and obsession with a lost past; in 1929 Ford opened Greenfield Village, a museum dedicated to reassembling the rapidly disappearing past.²³

Despite this, the mechanisation of culture held a fascination that became central to a variety of cultural outputs. Recognising the new cultural force of the machine in 1922, photographer Paul Strand described the relationship between machine and society as a modern Trinity: 'God the Machine, Materialistic Empiricism the Son, and Science the Holy Ghost'.²⁴ Writers, artists and intellectuals engaged both pessimistically and exuberantly with the resulting 'machine aesthetics' of the new machine age.

As America emerged as the foremost economic, political and cultural power, American culture took on a new importance, not only for Americans but for the rest of the world. Fitzgerald claimed '[w]e were the most powerful nation. Who could tell us any longer what was fashionable and what was fun?'²⁵ In addition to exporting raw and finished goods, wrote Malcolm Cowley, the United States now exported 'cultural goods, hot and sweet jazz bands, financial experts, movies and political ideals'.²⁶ The recovery of society and democracy appeared intertwined with the rebuilding of national cultural values on a new world stage, yet there was no consensus on the shape that this new culture should take. As Mumford noted, cultural pessimism was

paralysing intellectual thought, dispelling the founding drive, the ‘will-to-utopia’, in wider American society. ‘Looking around at our contemporaries who have survived the war, it is fairly evident that most of them are in the first stage of panic and despair,’ he wrote, arguing for a ‘utopia of reconstruction’ on which to base new ideals and society.²⁷

The Science of Culture

Despite a deeply ingrained pessimism, intellectual activity over the period did produce a vibrant culture of ideas and perceptions that appeared to liberate society from outmoded and outworn beliefs and behaviours. To America’s foremost philosopher, John Dewey, post-war reconstruction depended upon ‘reconstruction in philosophy’ that would rebuild national culture and revive democracy.²⁸ Dewey believed that ‘[c]onceptions of possibility, progress, free movement and infinitely diversified opportunity have been suggested by modern science’, but that society was afflicted by ‘the heritage of the immutable . . . ordered and systematized’ that lay ‘like a dead weight upon the emotions, paralyzing religion and distorting art’.²⁹ Overthrowing the past, then, was a political act of revivifying democracy.

Born in 1859, Dewey was influenced by the philosopher William James’ turn to pragmatism as a solution to contemporary problems of democracy, knowledge and education. His belief in the holistic connection between science and art, experience and reality, the individual and community provided a counterpoint to the despair and nihilism that permeated cultural tensions in the decade. Rather than return to the security of tradition, however, Dewey believed that the philosopher and intellectual had a public role ‘to assist in [the] clarification and redirection of men’s thoughts’ and ‘to free experience from routine and from caprice’. Dewey argued for social stability based not on tradition or dogmatic belief, but on intelligent and rational responses to the needs of social progress in the present: ‘we rely on precedent as authority only to our own undoing’, he argued.³⁰

Pragmatism was often perceived simply as an instrumental philosophy of action rather than ideas; Dewey, however, saw it as a method of creating action ‘informed with vision, imagination, reflection’; a method relevant for solving modern conflicts and confusion in which culture was central.³¹ Eschewing dogma and a priori belief – notably the nationalistic dogmas which had led to the war in Europe – Dewey claimed that the new world position of America demanded a new philosophy which showed faith ‘in the power of intelligence to imagine

a future which is the projection of the desirable in the present, and to invent the instrumentalities of its realization'.³² Dewey offered a salve to the tensions in society between the past and future. Over the 1920s his ideas permeated into discussions over politics, education, community and society. Most notably, the 1920s marked the popularisation of the ideas of pragmatism more widely than ever before.³³

Dewey also believed that it was in the popularisation and ethical application of scientific knowledge that democracy could be sustained. Dewey's ideas undercut the pessimism of the 1920s by arguing that democracy in mass society was not only possible but likely, with the rapid increase of mass communication and education. His writings indicated that mass society was not inherently in decay. Despite this, Dewey's ideas did not offer the stability of belief that many needed. To Dewey 'truth' was relative, mutable and based upon untested outcomes; for him it was 'the quest for certainty' that harmed society and hampered social progress. Few, however, celebrated uncertainty with quite the same passion.³⁴

Reassessing American Culture: Social Science

Dewey's pragmatism influenced a new approach to gathering, analysing and applying information within the social sciences.³⁵ The 1920s marked a new era for the social sciences with the formation of the Chicago School of sociology and the work of urban sociologists Robert Park and Ernest Burgess from around 1918. Robert Park had been a student of both Dewey at Michigan, and William James at Harvard. The University of Chicago sociologists and their students were deeply influenced by empirical methodology coming out of the sciences, believing in investigation through personal experience, first-hand observations and interviewing methods combined with empirical data. Their researches aimed to describe reality in a new way that had a big impact on other forms of cultural and literary production.

The social scientists of the 1920s developed new techniques and observations that were based on empirical evidence rather than applying a priori theories to a range of situations. Their research marked a shift towards collaborative and interdisciplinary work, which combined several disciplines such as sociology, the political sciences, psychology, anthropology, statistics and economics. Further to this, the Chicago School sociologists became distinctive in the way that they incorporated a variety of evidence-based cultural documents into their studies, assembling their studies using personal documents such as

diaries and letters, intensive field observations based on months spent participating in a community (sometimes even in disguise or undercover), documentary sources such as newspaper articles, photographs or court records alongside the use of statistical techniques, and social and environmental mapping. These new methods aimed to illustrate a more truthful experience of the subject under investigation from a variety of angles, embellished at times with diaries or letters, and at others with journalistic commentary from the researcher.

The desire to access a truthful experience of the subject under study meant using a variety of scientific methods. Biologist Jacques Loeb's study of ant society, for example, informed Robert Park's analysis of the city. Likewise, William Ogburn insisted on the importance of psychology and psychoanalysis to sociology in order to know the 'etiology of our own desires and the mechanisms of their behavior'.³⁶ The influence of Freudian thought on sociology enabled sociologists like Burgess to develop their ideas about group and social psychology and explore new arenas like social psychiatry in later years.

The methods of the Chicago School attempted to portray a reality that was multilayered and relative rather than the singular vision of the moralistic reformer of previous decades, heralding new ideas about communication and the construction of reality. This new research undermined the universalism upon which certainty and stability relied. Anthropologists like Margaret Mead examined culture as a relative rather than fixed phenomenon, thus counteracting the prevailing trend of evolutionary determinism sanctioned by cultural pessimists such as Lothrop Stoddard (discussed below). Mead's study of Polynesian culture, *Coming of Age in Samoa* (1928), popularised the idea of cultural relativism by showing that all cultures had equal validity, and shocked many by showing a 'primitive' culture as happier and more stable because less sexually repressed than more 'civilised' American society. A new investigation of American cultural pluralism evolved in the wake of such anthropological studies made abroad.

In the 1920s American social scientists also turned their attention from the study of 'foreign' cultures to their own, beginning with the investigation of immigrant or migrant culture in the urban environment – *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America* (1918), *Old World Traits Transplanted* (1921), *The Negro in Chicago* (1922), *The Neighborhood* (1923), *The City* (1925), *The Gang* (1927) and *The Ghetto* (1928) – followed by research into the middle classes in the suburban setting such as *Middletown* (1929).³⁷ To many, these investigations indicated that social problems were caused by maladjustment to culture. The

disparity between social and technological developments and human capacity to keep up with and adapt to cultural change became a central concern of sociologists such as William Ogburn, who invented the term 'cultural lag' to describe the problem. Ogburn's conceit not only influenced intellectual thought but became central to popular ideas about modern living and self-improvement. The increasing speed of social change led to a flurry of investigations that attempted to remap the social and cultural landscape of America.³⁸

The Culture of Science

Dewey's ideal of a democracy of well-informed and educated citizens was counteracted by the concern that corporations and private business entrepreneurs now exercised a new domination over intellectual life, as the relationship between academia, intellectuals and big business actually merged more than ever. The huge growth and popularisation of social science research was assisted by increased research funding by American millionaire philanthropists. Carnegie and Rockefeller had begun their foundations in the progressive era, but huge numbers of research-based studies were sponsored by a variety of philanthropic endeavours, among them the Brookings Institution and the Pollak Foundation for Economic Research. If the research of the social scientists and psychoanalysts were to make effective material changes to the shape of modern culture, then the sponsorship of rich philanthropists and corporations was vital to this project.³⁹ Likewise, the newly formed public relations and advertising agencies during this period recognised the potential commercial use of social science research and the new ideas of social psychology, a relationship highlighted in 1924, when a leading exponent of the Behaviourist school of psychology, John B. Watson, became vice-president of the country's leading advertising agency, J. Walter Thompson.⁴⁰

While the social sciences started to use scientific research methods in a more systematic way, the shift came alongside a new dissemination of science in popular culture. In 1921 Einstein's arrival in New York created a media sensation, followed by numerous attempts to popularise and explain his theories, including the animated movie *The Einstein Theory of Relativity* (1923) that showed how '[o]ne by one, Einstein sweeps away every accepted notion'.⁴¹ The year 1921 also saw the founding of the Science Service in Washington DC, a science news syndicate which aimed to make all of the latest theories and discoveries accessible and freely available to ordinary Americans.⁴² As a

consequence, the discovery of vitamins, calories, new hormones such as insulin, and medical cures such as penicillin became integrated into popular knowledge for the first time. Edwin Emery Slosson of the newly formed Columbia school of Journalism ran 'Easy Lessons in Einstein' for his journalism students and by 1927 the Science Service had ventured into radio broadcasting with 'Science News of the Week' being syndicated to 22 stations by 1929.⁴³ A proliferation of popular-science magazines and bestsellers added to this expansion of scientific knowledge, impacting on all aspects of culture, from art and poetry to self-help and fashion. From streamlined design to physical health, progress and modernity appeared to depend on a more scientific approach to life.

Culture as Therapy

The huge popularisation of one particular field of science appeared to threaten traditional culture more than any other: psychoanalysis. Freud first visited America in 1909 and his newly translated work had permeated into intellectual circles of radical writers, who used Freud as a way of challenging tradition and conservatism. However, it wasn't until the 1920s that Freud 'became epidemic in America'.⁴⁴ Just as Einstein's theory had revealed the deception of surface appearance, Freud's indicated that beneath the appearance of normality lay unseen unconscious drives: both revealed that there were unseen forces behind the movements of the natural and social world.

To many, the Great War confirmed Freud's theories about the irrational and brutal beneath the veneer of civilised society, revealing the dangerous possibilities of the primal instincts in human nature. Not only had the war exposed the fragility of modern democracy, it had generated and revealed the existence of widespread psychological disorders that had been previously undetected or undiagnosed: 'America is by way of being something of a psychiatric clinic,' claimed Veblen in 1922.⁴⁵ Psychiatric treatment of shell-shocked soldiers illustrated the usefulness of Freud's theories for treating the traumatised and the neurotic – ideas that became extended to the peacetime adjustment of Americans to the new conditions of modernity. To many intellectuals, their disillusion with received values and institutions was justified in the discoveries of psychoanalysis, a field that counteracted the pessimism it created by offering a new path to social progress. In many ways the tension between the past and future progress within American society was represented in the neurotic individual, trapped

in the past and unable to progress to 'normalcy' until psychoanalysis unlocked the door to a more stable future. As Freud noted in 1927, progress in psychoanalysis (and culture more generally) relied on a tension between the past and the present, where 'the present . . . must have become the past – before it can yield points of vantage from which to judge the future'.⁴⁶

By the 1920s intellectual interpretations of American history were being amended by Freud's theories. In his negative appraisal of the state of American culture in 1922, Harold Stearns employed the Oedipal complex to describe the poor state of American culture: 'America is a very young country . . . [w]e have not sufficiently grown up but that we must still cling to our father and mother'.⁴⁷ The critic Waldo Frank in *Our American* (1919) also analysed contemporary problems as a result of 'repression on a national scale'.⁴⁸ Frank interpreted the postwar psychic imbalance as an effect of the centuries of Puritan and pioneer repressions. Materialism and the drive for success had replaced the natural instincts, they argued. Only in the rediscovery of the far reaches of human consciousness, through art, literature and poetry, and a rejection of the past, would it be possible to cure the neurotic industrial monster that America had become. In this way the past was cast as 'disease' with culture as the cure.

By the start of the 1920s such ideas about the individual and society were being circulated in the mass media outside of elite and intellectual circles, even appearing in the more conservative echelons of *Good Housekeeping* magazine.⁴⁹ In 1920 one writer claimed that it was 'hard to pick up a newspaper or a magazine without finding psychoanalytic terms', and by 1925 another writer was calling Freud the 'Columbus of the Subconscious' and the 'God of psychoanalysis'.⁵⁰

This widespread use of psychoanalysis was not unproblematic. The discipline itself experienced crisis with the appearance in the 1920s of a 'new' psychoanalytic psychology, 'an eclectic mix of Adler, Jung and Freud'.⁵¹ The huge popularisation of Freudian ideas in the mass media resulted in a lack of orthodoxy that appeared to be exploiting public interest in the new trend rather than assisting progression. The popular overuse of Freudian theory led to dilution, misinterpretation and downright quackery, developments that in turn became an object of satire for writers and artists.⁵² As Alfred Kuttner noted in 1922, the nation's embrace of Freudianism in the 1920s exhibited 'the most extravagant development of the so-called "wild" psychoanalysis'.⁵³ The adaptation of Freud to new market and social conditions took on a variety of guises; from the appearance of the first popular magazine

on psychology in 1923 came a torrent of popular literature on the new psychology, including books, magazine articles and newspaper columns.⁵⁴ Like Einstein, Sigmund Freud became a household figure, and made the first of five appearances on the cover of *Time* magazine on 27 October 1924.

The public profile of psychoanalysis was raised further in 1924 when four psychoanalysts gave expert testimony in the notorious Loeb–Leopold murder trial. William Randolph Hearst even sent a public invitation to Freud to testify on behalf of the defendants, which he declined.⁵⁵ The highly publicised trial of two homosexual teenagers who had randomly kidnapped and murdered fourteen-year-old Bobby Franks exhibited the irresolvable tension between tradition and modernity, religion and science that characterised the decade. Clarence Darrow, celebrated defence lawyer who would later defend John Scopes for teaching evolution in Tennessee (see the case study below), argued against the death penalty for the boys on the basis that they were psychologically sick rather than morally diseased. This view of crime and human behaviour transformed subsequent advances in criminology but also indicated a new danger to society in the form of ‘abnormal’ psychology and mental disease. Yet it was also a highly publicised fact that Leopold was a self-confessed atheist who had been motivated to crime by his reading of the philosopher Nietzsche. Darrow’s defence thereby also appeared an intellectual defence of modern atheism and philosophy and the trial illustrated that beneath the veneer of educated civilisation was a debased atavism, a belief that Freud’s publications over the 1920s were only to confirm further. The importance of the psychoanalyst in detecting and curing psychoses and creating functioning citizens in a godless, amoral society seemed paramount but the trial also revealed the moral vacuum in which psychoanalysis now functioned.

The popularity of psychoanalysis as a cure for social and cultural problems led to the proliferation of books and magazines offering pop psychology as a solution to all ills. Although Freud was dismayed at the emergence of such eclectic psychoanalysis in America, his ideas did combine fruitfully with other disciplines to provide Americans with a new intellectual roadmap. Freud and Dewey’s mutual admiration, for example, led to important developments in psychoanalytic education, and Freud was greatly influential in the development of social anthropology and criminology in the social sciences.⁵⁶ Rather than curtailing the tensions in American culture, however, the proliferation of psychoanalytic theories of the individual, society and culture intensified

the paradoxical experience of modernity. To many, the new impact of psychoanalysis was associated with modern freedom and expressivity. To others, however, it became associated with enforcing and policing a new conformity and conservatism, one based on a consumerist or behavioural ‘normalcy’ rather than religious faith, politics or artistic expression.

Culture and Religion

Psychoanalytic theories enabled rebellious intellectuals to turn against traditional values, rejecting the heritage of Puritanism and the values associated with Victorian culture; at the same time these theories filled the gap left by the repudiation of traditional social and religious doctrines in the scientific age. To many, it seemed, psychoanalysis had replaced religion as Freud presented Americans with a ‘sustained plea for a heroic and defiant atheism’ through which the tension between the past and the future could be expressed and resolved.⁵⁷ Freud’s publications over the 1920s only confirmed this view more fully. While *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* (1921) had shown that individual psychology was affected by a ‘herd instinct’ that was ‘contagious’ in a crowd, in *The Future of an Illusion* (1927) Freud asserted that religious belief was ‘a store of ideas . . . born from man’s need to make his helplessness tolerable and built up from the material of memories of the helplessness of his own childhood and the childhood of the human race’.⁵⁸ Sensationally reported in the *New York Times*, the headline read: ‘Religion Doomed, Freud Asserts; Says It Is at Point Where It Must Give Way Before Science’.⁵⁹ Yet while Freud revealed the illusion, he also demonstrated how it had been essential in the development and survival of civilisation thus far – without religion, this implied, civilisation would struggle to function.

The growth and popularisation of scientific thought, instrumentalism, pragmatism and materialism all appeared on the surface to divide American society between Christians and those who believed in something else. Relativism and pluralism appeared to divest American culture of a moral framework on which social stability could be formed. Despite this, aspects of religious thinking were infused by new ideas. University of Chicago professor of divinity Shailer Matthews developed theories of a theological ‘scientific modernism’ using the socio-historical methods of the Chicago school; his *The Faith of Modernism* (1924) argued that ‘[Theological] Modernists endeavor to reach beliefs and their application in the same way that chemists or historians reach

and apply their conclusions . . . [their] theological affirmations are the formulation of results of investigation both of human needs and the Christian religion'.⁶⁰

To some, however, it was this theological liberalism that threatened American culture most of all.⁶¹ In response to the growing secularisation of society and growing liberalism of religious belief, fundamentalism expanded in diverse and unprecedented ways. Theologians met and organised opposition to modernists and the demise of civilisation, coining the term 'fundamentalist' in 1920 for someone who went into battle for 'the fundamentals' of Protestant belief and interpreted the Bible literally.⁶² Organising a growing network of associations and Bible institutes, fundamentalists emphasised the literal truth of the Bible and the Gospels and challenged scientific ideas that threatened this. The popular radio preacher Harry Emerson Fosdick called for reconciliation between modernisers and fundamentalists in his 1922 sermon 'Shall the Fundamentalists Win?'⁶³ However, the anti-evolutionary movement within fundamentalism had become a 'national fad' by 1925, epitomised in the trial of John Scopes for teaching evolution at a school in Dayton, Tennessee.

The Scopes Trial, 1925

The Scopes 'Monkey Trial' became the stage on which these key conflicts were played out in the public arena. The trial illustrated the irreconcilable tension that had emerged between science and religion, modernity and tradition, the urban and the rural, 'wets' and 'drys', and the intellectual liberal versus the conservative fundamentalist. At the time it gave a public platform to ideas and anxieties about modernity that were seething in the intellectual undercurrents of the 1920s.

During the war the American Civil Liberties Union had formed to defend the civil rights of those threatened by bigotry and conservatism, and continued after the war in the face of the rise of fundamentalism, nativism, racism and anti-communism. Their focus on legislation made them turn their attention in 1925 to a Tennessee statute, the Butler Act, a state law making it unlawful for a State-employed teacher to 'teach any theory that denies the divine creation of man as taught in the Bible, and to teach instead that man has descended from a lower order of animals'.⁶⁴ An apparently serious threat to intellectual and educational freedom, the ACLU approached a high-school science teacher in Dayton, Tennessee, asking him to act as a test-case for challenging the legitimacy of the statute. After teaching evolution from a biology textbook, John Scopes was arrested and charged according to the Butler Act.

The ensuing trial became a publicity feature of the decade, helped by the presence of 'two well-known verbal pugilists', William Jennings Bryan on the anti-evolutionist side, and Clarence Darrow for scientific modernism.⁶⁵ Over the 1920s, Bryan had become a leading campaigner for the fundamentalist anti-evolution movement, arguing for the literal interpretation of the Bible. Despite this, he did not neatly fit into reactionary categories. As a familiar speaker on the Chautauqua circuit and a well-known popular and political figure, he had formerly led populist campaigns in the 1890s – notably the Free Silver campaign, anti-imperialism and pacifist campaigns – and had been a Democratic Presidential candidate three times, becoming Secretary of State in Woodrow Wilson's cabinet in 1913. In many ways, Bryan personified the disillusion with progressive reforms of the era. He saw the teaching of evolution as something that encouraged selfish, animalistic behaviour, equated Darwinism with unrestricted capitalism and saw the ravages of the war as a consequence of such scientific rationalism. In his career he had often renounced conservatism and capitalism, thus in Bryan 'reform and reaction lived happily, if somewhat incongruously, side by side'.⁶⁶

Bryan's populist beliefs came into play to argue that in a state where a large percentage of the population were against the teaching of evolution, tax-payers should not be forced to pay the wages of teachers who taught contrary to the majority belief. Thus he became chief prosecutor, protecting 'the word of God against the greatest atheist or agnostic in the United States'.⁶⁷

That atheist, Clarence Darrow, had a similar past of campaigning for liberal causes, fighting legal battles in the cause of labour against big business. He had even campaigned for Bryan's Presidential nomination, supporting Democratic campaigns against the exploitation of the common man. By 1925 Darrow had become the most famous criminal defence lawyer in the United States – fighting the death penalty for the Nietzschean 'thrill murderers' Loeb and Leopold – and offered his services to the ACLU for no charge. Despite his earlier connection with similar causes to Bryan, he had come to regard Christianity as a 'punitive slave-religion' and stated his aim in court as simply 'preventing bigots and ignoramuses from controlling the education of the United States'.⁶⁸

Likened to the publicity given to sporting events, especially the famous boxing matches of the era, the preparations made for the world to descend on the small town of Dayton had a carnival atmosphere: the courtroom was repainted, 500 extra spectator seats were built and the room was filled with wires and microphones for the first ever live radio broadcast of such an event; a field was turned into an air strip to accommodate reporters and journalists who would fly daily newsreels out to northern theatres, to be shown later that day; a loft in a downtown hardware store was turned into a press office for the hundreds of reporters who turned up from all over the world to report the bizarre American trial; extra trains were laid on and souvenir and hotdog stands appeared on the streets. More than 2,000 daily newspapers covered the trial, some with full stenographic

transcriptions of the courtroom events, and when the trial moved onto the wooden stage outside the courthouse for fear that the floors would collapse, the performance could not have been more dramatic.⁶⁹

That the trial was a 'set-up' in many ways did little to diminish interest in it. Darrow's dramatic speeches claimed world attention by illustrating that the trial represented nothing less than the future of culture: 'with flying banners and beating drums we are marching backward to the glorious ages of the sixteenth century when bigots lighted fagots to burn the men who dared to bring any intelligence and enlightenment and culture to the human mind'.⁷⁰ The works of Darwin, the Bible, anthropologists, archaeologists and biologists were all used as evidence in the attempt to determine the relationship between religion and evolution and whether John Scopes had denied creation by teaching from a standard biology textbook. It was Darrow's cross-examination of Bryan that electrified the trial, however, as he challenged Bryan on the literal interpretation of the Bible asking questions such as 'Do you believe that [Eve] was literally made out of Adam's rib?', and forcing Bryan to explain his fundamentalist belief in the Virgin birth, the creation of Earth, and whether Jonah was really swallowed by a whale or a huge fish. In the sparring between the two men Darrow showed fundamentalism to be essentially anti-intellectual, as shown in his cross-examination of Bryan about his belief in the age of the Earth and the beginnings of mankind:

- D: Do you know there are thousands of books in our libraries on all those subjects I have been asking you about?
- B: I couldn't say, but I will take your word for it . . .
- D: Did you ever read a book on primitive man? Like Tyler's *Primitive Culture*, or Boaz, or any of the great authorities?
- B: I don't think I have read the ones you mentioned.
- D: Have you read any?
- B: Well, I have read a little from time to time. But I didn't pursue it, because I didn't know I was to be called as a witness.
- D: You have never in your life made any attempt to find out about the other peoples of the earth – how old their civilisations are – how long they had existed on earth, have you?
- B: No sir, I have been so well satisfied with the Christian religion that I have spent no time trying to find arguments against it.⁷¹

The trial became a duel between old thought and new. That Bryan had so clearly refused to read the modern works of cultural anthropology and science appeared a rejection of modernity and the cultural knowledge upon which modern society depended. The contrast between the two worlds that these ideas inhabited could not have appeared greater to all of those following the trial, and it was this tension that made the case electrifying.

At the end of the eleven days, Scopes was found guilty and sentenced to pay \$100. Despite this, the case was seen as Darrow's conquest; modernity had been brought to Dayton and the world had seen that scientific

progress could not be stopped. At the same time fundamentalism was not crushed by defeat, and Darrow's antics in court merely highlighted rifts and tensions between moralists and atheists. Darrow's comparison of the trial with the witch-burning of the sixteenth century later resonated with other historical events in the 1950s, where the trial received popular treatment as a play and a film, *Inherit the Wind*, resonating with McCarthy's persecution of 'atheistic communism'.

The trial did nothing to reconcile or resolve the tensions of the 1920s. Instead, as the *Atlanta Constitution* stated, it was a 'stage-play between conflicting currents of thought'. The *Christian Century* claimed after the trial that few really cared about the legal issues involved but had turned up to be entertained by the self-publicising 'pugilists' in the 'Amateur Dramatics at Dayton'.⁷² Satirist H. L. Mencken saw more danger than humour in the success of the prosecution: 'Let no one mistake it for comedy, farcical though it may be in all its details. It serves notice on the country that Neanderthal man is organizing in these forlorn backwaters of the land, led by a fanatic, rid of sense and devoid of conscience'.⁷³ While the trial had few intellectual or legal consequences for either side involved (the Butler Law was not repealed until 1967), the issues that it raised remain significant within American society today, in debates about freedom of speech, freedom of science, public education and the still-raging debates over evolution, creationism and 'intelligent design'.

The Scopes Trial profoundly illustrated that while America of the 1920s was fascinated with the rift between tradition and modernity, modern America was more a confused melting pot of the two. Commenting on Bryan's anti-evolution campaign in 1922, Dewey saw great danger in Bryan's mix of fundamentalism and populism, and perceived his mix of 'social and political liberalism combined with intellectual illiberality' as symptomatic of the confused and potentially dangerous climate of the 1920s. To Dewey, it raised 'fundamental questions about the quality of our democracy'.⁷⁴ Bryan's crusade reflected the illiberalism embedded within American democratic and liberal thought, where the desire for social and moral order in the midst of 'latent frontier disorderliness' operated to crush free inquiry and criticism where it didn't operate to enhance that moral order. To Dewey, this 'fixed limit to thought' closed down the potential use of art and science for liberating and elevating the human spirit; instead the function was limited: 'science and art as far as they refine and polish life, afford "culture," mark stations on an upward social road, and have direct useful applications, yes: but as emancipations, as radical guides to life, no'.⁷⁵

Anti-science religious fundamentalism appeared to hamper both progress and freedom of thought and expression. The director of

the Science Service, Edwin Slossen, equated the 'instinctive mass reaction against new ideas' to the 'common aversion to the foreigner', a bigotry that would have popular votes repeal Copernican, Newtonian and Einsteinian theories, he claimed.⁷⁶ The most obvious manifestation of the rise of a virulent religious bigotry was in the rapid growth of the Ku Klux Klan in the postwar period. As 'guardians' of white Protestantism and Victorian values, the Klan ascended to the height of its power in 1924, attracting up to five million supporters throughout the nation.⁷⁷ Decidedly anti-modern, the Klan voiced white working-class grievances against big business and economic exploitation as well as appealing to white supremacy with attacks on African Americans, immigrants, Jews, Catholics, feminists and radicals.⁷⁸ Despite this, even the Klan employed modern techniques of mass marketing and publicity gleaned from recent business culture.⁷⁹

Modern mass culture came under regular assault in the sermons of traditionalists, who blamed immoral behaviour on developments in mass technology, especially cars, cinema and radio. However, like the KKK, fundamentalists also used and benefited from these new technologies with productions of their own. Pentecostal preacher Aimee Semple McPherson became the first female radio evangelist in 1922, acquiring her own radio station a year later to promote her unique brand of Christian fundamentalism. A conservative in faith and a moderniser in behaviour, McPherson neatly embodied the paradox of 1920s fundamentalism.

The modernisation of religion was no more visible than in the developing relationship between Church and business over the decade, symbolised in the appearance of the new journal *Church Management* in 1923.⁸⁰ Arguing for more business efficiency in church affairs and explaining how to run a church like a business, the role of the businessman became increasingly central to a successful religion. The rise of business culture did not necessarily trammel traditional moral ethics, for Shailer Matthews 'business does more than make money – it makes morals'.⁸¹ Modernising Baptist minister Harry Fosdick called for *Adventurous Religion* in 1926, a title that evoked the excitement and risk-taking of business ventures rather than faith. Business and religion were not mutually exclusive, argued Bruce Barton in his bestselling *The Man Nobody Knows* (1925), which depicted Jesus as the most successful businessman the world had known. The writer Sinclair Lewis satirised this paradox of modern conservatism as moral confusion in both *Babbitt* (1922) and *Elmer Gantry* (1927).

Culture and Race

While the variety of religious experiments in the 1920s appeared to have shattered a unitary experience of faith, and business involvement in the Church further elided the secular with the religious, American society was less in the process of destroying God than diversifying a variety of faiths into an expanding number of areas. Religious revivals took on a variety of shapes and forms outside of the traditional perspective of Protestantism and at times provided a platform for new forms of liberation and expression. The 'modernisation' of spiritual faith worked in more radical ways for sections of believers and, indeed, served to revitalise spirituality for many African Americans during the period. The emergence of religious groups and cults preaching equality, self-improvement and economic independence contained both elements of a radical modernity and a rejection of past oppressions, alongside religious fundamentalism and patriarchal politics. The rising presence of African Americans in northern cities provided the impetus for a variety of new movements; among these were the Pentecostal cult leader 'Daddy Grace', who established the United House of Prayer for All People in 1919, 'Father Divine', founder of the International Peace Mission Movement, and F. S. Cherry, who founded the black Jewish 'Church of the Living God' in Philadelphia in 1915. The decade saw the rise of pan-Islamism with Noble Drew Ali's Moorish Science Temple (later followed by the Nation of Islam movement in the 1930s).⁸² These religious movements, which later became connected to the civil rights and freedom movements, provided African Americans with a faith-based rhetoric of empowerment as well as offering institutional support networks for activities that were not formally sponsored by the State such as relief, charity and cultural activities.⁸³ For many African Americans, embracing a new spiritual modernity became symbolic of the rejection of 'old' America, with its slavery and economic oppression that connected to the fundamentalist Christian South.

Marcus Garvey's United Negro Improvement Association was undoubtedly the most popular of all of these new movements. Jamaican-born Garvey had founded the movement in 1914, setting up a chapter in New York in 1916. By 1920 the UNIA had gained over four million members.⁸⁴ Garvey had tapped into a new black demographic; newly urbanised following the migration of over one million African Americans from the South since 1910, hopeful that the North would provide them with new economic and social freedom

but victims nonetheless of race riots and prejudice in both the North and South. Garvey argued for a new pan-African solidarity to sustain black pride, economic self-sufficiency and self-governance. In contrast to earlier movements for African American civil rights, Garvey's philosophy was separatist and anti-assimilation.⁸⁵

Garvey reversed the Darwinian-inspired notions of cultural evolution with which white supremacists justified their position, arguing that 'When the great white race of today had no civilization of its own, when white men lived in caves and were counted as savages, this race of ours boasted of a wonderful civilization on the Banks of the Nile'.⁸⁶ To Garvey, Africa was the fatherland of all people of African ancestry and a place that they should aim to return to, repossess and repopulate. Garvey argued for a social, economic and cultural separatism, setting up black-owned businesses and companies. Appearing ready for a fight in his paramilitary regalia, he argued that the postwar world offered the opportunity for those of African ancestry to fight for their rightful place in a world that had disinherited them.

To some white observers, this rise of Black nationalism and 'pan-Africanism' was part of a dangerous uprising of 'colored' people around the world. Behind the fears of 'cultural lag' and individual inability to keep up with the times were perceptions that the white race and Western civilisation were in decline – a theory promulgated by the popular reception of Oswald Spengler's *The Decline of the West*. In his organic conception of civilisation first published in Germany in 1918, Spengler wrote that Western civilisation was in its 'winter' phase and thereby racing towards its inexorable end. To many, the decline was specifically connected to modern patterns of culture and reproduction and Spengler's idea merely confirmed the well-established theories of 'race suicide' promoted by eugenicists over the previous two decades. It was in the aftermath of the Great War, however, that these ideas reached their zenith of popularity, epitomised by the 1920 publication of Lothrop Stoddard's *The Rising Tide of Color Against White World-Supremacy*.

The Rising Tide of Color (1920)

Lothrop Stoddard was a protégé of the naturalist and anthropologist Madison Grant, whose book *The Passing of the Great Race, or the Racial Basis of European History* was published to wide acclaim and effect in 1916. Grant's thesis epitomised 'scientific' racism of the era by arguing that the

superior 'Nordic' culture was under threat in the US by the unprecedented immigration of other races and the massive migration of African Americans to the urban North. Grant's thesis was influenced by the combination of evolutionary thought with new scientific ideas about genetic inheritance, asserting that the races were in perpetual competition with each other for power, control and resources. Stoddard adopted many of Grant's ideas about the threat to 'Nordicism' from other races, but placed this threat in a world context and argued further that the Great War had highlighted and exacerbated the emergency now facing the white race.

Like *The Passing of the Great Race*, *The Rising Tide* argued that the 'conflict of color' was the 'fundamental problem of the twentieth century'. Stoddard's view of the centrality of race to the twentieth century had been pre-empted by the African American intellectual W. E. B. Du Bois, who had written in 1903 that 'The problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color-line, – the relation of the darker to the lighter races of men'.⁸⁷ To white supremacists, however, any gain in power from 'inferior' races would result in the further collapse of civilisation. In his introduction to the book, Grant argued that 'If this great [Nordic] race, with its capacity for leadership and fighting, should ultimately pass, with it would pass that which we call civilization . . . succeeded by an unstable and bastardized population'. Grant argued that democracy was something that only applied to a homogenous population of 'Nordic blood' and that sharing blood and ideals with 'brown, yellow, black or red men' was 'suicide pure and simple'.⁸⁸ Stoddard expanded on the threat to white supremacy in his study of the rise of non-white races in all parts of the globe. Not only were whites outnumbered but white cultural advance had enabled the 'colored' world to increase, advance and thrive at alarming levels. White civilisation had thus sown the seeds of its own destruction by sharing its scientific and technological advances with 'inferior' races. While 'the white world was tearing itself to pieces' in war, and limiting its numbers with the increasing availability of birth control, the 'colored' world had been watching closely, increasing its numbers and waiting to 'shake off its fetters' and seize power and resources from the whites.⁸⁹ Stoddard charted, chapter by chapter, the rise of the 'colored' threat – the rise of Asian territories and 'Asiatic nationalism' (notably Japan's recent territorial aggression), the 'Mohammedan Revival' and the building of a coming 'Jehad' or 'Holy War' by Muslims, the rise of pan-Islamism and population growth in Africa, and the dangerous 'mongrelization', rebellion and radicalisation of Latin America – all of which added up to a 'cataclysmic' situation for 'Nordic' culture.

To Stoddard the war had added new factors to intensify the threat further; having destroyed the lives, youth, 'breeding' potential and economic infrastructure of 'white' Europe, the problematic peace settlement initiated further dangers and crises through the 'perpetuation of hatreds' among white Europeans. As well as the dysgenic 'slaughter of genius-bearing strains' in war, the recent revolution in Russia further illustrated the most 'gigantic triumph of dysgenics ever seen'. Bolshevism encouraged

the underdog and the 'dysgenic' to rise up, to kill off the carriers of higher-quality genes – the aristocracy and educated elite – and created agitators in 'every quarter of the globe' to inspire further nationalist uprisings and agitate against every grievance. 'Bolshevism is "the arch-enemy of civilization" and must be "crushed out with iron heels, no matter what the cost"'.⁹⁰ Stoddard's interpretation depicted white America as the last post and refuge for civilisation, surrounded by seething hordes of 'coloreds' and Bolsheviks literally hammering at the door.

The impact of such ideas on politics and culture throughout the decade was huge. Both Grant's and Stoddard's ideas argued for the 'vital necessity of restriction and selection in immigration' and underpinned the enactment of new immigration laws in 1921 and 1924.⁹¹ Stoddard's book came out at the height of postwar immigration to the United States and during the onset of economic depression, contributing to the scare that enabled the rapid enactment of the Emergency Immigration Act of 1921. This act limited immigration to 3 per cent of the foreign-born residing in America in 1910. The racial theories of those such as Grant and Stoddard continued to fuel fears over 'race suicide', so that even though America had entered a 'boom' period, in 1924 the National Origins Act was passed to further limit immigration, changing the quota to 2 per cent and adopting 1890 as the date on which to base the quotas (a time seen as more demographically favourable to 'Nordics'). Further restrictions effectively barred any Japanese immigration at all – the racial group that Stoddard had claimed to be the most immediately threatening to white America.⁹² President Harding recommended Stoddard's book in a speech at Birmingham, Alabama, on 26 October 1921: 'Whoever will take the time to read and ponder Mr. Lothrop Stoddard's book on *The Rising Tide of Color* . . . must realise that our race problem here in the United States is only a phase of a race issue that the whole world confronts'.⁹³

Following the success of his book, Stoddard penned many more. In *The Revolt Against Civilization: The Menace of the Under-Man* (1922), he argued that civilisations went into decline because of 'mongrelization' and the appearance of weaker 'germ plasms', causing the increasing appearance of degenerate types. Barely mentioning 'colored' races, *The Revolt Against Civilization* neatly summarises eugenic thinking of the 1920s, which blamed all social and political problems on genetic decline. The *Saturday Evening Post* complimented Stoddard on being the first to successfully 'present a scientific explanation of the worldwide epidemic of unrest that broke out during the Great War and still rages in both hemispheres'.⁹⁴ Stoddard complemented his theories with further books interpreting world history in racial terms: *The New World of Islam* and *Racial Realities in Europe* (1924). In *Reforging America* (1927) he highlighted how white America could rebuild its 'native' stocks and assimilate white immigrants into the fold. While Stoddard represented a trend rather than a founder of such ideas, his writings undoubtedly contributed to the widespread popularity and dissemination of racist ideology in the 1920s.

Despite the overt racism of his books, with historical hindsight Stoddard appears to have predicted some key convulsions of the post-colonial world in the second part of the twentieth century. Not only does his book anticipate the downfall of European imperialism such as British rule in India and French rule in Africa and Asia, his dire warnings of forthcoming conflict appear to predict beyond World War II to the Cold War, the Vietnam War, The Gulf War, American military interventions in Latin America, War in Afghanistan and the 'War on Terror'.

However much the conflict over the 'color line' appeared as a black versus white issue – epitomised in 1929 when Stoddard and Du Bois stood together on a platform in Chicago to debate 'cultural equality' in front of a mainly black audience – neither the 'rising' nor the 'ebbing' tides were as homogenous in their racial identity or scientific beliefs as either side desired.⁹⁵ Eugenics not only inflected white modernism, black leaders such as Garvey, whose anti-miscegenation ideas mirrored white separatism, and Du Bois, whose claim that there was an elite 'talented tenth' among the black population, also subscribed to eugenic beliefs as a form of racial 'improvement'.⁹⁶

Culture and the New Negro

Though inspiring fears of 'colored' races in the white populace, Stoddard's work indicated to racial minorities that their new world was indeed coming. **To African American activists in the 1920s the promise of a new civilisation in which they would play a vital role presented both a challenge and an opportunity.** While black rejection of white domination and demands for equal status and recognition had been growing over the past twenty years, the 1920s saw a fruition of black pride and activism in cultural and intellectual life, as well as in the social sphere. In contrast to both African nationalists and white supremacists, a cultural movement supported by Du Bois and a number of African American artists arose to proclaim that there was a 'New Negro' who would play a key role in the revitalisation of both black and white American culture. Black intellectuals and artists consciously ignited a new cultural movement that reflected this growing self-consciousness. Unlike white despair over the decline of civilisation, the movement exhibited a willing rejection of the past and a celebration of social and cultural change as progress. This celebratory modernism was reflected in the name given to the movement: the Harlem Renaissance.

The Harlem Renaissance was spurred forward by the support and patronage of Charles Spurgeon Johnson, a Chicago sociologist whose *The Negro In Chicago* (1922) reported the causes of the Chicago race riots of 1919 to the Chicago Commission on Race Relations. As publisher of *Opportunity: A Journal of Negro Life* he encouraged and published black writers and found white patrons for the artists. Johnson believed in cooperation rather than conflict between the races and worked to allow black artists self-expression.⁹⁷ At a literary dinner for the publication of Jessie Fauset's new novel *There is Confusion* (1925), the editor of *Survey Graphic*, a social science journal, proposed a whole issue devoted to black culture, which became *Harlem: The Mecca of the New Negro*.⁹⁸ This volume was expanded into an anthology in 1925, *The New Negro*, edited by Alain Locke.

The volume of essays, stories and poems printed in *The New Negro* anthology illustrated a new interconnectedness between the social sciences and the creative arts, with sections on black demographics, sociology, and history interspersed with poems and essays on the culture of jazz, spirituals, art and sculpture. Locke saw salvation for the African American in the realm of such intellectual and cultural production, and his seminal essay 'Enter the New Negro' argued that a new psychology was emerging which shook off the 'old chrysalis of the Negro problem', showing a new self-respect and self-dependence. This new psychology would release 'our talented group from the arid fields of controversy and debate to the productive fields of creative expression'. Thus the 'New Negro' was the epitome of modernity, of cultural pluralism, self-making and the conscious rejection of the past. 'The American mind,' he argued, 'must reckon with a fundamentally changed negro'.⁹⁹

Although Locke barely mentioned Garvey, the volume was certainly linked to a rising nationalist politics throughout the world following the war. Locke, however, argued for a cultural pluralism reliant on white cooperation and acceptance rather than separatism. 'This wider race consciousness,' he argued, was a 'different thing from the much asserted rising tide of color'; rather than threatening civilisation it was essential to its rejuvenation and progress.¹⁰⁰ While the new centrality of African American artistry would provide uplift through cultural pursuit and refinement, all of American culture would be advanced. An example of this is shown in his essay 'The Legacy of Ancestral Arts', where Locke claimed that African cultural heritage had saved the European avant-garde culture from 'decadence and sterility'.¹⁰¹ To Locke, then, pluralist culture was in itself a form of progress, politics and racial advancement.

Despite the claims for a new group psychology based on these ideas, rifts in the movement were always present. Locke's promotion of intellectuals and artists struck some as elitist and highly selective.¹⁰² The young journalist George Schulyer called the Harvard-educated scholar 'the high priest of the intellectual snobbocracy'.¹⁰³ Others felt that Locke – educated in traditions of European thought – had papered over the everyday experiences of ordinary African Americans in order to promote a hygienic vision of the 'New Negro' with which white reformers and patrons would feel comfortable. At the same time the tension between past and future is clear in much of the anthology: in trying to establish a tradition for African American culture, while at the same time make claims for an entirely new modern age, the message was at times contradictory or paradoxical. Despite this, the Harlem Renaissance and the conditions that gave rise to it were both 'molding a new Negro [and] molding a new American attitude'.¹⁰⁴

Women and Culture

Like the New Negro, the New Woman was not an innovation of the 1920s, yet rapid social change made women's role in society a topic of heightened prominence and cultural concern. In the years preceding, women had played key parts in progressive and reform movements by using a moral authority garnered from their domestic roles as mothers, carers and homemakers. At the same time the transformation from an agrarian economy to an industrial one had created new opportunities for women, particularly single, working-class women. The image of the modern woman was further transformed by women's participation in industrial work during the war, leading to an emergence of new expectations and social norms. Enjoying the freedom that came from having an independent source of income, many working-class women created a new culture for themselves that centred on consumption and mass entertainment. The postwar boom enabled these women to further explore their new autonomy and individuality and reject their mothers' ways for more modern choices.

In 1920 two key successes of the women's movement appeared to herald a new feminine future: temperance and suffrage. For decades reformers had argued that these two gains would fundamentally transform society, as women would vote more ethically than men (whose involvement in the world of business and politics corrupted them) and prohibition would stop the abuse and disintegration of the family that was a key feature of modern urban life. On the eve of the decade

it seemed that a new female-improved culture was dawning. Despite this success, the feminist ideal of the reform-minded club-woman, the settlement worker or the liberated, free-loving, bohemian intellectual of the 1910s was being replaced with a more individualistic image of female liberation: one that was based on freedom of expression, sexuality (notably heterosexuality) and consumption.

In many ways the problem for American women in the 1920s lay in the tension between tradition and progress that had been embedded in their success: reformers had relied on traditional feminine stereotypes in order to push through their radical goals for social change. In arguing for equality the women's movement had been forced to defend women's traditional roles and moral superiority against the tide of modern social change. **As social change led to new roles for women, where they did not use their newly gained freedoms to further reform and improve society, the attempt to sustain the paradox collapsed, leading to a decade of contradiction and critique.** The disappointments of the morning after were bitter: women's votes did not radicalise society; instead there emerged a decade of political conservatism, individualism and apparent indifference.

Contradictory images of new women thus emerged on the social scene as racism, fundamentalism, conservatism, crime, corruption and cultural anxiety over modernity reached a zenith. At the same time women entered into the workplace in unprecedented numbers, attained a new cultural voice in literature, film and radio, expressed new sexual freedoms with support from Freudian analysis and freer access to birth control, and helped fuel the consumer boom that has characterised the decade. Some blamed the women's movement for the rising tide of reactionary politics, others blamed it for the changing gender roles which appeared to lead to increased divorce and family breakdown, others equated femininity with mass consumer culture; in all cases the backlash to feminist ideology was strong enough to last until the 1960s.¹⁰⁵

Behind many of the concerns and anxieties over the transformation to modernity lay a deeply embedded gender critique that expressed a concern over the apparent dominance of American woman in cultural life. According to Harold Stearns 'the extraordinary feminization of American social life' had caused the spiritual impoverishment of culture.¹⁰⁶ Even the 'remarkable growth of pragmatism' and 'its sturdy offspring instrumentalism' was only possible due to an intellectual atmosphere 'surcharged with this feminized utilitarianism', for 'what women usually understand by the intellectual life is the application of modern scientific methods to a sort of enlarged and subtler course

in domestic science'.¹⁰⁷ As intellectuals rejected the repressions of Puritanism, Puritanism became associated with domineering, evangelical womanhood. The shallowness, materialism and functionalism that Stearns saw as a feature of American culture could be blamed on women, to whom 'intellectual life is an instrument of moral reform . . . a sociological activity' compounded by the 'satisfied marital felicity of the bacteria-less suburbanite in his concrete villa'.¹⁰⁸ Rather than cultural improvement, he argued, the culture of the new woman and female reform had contributed to cultural and spiritual decline.

According to Van Wyck Brooks, artists and writers were similarly affected by this cultural emasculation, sterility and impotency; like Samson, the writer had 'lost his virility before the philistines bound him'.¹⁰⁹ Likewise, cultural infantilism could be blamed on the overvaluation of the mother figure according to Alfred Kutter, where Americans' 'exaggerated mother-love' had reached 'cultic proportions', leading to the 'sexual infantilism' of the American male.¹¹⁰

These ideas were connected as much to the changing nature of American society as to the changing roles of women within it. Mass production soared in the 1920s, creating a huge consumer boom in which women appeared to play a key role. By the end of the 1920s consumer culture appeared as a new type of matriarchy, in which women controlled the nation's pocketbook. Stearns used the example of the popular cartoon strip 'Bringing up Father' as an example of women's relationship to modern cultural life. In the strip a nouveau riche wife aspired to a bourgeois lifestyle while her husband remained stuck to his gauche working-class habits. 'Bringing up' father meant forcing him to adopt materialistic and superficial habits that had rapidly become associated with middle-brow, anti-intellectual, feminine bourgeoisification. Using 'rolling-pin' humour, the strip highlighted the new power of women in a world of showy artificiality and consumption – inevitably 'mother' was twice the size of 'father', although her reform project continuously fails.

Women's smoking, drinking and jazz dancing represented a further rejection of prohibitive Victorianism and feminism as 'the flapper' emerged as the most overt rejection of the 'old'. Connected to a new sexual freedom and the mass production of ready-to-wear items, the flapper style entailed a minimum of undergarments, short skirts, filmy fabrics and sheer hosiery. Her bobbed hair (a release from the weight of tradition) represented female daring and eroticism. Smoking, drinking and cosmetics – traditionally associated with prostitutes – further underscored women's right to sexuality and personal expression.

Movies also projected visions of women who had physical freedom, energy and independence.

To some feminists and radicals, however, the flapper did not represent choice but consumer conformity. Former suffragists were dismayed to see women using their new-found freedoms to display themselves to men in competition for a husband in the restrictive environment of 1920s heterosexuality – the first Miss America contest held in 1921 at Atlantic City was an apotheosis of this new superficiality. Blamed for a new amorality and seen as a threat to the family, women reformers saw the nihilism of the flapper as a contradiction to the values of the earlier women's movement.

In this climate some women exercised their new political voices to defend older patriarchal gender roles and racial hierarchies. From 1923 The Women's Ku Klux Klan (WKKK) became flooded by those who continued to link the preservation of the family to women's political activism, whose goals were 'to cleanse and purify the civil, political and ecclesiastical atmosphere of our country; to provide a common meeting ground for American Protestant women who are willing to co-operate in bringing about better conditions in the home, church and social circles; to assist all Protestant women in the study of practical politics; to encourage a study by Protestant wives, mothers and daughters of questions concerning the happiness of the home and the welfare of the state'.¹¹¹ As Kathleen Blee has argued, 'anti-immigrant and racist sentiments within the women's suffrage, moral reform, and temperance movements created the historical possibility for a post-suffrage women's Klan that espoused women's rights while denying the rights of nonwhites, non-Protestants, and the foreign-born'.¹¹²

Many women reformers continued to see the educated woman as central to the progress of a new civilisation yet based their ideas of progress on 'scientific breeding' and reversing 'race suicide' rather than political or economic reform. Activist Margaret Sanger, central to making birth control more accessible in America during this period and thereby enabling the new sexual freedom for women, departed from feminist and socialist arguments to adopt a eugenic panacea for the problem of civilisation. Tapping into the wide body of intellectual perceptions about the genetic decline of American civilisation, she argued that birth control would enable a new civilisation by preventing the propagation of the 'unfit'.¹¹³ Published in the same year as Stoddard's *The Revolt Against Civilization*, Sanger's *The Pivot of Civilization* (1922) argued '[t]he lack of balance between the birth-rate of the "unfit" and the "fit" was the greatest present menace to



Figure I.1 Women in Ku Klux Klan demonstration, Washington DC, 1928 (© The Art Archive/ National Archives Washington DC).

the civilization’. In his introduction, H. G. Wells highlighted how Sanger’s book presented ‘the case of the new order against the old’:

The New Civilization is saying to the Old now: ‘We cannot go on making power for you to spend upon international conflict . . . we cannot go on giving you health, freedom, enlargement, limitless wealth, if all our gifts to you are to be swamped by an indiscriminate torrent of progeny. We want fewer and better children who can be reared up to their full possibilities in unencumbered homes, and we cannot make the social life and the world-peace we are determined to make, with the ill-bred, ill-trained swarms of inferior citizens that you inflict upon us’.¹¹⁴

The new civilisation evoked by Wells and Sanger tapped into modern scientific thought: ‘Recent developments in the realm of science, – in psychology, in physiology, in chemistry and physics – all tend to emphasized the immediate necessity for human control over the great

forces of nature', she argued. Birth control was 'pivotal' to progress, and educated women's choices were vital to this new civilisation: 'The new civilization can become a glorious reality only with the awakening of woman's now dormant qualities of strength, courage, and vigor . . . The physical and psychic power of woman is more indispensable to the well-being and power of the human race than that even of man'. Women thus remained central to the progress of civilisation but their emancipation was only of benefit if they used it for scientific efficiency and racial uplift. Despite the class and race bias in the birth control movement, however, many black, immigrant and working-class women subscribed to these ideas as a necessity (and boon) to modern womanhood, sexual freedom and the progress of civilisation.

The shift toward negative eugenics (the prevention of breeding among the 'unfit') in this decade was closely tied to beliefs about modern civilisation and decline promulgated in the arts. As schemes to increase the breeding of 'the fit' remained unfocused, the prevention of an unwanted rising tide of misfits became a focus of social and cultural improvement. America had enacted the world's first compulsory sterilisation law in 1907 – providing for involuntary sterilisation of 'confirmed criminals, idiots, imbeciles and rapists'. By 1927 the law was revised to include those deemed 'feeble-minded, epileptic and the potential parents of socially inadequate offspring'.¹¹⁵ In the same year the Supreme Court upheld the 1924 forced sterilisation of Carrie Buck (in the now infamous *Buck v. Bell* case) making compulsory sterilisation constitutional.

The celebratory modernism of the new woman was thus more complex than a simple rejection of traditional roles and the adoption of new 'flapper' lifestyles. African American women had to negotiate a new terrain that celebrated her sexuality without reverting to primitive stereotypes associated with the sexual exploitation of slavery. Similarly, overt sexual expression in young working-class women could lead to a stint in the reformatory and even to sterilisation if she were deemed 'unfit' to become a mother, while homosexuality in both men and women was increasingly classified by psychoanalysts as a sign of 'abnormal' sexual development that needed correction.

Conclusion

Just as Einstein's discoveries dismantled the old Newtonian order of reality, the character of modernity was an apparently chaotic battle to re-establish stability. As John Dewey noted:

The chief intellectual characteristic of the present age is its despair of any constructive philosophy . . . the formation of a new, coherent view of nature and man based upon facts consonant with science and actual social conditions is still to be had. What we call the Victorian Age seemed to have such a philosophy. It was a philosophy of hope, of progress, of all that is called liberalism. The growing sense of unsolved social problems, accentuated by the war, has shaken that faith. It is impossible to recover its mood.¹¹⁶

Baker Brownall claimed in his book *The New Universe* (1926) that '[t]oday is a crevice between two worlds': 'In music, and poetry, in geometry, physics, in space, time, chemistry, in painting and dancing, in religion, in politics, in trade and sculpture, the old forms shift and deliquesce and new formulations of the world appear'.¹¹⁷ In his 1929 essay 'The Modern Temper', literary critic Joseph Wood Krutch argued that a crevice had indeed opened up in which 'man seems caught in a dilemma which his intellect has devised. Any deliberately managed return to a state of relative ignorance . . . is obviously out of the question', for '[t]he values which he thought established have been swept along with the rules by which he thought they might be attained'. While there was no going back, ('[n]o one can tell how many of the old values must go or how new the new will be') what was certain was that the gulf left behind by the loss of stability meant 'either extinction [of the human spirit] or a readjustment more stupendous than any made before'.¹¹⁸ Culture, in all its varieties, was the sphere in which this stupendous readjustment took place.

Fiction, Poetry and Drama

Although America had attained a new cultural dominance in the 1920s and its writers an exuberance, confidence and readership to accompany it, literary productions did not reflect the boosterism of the business elite; instead, writers cast a critical eye over the myths and claims of the founding dream of abundance and democracy, finding their new position a source of discomfort and tension. In *The Professor's House* (1925) Willa Cather used the metaphor of the intellectual trapped between the old and new to illustrate the tension of the era:

[H]is new house, his old house, everything around him, seemed insupportable, as the boat on which he is imprisoned seems to a sea-sick man. Yes, it was possible that the little world, on its voyage among all the stars, might become like that; a boat on which one could travel no longer, from which one could no longer look up and confront those bright rings or revolution.¹

This tension between the past and the present, life and death, and the experience of lacking destination were themes explored by young writers who became known as 'the lost generation'. The term first appeared in the epigraph to Ernest Hemingway's novel *The Sun Also Rises* (1926), which quoted modernist writer Gertrude Stein declaring 'you are all a lost generation'.² Although referring specifically to a group of young writers who chose to spend some, or all, of the decade in Europe, the notion of a 'lost generation' also expressed a wider abandonment of traditional beliefs among American intellectuals in the postwar period. As Malcolm Cowley wrote in his memoir of the decade *Exile's Return*, 'they were not a lost generation in the sense of being unfortunate or thwarted', instead the generation was 'lost, first of all, because uprooted . . . lost because its training had prepared it for

another world than existed after the war . . . lost because it tried to live in exile . . . lost because it accepted no older guides to conduct'.³ Yet, as Joseph Krutch noted, these exiles were 'seceding from the old and yet could adhere to nothing new'.⁴

Stuck between two irreconcilable worlds, this inability to be at home in either appeared an inexorable path towards self-destruction, violence or death. **To philosopher George Santayana, the patterns of restlessness that he witnessed around him in 1920 summarised the national character:**

Consider now the great emptiness of America: not merely the primitive physical emptiness, surviving in some regions, and the continental spacing of the chief natural features, but also **the moral emptiness of a settlement where men and even houses are easily moved about**, and no one, almost, lives where he was born or believes what he has been taught.⁵

In their personal lives the writers of the lost generation famously pursued destructive lifestyles, drinking excessively, driving carelessly or obsessed with the primal scenes of violence. So many of the writers in the decade were alcoholics, Ann Douglas has noted, that 'this was the generation that made the terms "alcoholic" and "writer" synonyms'.⁶ **Writers such as F. Scott Fitzgerald, Ernest Hemingway, Dorothy Parker, Djuna Barnes, Hart Crane, Harry Crosby, Sinclair Lewis, Jean Toomer, Wallace Thurman, Eugene O'Neill and William Faulkner all battled with alcohol problems during the thirteen-year period of national prohibition.**

Fitzgerald wrote that by 1927 **'contemporaries of mine had begun to disappear into the dark maw of violence.** A classmate killed his wife and himself on Long Island, another tumbled "accidentally" from a skyscraper in Philadelphia, another purposely from a skyscraper in New York. One was killed in a speak-easy in Chicago; another was beaten to death in a speak-easy in New York and crawled home to the Princeton Club to die; still another had his skull crushed by a maniac's axe in an insane asylum where he was confined. These are not catastrophes that I went out of my way to look for—these were my friends'.⁷ The tension between violence and the pursuit of pleasure exhibited by the Lost Generation was central to Freud's work in the postwar period. In his search for the psychological causes of violent obsessions, which he termed the 'death-instinct', he turned to the traumatised soldier. Freud claimed that humans had an inherent urge 'to restore an earlier state of

things which the living entity has been obliged to abandon under the pressure of external disturbing forces'.⁸ This idea, published in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), explained the self-destructiveness of nostalgic longing as a desire to enter an idealised state that created a longing for death. Freud's theory revealed that behind destructiveness and violence was a compulsion to repeat or re-enact the moment of trauma or loss in order to gain mastery or control over that which was feared. The death-instinct was thereby a compulsion to revisit the trauma (something that had happened in the past) in order to find what had been lost (in the present), and restore it (in the future). Freud expanded his ideas over the decade to show how this idea applied to the modern subject within civilisation more generally.

Writers of the period certainly explored this modern sense of loss and trauma in their work but unlike Freud they offered few cures and little comfort. A prevalent image underpinning such spiritual desertion and geographic or historical confusion was that of the wasteland. As a symbol for modernity the wasteland was not a cultural desert but a place of chaotic and fragmented cultural detritus, where past and present merged in nauseating profusion, chaos and overabundance. The most celebrated depiction of this warped cultural fecundity appeared in T. S. Eliot's landmark poem 'The Waste Land' (1922). '[W]ithered stumps of time' depicted the spiritual and cultural chaos of a world broken by war and dehumanised by mass production, making him question what future could grow from such corruption: 'April is the cruellest month, breeding/ Lilacs out of the dead land' . . . 'What are the roots that clutch, what branches grow/ Out of this stony rubbish?'⁹ The fractured civilisation of 'The Waste Land' showed the individual searching for order and meaning in the rubble of burnt-out ideas and beliefs. In it, the modern subject was literally 'lost' in time.

Fiction written about the recent war compounded and underwrote this sense of loss. The young writer John Dos Passos fictionalised his war experiences in his first novel, *One Man's Initiation: 1917* (1920).¹⁰ The initially idealistic young hero, Martin Howe, sees the destruction of civilisation and culture first-hand, causing him to describe war-devastated France as a wasteland: '[i]t's all so like an ash-heap, a huge garbage dump of men and equipment'.¹¹ Later in the novel, the relationship of American culture with this European wasteland is discussed among the soldiers:

In exchange for all the quiet and the civilization and the beauty of ordered lives that Europeans gave up in going to the new world we

gave them opportunity to earn luxury, and, infinitely more important, freedom from the past, that gangrened ghost of the past that is killing Europe to-day with its infection of hate and greed of murder. 'America has turned traitor to all that, you see; that's the way we look at it. Now we're a military nation, an organized pirate like France and England and Germany.'¹²

The devastation of the ancient structures represented a collapse of time, a collapse of faith and the belief in lineal progress, where civilisation, the past, has become a 'gangrened ghost' that has infected the founding ideals of the nation.

The destruction of civilisation and the dehumanisation of war shaped Dos Passos' novel *Three Soldiers* (1921). The novel is divided into sections reflecting an industrial production line as the army processes the soldiers through war: 'Making the Mould'; 'The Metal Cools'; 'Machines'; 'Rust'; 'The World Outside'; 'Under the Wheels'. As in T. S. Eliot's 'The Waste Land' the lost past emerges in the palimpsest of the present: as the wounded soldier John Andrews finds himself returning to consciousness in a Renaissance Palace that has been converted into a field hospital, he observes the figures on the decorated ceiling seeming 'to wink and wriggle in shadowy mockery of the rows of prostrate bodies in the room beneath them . . . in which all the little routine of the army seemed unreal, and the wounded men discarded automatons, broken toys laid away in rows'.¹³

The wounded and broken man featured prominently in Ernest Hemingway's series of interlinked short stories, *In Our Time* (1925), which explored the death-instinct beneath everyday social relationships. Between each short story he interspersed abstract violent scenes from war or bullfighting, making death a subtext that highlights the violence of 'normalcy' within everyday life. In 'Soldier's Home' society's demand for a mythical heroism annihilates the individual, hollowing out his existence and leaving him a meaningless cipher. The impossibility of translating the immediacy of his experience in war makes Krebs, the returning hero, fabricate the past: by telling lies about his wartime experience, Hemingway wrote, 'he lost everything'.¹⁴

Idealist myths were further debunked in his celebrated war novel, *A Farewell to Arms* (1929), with the depiction of random atrocities, mass death and retreating soldiers shot by their own side and where future promise ends with a mother's death in childbirth and a stillborn baby. This bleak refutation of idealism and romanticism emerged in the style of writing as well as in the narrative. Under the tutelage of Gertrude

Stein and Ezra Pound, Hemingway utilised the continuous present and the results presented a new type of psychological realism that was indebted to pragmatic philosopher William James's idea that modern experience was a 'stream of consciousness'. Hemingway's style aimed to overthrow past literary conventions that readers had grown too familiar with and his writing attempted to reveal only the essential truth of the experienced situation and to abandon any distracting embellishments. To Hemingway, all abstractions in literature were 'romance'; decorative, fake and ultimately meaningless. As Frederick Henry states in *A Farewell to Arms*, 'Abstract words such as glory, honor, courage, or hallow were obscene beside the concrete names of villages, the numbers of roads, the names of rivers, the numbers of regiments and the dates'.¹⁵

In *The Sun Also Rises* (1926), Hemingway further exposed the fantasy of a romantic past as something sinister and destructive. When Jake Barnes discovers that his friend Robert Cohn had been reading and rereading a book called *The Purple Land* that recounts the 'splendid imaginary amorous adventures of a perfect English gentleman in an intensely romantic land, the scenery of which is very well described', Barnes calls it an 'innocent occupation' becoming sinister 'if read too late in life': 'For a man to take it at thirty-four as a guidebook to what life holds is about as safe as it would be for a man of the same age to enter Wall Street direct from a French convent, equipped with a complete set of the more practical Alger books'.¹⁶ Hemingway and the Lost Generation thereby explored more than just death, but the possibility of escape from the corruption of the old dreams – of being able to 'resume again unknowing' – without returning to the past.

For African Americans the experience of exile and return was less a choice than an imposition caused by social, economic and legal exclusion. In the opening line of his poem 'The White House' (1922) Claude McKay stressed that for the black soldier homecoming was also exile, as 'Your door is shut against my tightened face'.¹⁷ The experience, however, led many writers to explore new models of liberation and black subjectivity that had a direct influence on the emergence of the Harlem Renaissance, signified by the radical potential of violence as self-definition in McKay's poem 'If We Must Die' (1919). The migration, persecution and exile that characterised the African American experience made the definition of 'home' problematic to non-white writers. Caribbean expatriate McKay contentiously portrayed this in *Home to Harlem* (1928), where Jake, a black working-class southern war deserter, befriends Ray,

an exile of American-occupied Haiti, who experiences his alienation as a sensation of being 'in the middle of the world, suspended in space'.¹⁸ To such exiles Harlem became the ironically fleeting and subaltern home for fleeing or seeking migrants, be it from the South, Haiti, the Caribbean or Africa. For Alain Locke, however, Harlem was a 'Mecca' for the New Negro and the 'home for the Negro's "Zionism"'.¹⁹ In *The New Negro* Locke wrote that Harlem was the place where the modern American was made, a 'laboratory of a great race-welding' in which the modern human was forged.²⁰ To Locke, black exodus from the South was less exile – the African American in the South had been in exile since slavery anyway – than a 'deliberate flight not only from countryside to city, but from medieval America to modern' and a grand project of self-making.²¹

Despite this, as Jessie Fauset pointed out in her essay 'Nostalgia', for the migrant the feeling of homesickness was always a longing to be somewhere else, a permanent sense of 'spiritual nostalgia' caused by alienation and exile from equal citizenship.²² As lamentations of loss and longing, blues and folk songs gave voice to the experience of those in the margins and interstices of culture. Langston Hughes' poem 'The Weary Blues' (1923) expressed this nostalgia as a state of permanent longing that underpinned black folk expression: 'I got the Weary Blues/ And I can't be satisfied'.²³ To Harlem Renaissance writers, exiles and migrants occupied the interstices of race and gender as well as of time and space, a liminal position of 'inbetweenness' examined in the many novels of racial passing such as Nella Larsen's *Quicksand* (1928) and *Passing* (1929); Walter White's *Flight* (1926) and Jessie Fauset's *Plum Bun: A Novel Without a Moral* (1928). Novels of passing explored the migrancy of existing within and outside of two mutually exclusive worlds, at home and an outcast in both. Langston Hughes summarised the liminal world of the racial outcast in 'Cross' (1925): 'My old man died in a big fine house./ My ma died in a shack./ I wonder where I'm gonna die,/ Being neither white nor black'.

While African American writers were acutely aware that 'old' dwelled within 'new', the theme was prevalent throughout the literature of the decade. In *The Modern Temper* (1929) Krutch called the 1920s a time 'haunted by ghosts from a dead world and not yet at home in its own', a theme explored by Willa Cather in *The Professor's House* (1925). While not a war novel, the effects of the war haunt the text in the character of Tom Outland, a young inventor killed in action. Attempting to write up Tom's diaries, historian Godfrey St. Peter undergoes a psychical crisis closely resembling Freud's death-

instinct: under ‘pressures of external change’ St. Peter resists a move into his new house, but spends his time in the attic of his old house reading Outland’s diaries and conjuring memories from his earlier life. His retreat into memory makes him wish for death, a wish only just averted through a chance visit from the family seamstress. In all parts of the fragmented narrative the past and youth is being, or has been, destroyed; at the same time the story fights to put the narrative back together and ‘reconstruct’ the unknowable past. To St. Peter there is no longer any satisfactory model or vision of the future on which new structures can be based. The new houses imitate the ‘old’ but they are hollowed of meaning and history – especially disturbing to St. Peter is his daughter’s new house, called ‘Outland’, built in Norwegian manor house style out of the profits of Outland’s invention, ‘the Outland Vacuum’. Outland thus becomes a place and a non-place, a symbol of what is missing (hence ‘a vacuum’) among the modern debris of material culture.

Longing, nostalgia and self-destruction highlighted an experience of modernity that went beyond the soldier’s experience. The war and increasing pace of change had triggered a widespread feeling that modern living was an accident waiting to happen, and it was the expectancy of such a collision that propelled the tension in what has become the most celebrated novel of the period, F. Scott Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby* (1925).

F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby* (1925)

F. Scott Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby* is the story of Jay Gatsby’s attempt to win back his former girlfriend, Daisy, who has married the wealthy Tom Buchanan. Like all of Fitzgerald’s stories the characters are superficial, sometimes vapid, and usually wealthy enough to try and disconnect themselves from the harsh realities of contemporary life. Despite being celebrated for his depiction of a privileged elite and carefree flappers, Fitzgerald managed to tap the plethora of intellectual and social anxieties in *The Great Gatsby* to make it far more than just a novel of manners or high society. The key to this lies not in Jay Gatsby’s relationship with Daisy but in his relationship with the American past, which ultimately propels the novel: Gatsby’s acquisition and display of huge wealth is motivated not just by love but by the desire to remake the past, so that when the novel’s narrator Nick Carraway tells Gatsby “‘You can’t repeat the past’”, Gatsby responds incredulously, “‘Can’t repeat the past?’ . . . “Why of course you can!”²⁴

Gatsby's house and possessions illustrate his impossible desire to create a new history for himself. His books in the library are unread, and his house a bricolage of failed dreams and ambitions: a Georgian colonial mansion containing a patchwork of historical styles from Marie Antoinette music-rooms, Restoration salons, a 'Merton college library' and numerous undefined period bedrooms. The faked realism only highlights Gatsby's isolation, emphasising that he has no true home. Gatsby's identity is one-dimensional, created out of the objects that surround him – 'you resemble the advertisement of the man,' Daisy comments, drawing unintentional attention to his semiotic display and emptiness.²⁵ Gatsby's imperial quest to gain Daisy means that he must display his possessions like a 'World's Fair', but this makes him a cheap peddler of outdated ideas and attractive to the wrong type of guests who behave more like patrons of an amusement park than the elite he wishes to join.²⁶

Yet to Nick, Gatsby represented 'something gorgeous', showing 'a gift for hope, a romantic readiness such as I have never found in any other person'. Despite this, Gatsby's romanticism is also a futile desire to return to a former state that resembles Freud's death-instinct: '[Gatsby] talked a lot about the past, and I gathered that he wanted to recover something, some idea of himself perhaps, that had gone into loving Daisy. His life had been confused and disordered . . . but if he could once return to a certain starting place and go over it all slowly, he could find out what that thing was . . .'²⁷

The past that Gatsby conceals and erases in his self-formulation is working-class immigrant. As Nick pieces together the fragments of Gatsby's past – much of which he has fabricated to conceal his former class status and remake himself – he learns of Gatsby's earlier relationship with Daisy (his military uniform acted as an 'invisible cloak' that covered his true class identity) which ended while he was fighting in Europe, during which she married Tom. With a vast fortune accumulated within three years following the war (an implied result of profiteering or black-market activities) Gatsby has bought a huge mansion across the bay from Daisy where he holds lavish parties in the hope of winning her back. When Nick first encounters Gatsby he is staring at the bay that separates him from Daisy, stretching out his arms to the green light at the end of Daisy's dock in a gesture of desire and hope. Nick becomes central to their reunion as Gatsby uses Nick's acquaintance with the Buchanans to solicit a meeting between himself and Daisy. Despite this, his dream of returning to the past is shown as futile and outdated: Gatsby in fact exists between the world he creates and the world he tried to escape, between the faked happiness and hollow luxury of the sumptuous parties, filled with jazz music and actresses, and the dust-covered reality of the vast wasteland between New York and Long Island called the valley of ashes. Ultimately, Gatsby remains a class outcast (Tom calls him 'Mr Nobody from Nowhere') and his dream results in cataclysmic violence and death.

The novel implicitly examines the anomie resulting from social change following the war. Nick's decision to go East at the start of the story is

based in his own sense of restlessness after the war – an event that he calls an enjoyable ‘counter-raid’ to ‘Teutonic migration’ after which his home feels ‘like the ragged end of the universe’.²⁸ Like Gatsby, his move East becomes another counter-migration, one almost as violent as the war, and a negative mirror-image of the American Dream that propelled Western migration in search of freedom and material gain. The drunken marauding that punctuates the novel shows the nihilism beneath this reversal, an alienation that is summarised by Nick as a casual carelessness: ‘It was all very careless and confused. They were careless people, Tom and Daisy – they smashed up things and creatures and then retreated back into their money or their vast carelessness, or whatever it was that kept them together, and let other people clean up the mess they had made . . .’²⁹

This mess is rudely exposed in Fitzgerald’s portrait of the valley of ashes – ‘a fantastic farm where ashes grow like wheat into ridges and hills and grotesque gardens; where ashes take the forms of houses and chimneys and rising smoke’.³⁰ A huge waste tip, the ‘ash-grey’ workers in the valley of ashes are screened by an ‘impenetrable cloud’ over which appeared the faded ‘blue and gigantic’ eyes of Doctor T. J. Eckleburg, a massive billboard advertisement for an oculist who has long since disappeared. The obscuration of vision, meaning and truth, a central theme of the novel, is represented by these unseeing eyes that overlook the garage in which Tom’s working-class mistress, Myrtle Wilson, lives with her mechanic husband. It is here where the collision finally happens and the vital body of Myrtle Wilson is extinguished by Daisy who is driving Gatsby’s car – a hit-and-run accident that leaves her ‘violently extinguished’, her left-breast ‘swinging loose like a flap’ . . . ‘the mouth wide open and ripped a little at the corners’.³¹

Like his real-life contemporaries Henry Ford and William Randolph Hearst, the millionaire’s fantasy of perfection in the imagined past is fuelled by his own destruction of it.³² Through Gatsby and his material acquisitions, Fitzgerald shows that the dream of progress and upward mobility is connected to a deep sense of loss and destruction that is particular to Americans: cutting themselves adrift from history and smashing up idols and links with an old world has left them bereft of meaning; living, like the title of Eliot’s poem, as ‘The Hollow Men’ (1925). Rather than its story of wealth, money or love, what makes *The Great Gatsby* supremely emblematic of ‘jazz age’ psychology is the way it reveals the sublimation of social unease and anxiety necessary to enjoy the glib and fleeting pleasures associated with the pursuit of happiness and material gain. Fitzgerald’s writing hints at the class and race violence that lies beneath the American Dream of success and self-invention but remains ambivalent, torn between the dream and its destruction, just as Nick attempts to sustain the romantic ideal of a Gatsby being ‘Great’ despite his failure. Fitzgerald posits this ambivalence as the representative condition of modern America caught between progress and the past, and ends the novel with Nick’s ambivalent reflection:

Gatsby believed in the green light, the orgiastic future that year by year recedes before us. It eluded us then, but that's no matter – tomorrow we will run faster, stretch out our arms further . . . And one fine morning – So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past.³³

The New Poetry

The desire to 'make it new' while being 'borne ceaselessly back into the past' produced a characteristic tension in avant-garde poetry expressed by Gertrude Stein's 'Beginning again and again and again'.³⁴ Ezra Pound, foremost in the promotion of the artist as a cultural renovator, encouraged numerous poets and writers to adopt a minimalist directness and economy of expression that became highly visible in the literature of the 1920s. Pound believed that 'making it new' in poetry, art and music could lead to the restoration and rejuvenation of civilisation, yet while he demanded that new poetry should jettison abstractions and old habits, he also held up the best examples from the cultural past to guide the modern reader and writer, something he later called 'pragmatic aesthetics'.³⁵

Pragmatic aesthetics signified an experimentalism in art that employed methods and ideas coming out of experimental psychology, sociology, philosophy, maths, science and technology. New ideas about the composition of organic structures and their relationship with the perceiving subject stimulated writers to new forms of expression that broke with tradition.³⁶ Like Pound, Gertrude Stein encouraged writers to take up the challenge of the 'new realism' that had emerged from the scientist's observations. Stein's work challenged lineal narratives of historical progress by positing that human experience was a series of perceptions in the continuous present that were relative and transitional. Her *Making of Americans* (1925) showed, however, that within the continuous present there was always a past: 'The old people in a new world, the new people made out of the old, that is the story that I mean to tell, for that is what really is and what I really know'.³⁷ This was confirmed in her essay 'Composition as Explanation' (1926) where repeating the past ('Beginning again and again and again') creates something new. To Stein, this aesthetic was particularly appropriate to America because migration and exile had meant that Americans had to continually reinvent themselves: 'The nature in every one is always coming out of them from their beginning to their ending by the repeating always in them, by the repeating always coming out of them'.³⁸

Eliot also explained this dynamic between past and present as a new temporal order, where the past was ‘altered by the present as much as the present is directed by the past’.³⁹ The poet, he claimed, ‘is not likely to know what is to be done unless he lives in what is not merely the present, but the present moment of the past, unless he is conscious, not of what is dead, but of what is already living’.⁴⁰ Such ideas show that *Gatsby’s* frustratingly impossible dream of repeating or altering the past made him less a symbol of romantic loss than of supreme American modernity.

The modification of the past in the present offered an exciting promise to young writers who were fascinated with the new knowledge of objects offered them by science and psychology. Marianne Moore’s *Observations* (1924) explored the natural world with the precision of a naturalist, botanist or archaeologist – ‘Contractility,’ she said of the snail ‘is a virtue’.⁴¹ To these poets, objects needed no embellishment, ornamentation or Godlike creator to make them wondrous. Similarly, William Carlos Williams and Archibald MacLeish saw Einstein’s theory of relativity as liberation from the past and inspiration for new poetic expression. In Williams’ poem ‘St. Francis Einstein of the Daffodils’ (1921), Einstein was the bringer of spring, the liberator from ‘oldfashioned knowledge’.⁴² Like Pound, Williams eschewed literary abstraction for concrete expression; using mechanisation as a model for his literary efficiency he argued in 1921 that writers should have the ‘inventive intelligence of our engineers’ and later explained the poem as a ‘machine made of words’.⁴³ His joy in the scientific understanding of the unadorned object is famously expressed in ‘The Red Wheelbarrow’ from *Spring and All* (1923), a collection that jettisoned archaism and literary convention. ‘The rose is obsolete,’ he stated at the start of ‘The Rose’, (echoing Gertrude Stein’s ‘Rose is a rose is a rose’) yet it could be revived through geometric rather than romantic appreciation. MacLeish’s long poem ‘Einstein’ (1926) also illustrated the vast potential of a world seen anew, yet hinted at the vertiginous psychological shift that the scientist’s work entailed: ‘Still he stands/ Watching the vortex widen and involve/ In swirling dissolution the whole earth/ And circle through the skies till swaying time/ Collapses, crumpling into dark the stars,/ And motion ceases and the sifting world/ Opens beneath’.⁴⁴ Williams also saw the knowledge of relativity as painful moments of epiphany ‘that somehow seems to destroy us’ and leaves ‘no one to drive the car’ (‘To Elsie’).⁴⁵

While science left in its wake a moral relativism and spiritual disorder that threatened civilisation, Wallace Stevens showed that the

new structural understanding offered its own fragile order that could be harmonious. His first collection, *Harmonium* (1923), was particularly concerned with ways of portraying the impact of this shifting order on the structure and perception of reality. Each of the five sections of 'Sea Surface Full of Clouds' begins with 'In that November off Tehuantepec' and offers a repetition with variation of the section before it – each a description as 'real' as the other while remaining different, showing how the perceiving subject structures external reality. This kaleidoscopic and shifting heterogeneity was further underscored in 'Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird' that illustrated the impossibility of a single way of knowing.

These new aesthetics enabled the defamiliarisation of common objects and thoughts in order to revivify the everyday experience of modern machine culture and mass production. The aesthetics of the machine age, Pound insisted, should at least meet the profound transformations that the sciences had revealed. To Pound, observing the machine allowed the artist to study form with a detachment that enabled a radical departure from outmoded forms of expression associated with pre-formulated emotional responses. Henry Ford's workshop, he thereby argued, had produced a new musical rhythm and pace to life that had been incorporated in the work of his friend and composer Antheil.⁴⁶

Few poets could detach themselves from an emotional response to the machine in the way that Pound wished, however.⁴⁷ The most ambitious attempt to construct poetry by surrendering to urban experience or the 'jazz rhythm' of the city was visible in Hart Crane's *The Bridge* (1930). In the metaphor of the bridge Crane celebrated the contemporary experience as a connection between old and new, celebrating American modernity as a union, rather than disjuncture, of machine culture and the pioneer past. Williams also attempted to depict this particularly American experience in his iconoclastic prose works *The Great American Novel* (1923) and *In the American Grain* (1925).

These poets found new rhythms not in the machine but in the mix of folk or working-class culture and the urban or everyday experience. Harlem provided the best example of this productive synthesis between old and new, man and machine. The rhythm of Harlem nightlife and music inspired Langston Hughes, who drew on blues songs and jazz music in an innovative mix of modern music, vernacular sounds and machine culture in *The Weary Blues* (1926) and *Fine Clothes to the Jew* (1927). To Hughes this was the beat of the new

America: 'jazz to me is one of the inherent expressions of Negro life in America: the eternal tom-tom beating in the Negro soul – the tom-tom of revolt against weariness in a white world, a world of subway trains, and work, work, work; the tom-tom of joy and laughter, and pain swallowed in a smile'.⁴⁸

Drama: The Mind and the Machine

The psychological effects of the man-made world on the individual were key themes explored in new and experimental drama. As one observer noted, new ideas about the relationship between the individual and the world being developed in the sciences emerged in drama: 'Just as in all of the other arts, the material of the theatre has been affected thoroughly by modern scientific thinking. It has been influenced by all the "ologies and isms" – neurology, psychology, pathology – by free, independent, daring thinking'.⁴⁹ While it was correct to note a vibrant experimentalism that engaged with ideas coming out of the sciences, the influence of European experiments in drama, most notably German expressionism, was sometimes unacknowledged. John Dos Passos, however, whose expressionist play *The Garbage Man* (1925) was being produced in the same year his experimental novel *Manhattan Transfer* was published, wrote about the impact of European modernism on the Americans in postwar Paris.⁵⁰ One result of this ferment between native and foreign influences alongside contemporary artistic and scientific theories was that modern American theatre started to develop a unique identity that would make American drama internationally ascendant.

The growth of independent theatre groups and 'little theatre' in the previous decade provided the impetus for experiments that were shocking to conventional audiences in the 1920s. Alternative theatre provided outlets for young, female and immigrant writers more easily than the mainstream commercial theatre. In these alternative and independent theatre groups (which included the Provincetown Players, the Washington Square Players, the Neighborhood Playhouse, various African American community theatres and university Laboratory Theatres) the impact of the war, the Russian Revolution, Freud and feminism were expressed in experiments with theatrical space, time, dialogue, character, subject and setting that changed the landscape of American drama.⁵¹ Out of these groups emerged the foremost writers of the decade, among whom Eugene O'Neill became the most celebrated.

Eugene O'Neill

Eugene O'Neill's work over the 1920s was continually experimental and expressed the alienation of modern culture and the anxieties over gender, race and class that dominated American social thought. O'Neill first came to popular notice with *The Emperor Jones* (1920), an expressionist play about the rise of a working-class African American murderer to totalitarian leadership on a West Indian island and his subsequent psychological collapse and self-annihilation.⁵² The play opened in November 1920, just three months after Marcus Garvey's First International Convention of the Negro Peoples of the World in New York, and can thus be seen as a reflection on the 'rising tide' of black self-determination and declining European empires, as well as the rising imperialism of the United States in the Caribbean (having invaded Haiti in 1915). Despite this, O'Neill saw Brutus Jones as a universal or paradigmatic figure, who illustrated that a material rise became also an atavistic descent, showing the rapidity with which the 'civilised' man returned to savagery – something that Jung and Freud's theories of mankind's compulsion towards racial primitivism and violence confirmed at the time. Unusual though this plot was for conventional theatre, the style was even more revolutionary – the setting of expressionist silhouettes and silent shadowy figures reflects Jones' emotional hysteria as he is haunted by the past, accompanied by incessant drumbeats that increase in tempo and intensity until the protagonist dies.

Expressionism intended to depict the nightmare of human existence through sparse and distorted scenery, automaton 'everyman' characters and themes of the senseless mechanised horror of industrial society. Most central to the expressionist play, however, was the exploration and dramatisation of inner states of being that recent psychoanalytic studies had revealed. *The Emperor Jones* thus explored Jung's idea of a collective racial unconscious in the individual mind of a man haunted by his origins.⁵³ O'Neill's second expressionist play, *The Hairy Ape* (1922), explored this further through the inability of 'Yank', a seaman, to connect with the world around him. Yank is only happy when he is part of the machine – literally feeding coal into the engine of a cruise steamer that carries the wealthy leisured classes above his head. Once his alienation is made apparent to him, his search for a place in society propels him towards death. The play ends when Yank, entering into the gorilla cage in Central Park Zoo to return to his 'family', is crushed by a gorilla, his alienation compounded as he asks 'Where do I fit in?'

O'Neill continued to explore these ideas of alienation and estrangement using controversial themes and expressionist stage techniques to explore every religious and social taboo: in *Desire Under the Elms* (1924) it was greed, sex, incest and infanticide; in *All God's Chillun' Got Wings* (1924) interracial marriage, miscegenation and sexual slavery; in *The Great God Brown* (1926) business materialism and the death of art and spirituality; in the Pulitzer prize-winning *Strange Interlude* (1928), a

six-hour play, he explored promiscuity and eugenic abortion. Although he downplayed the importance of Freud to his work O'Neill, along with many of his contemporaries, was certainly familiar with Freud's *Totem and Taboo* and *The Pleasure Principle* as well as Jung's *Psychology of the Unconscious*.⁵⁴

O'Neill's plays captured the nation's engagement and fascination with Freudian ideas to an unprecedented extent. In his expressionistic and psychoanalytic explorations of religion, sex, materialism and race, he dramatised key issues of the 1920s. His use of masks gave dramatic illustration of personality complexes and types that had entered into current discourse and illustrated the battle between the surface image and the hidden subconscious. His characters often spoke an inner monologue alongside their 'public' dialogue, illustrating the 'inner reality' of the battle between the individual and society alongside the conscious and subconscious drives that motivated their actions. By 1927 O'Neill was himself undergoing psychoanalytic therapy for his alcoholism, and his plays continued to express his search for dramatic devices 'to penetrate the conscious surface of the personality'.⁵⁵

Psychoanalysis was a particularly apt device for the dramatist as it illustrated not just the tensions experienced by the individual in society, but those between the past and the future in which the present was a chaotic 'jungle' of collective memory. Like the psychoanalyst who attempted to get to the bottom of present psychopathic behaviours by examining the patient's past, O'Neill's play *Strange Interlude* exposed the way that past inheritances shaped subsequent events. As the central protagonist, Nina, states in the play: 'The only living life is in the past and future – the present is an interlude – strange interlude in which we call on past and future to bear witness we are living!'⁵⁶

The nihilism of commercial modern culture also appeared in O'Neill's plays. The far less successful *Marco Millions* (1928) presented a satire of Marco Polo as a thirteenth-century commercial traveller, a mercenary, self-centred historical 'Babbitt' who reflected the soullessness of modern business America. By 1929 O'Neill embarked further on a theme that would 'dig at the roots of the sickness of today as I feel it – the death of an old God and the failure of science and materialism to give any satisfactory new one for the surviving religious instinct to find a meaning for life in, and to comfort its fear of death with'.⁵⁷ The subsequent play *Dynamo* (1929) follows the downward trajectory of Reuben, a fundamentalist preacher's son, who renounces his father's faith, rapes and kills his girlfriend, and replaces her with a womb-shaped humming dynamo, by which he is electrocuted as he grasps the machine he calls 'mother'. As Reuben renounces his faith he takes to studying science: 'books on astronomy, biology and physics and chemistry and evolution. What the fool preachers call God is in electricity somewhere'.⁵⁸ Although the play was not successful it dramatised the tension between faith and the worship of science that had been epitomised in the Scopes trial and Henry Adams' discussion of 'The Dynamo and the Virgin': 'the dynamo became a symbol of infinity.

As he grew accustomed to the great gallery of machines, he began to feel the forty-foot dynamos as a moral force, much as the early Christians felt the Cross . . . Before the end, one began to pray to it'.⁵⁹ O'Neill's play illustrated the calamitous outcome of this loss of faith in the modern world.



Figure 1.1 Paul Robeson in the film of Eugene O'Neill's *The Emperor Jones*, 1933 (© United Artists/The Kobal Collection).

Numerous other dramatists rebelled from the realistic dramaturgy of the day in their attempts to express modern alienation as a psychotic withdrawal from 'civilised' values in a dehumanising machine-made culture.⁶⁰ Elmer Rice's *The Adding Machine* (1923) opened twelve months after O'Neill's *The Hairy Ape* and incorporated similar expressionist-inspired techniques to illustrate the individual as a cipher or cog in the modern industrial machine. In the strikingly absurd play the central character, Mr. Zero, kills his boss when he replaces him with an adding machine. The play follows his trial, execution, and his after-life, where he fails to take up the emancipation he is offered, choosing instead to operate another adding machine. After twenty-five years operating the machine Zero is eventually 'sent back' to become a baby again, only to become another unwitting cog in the machine. Zero's self-subordination turns him into a waste product of the machine-age; the lieutenant who is sending him back to his 'sunless groove' declares: 'You're a failure, Zero, a failure. A waste product. A slave to a contraption of steel and iron . . . Back you go – back to your sunless groove – the ready prey of the first jingo or demagogue or political adventurer who takes the trouble to play upon your ignorance and credulity and provincialism'.⁶¹

Rice further explored the individual trapped in the mechanistic world in his next play, *The Subway* (1929), which dramatised the downward trajectory of a filing clerk, Sophie Smith, who is seduced by the businessman Eugene Landray. Eugene describes his feelings for the city as a new form of sexual passion: 'It fills me . . . obsesses me . . . The city . . . the city . . . steel and concrete . . . industrialism, rearing its towers arrogantly to the skies . . . Higher and higher . . . deeper and deeper . . . Up and up'.⁶² Finding herself with an illegitimate pregnancy, Sophie commits suicide by jumping in front of the subway train that has become symbolic of her trapped existence.

The theme of the woman trapped by her biological role in a mechanistic environment to which she is unable to adapt was pursued in Sophie Treadwell's *Machinal* (1928) – based on the infamous Judd Gray/Ruth Snyder murder case that Treadwell had covered as a journalist. (The same murder plot was later to provide the story for James M. Cain's serialised novel *Double Indemnity*.) Treadwell sympathetically depicted the killer as an 'everywoman' trapped within patriarchal capitalism, highlighted by cage-like stage settings and the continual presence of offstage noises such as adding machines, telegraph bells, airplanes, radios, buzzers and other mechanical instruments. In the final scene the machinery has finally triumphed and she is executed in

an electric chair, a scene gruesomely paralleling the real-life execution of Snyder that was secretly photographed and splashed across the daily news the following day.

The mechanisation of the individual within the contemporary urban scene again appeared in Edward Faragoh's *Pinwheel* (1927), which he called 'a rapid patterned dance of multitudes to the music of a gigantic hurdy-gurdy of steel and concrete'.⁶³ The play explored the mechanised work and leisure of the female office worker, 'The Jane', whose office is dominated by an enormous typewriter like the oversized adding machine in Rice's play. The play sees 'the Jane' pursued by men and going on dates to the dance hall and the movies, and features an 'orgiastic' shopping spree and a Coney Island debauch – similarities that it shared with the expressionistic movies *Sunrise* (1927) and *The Crowd* (1928).⁶⁴

As expressionist cinema reached its height with the American release of Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* in 1927, politicised expressionist dramas continued to appear on the stage. The e. e. cummings play *Him* (1927) began with an anaesthetised pregnant woman on a table whose unconscious thoughts become objectified in the surreal performance that unfolds. Michael Gold's *Hoboken Blues* (1928) demanded an all-black cast (with white characters played using white masks) with reality depicted through the mind of the unemployed Negro Sam Pickens, suggesting a 'battle of jungle and modern industrialism'.⁶⁵ Similar political attacks on capitalism were *The Belt* (1927) by Paul Sifton and John Dos Passos and Upton Sinclair's *Singing Jailbirds* (1928). In *The Belt* the workers of an automobile plant revolt and destroy the assembly line when Old Man, a Henry Ford figure, tries to shut down the factory. The play depicted the Ford factory process with a procession of automobile frames moving slowly across the stage as men worked 'monotonously' around it.⁶⁶ By the end of the 1920s, experimental drama had had a huge impact on theatre and performance, influencing Broadway productions, trends in crime fiction and film noir, works produced in the 1930s by Group Theatre and the Federal Theater Project and drama of the forties and fifties by those such as Arthur Miller and Edward Albee.⁶⁷ Although the height of the expressionist trend only lasted until the end of the decade (and the majority of plays were more traditional in theme and setting) the themes of the expressionist play tapped the anxieties of the lost generation concerning estrangement and alienation in capitalist mass culture.

The Novel and Mass Culture

Consumer capitalism's effect on human behaviour was central to Theodore Dreiser's *An American Tragedy* (1925). Dreiser depicted the pathological impact of the new materialism through the moral descent of Clyde Griffiths, who, having rejected his parents' evangelical and repressive lifestyles, has no moral map to follow. His pursuit of pleasure and lust for social status turns him sociopathic and his attempt to improve his lot leads only to the execution chamber. The pursuit of 'normalcy' and success, Dreiser thus implied, encouraged a greedy individualism that led to modern neuroses and compulsions.

The dehumanising impact of mass production, standardisation and psychological repressions in small-town America came under satiric critique in Sinclair Lewis's *Main Street* (1920). Central protagonist Carol Kennicott observes 'an unimaginatively standardised background, a sluggishness of speech and manners, a rigid ruling of the spirit by the desire to appear respectable'.⁶⁸ To Carol, the townsfolk are: 'A savorless people, gulping tasteless food, and sitting afterward, coatless and thoughtless, in rocking-chairs prickly with inane decorations, listening to mechanical music, saying mechanical things about the excellence of Ford automobiles, and viewing themselves as the greatest race in the world'.⁶⁹

American 'normalcy' also came under attack in Sinclair Lewis's story of passive consumerism in *Babbitt* (1922), a book that displayed a deep disdain for the commodity fetishism and materialism of the era that had turned culture into an adornment and advertisement for capitalist values. In the opening chapter the city of Zenith is described as a streamlined machine: the skyscrapers are towers of steel, as sturdy as silver rods, a car moves over the concrete bridge noiselessly and as the train runs past 'twenty lines of polished steel leaped into the glare'.⁷⁰

In contrast to this smoothly running productive machine, the sleeping Babbitt is described as babyish and flabby, an archetypal consumer. Not a loner or alienated outsider, however, Babbitt is Mr Average. A fictional parallel to the sociological description of life in *Middletown* (1929), Lewis charts Babbitt's mundane daily activities to highlight how much of his life is structured by the material objects he has purchased. The alarm clock that wakes him is 'the best of nationally advertised and quantitatively produced alarm-clocks' and just seeing it in the morning makes him feel proud and socially 'creditable'. The objects surrounding him perform a semiotic function, symbolising dreams and aspirations that are never fulfilled: his camping blanket 'suggests'

freedom and heroism to him, although he bought it for a camping trip that never happened. Babbitt's 'wasteland' is created by the abundance of consumer goods surrounding him out of which he constructs meaning – the objects take on a life and meaning of their own and formulate a narrative of display (just as Jay Gatsby's house and possessions 'narrate' him). In the bathroom, for example, 'above the set bowl was a sensational exhibit of tooth-brush holder, shaving brush holder, soap-dish, sponge dish and medicine cabinet, so glittering, so ingenious that they resembled an electrical instrument board'.⁷¹

The objects satisfy Babbitt not to use but to see, as displays of his success, modernity and efficiency. Despite this, Babbitt isn't content. By making modern appliances his 'God', Babbitt experiences a constant feeling of undefined dissatisfaction. Lewis showed that because Babbitt allowed objects to replace authentic feelings he also experienced displacement and homelessness: 'there was but one thing wrong with the Babbitt house: It was not a home'.⁷² Through *Babbitt* Lewis criticised consumer democracy as proto-fascist, alienating and dehumanising – showing that it was not just workers on the production line who experienced anomie. As one critic noted in 1928,

Babbitt, as a representative man, is possible only in America. His gestures, his foibles, his words and phrases, are explained by the country where millions of human beings are cut on the same pattern, made in series like automobiles or harvesters, because it cannot be done otherwise. Quantity versus quality, the masses against the individual, – this is the great American problem and George Babbitt is the half-sarcastic, half-tragic example of it. He is conformism incarnate.⁷³

Average Americans enjoyed Lewis's portrait and the huge popularity of the book among the middle classes at the time led 'Babbitt' to become a dictionary definition of shallow consumerism and pompous middle-class narrow-mindedness.

Southern Renaissance

Two major literary phenomena of the decade also grew out of the changes experienced as a result of the rapid industrialisation that had been accelerated by wartime production: **the Southern Renaissance and the Harlem Renaissance.**

A cultural renaissance in the South did not appear possible to H. L. Mencken in 1917, who likened the South to a cultural wasteland or

desert. In his famous essay 'The Sahara of the Bozart' (1917), Mencken depicted the South as culturally retarded, a place far more sterile and degenerate than anything T. S. Eliot had yet to imagine: 'It is, indeed, amazing to contemplate so vast a vacuity . . . It would be impossible in all history to match so complete a drying-up of a civilization'.⁷⁴ To Mencken the South was not just un-modern but anti-modern, a place where religious fundamentalism and ignorance reigned, of which the Ku Klux Klan was a prime example. The imposition of crass materialism from the North had only exacerbated things: 'the liberated lower orders of whites have borrowed the worst commercial boulderism of the Yankee and superimposed it upon a culture that, at bottom, is but little removed from savagery'.⁷⁵ As the Scopes trial was to confirm, the South appeared a place that time and progress had forgotten.

That this barren, infertile wasteland would sustain some of the best writers of the decade had not been apparent to Mencken, yet after the war a flowering of southern literary magazines provided the stimulus for new cultural production. Magazines such as the *Double Dealer*, *The Reviewer* and *The Fugitive* became publishing outlets for young, innovative writers.⁷⁶ *The Fugitive* (1922–5), founded by John Crowe Ransom at Vanderbilt University, became the most famous of these, publishing verse and critical pieces by young southern writers who were later to become known as 'the Southern Agrarians'; Ransom, Allen Tate, Robert Penn Warren and Donald Davidson. These writers also saw themselves as exiles; the *Fugitive*, claimed Allen Tate, was 'a Poet: the Wanderer, . . . the Outcast'.⁷⁷ To these writers, industrialism and 'progress' imposed an alien and abstracted consumerist culture that was spiritually sterile and fragmenting; their criticism dismissed modern capitalist progress as a chimera that offered the South no remedies or security, no culture and no faith.⁷⁸

As in 'The Waste Land', Allen Tate's poetry mourned the loss of God in this mechanically produced civilisation, where the machine was a figureless 'mathematical shroud' that prevented a genuine capacity for faith and belief. Like Eliot, Tate also employed ancient culture to show the decline into modernity, using Homer and Virgil as critics of twentieth-century culture in comparisons with the cheapening of mass-produced culture, where 'the Parthenon/ In Tennessee stucco, [was] art for the sake of death'.⁷⁹ Although the agrarians looked backwards to the pre-industrial South, as Tate's poetry showed, their aesthetic links were to modernist or European traditions.⁸⁰ Tate wrote that rather than resurrecting the past, 'my attempt is to see the present from the past, yet remain immersed in the present and committed

to it'.⁸¹ Rather than a return to the past, the poets and writers of the Southern Renaissance set about to consciously forge a 'new' southern tradition that would represent more accurately the condition of the South as the 'lost' country within a country.

Rediscovering that lost country led to a resurgence of poetry, prose and non-fiction that resurrected southern figures or considered matters central to the agrarian mission: as well as collections of poems these included Allen Tate's biographies of Stonewall Jackson (1928) and Jefferson Davis (1929), Warren's iconoclastic *John Brown* (1929) and Ransom's dismissal of science and defence of fundamentalism in *God without Thunder: An Unorthodox Defence of Orthodoxy* (1930).⁸² Their 'radical conservatism' reached its apotheosis in the 1930 publication of *I'll Take My Stand*, a collection of essays from twelve contributors from different disciplines – 'which vigorously stated their preference for the social models of the white aristocratic planter of the Old South or the self-sufficient white yeoman farmer over the city-bound, clock-watching George Babbitts of the 1920s'.⁸³ *I'll Take My Stand* was the battle-cry of revisionist writers in search of a harmonious system, a white male vision of an organic South whose shared tradition depended on the exclusion of African American and female.

By re-commanding history the agrarians hoped to heal past wounds and restore masculinity to the Southern landowner, eviscerated by the dominance of northern financial and economic systems. The impact of World War I caused southern writers to revisit the losses of the Civil War, where the problem of modernity, the fracturing of culture and the imposition of a northern version of national history had begun. Loss of innocence, traditions and heroic causes inflected the fugitive's poems. Yet, in trying to capture the heroic past at the moment of its loss, the southern writer revisited the painful events only to find he was unable to restore or change the past. The poet was thus forced into a frustrating repetition of loss and impotency. Tate's 'Ode to the Confederate Dead' (first version written in 1926) illustrated such stasis, charting less a return to the past than a frustrating loss whereby the past cannot be re-experienced in the present.⁸⁴ The writing of the agrarians was nearly always retrospective, exploring the decomposition or deconstruction of the past as it emerged in the present,⁸⁵ an experience that Tate referred to as the 'cut-off-ness of the "modern intellectual man" from the world'.⁸⁶

Other southern writers also experienced this 'cut-off-ness' from the past as a loss or absence that fuelled their search for 'home' and connected them, despite their regional focus, to the modernism of the

lost generation. Thomas Wolfe's epigraph in *Look Homeward Angel* (1929) described birth itself as an exile and the earth as an 'unspeakable and incommunicable' prison, lamenting 'O Waste of loss, in the hot mazes, lost, among bright stars on this most unwearied unbrilliant cinder, lost! Remembering speechlessly we seek the great forgotten language, the lost lane-end into heaven, a stone, a leaf, an unfound door'. Wolfe's autobiographical essay 'God's Lonely Man' confirmed his belief that such isolation and atomisation was the universal human condition.

Both southern and modernist, William Faulkner wrote in his journal about this sense of dislocation on returning to the South at the end of the war: 'When the war was over – the other war – William Faulkner went back to Oxford, Mississippi . . . Now he was home again and not at home, or at least not able to accept the postwar world . . .'.⁸⁷ To Faulkner the South was haunted by the ever present but inaccessible and fragmented past that can only be expressed (and then inadequately so) through fragmented and elliptical narratives. His first novel, *Soldiers' Pay* (1926), narrated the homecoming of a disfigured aviator who has returned home to die. Donald Mahon returns changed to a changed world, where his scar marks him as an outsider. As Richard Gray has noted, the theme of 'the absent centre or central figure who is both there and not there' was to become a trademark of Faulkner's later work.⁸⁸

In *Sartoris* (1929) Faulkner depicted the destructiveness of the past in the present as he juxtaposed the Sartoris family's experience of the Civil War with the recent World War. The effect of this past's presence is always destruction and decline. As the young aviator Bayard Sartoris returns to the family at the end of World War I, bereaved and guilty at the death of his twin brother in an air battle, legendary stories about Bayard's Confederate grandfather, Colonel John Sartoris, continue to circulate around him. These are filled with chivalry, bravery and heroism, yet Bayard cannot connect these stories to his present or to the memories of the war that destroyed his brother. Bayard manifests Freud's death-instinct in his persistent reckless driving and self-destructiveness, eventually dying, like his twin, in a plane crash. Like Krebs in Hemingway's 'Soldiers Home', Bayard cannot adapt to the changes following the war and Faulkner connects his self-destructiveness and family decay to the violent fracture of the southern past that re-emerges within industrial modernity.

The experience of time and memory as loss or confusion was central to Faulkner's other novel of 1929, *The Sound and the Fury*, in which he collapsed time around a non-linear narrative of Candace Compson's

absence in the lives of four different narrators. The impossibility of achieving or even aiming for a single ideal or vision is illustrated through the multiple perspectives of the narrators, who all experience individual versions of the loss of Caddy. Just as the autistic Benjy 'could not remember his sister but only the loss of her', Faulkner did not aim to represent a stable past, only the loss of it – the results of such a loss.⁸⁹

Rather than resort to nostalgia, however, the 'stable past' itself is shown as an unsustainable illusion. On the day of his suicide Caddy's elder brother Quentin (the second narrator) begins by destroying his watch while he remembers his father's words as he hands him the heirloom:

I give it to you not that you may remember time, but that you might forget it now and then for a moment and not spend all your breath trying to conquer it. Because no battle is ever won he said. They are not even fought. The field only reveals to man his own folly and despair, and victory is an illusion of philosophers and fools.⁹⁰

In this sentence Quentin's father summarises the nihilism that propels his son towards death: the loss of the battle, the Old South, lineal time and Caddy's virginity are not even losses but illusions of something whole that never was. Like Henry Adams, whose encounter with modernity convinced him that 'the sequence of men led to nothing and that the sequence of their society could lead no further, while the mere sequence of time was artificial, and the sequence of thought was chaos', Quentin Compson's fragmented watch, like the fragmented narrative that depicted it, symbolised the destruction of the old order replaced with an arrangement of events ultimately 'signifying nothing'.⁹¹

'Other' Renaissances

While the agrarians and Caddy Compson's brothers propelled a vision of the lost South as a fantasy of masculine order and white control, women and non-white writers found Mencken's desert to be a fruitful terrain, one that was also gaining a nationwide audience. Southern women writers achieved unprecedented popularity in this period with their portraits of overlooked or 'lost' Americans who existed on the margins of progressive urban society, examining rural existence with sociological realism. These stories gave a relenting image of the grinding nature of poverty in the South that contrasted with 'local color'

fiction or idealistic notions of the rural past promulgated by some agrarian visions. Edith Summers Kelley's *Weeds* (1922) focused on the grim life of a sharecropper's daughter as she became resigned to the monotony and hopelessness of rural poverty, while Elizabeth Madox Roberts' *The Time of Man* (1926) depicted with sociological realism a woman's struggle for self-definition while trapped in a cycle of poverty and childbearing within a Kentucky farming community.

Although these mostly upper- or middle-class southern writers found a feminist subtext in poor white female lives, white writers also found a literary harvest in writing about poor black existence. At times this fascination barely differed from the slumming of northern white Harlemites, or writers who used experimentalism to explore the edges of their subconscious revulsion and salacious fascination with 'savagery' and primitivism.⁹² Elizabeth Madox Roberts' *My Heart and Flesh* (1927), for example, showed the 'hell' of a young white woman's encounter with savagery when she discovers that, as a result of her father's miscegenation, she has two sexually incontinent mulatto half-sisters and a half-witted brother; her subsequent identity crisis leads to a breakdown and final retreat into the purity of the mountains.

One southern plantation owner, however, received unusual approval from the black intelligentsia with her ethnographical portraits and stories that were written using southern speech forms or Gullah, a Creole dialect that combined English with a variety of West African dialects. Julia Peterkin wrote from observation in the fields and cabins of Lang Syne, the cotton plantation she owned with her husband in South Carolina and her books *Green Thursday* (1924) and *Black April* (1927) were highly praised by champions of the New Negro movement Alain Locke, W. E. B. Du Bois, James Weldon Johnson, Paul Robeson, Langston Hughes and Walter White. Although modernists H. L. Mencken and Carl Sandburg promoted her, genteel white southerners were outraged by her work and she lived in fear of Klan reprisals. Her novel *Scarlet Sister Mary* (a comedic take on the Puritan morality that was the subject of Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*) depicted a plantation harlot who has nine children by nine different fathers. Although banned for obscenity in parts of the South it won a Pulitzer Prize in 1929. While Peterkin upset the southern gentry, her work achieved widespread popularity because of its unusual sensitivity to black speech patterns and observation of plantation life, goals that were in keeping with black intellectual goals to dignify the oral traditions of the black past.

Like Peterkin, white male writers also found rejuvenation for their aesthetic by writing 'blackface': DuBose Heyward depicted life in Charleston's black slums in his *Porgy* (1925), the story of a crippled beggar who falls in love with the drug addict Bess (later adapted into George Gershwin's opera *Porgy and Bess* in 1935); Roark Bradford wrote *Ol Man Adam an His Chillun* (1928), a collection of stories in black folklore style. Waldo Frank's experimental *Holiday* (1923), depicting the events of one day that lead to a lynching, was written from an African American perspective (and, indeed, Frank himself 'passed' for black when he travelled South with Jean Toomer to research the novel). Thomas S. Stribling explored the social and political issues of the South in his iconoclastic socio-journalistic works that were castigated by the Southern Agrarians; his *Birthright* (1922) – later adapted into a silent film by black film director Oscar Micheaux in 1924 – provided a damning critique of segregation and racial hierarchies as encountered by a Harvard-educated mulatto returning 'home' to the South.⁹³ Howard W. Odum, founder of the Department of Sociology at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 1920, also employed the voice of a black migrant worker in his fictionalised narrative *Rainbow Round My Shoulder: The Blue Trail of Black Ulysses* (1928).⁹⁴

More than just minstrelsy or entertainment, however, white writers' fascination with black life in the South offered them an alternative vision to the cultural degeneracy associated with Western civilisation that the war had revealed. In *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1929), Freud noted a common perception that 'what we call our civilization is largely responsible for our misery, and that we should be much happier if we gave it up and returned to primitive conditions'.⁹⁵ In folk culture, writers saw a way to reject the false values of alienated industrial capitalism as well as the Puritan past and used 'pre-civilised' lifestyles to denote the restoration of spirituality that had been lost in modern culture. As a celebratory alternative to the decline or corruption of Western culture, 'primitivism' seemed a way to transform culture into something better and restore the authenticity that mass production had taken away.⁹⁶

The desire to protect and document an 'authentic' folk culture existing outside of mass-produced culture led to increasing numbers of fictional productions that used fieldwork and sociological observations in an attempt to portray an authentic southern culture. A rage for collecting and collating the southern past resulted in numerous folk and sociological studies that examined the forgotten,

ephemeral, oral or overlooked aspects of southern culture, many of which are now seen as products not of the Southern Renaissance but of the New Negro or Harlem Renaissance. While on the surface it seemed that the Harlem Renaissance was the mirror opposite of the Southern Renaissance – based in the North and associated with the urban, the modern and the future rather than the past – the interest in southern folk culture and the re-evaluation of black contributions to American cultural life were central to the development of the literature of the Harlem Renaissance. Indeed, many of the writers, artists and musicians who fuelled the New Negro movement were part of the huge migration of black Americans from the South who fused folk knowledge and traditional artistic practices with their experience of industrial culture in the North. To Houston A. Baker it is this very fusion that created and defined American literary modernism.⁹⁷ Jean Toomer's *Cane* (1923) provided a pivotal representation of this complex hybrid aesthetic with its fusion of multiple genres, northern and southern intersections, transgressive racial politics and incorporation of blues and folksong within the fragmentary narratives.

Jean Toomer, *Cane* (1923)

To Waldo Frank, *Cane* translated the essence of the South into poetic form, capturing a primitive beauty and the dying folk-spirit of rural life at threat from industrial encroachment and northern progress.⁹⁸ At the same time Toomer became the flagship writer of Harlem's New Negro Movement, 'a bright morning star of a new day' in literature.⁹⁹ Toomer, however, defied any singular categorisation – not only had he grown up comfortably in the North, he later refuted racial classifications, and *Cane* was to be his only recognised literary achievement.

Born in Washington DC in 1894, Toomer was raised by his grandfather, P. B. S. Pinchback, a fair-skinned reconstruction-era politician who became the first US state governor of African American heritage. Toomer studied peripatetically in Wisconsin, Massachusetts, Chicago and New York before settling in Greenwich Village in 1919. In 1921 he accepted a position as a substitute teacher at a black school in rural Georgia. His experience of northern city life at the height of the race riots along with his encounter – as an educated, light-skinned African American – with rural poverty, folk song, segregation and lynching in the South, provided the material and impetus for what would become one of the Harlem Renaissance's most experimental texts: *Cane*.

Cane gathered together a set of connected writings that Toomer had been composing for several years since his experience in rural Georgia; his immersion in the South unleashed a sense of spiritual and artistic awakening that he had not found in his academic studies or intellectual circles. To Toomer, 'The folk-spirit was walking in to die on the modern desert. That spirit was so beautiful. Its death was tragic'.¹⁰⁰ Despite this, his South is not a simple place of natural harmony. Although Toomer saw a spiritual identity in Georgia that he connected to natural rhythms and expression, he also explored a painful repression and biological determinism behind the structures of an exploitative racial and gender economy. In 'Karintha' a beautiful girl's soul is attenuated by premature sexuality, which has 'ripened too soon' under the lustful attentions of townfolk.¹⁰¹ The forced ripening mirrors the economic exploitation of the South in the poem 'November Cotton Flower' where the unnatural blossom becomes a harbinger of drought and hardship.¹⁰² This is not a South of natural harmony but one ruled by violence and sexual passion ('Carma'), one inhabited by a race of slaves who are 'dark purple ripened plums,/ Squeezed and bursting in the pine-wood air'.¹⁰³

Divided into three sections, the book is a tapestry of poetry, prose and drama (sometimes all three genres appear in a single narrative such as in 'Kabnis') that incorporated folklore, folk songs, spirituals and the shifting sensibilities of rural and urbanised characters to create a kaleidoscope of places and situations that refuted categorization. The shifting text was intentionally non-linear, hybrid and ambiguous: Toomer wrote in a letter to his mentor Waldo Frank in 1922 that 'From three angles, *Cane's* design is a circle. Aesthetically, from simple forms to complex ones, and back to simple forms. Regionally, from the South up to the North, and back into the South again. Or, from the North down into the South, and then a return North'.¹⁰⁴ The endless circular motion that this implied makes migration, exile and place (or home) central themes in each section, themes mimicked in the fragmentary roaming style of the text. To the literary critic Gorham B. Munson the 'period of shifting and drifting without settled harborage' finds resolution in the South: 'Weary of homeless waters, he turns back to the ancestral soil, opens himself to its folk art and its folk ways, tries to find his roots, his origins'.¹⁰⁵ Despite this, *Cane* depicts violence rather than safety in origins: the story 'Becky' shows the social exclusion and alienation of sexual and racial transgression in the story of a white woman who gives birth to two Negro sons. An outcast who lives 'on the narrow strip of land between the railroad and the road', Becky becomes an ethereal presence, a ghost reminding the townfolk of submerged transgressions and alienation.¹⁰⁶ The level of violence resulting from such repression varies from self-annihilation, as in Esther's internalised racism ('Esther') and sexual frustration, to violent lynching ('Blood-burning Moon'). The 'narrow strip of land' occupied by the sexual and racial outcast in *Cane* is thereby a place of both poetic beauty and extreme violence.

In the second section, mostly set in Washington DC, Toomer continued to explore the themes of repression and racial transgression. Prohibition and the war have created a 'bastard' culture of jazz songs and love in the 'whitewashed' wood of Washington where white standards of civilisation are shown as spiritually repressive and suffocating, like Rhobert's house, which he wears 'like a monstrous diver's helmet' ('Rhobert').¹⁰⁷ Trapped between the two worlds, white and black, intellectual and physical, the story of Ralph Kabnis who goes South to teach and write completes the circle. Contrary to Toomer's literary awakening in the South, however, Kabnis finds himself petrified with fear of racial violence, surrounded by stories of lynchings (stories based on real lynchings that had happened during Toomer's southern sojourn) and an outcast among the southern black community.¹⁰⁸ Kabnis, however, cannot disconnect himself from the past. northern civil rights activist Lewis reminds Kabnis of his connection:

Kabnis: . . . my ancestors were Southern blue-bloods –

Lewis: And black.

Kabnis: Aint much difference between blue an black.

Lewis: Enough to draw a denial from you. Can't hold them, can you? Master; slave. Soil; and the overarching heavens. Dusk; dawn. They fight and bastardize you.¹⁰⁹

Toomer's elliptic and 'bastardised' text was feted by the intellectuals of the Harlem Renaissance – although *Cane's* complexity and hybridity led to its neglect in subsequent years. *Cane* was reprinted in limited quantity in 1927, after which it remained out of print until interest from the black arts movement revived it in the 1960s and 1970s. After publication Toomer found the label of 'Negro' increasingly problematic and restricting, writing to James Weldon Johnson that 'My poems are not Negro poems, nor are they Anglo-Saxon or white or English poems. My prose, likewise . . .'¹¹⁰ Toomer's quest for spirituality led him to follow the Armenian mystic Georges Gurdjieff, whose theories of self-creation contained no racial classification and fitted in with Toomer's belief in self-development. In 1922 he had written to Waldo Frank of this ambiguous racial identity: 'My own life has been equally divided between the two racial groups. My grandfather, owing to his emphasis upon a fraction of Negro blood in his veins, attained prominence in Reconstruction politics. And the family, for the most part, ever since has lived between the two worlds, now dipping into the Negro, now into the white. Some few are definitely white; others definitely colored. I alone have stood for a synthesis in the matters of the mind and spirit analogous, perhaps, to the actual fact of at least six blood minglings'.¹¹¹ *Cane* displays the writer's exploration of such racial synthesis and ambiguity through an experimental literary modernism that illustrated such complex modern subjectivity. As both a violent death and a rebirth, the condition he described was one of unavoidable modernity.

In his construction of a hybrid racial subjectivity, Toomer showed that the past was deeply intertwined with visions of the new. African American collector and archivist Arthur Schomburg wrote that the Negro needed to 'remake his past in order to make his future'.¹¹² To Schomburg, remaking the past would restore the human values and rights that slavery had taken away. Other African American writers of the Harlem Renaissance, such as James Weldon Johnson, were pivotal in highlighting the creativity and originality of black cultural productions originating from the South; over the 1920s his work included *The Book of American Negro Poetry* (1922), *The Book of American Negro Spirituals* (1925), *Second Book of American Negro Spirituals* (1926), *God's Trombones: Seven Negro Sermons in Verse* (1927) and *Black Manhattan* (1930).¹¹³

The social sciences were therefore at the forefront of the new literary vision. In 1926 anthropologist Franz Boas encouraged his student, Harlem Renaissance writer Zora Neale Hurston, to undertake folk-life research in the South that resulted in her subsequent collection *Mules and Men* (1935) as well as many plays, stories and musical revues. The previously overlooked African American became the focus of numerous studies: *Negro Workaday Songs* by Howard Odum (1926), *Folk Beliefs of the Southern Negro* (1926) by Newbell Niles Puckett, *Congaree Sketches* (1927) by E. C. L. Adams, *Singing Soldiers* (1927) by John J. Niles and Margaret Thorniley Williamson, *Plays of Negro Life* (1927) edited by Alain Locke, Montgomery Gregory and Aaron Douglas, *Caroling Dusk* (1927) by Countee Cullen and Aaron Douglas, *Ebony and Topaz: A Collectanea* (1927) by Charles Johnson and *Religious Folk-Songs of the Negro* (1927) by R. Nathaniel Dett.¹¹⁴ Such publications further propelled the writing of white dramatists Heywood Brown and Paul Green, indicating that the new folk aesthetic had become a publishing phenomenon of the decade.¹¹⁵

Despite this interest in folk life, the New Negro and pan-African movements worked to dispel any sense that African Americans were historic or primitive throwbacks. They persistently rejected white stereotypes of the 'old' Negro, insisting that through a 'new aesthetic and a new philosophy of life' they had become modern players on a contemporary, international and intercultural stage.¹¹⁶ Often combining urban with rural, the fusion and tension of multiple geographical, chronological and racial spaces underpinned the hybrid aesthetics of the Harlem Renaissance. Linking the African American with a disappearing folk past while also laying claim to representative modernity inevitably led to dissension. The publication of Sherwood Anderson's

Dark Laughter (1925) and Carl Van Vechten's *Nigger Heaven* (1926) brought this debate out into the open as intellectuals supported or rejected white characterisations of African American low-life. Locke, Du Bois and Weldon Johnson denigrated white 'Negrophilia' and saw degenerate portrayals of black life as capitulation to 'old' stereotypes of black life as primitive or regressive. In his essay 'Criteria of Negro Art' (1926), Du Bois claimed that all art was propaganda and that it was the duty of the black artist to represent the beauty of his people rather than their degradation.¹¹⁷ Younger writers like Hughes, Toomer, Hurston, McKay and Wallace Thurman rejected what they saw as an attempt to police racial representation in art by the 'Niggerati'.

In the same year George Schuyler's 'Negro Art Hokum' argued that 'blackness' was no more a useful category of judgement in art than 'whiteness' and that 'the Africamerican is subject to the same economic and social forces that mold the actions and thoughts of the white Americans'.¹¹⁸ Langston Hughes saw this as a denial of African American uniqueness, stating that 'Nordicised' black intellectuals were sustaining the 'urge within the race toward whiteness, the desire to pour racial individuality into the mold of American standardization, and to be as little Negro and as much American as possible'. While the 'present vogue in things Negro' may do some harm, he added, it had 'brought him forcibly to the attention of his own people' who for so long had valued him only through white eyes. Hughes declared that 'We younger Negro artists who create now intend to express our individual dark-skinned selves without fear or shame'.¹¹⁹

Insisting on artistic freedom, the self-consciously transgressive Harlem libertarians refused to conform to the boundaries of the 'talented tenth'. These arguments over internalised racism and representational politics spilled into Wallace Thurman's satire *The Blacker the Berry* (1929), Rudolph Fisher's *Walls of Jericho* (1928) and Schulyer's satire *Black No More* (1931). Rather than portraying Harlem as a mecca, Thurman's and William Rapp's play *Harlem: A Melodrama of Negro Life in Harlem* showed the hardships of migration there, with scenes of deprivation and illicit rent parties that upset both black and white critics.

A further liminal space was explored by gay Harlemites such as Countee Cullen, Langston Hughes, Claude McKay, Wallace Thurman and Richard Nugent. Although the margins could be hostile and only Nugent was open about his sexuality (in his 1926 'Smoke, Lilies, Jade' he expressed frank joy in his sexuality in an unpunctuated dream-like stream-of-consciousness narrative) Harlem's diversity enabled

previously unmapped representations that the rebels were keen to turn into literary art.¹²⁰ Similarly, Hurston's explorations of folk practices showed that forms such as spirituals and stories were not museum pieces but fluid, performative, interactive and constantly changing. Neither denying her past nor letting it prevail over her self-construction, she described herself as a 'brown bag of miscellany . . . a jumble of small things priceless and worthless'.¹²¹ Instead of a wasteland, however, the detritus formed a spectacular quilt in which the past was recast into something new and unique.

Yet Hurston's gaze Southwards among the 'lost generation' of black southerners was also a repudiation of a masculinised northern progressivism.¹²² Hurston understood the double-oppression and double-standard that structured black female identity and explored this theme in many of her works. Her play *Color Struck* (1926), for example, exposed the destructiveness of black female self-loathing due to the social fetishisation of whiteness.¹²³ Like Hurston, Marita Bonner exposed the disempowerment and alienation that resulted from race and gender oppression in 'On Being Young – A Woman – and Colored' (1925).¹²⁴ Bonner showed that the experience of northern migration and entry into modernity was particularly difficult for the young black female. Bonner further explored this alienation and destructive marginalisation of black women in her unconventional expressionist plays *Exit, An Illusion* (1923), *The Pot Maker* (1927) and *The Purple Flower* (1928).¹²⁵ *Exit: An Illusion* illustrated the fatal destructiveness of internalised racism in a female protagonist who passes for white but who dies as a result of her self-loathing. Expressionist techniques enabled Bonner to disconnect her characters from time and place in order to expose and deconstruct oppressive hierarchies of race. The abstract setting of *The Purple Flower* was therefore a no-man's-land in which time was the 'Middle-of-Things-as-They-Are. (Which means the End-of-Things for some of the characters and the Beginning-of-Things for others)', and the place 'Might be here, there or anywhere – or even nowhere'.¹²⁶ As Hurston and Bonner showed, there was nothing uniquely white or uniquely male about self-destruction, violence, exile and alienation.

Women of the Lost Generation

To many modern writers the rejection of the past was a rejection of oppressive gender relations as well as racial stereotypes. In their novels, motherhood, marriage and domesticity were depicted

as sites of patriarchal control or monstrous biological femininity. Experimental southern writer Evelyn Scott explored the problems and possibilities of female empowerment within patriarchal culture in her portraits of repressed female desire and sexuality within the narrow restrictions of traditional (white) southern womanhood. Her novels, *The Narrow House* (1921), *Narcissus* (1922), *The Golden Door* (1925), *Ideals* (1927) and *Migrations* (1927), and her autobiography *Escapade* (1923) showed the family and tradition as dysfunctional and repressive. Similarly, Frances Newman focused on female sexuality in her bestselling novels *The Hard-Boiled Virgin* (1926) and *Dead Lovers Are Faithful Lovers* (1928), which satirised the traditional role of the southern belle, the sexual double-standard and repressions of patriarchal domesticity. Although their work antagonised the agrarians, these women were central to the broader Southern Renaissance; yet they displayed no nostalgia for a lost past – the rejection of traditional southern womanhood was a strike for female sexual and social independence.

Women writers in the 1920s also included unprecedented portrayals of pre-marital sex, birth control, lesbianism and abortion in their novels: exploring modern sexuality in literature became a way that women could challenge the boundaries of their traditional social exclusion and domestic confinement. While Dorinda Oakley in Ellen Glasgow's *Barren Ground* (1925) eventually finds independence through miscarriage and land ownership, Agnes Smedley's feminist novel *Daughter of Earth* (1929) portrayed Marie Rogers' liberation from biological determinism through her abortion, use of birth control and divorce. Although often reluctant to see themselves as part of any women's movement, unconventional women writers did not submit to marginalisation quietly or politely.

Women's writing of the decade was particularly notable for the emergence of the bawdy or outspoken woman writer who openly discussed sex and sexuality and lived as intemperately as her male contemporaries. On Broadway, Mae West became the most iconic of the rebellious new women writers; her plays, *Sex* (1926), *The Drag* (1927), *The Pleasure Man* (1928) and *Diamond Lil* (1928) challenged the boundaries of puritanical America with topics ranging from sex addiction, prostitution, homosexuality and interracial relationships. Famous for her dialogue and dirty street-talk taken from the speakeasies and familiar vaudeville routines, West's prostitutes and fallen women were no victims or failures. Even though her characters sinned without punishment, by daring to challenge the boundaries of

decency, West endured periods of imprisonment and censorship (as well as increasing fame and renown).

Bawdiness, blasphemy, and sexual and literary experimentation also characterised the work of writer-journalist Djuna Barnes. Barnes experimented with literary form as well as openly exploring lesbian sexuality and desire in her anarchistic and surreal writings; her mock-medieval text of lesbian instruction *The Ladies Almanack* (1928) was banned for obscenity, and her satire of promiscuous domesticity and fecund patriarchy, *Ryder* (1928), was censored before publication in New York (though she rebelliously insisted on showing the censor's hand by putting asterisks to expose the 'havoc of this nicety'). Barnes' carnivalesque fiction drew attention to the constructed nature of the text in order to playfully expose male authority and biological determinism and her anti-puritan parable of the politics of sexual reproduction 'upturned literary, religious and sexual orthodoxy through linguistic and thematic misrule'.¹²⁷

While stylistically very different from Barnes' overwrought parody-narratives, another Paris-based lesbian writer of the era, Gertrude Stein, also used playful linguistic misrule to overthrow sexual and literary orthodoxy. Stein's long poem 'Patriarchal Poetry' (1927) is seen by critics as a 'mock epic' counterpart to *The Waste Land*, in which she rejects 'the Western literary past and . . . attempt[s] to erect a new literature on the ruins of that demolished culture'.¹²⁸ For modernist women writers the non-linear anti-narrative radically exposed the patriarchal structures that were buried within language and enabled them to experiment with alternative forms of expression that went beyond feminist 'protest' literature of the progressive period.

The new assertive presence of the female writer did not automatically lead to the feminist heroine. In popular stories and novels the new woman was flawed, assertively independent and selfishly individualistic in her attempts to subvert patriarchal conventions. In her acerbic and witty stories, the outspoken Dorothy Parker criticised superficial modern relationships, domesticity and materialism through her various depictions of wisecracking broads, weedy girlfriends and wives, snobbish party hosts or female alcoholics. Parker's own suicide attempts, failed marriages, alcoholism and abortions became well known, and her short stories drew on this unhappiness to portray the hypocrisy of modern culture and the dilemmas of the new female independence. In her story 'Big Blonde' (1929), a blonde ex-model falls into self-destructive domesticity and alcoholism that finally leads to a failed suicide attempt that displayed all the characteristics of Freud's

death-instinct: 'The thought of death came and stayed with her and lent her a sort of drowsy cheer. It would be nice, nice and restful, to be dead'.¹²⁹

Not all women found their new-found sexual freedom problematic: Anita Loos offered a satirical reflection on the working-girl in her novel *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes: The Illuminating Diary of a Professional Lady* (1926), in which the semi-literate showgirl Lorelei Lee recorded her gold-digging quest for riches and status around Europe. A satire on upward mobility, popular self-help and success literature, Lorelei Lee goes to Freud for analysis and later writes in her diary that 'Dr. Froyd said that all I needed was to cultivate a few inhibitions and get some sleep'. While more comedic than tragic, Lorelei is a female Gatsby: her sexually charged performance of gender enables her to gain upward mobility in a world that continued to create and silence the 'dumb' blonde.¹³⁰

Conclusion

The dumbing-down of culture and the threat to civilisation remained an intellectual concern throughout the 1920s. Popular novels like *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* lampooned cultural degeneration but also seemed to fuel it: Loos' novel became a bestseller, making the author extremely rich, while other 'high-brow', experimental and serious works struggled to gain a readership. The appearance of tabloid newspapers, book-of-the-month clubs and the *Reader's Digest* all added to a host of concerns about the quality of mass culture. The relationship between high and low, however, was becoming less distinct as writers buoyed up their careers by contributing to popular magazines and the film and radio industries: both Fitzgerald and Faulkner wrote scripts for Hollywood, while Mencken and George Nathan began the pulp crime magazine *Black Mask* in 1920, in order to financially prop up their high-brow literary magazine *The Smart Set*.

It was this hybridity of high and low, black and white, old and new that made the literary wasteland so richly innovative over the decade. Although the war and cultural change left writers anxious about the future, the literature of the 1920s did not turn its back on the present and retreat into the past. The 'Lost Generation' were deeply committed to representing the emotional trauma caused by social and political change even if they were unable to provide any clear solutions to it. While faith in democracy, progress and founding Puritan principles were at an all time low, postwar abundance appeared excessive and

frivolous, and freedom remained a highly valued but contested terrain. Fitzgerald called the 1920s 'The Jazz Age' not because his wealthy elite expressed their desultory freedom by dancing to jazz, but because jazz was the experimental and improvisational score that set the pace for this new America. Jazz was the beat and rhythm of unavoidable cultural change, a hybrid sound of the southern past and the industrial North, the 'primitive' keeping time with Ford's production line. As we shall see in the next chapter, hybridity, spontaneity and boundary-stretching transgression were central to the anxious pleasures of the age.

Consumption and Leisure

The expanding corporate landscape visible in soaring skyscrapers and advertising art produced an image of the 1920s as a decade of unremitting prosperity and machine-made pleasure. This booster landscape was sustained and manufactured by a dominant business ideology that entered into all aspects of social and political culture. Yet it did not begin in prosperity but with a serious economic crash as Harding was taking over the presidency. The transition from a wartime economy led to the collapse of wholesale prices, rising unemployment and a decline in business profits 'from 8 billions in 1919 to less than a billion in 1921'. The crash caused more than half of all companies to go into debt and commercial failures to increase from 6,500 to 19,700.¹ Such economic instability was disastrous for business and labour and, in the grip of the 'Red Scare', Warren G. Harding promised to correct and return the volatile economy to 'normalcy'. Harding blamed the problems on excessive government expenditure in war and over-dependency on unstable European markets and worked to replace these with a deregulated, laissez-faire, corporate-run economy based on low government spending, low taxes, trade tariffs and the widespread availability of credit to stimulate consumption and wealth. Declaring in his campaign speech that there should be 'Less Government in Business and More Business in Government', Harding appointed the millionaire banker Andrew Mellon to head the treasury on his appointment in November 1920.² Mellon cut federal spending and dramatically reduced taxes for the wealthy, while business was left to operate unhampered.³

It was a policy that appeared to be paying off by the time that Calvin Coolidge became President in 1923. By 1925 the frugal Coolidge, who had adopted Harding's policies but had distanced himself from the subsequent corruption scandals that had emerged,

confidently announced that ‘the chief business of the American people is business . . . We make no concealment of the fact that we want wealth.’⁴ Whether wealth flowed because of their policies or because of a postwar production boom, the economy revived from the 1921 slump and, with only slight contractions in 1924 and 1927, boomed until October 1929.’



Figure 5.1 ‘Calvin Coolidge plays for Big Business’ (© The Art Archive/Culver Pictures).

Once wartime restrictions on construction were lifted the expansion in domestic, commercial and public building works fuelled a whole range of further industries.⁵ As well as increasing demand for labour and raw materials, new home ownership propelled the sales of household appliances and furnishings, as demand for modern bathrooms, telephones, electricity, lighting and heating increased. The electrification and modernisation of houses created a consumer boom in fridges and other electrical appliances such as electric irons, stoves, washing machines, toasters, kettles and curling irons, all of which were made more cheaply by an intensification of mass production and bought in unprecedented quantities. The role of the consumer in economic life came under increasing scrutiny by social scientists who noted that this significant social shift from making a living to '*buying* a living' introduced new factors into the economic equation.⁶

The newly established radio industry entered the market and expanded in value from \$54 million to \$177 million between 1923 and 1925 alone.⁷ Economist Stuart Chase noted that in this period the sales of '[m]otor cars, telephones, radios, rayon, refrigerators, chemical preparations – particularly cosmetics and cleaning compounds, and electrical devices of all sorts have skyrocketed'.⁸ The fashion and synthetic textile industries expanded as the demand for cheap ready-to-wear clothing increased, while the new popularity of cigarettes and make-up among women led to further exponential increases in consumption. To nearly everyone, however, it was the massive expansion in the automobile industry that presented the most dramatic revolution in the social and economic landscape. To Stuart Chase the automobile was the single largest force in the abundance of the decade and its proliferation helped to give the decade the 'visible appearance of a prosperity in which everybody seemed to share'.⁹ Economist Leo Wolman noted in 1929 that 'It would be difficult to find anywhere in economic history so swift and pervasive a revolution' as the expansion in production and use of the motor car over this period: 'In 1910 there was one automobile to every 265 persons in the country; in 1917 one to every 22; in 1919 one to every 16; and on July 1, 1928, one to every 6'.¹⁰ Such growth had boosted a variety of other industries and businesses, from highway construction to the expansion of filling stations, roadside diners and motels. Accelerating the speed of social change, the automobile led to new, sometimes troubling, social behaviour. Not only did the auto make living in newly built suburbs possible, creating a flight from the city by wealthier citizens, activities such as 'auto-camping' and automobiling became popular leisure pursuits among

the less wealthy. Most noted of all, however, was the way the automobile became the locus of increasing sexual freedom and a private leisure space for youth outside of traditional social control.

Between 1923 and 1929 industrial production increased by a huge 40 per cent as a result of these technological and industrial conditions. The increased availability of credit and instalment payment plans for the consumption of everyday goods meant that many Americans were able to get mortgages, as well as buy houses, cars, washing machines, refrigerators and radios without saving for them first. While credit wasn't new, its widespread use as a way of selling mass-produced goods was. Over the decade the volume of consumer debt increased from \$3.3 billion to \$7.6 billion, a rise of 131 per cent, household debt doubled and home mortgage debt tripled.¹¹ By the end of the 1920s half of all households had one or more payment instalment plans. As consumer credit became more available many noted big changes in social attitudes to debt and saving; sociologist Robert Lynd found that the desire to possess an automobile had 'unsettled the habit of careful saving for some families' and that it was no longer uncommon practice to mortgage a home in order to purchase one.¹² In fact two-thirds of all new cars were purchased on credit. Movies even began to depict the 'perils and pitfalls' of the new credit culture in pictures such as *Charge It* (1921) and *Keeping Up with Lizzie* (1921).¹³

When, in 1926, it was announced that, with an income of \$90 billion, the United States had reached 'the highest standard of living ever attained in the history of the world', the Coolidge years of prosperity were widely accepted as a sign of universal national progress and democracy.¹⁴ In his election speech only twelve months before the Wall Street Crash, Herbert Hoover, Secretary of Commerce since 1920, claimed that the Republican policy was a self-evident success that had led to the greatest degree of well-being in the world and that America was 'nearer to the abolition of poverty, to the abolition of fear of want, than humanity has ever reached before'.¹⁵

The pay-off for this increased productivity and efficiency was visible in the increasing availability of leisure time. Coolidge saw this as a sign of machine-made progress, for where technology had 'steadily reduced the sweat in human labor' the 'hours of labor have lessened; our leisure has increased'.¹⁶ Not only had Americans devised solutions to traditional problems of labour, housing, health and education, the increasing leisure hours that machinery made available had released humans from toil for more cultural pursuits, a victory that seemed to lead to a new and higher phase of civilisation.

By 1929 the boosting of business culture had attained the status of a new orthodoxy. As ex-stockbroker turned historian, James Truslow Adams noted in *Our Business Civilization* (1929): 'It is assumed that spiritual and intellectual progress will somehow come also from the mere accumulation of "things," and this assumption has become a sort of American religion with all the psychological implications of religious dogma'.¹⁷ Belief in the success of the capitalist ethos went deep: in 1928 even muckraker and future communist Lincoln Steffens stated that big business was 'producing what the Socialists hold up as their goal: food, shelter and clothing for all'.¹⁸

Adams and Steffens were surrounded by a proliferating ideology of business that was particularly visible in the outpouring of books celebrating corporate culture as the highest achievement of civilisation. In *Business the Civilizer* (1928), marketing executive Earnest Elmo Calkins argued that business values had attained the highest goals of civilisation and had done more to promote peace, spiritual and social satisfaction and well-being than any previous form of government: the 'world gets civilized just as fast as men learn to run things on plain business principles,' he claimed.¹⁹ Business and industrialism had enabled the arts and science to flourish and businessmen displayed their culture and learning through endowments and trusts that further helped civilise society. To Calkins, a civilisation based on business values represented the zenith of American democratic culture.

Not everyone agreed with this assessment. The new business dogma ushered in a host of difficult questions about the relationship between capitalism, culture and the role of consumption. In entering a 'money and credit age', argued economist Stuart Chase, America had allowed the businessman to emerge 'as the dictator of our destinies . . . he has ousted the statesman, the priest, the philosopher, as the creator of standards of ethics and behavior, and has become the final authority on the conduct of American society'.²⁰ Adams observed that America had become 'almost wholly a *business man's civilization*' and noted that the profit motive underlying cultural change was 'at war' with the traditional, financially disinterested, spirit of art and progress.²¹ Not only did business 'facts' about prosperity conceal the gulf that had grown between the rich and 'average' American, he argued, but business idealism had turned the idea of attaining culture into something by which to profit further, rather than as a means towards spiritual and intellectual growth and fulfillment.

Writers confirmed and satirised the adoption of culture as a part of business capital. Former advertising copywriter William E.

Woodward wrote several novels mocking the advertising industry and business culture: *Bunk* (1923), *Lottery* (1924) and *Bread and Circuses* (1925). F. Scott Fitzgerald noted that successful cultural production was shrouded in business rhetoric: 'a successful program became a racket [and] I was in the literary racket,' he noted.²² In Sinclair Lewis's *Babbitt*, the commercial 'artist' and poet Chum Frink proposes business sponsorship of a civic symphony orchestra, even though preferring jazz himself, saying:

Culture has become as necessary an adornment and advertisement for a city today as pavements or bank-clearances. It's Culture, in theaters and art-galleries and so on, that brings thousands of visitors to New York every year . . . The thing to do then, as a live bunch of go-getters, is to *capitalize Culture*; to go right out and grab it.²³

As Jackson Lears has noted, advertising agents like the fictional Frink began to see themselves as poets of the new corporate uplift and harbingers of a cultural modernity that merged avant-garde and commercial culture. Copywriters were described as 'agents of aesthetic progress' and the Shakespeares or Marlowes of their day by advertisers, a view supported by avant-garde writers such as Matthew Josephson, who saw them as pioneers of the terse and vigorous modernist style in literature.²⁴

While fiction writers explored the possibilities and limits of a culture based on business rhetoric, the lifting of taxes on advertising outlays in 1919 led to huge investment and a rapid escalation of the marketing industry. The notable change in output was matched by changes in style, as the theories of Freudian psychoanalysis were applied to marketing campaigns. Much to the chagrin of observers like Chase, adverts switched from providing information about products to appeals directed at unconscious sexual drives, neuroses or social anxieties. The leading public relations expert in America, Edward Bernays, also happened to be Freud's nephew and had drawn on his uncle's ideas to develop techniques for 'democratic social engineering' during the war, later turning his attention to consumption and public opinion. In *Propaganda* (1928) he argued that this 'conscious and intelligent' manipulation of the unconscious habits and actions of the 'the masses' was a way of organising chaos and restoring democracy.²⁵ Since Hugo Munsterberg's *Psychology and Industrial Efficiency* (1913), American psychologists had provided advice and guidance about the psychology of workplace management. None, however, had applied this to

advertising or consumption in the way Bernays suggested. Freudian analysts, he argued, had revealed that human thoughts and actions were often 'compensatory substitutes for desires' that had been suppressed; the intelligent public relations expert could manipulate the behaviour of these people by channelling those desires into consumption. Such public relations experts were, to Bernays, social engineers, who manufactured or engineered behaviour based on scientific rationalism in order to create social, political and financial stability.²⁶ In his *Public Opinion* (1922), Walter Lippmann called such new techniques of persuasion and social control the 'manufacture of consent', arguing that its use as a tool of popular government called for a reassessment of the idea of democracy itself.²⁷

Marketing professionals now saw the findings and discoveries of social science professionals and psychologists as useful tools for dovetailing business with social reform goals, and led them to believe that real social progress could emerge from such an organised business civilisation. In this spirit, leading behavioural psychologist John B. Watson gave expert advice to the J. Walter Thompson company from 1920, becoming a vice-president in the company from 1924. Other business professionals were encouraged to update their knowledge of the latest scientific theories by consulting magazines such as *Industrial Psychology Monthly*, which began publication in 1926.

Despite these attempts to rationalise advertising along scientific lines, many felt that Bernays' propaganda techniques could potentially harm the gullible masses as much as guide them, by forcing them to buy unscientifically. Chase, for example, considered advertising 'the life blood of quackery'.²⁸ In *Your Money's Worth: A Study In The Waste Of The Consumer's Dollar* (1927), written with F. J. Schlink, he exposed the fraudulent claims and malign selling practices of advertisers and salespeople, in the first exposé of modern advertising techniques.²⁹ The psychological selling of goods gave them 'dubious' new uses that could not be proven or tested, he argued, forcing masses of unwanted goods upon unwitting consumers with false promises. While the book established the need for the national regulation of the advertising industry and helped produce a growing consumer-rights and trading-standards activism, many continued to fear the threat to democracy implied in the manipulation of the masses by unelected profit-motivated business forces.³⁰ To these intellectuals 'business' and 'culture' were contradictory terms.

Shattering the illusion of business uplift from 1923 were ongoing investigations into the 'Teapot Dome' affair, a high-profile scandal

involving senior Harding officials in accusations of fraud and graft. Alongside the exposure of other corrupt dealings between business and government, confidence in those entrusted to run the nation appeared falsely placed.³¹ Not only did the expansion of consumer credit and materialism lead to rises in loan sharks and illegal finance companies that placed people into the hands of shady dealers or gangs, stock market racketeering also increased as inexperienced investors joined the speculation game.³² One *New York Times* article in August 1929 called such investment scams Wall Street's 'financial "speakeasies"', a term that hinted at the proliferation of a new and unregulated underground business culture that was pulling many businesses into the morass of the underworld. Indeed, prohibition-fuelled profiteering that sucked corporate, federal, state and police officials into an unregulated Darwinian struggle, brought into question the very possibility of a civilisation based on business.

The Culture and Business of Prohibition

Although twenty-three states had already been 'dry' since 1914, when the Eighteenth Amendment and Volstead Act came into effect in January 1920, the sale, transportation and manufacture of alcohol, though not its consumption, was made illegal throughout the entire United States. From one perspective prohibition appeared a victory of the rural, small-town conservatism of the southern states against the urban, ethnic North and a victory of moral uplift against cultural degeneracy. It was, however, also a victory for the forces of modernisation who had worked to adjust social organisation with industrial culture. The central role of the Women's Christian Temperance Movement in both the suffrage campaign and prohibition linked the two with the ideology of the New Woman, in which alcohol consumption was connected to the abuse of women in the home, poverty and the corruption of the working class. The race 'modernisers' in the eugenics movement also saw alcohol as a 'racial poison', a significant factor in 'race suicide' and the degeneration of civilisation as discussed by Stoddard and Sanger.³³ Great hopes lay in the ban.

Initially introduced to control alcohol consumption in wartime by the Democrat government, it was ironically the free-market Republicans who oversaw its implementation and who became associated with the dry crusade. As David Kyvig has pointed out, this was an apparently anomalous policy at a time of business deregulation that 'set a new standard for governmental intervention into personal lives'.³⁴ To many free-market businessmen, however, the law supported both the moral and the practical requirements of modern industrial culture. While all other business controls were loosened, strict control over the liquor trade was seen as a coherent

part of wider industrial control over the working class and operated alongside other controls such as anti-unionism, anti-communism, 'efficiency drives' and welfare capitalism – all characteristics of labour control in the era. John Rumbarger notes that during this period 'most reformers and wealthy capitalists believed the transformation of American society into a productive order based upon capital concentration and a truly stable, reliable working class, required the creation of a liquor free social environment' where the working class were 'capital' or stock to be improved.³⁵ In a world where everyone was operating machinery or dependent on those who did, drinking was not only seen as potentially lethal but wastefully inefficient. In *Prohibition, an Adventure in Freedom* (1928) Harry Warner quoted teetotaler Ford as saying 'Booze had to go out when modern industry and the motor car came in. Only on one condition can the nation safely let it come back, that is, if we are willing to abolish modern industry and the motor car'.³⁶

Despite this, the unenforceable law unleashed an alternate business culture that existed in a Jekyll and Hyde relationship with modern capital and legitimate business. As Andrew Sinclair has written, in 'politics and in business, in labor unions and employers' associations, in public services and private industries, prohibition was the golden grease through which organized crime insinuated itself into a position of incredible power in the nation'.³⁷ The problem ranged from the corruption and criminality of ordinary citizens to the corruption of federal agents, state officials and police departments – making it hard to decipher who was on which side of the law, who were victims and who were perpetrators. In order to catch bootleggers, federal agents used methods of entrapment that breached the boundaries of legality, and the official method of preventing industrial alcohol from being drunk by adding toxic denaturants led to further deaths and poisonings. Bootleggers created lethal mixes of industrial alcohol with essences such as juniper to create 'gin' or whisky-like brews that were sold in bottles with counterfeit labels, emulating mainstream marketing strategies to promote their 'authentic' products. Civilians turned against federal agents when innocents were gunned down in the crossfire with lawbreakers and bootleggers became local heroes by offering jobs and welfare to poor and immigrant communities, while black-market activities enabled uneducated or immigrant men to make a good living outside of the emasculating restrictions and repetitive tedium of either the labourer or the white-collar worker.³⁸

Prohibition had opened up a new interstitial space between legitimate and non-legitimate business activities. By 1929 the police commissioner of New York City estimated that there were 32,000 nightclubs and underground leisure speakeasies. Such a climate made drunkenness a badge of social prestige and conspicuous consumption or a sign of individual valour against conformity and puritan repression. In reverse of the original goals, the law made people drink more in one go, drink more of poor quality and speed up their drinking in the fear that it might run out at any moment.

In this topsy-turvy moral environment a further paradox arose as mass production and technology made crime easier. The underworld was modernised and made efficient by machine guns and fast getaway cars, turning gangsters into machine operatives whose role on the 'production line' turned their leaders into self-made tycoons. To these men the business of prohibition provided an alternative form of upward mobility and success in a world where the gap between the rich and poor was wider than ever. Leading Chicago gangster Al Capone invested his gains in legal businesses and portrayed his activities as public service. His philanthropy made him a local hero when he gave food and coal to the poor or donated money to charity. 'Everybody calls me a racketeer,' he said, but 'I call myself a business man'.³⁹ Capone's corporate-style vertical integration paralleled the business models 'of the robber barons and trusts, with the elimination, through terror or murder or price cutting, of all rivals'.⁴⁰ The 1929 St Valentine's Day Massacre established Capone as the dominant leader of the Chicago underworld and revealed the hidden violence behind such business methods but he still evaded prosecution and it was only in 1931 that he was prosecuted, not for violence or bootlegging, however, but for the businessman's crime of tax evasion.

New sociological models of human behaviour and criminal psychology were developed in studies of immigrant and gang culture by Chicago sociologists. Frederic Thrasher's *The Gang* (1927) described gangland as 'interstitial', or a space that intervenes between one thing and another.⁴¹ To crime writer Dashiell Hammett this space became a place in which the unwanted or unseen detritus and waste of capitalism gathered; a space he paralleled with the subconscious mind as it enacted the repressions of civilisation. In *Red Harvest* (1929) the city is a social and moral wasteland ('Poisonville') in which the mindless destruction of gangland killings mirrors the mechanical destruction of humanity on the production line. As his 'Continental Op' investigates this underbelly of capitalist culture the latent subconscious or primitive drives that are released are barely contained beneath a thin veneer of civilisation, a social dialectic that was replicated within the individual as a battle between the ego and id.

While Herbert Hoover called prohibition 'a great social and economic experiment, noble in motive and far-reaching in purpose', the plan was not only failing but had paradoxically contributed to further cultural decline. The experiment had gone so badly wrong that by 1933 demands for repeal even came from those who had formerly supported it.⁴² Despite this it was the Great Depression that gave impetus to the nullification of the law. 'Wets' partly blamed the economic collapse on prohibition by arguing that not only had it furthered rural poverty by curtailing the brewing industry and lessening the demand for grain but that the loss of government revenue in liquor taxes and the cost of law reinforcement had also weakened the federal coffers. In the end, it seemed, it was a business argument that hammered the final nail into the 'dry' coffin.

While prohibitionists such as Irving Fisher argued that the 18th amendment had helped to create current prosperity levels and had added an additional \$6 billion to the national income, the emergence of a deregulated black-market economy proved costly to federal and state governments.⁴³ The results of such a failure provided troubling parallels with legitimate but cutthroat business operations in a time of decreasing union protection for workers, for while it could not be denied that the free market had created huge prosperity the uneven distribution of that wealth into the pockets of the few was creating a potential disaster. By 1929 the richest tenth of the nation received almost 40 per cent of the national income, leaving well over half of the country's households in a condition of economic hardship and living below the 'decent standard' drawn up by the Bureau of Statistics.⁴⁴

Not everyone ignored the inequalities that had arisen in the economy. In *Prosperity: Fact or Myth* (1929), a book completed just before the Wall Street Crash, Stuart Chase attempted to look behind the dogma of prosperity 'to find out what this period of alleged prosperity has meant to the man on the street, and to his family'. His popular book disclosed what economic studies were starting to reveal about the nature of business prosperity: real wealth had been generated but it was not spread evenly and the reality was a widening gulf between the rich, the middle-income and the poor, between urban and rural populations all of whom were reliant on an unstable credit economy to sustain rising modern standards of living. As one lecturer noted just four months before the Wall Street Crash: 'This myth of prosperity if believed will lead to inevitable catastrophe. America's prosperity is for only 24 per cent of the people, and this percentage owns all the wealth of this country'.⁴⁵

The harshest reality behind the myth lay in the farming depression that hit rural communities for the entire decade. From 1920 the price of staple crops had plummeted while high interest rates on wartime loans, taken out in order to mechanise and increase farming efficiency, had increased the cost of production and distribution. Mechanisation and scientific innovations that made farming more efficient also created surpluses of food and labour, leading to markets flooded with cheaper agricultural products and the 'technological unemployment' of manual labour. Wage labourers, tenant farmers and sharecroppers were already trapped in a cycle of debt peonage that a series of natural disasters such as drought, crop diseases and poor harvests made even worse. Rural communities had become increasingly indebted and by 1929 more than 40 per cent of the total farm population living on low-value farms '[had]

not improved their standards of living in the period under review, and [appeared] to have sustained such standards as they have by the use of a vast mortgage indebtedness'.⁴⁶ The crisis in rural areas, in which almost 50 per cent of Americans still lived, created a deep divide through the culture of prosperity.

While the urban working classes fared better overall than the rural poor, gaining from the low food prices that afflicted farmers, as well as rising wages and the expansion of corporate welfare, unemployment remained a prominent spectre and unskilled industrial labour made almost as few gains as farm workers. As industries relied increasingly on the unpredictable retail of fashions, fads and trends, the certainty of regular work and profits diminished. In most industries closures, shut-downs and reliance on casual labour were common tactics for making savings in slow periods or to weaken union activity and keep wages down.⁴⁷ Not only were unions weakened in this period, working conditions were increasingly strenuous and subject to increased control by 'efficiency experts' and corporate managers. Many industrial workers failed to benefit from expanded production or consumption as technology made fewer workers necessary and depressions in the cotton, woollen and coal industries held down prices and wages, leading to industrial unrest in the coal and railroad industries in 1922 and in textiles in 1929. To these workers the 'electric' revolution in households was sustained at the expense of the miners by cheap coal and low wages, while the production of cheap ready-to-wear fashions came at the cost of low wages in southern mills.

Such imbalances and potential instabilities were addressed in a number of publications that eventually contributed to the regulation of the economy by the New Deal government in the 1930s. Rather than criticising excessive spending, William Trufant Foster, an educator and former student of John Dewey, and businessman Waddill Catchings developed a theory of underconsumptionism as the root cause of economic problems, a theory that predicted the Wall Street Crash and gave them added credence in the 1930s. They wrote a series of books to address the inadequacies of the free market based on unregulated consumption: *Money* (1923), *Profits* (1925), *Business Without a Buyer* (1927) and *The Road to Plenty* (1928) which argued for a greater balance in the distribution of industrial prosperity by controlling and regulating the flow of money. In this way a form of rationalised and universal consumption would balance production. One way of doing this was through a federal advisory board consisting of economists, business leaders and planners who would create

financial regulation through a government-sponsored public works programme.⁴⁸

None of these ideas questioned private ownership of businesses, capitalism or the importance of increasing profits and competition. Rather, stabilising and regulating the capitalist economy was central to these planners and reformers, who increasingly focused on the panacea of a reformed and educated consumer. Chase's *The Tragedy of Waste* (1925) was concerned with controlling the waste and inefficiencies of consumerism and the unregulated commercial market in order to make corporate culture stronger and more scientific. Chase's exposure of the myths behind prosperity and the unregulated market in *Prosperity: Fact or Myth* was indebted to the findings of the most influential study made of work, consumption and leisure in the 1920s: Robert and Helen Lynd's *Middletown* (1929).

***Middletown* (1929)**

Economic and social balance was central to the social ideals of Robert Lynd and Helen Merrell Lynd, who undertook fieldwork in Muncie, Indiana, for *Middletown: A Study in Contemporary American Culture* (1929), the first statistical and social analysis of the 'average' or ordinary aspects of American life. Unlike other social scientists at the time, the Lynds consciously set out to select the most 'middle-of-the-road' place for their study, somewhere with 'no outstanding peculiarities or acute local problems that would mark it off from the mid-channel'.⁴⁹ They relied on the philosopher John Dewey for their methodology and even their choice of a Midwestern location, who saw the Midwest as a 'common denominator' or 'mean' that 'held things together and [gave] unity and stability' to America.⁵⁰ They further sought the most average city in that region, a place with a small, homogenous population of mainly white native-born Americans that was as representative as possible of 'traditional' America. In this context they hoped to illustrate what had happened to typical Americans in the crucible of industrial modernity.

The study compared life in the small Midwestern city of 1925 with how it had been in the 1890s, charting growth and social change in order to illustrate the impact of modernity on society and behaviour. The Lynds' aim to record only 'observed phenomena' and create a dynamic and 'functional study of the contemporary life of this specific American community' accorded intellectually with pragmatist philosophy and experimentalism, as well as the work of the economist-sociologist Thorstein Veblen, whose *Theory of the Leisure Class* (1899) had earlier explored the social and psychological trends of consumer modernity.⁵¹ Rather than imposing their beliefs on the community, the researchers undertook a modern

self-reflective approach, openly questioning their methodologies as they proceeded and claiming to show the reader 'where the ice is thin'.⁵² In the appendix 'Note on Method', details were given about the way that data was collected so that the reader could judge how representative or accurate it was for themselves. Information was gathered from a number of extensive personal interviews and reports from representative individuals using lengthy questionnaires rather than outside observations. Research staff entered into and became part of the community, living locally in rented accommodation and attending dinners, meetings, rallies and parties and then writing up a record of this experience. Census data, surveys, city records, business reports, local histories, local newspapers and the minutes of various meetings provided additional statistical information, while diaries, scrapbooks and casual conversations provided more anecdotal or personal perspectives. As trends became apparent the researchers tested various hypotheses on their chosen groups to see if a common standard or average type could be drawn up. From this data *Middletown* emerged.

Divided into six main 'life activities': 'Getting a Living', 'Making a Home', 'Training the Young', 'Using Leisure', 'Engaging in Religious Practices' and 'Engaging in Community Practices', it was the first attempt at a cultural or anthropological examination of everyday life in an entire American city and subsequently became the most celebrated sociological study of the 1920s. While a comparison of the years 1890 and 1924 structured the book, making it an extensive documentation of the dialectic between traditional and industrial culture, the most interesting comparative aspect of the research emerged in the lived experience of class differences that underlay American 'normalcy'. The study was unique in the way that it examined income differentials, social and religious beliefs, diets, education, leisure, group memberships and common activities in various class, age and gender groups of ordinary people. Offering detailed descriptions of the minutiae of lives, what people read, what their houses looked like, what art they had on their walls, whether they had carpet or linoleum, servants or machines, their working and their leisure activities, the book illustrated the varying class experience behind consumer homogeneity. While they found little unrest or agitation, this method exposed the network of consensual and habitual activity that kept capitalism functioning effectively even when its rewards were unevenly distributed.

Although the Lynds exposed the class difference behind industrial culture, they also discovered an increasing standardisation in attitudes and behaviour among all groups that gave them cause for concern. Where people had once made and built the things they used, money was now earned by business manipulation in a credit economy that forced the working class into mechanical servitude to a money-making culture. Where the citizen of 1890 had dreaded the stigma of debt, the Lynds showed that in 1925 they now blindly accepted the expansion of a credit economy in order to keep up a common standard of living and purchase new technologies and home comforts that had not been available in the

past. This standardisation extended into their leisure, which had become passive and mechanised, centred around mass arts such as the movies, narrow club membership, conspicuous consumption and automobile ownership. Art and music were more likely to be passively absorbed in standardized ways than created locally or performed spontaneously, and while people read more – being better educated and having greater access to an increasing number of publications – the literature they read tended to be intellectually light, escapist or salacious, published in serials and motion picture magazines. This was not cultural balance but conformity to the mean.

While this unthinking conformity caused H. L. Mencken to praise the book as a confirmation of his views on the stupidity of rural America, a review he titled 'A City in Moronia', Lynd did not dislike Middletown or its people.⁵³ What bothered him was the hegemony of business culture and the lack of checks and balances over its chaotic development. Although the Lynds argued that 'no effort was being made to prove any thesis', the book was clearly not as value-neutral or objective as the described goals suggested. The book began as an enquiry into community religion funded by Rockefeller's Institute of Social and Religious Research and Robert Lynd had been training to be a Presbyterian minister before he switched to social science as a substitute for his ethical social goals. *Middletown* was consequently peppered with moral questions about the direction of American society that was based on an idyllic vision of the 1890s set against the pecuniary and materialistic business culture of the 1920s. To Lynd the fundamental goal of social science was the improvement of culture; his functionalist vision meant that he had no qualms manipulating his information in order to shake people out of their conservative habits, taking limited selections from newspaper reports and diaries from the 1890s at face value, while pointing out the media hypocrisies and manipulations of contemporary business culture. Richard Wightman Fox has pointed out that 'Lynd never acknowledged the irony that *Middletown* was produced through the philanthropy of the very corporate leader whose outrageous neglect of oil workers Lynd had graphically detailed' in 1923.⁵⁴ Both the lack of objectivity and the change in focus caused the original sponsors to refuse publication of the final report.

As a former publisher and journalist, Lynd had little trouble getting his study published and despite his despair about the reading habits of middle-brow Americans, when the book came out it became a surprising bestseller.⁵⁵ While they rejected the dominant Chicago School theory of group conflict, the gentle critique of ordinary life under industrial change ultimately depicted a disturbing portrait of a nation that had submitted unwittingly to the shallow materialism and goals of consumerist and capitalist 'normalcy' in sacrifice of the pioneer past. Underlying his critique was the point that by choosing to delegate their choices to business authorities and by ordering their lives around money, Americans were losing the self-reliance, community values and independence that had long been the basis of their democratic cultural heritage.

The Business of Leisure

Like many of their contemporaries, the Lynds felt that the arrival of the 'highest standard of living' was a business chimera that covered up the new problems and inequalities it had spawned. This tendency was most notable in the vast expansion of commercialised leisure. While the Lynds approvingly noted growing leisure time and the appearance of a 'vacation habit' among the inhabitants of Middletown, the more money and leisure that was gained, the more degraded, 'canned' or commercialised their activities became. This was as worrying to the social scientists as the imbalance between production and consumption, for if leisure no longer offered the opportunities for self-culture and civilisation, then prosperity seemed a pointless achievement once basic human needs were catered for. Throughout the 1920s reformers argued that the new leisure hours released by technological advances should be directed into healthy activities led by experts and used scientifically and efficiently. By targeting leisure, reformers believed that positive social change could happen without disturbance to the operations of capitalism on which it relied. Such leisure should be free of business culture and commercialism, away from industrial crowds and workday stresses, in order to operate effectively as a balancing mechanism.

Industrialists also became increasingly interested in meeting union demands for lower hours as a way of improving workers' productivity even further. Over the 1920s paid vacations for workers were becoming an increasingly accepted practice as a way of rejuvenating workers for industry as industrialists accepted arguments from the play reform movement that workers' leisure functioned as a way of recharging and storing up energy for greater efficiency later. Although the percentage of workers receiving paid or company vacations remained low, some employers now encouraged or even continued to pay wages during short vacations. As Cindy Aron has noted, this benefited employers and productivity only if the time was used wisely, a concern that led to increasing interference in the non-working time of industrial employees.

Movie receipts, radio, book and magazine sales as well as the proliferation in domestic tourism, automobiling and travel all indicated that not only did people have more time and money, they increasingly spent it 'spending'. A government report in 1929 noted that not only was leisure itself a 'consumable' but that 'people can not "consume" leisure without consuming goods and services, and that leisure which



Figure 5.2 Coney Island Beach Scene, Brooklyn, New York, c. 1920s (© The Art Archive/Culver Pictures).

results from an increasing man-hour productivity helps to create new needs and new and broader markets'.⁵⁶ The changing class dynamics of leisure visible in the crowds of workers attracted to the commercial amusements of Coney Island and the growth of spectator sports such as football and baseball were more often cause for concern rather than celebration. As the numbers of vacationers and day-trippers increased, so did the spectre of revolution, chaos and mob rule, as well as fears that standardisation, passivity and conformity would lead to a breakdown in democracy and social order. Writers like James Truslow Adams argued that free time should be a space in which individualism and freedom was stimulated and crowds resisted, for the 'road of conformity is merely the road back to savagery'.⁵⁷

Both social scientists and industrialists increasingly believed that commercialised leisure left workers fatigued and dissatisfied and aimed to promote leisure pursuits as an opportunity for rest or self-improvement that would enable them to become better workers: one 1923 company newsletter told workers to 'Make yourself 100% efficient by getting out into the open and living the natural life for the

next two weeks'.⁵⁸ Yet, concerns about self-cultivation in leisure were not just applicable to the working masses; as Adams pointed out, the primitive debauch of consumer culture particularly applied to successful businessmen who 'may live in a palace, ride in the most luxurious cars and fill his rooms with old masters and the costliest manuscripts which his wealth can draw from under the hammer at Christie's but if he cares more for riches, luxury, and power than for a humanly rounded life he is not civilized but what the Greeks properly called a "barbarian"'.⁵⁹ To Adams the business ethic of increased consumerism militated against real leisure opportunities and civilisation: 'our prosperity can be maintained only by making people want more, and work more, all the time,' he stated, and where business focused on profits it remained blind to culture and aesthetics.⁶⁰ In the end, he asked, can 'a great civilization be built up or maintained upon the philosophy of the counting-house and the sole basic idea of a profit?'⁶¹

Balance through Leisure

Intelligence and health tests on soldiers after the enactment of universal conscription during World War I had created a 'composite portrait' of the average man as physically and mentally 'unfit' for modernity that became a pervasive concern.⁶² Sociologist William Ogburn argued in *Social Change* (1922) that proper adaptation to the new pace of society was vital, as Americans were now lagging behind the technologies they had invented and could not be happy or successful until they had achieved balance and adjustment to it. One of the first to combine Freudian thought with sociological research, Ogburn claimed that 'nervous disorders, hysteria, morbid compulsions, anxiety-neuroses, paranoia, melancholia' and manic depression were all evidence of 'psychological maladjustment occasioned by cultural influences'.⁶³ Others feared that society would revert to barbaric atavism if cultural lag was not overcome. Director of the Rockefeller Foundation Raymond B. Fosdick stated in *The Old Savage in the New Civilization* (1928) that humanity was in 'unique peril' from cultural lag, asking is 'man to be the master of the civilization he has created, or is he to be its victim?'⁶⁴ As the inadequacy of staying 'average' was revealed, a flurry of cures promoting personal efficiency techniques emerged in self-help publications that merged social science theories with pop philosophy and psychoanalytic thought.

Psychological health, efficiency and balance became increasingly paralleled with health in the wider social and political system. A

stream of publications advised on using psychoanalysis for business, family and individual success. In 1923 the appearance of the magazines *Psychology: Health, Happiness, Success* and the *Psychological Review of Reviews* gave voice to a rising number of lay and popular analysts dedicated to the popular use of psychology as a form of cultural uplift. Psychologist Joseph Jastrow wrote a daily syndicated newspaper column that appeared in more than 150 newspapers titled 'Keeping Mentally Fit' that was eventually published as *Keeping Mentally Fit: A Guide to Everyday Psychology* (1928) and *Piloting Your Life* (1930).⁶⁵ Books by non-analysts such as Joseph Ralph's *How to Psycho-Analyze Yourself: Theory and Practice of Remoulding the Personality by the Analytic Method* (1921) popularised Freudian ideas and provided cheap DIY therapy for those clamouring to succeed in this new climate. Samuel Schmalhausen's *Why We Misbehave* (1928) and *Sex in Civilization* (1929) offered guidance for those troubled by the tension between traditional morality and new sexual attitudes and Andre Tridon's *Psychoanalysis and Love* (1923) scandalised many moralists by describing humans as rutting animals. Orison Swett Marden's *Masterful Personality* (1921) played on desires to control others, writing that 'You can compel people to like you'.⁶⁶ The most popular self-help book of all became Émile Coué's *Self-Mastery Through Conscious Autosuggestion* (1922) that claimed health and happiness could be achieved through the repetition of mantras such as 'Day by day, in every way, I am getting better and better'.⁶⁷

While the ideal of achieving balance between work and leisure became a popular antidote for breakdown and dysfunction on an individual and social level, such nostrums often confused spiritual with corporate success. Frederick Lewis Allen noted that the veneration of business and its association with religion was 'the most significant phenomenon of the day', a phenomenon encapsulated in *Moses, Persuader of Men*, published by the Metropolitan Casualty Insurance Company, a booklet that claimed 'Moses was one of the greatest salesmen and real-estate promoters that ever lived . . . a Dominant, Fearless, and Successful Personality in one of the most magnificent selling campaigns that history ever placed upon its pages'.⁶⁸ Advertising executive Bruce Barton's popular book of the life of Jesus, *The Man Nobody Knows: A Discovery of the Real Jesus* (1925), paralleled the story of Christ's ascendancy from poverty to great leadership with modern business achievements, adding a modern spin to theology by claiming that Christian parables were examples of the greatest advertisements ever made. To Barton the story of Christ represented the greatest

achievement story of all and a model of executive leadership for all businessmen. Barton led a 'new class of secular priests conveying the gospel of consumption to the nation's anxious flock of consumers' thereby helping to overturn traditional protestant morality concerning abundance and excess.⁶⁹ A mixture of pop psychology and Christian thought, such rhetoric provided the ultimate booster salve to any concerns or moral ambivalence about the culture of abundance, business and consumption.

The commercial success of such pop psychology led to the proliferation of other self-help tendencies including popular parlour games such as 'Know Your Type' and personality tests in popular magazines. In 1920 Emanuel Haldeman-Julius began The Little Blue Books publishing company to cater to the demand for self-instruction and self-help among the less wealthy and by 1928 he had sold over 20 million books. His own history of the enterprise, *The First Hundred Million* (1928), became a self-help bestseller, and his mass production of all types of instructional learning earned him the nickname 'the Henry Ford of Publishing'.⁷⁰ The creation of the Book-of-the-Month club in 1926 and the appearance of the first *Reader's Digest* in 1921 further helped consumers to make informed choices about their leisure-time reading, providing consumer efficiency alongside cultural uplift.⁷¹ Given such commercialism it was not surprising that by the end of the decade intellectuals noted a degradation in American psychology that called into question the link between individual success and wider social improvement.⁷²

While mental adaptation to modernity was important, new ideas about the physical presentation of the self were also prevalent in popular advice and self-help instructions. To Lorine Pruette and Harry Elmer Barnes in *Women and Leisure: A Study of Social Waste* (1924), women were more at danger than men from the potential degeneration caused by inefficient use of leisure and more attention should be given to this urgent cause. The elimination of household tasks by machines or efficiency techniques, such as those taught by C. W. Taber's *The Business of the Household* (1922) or Christine Frederick's *Efficient Housekeeping or Household Engineering* (1925), had left middle-class, educated women in danger of having too much leisure at their disposal. To Pruette, women in 'part-time jobs are growing fat and intellectually flabby [and] their minds are going soft like their bodies'.⁷³ Women were also responsible for 90 per cent of all consumption, a fact that tied their leisure or free-time pursuits closely to goals for national efficiency in consumption.⁷⁴ Women's leisure thereby came under

increasing scrutiny by management and efficiency experts, for, as the chief consumers and educators of the nation's youth, women were central to the success of civilisation.

Most advice, however, defined success differently according to sex. For men it mostly entailed keeping or getting ahead in business; for women, it was finding and keeping the right mate and sustaining the needs of a family. Such advice helped women navigate the uncharted path from Victorian morality to sexual expression but also involved the promises of consumer goods to maintain their youth and allure or keep their family healthy. Anxieties were generated in an increasingly competitive market for relationships, highlighted by competitions such as the first Miss America contest held in 1921, where women were encouraged to compare themselves to flawless Hollywood stars whose promotion of products caused cosmetic sales to skyrocket 'from less than \$17,000,000 in 1914 to \$141,488,000 by 1925'.⁷⁵

Paradoxically it was during this period of unprecedented excess and increasing automobile travel that exercise and dieting became fashionable. Active leisure pursuits were recommended for both sexes as ways to streamline the body and overcome the physical attributes of cultural lag that were manifested in flab or weakness. Fads for dieting and body shaping emerged as understanding of the science of food increased and made vitamins and calories part of a common vocabulary. The most popular non-fiction book of the 1920s was Lulu Hunt Peters' *Diet and Health, With Key to the Calories*, that advocated slimming or 'reducing' by counting calories and slow eating. This was the first diet book to encourage women to scientifically manage their diets in order to streamline their bodies. Diets became big business as celebrities revealed their secrets to slimness in popular magazines and eating fads such as the 'Hollywood Eighteen Day Diet' of 585 calories per day or the 'Medical Millennium Diet' which consisted of slow chewing and daily enemas became popular. Changes in dress styles and the popularisation of swimsuits and leisure clothes that exposed more of the body led middle-class women to try and streamline their bodies into the new angular and boyish shapes that had become symbolic of efficient modernity and control. By 1923 an article in the *Woman's Home Companion* noted that: 'Once fat was an asset: now it's a liability, both physical and esthetic'.⁷⁶ This was also true of men who, despite the growth in popularity of spectator sports such as football, baseball and boxing, feared the results of passive leisure and sedentary work on their waistlines. Using leisure to engineer and develop a new self was further promoted by the bodybuilding craze set in train by Charles Atlas, who

won the 1922 'Most Perfectly Developed Man' contest. Following his success he made a fortune marketing his training programme to feeble or flabby acolytes.⁷⁷

A variety of other fads, crazes and pastimes that 'performed' displays of endurance, speed, deprivation or physical excess seemed to test the capacity of human strength as well as the tolerance of social reformers. Crazes for flagpole sitting, mountain climbing, marathons, long-distance flying, high-altitude stunts and all types of record-breaking were fuelled by national media attention in movie houses and newspapers. Daring stunt pilots or 'barnstormers' gave popular shows that were regularly featured in movie houses and women performed impressive physical feats that illustrated a new daring and female strength: pilot Amelia Earhart set the women's altitude record in 1922 and Gertrude Ederle became the first woman to swim the English Channel in 1926.

Such successes encouraged others to attempt feats of endurance and skill, all of which provided advertising opportunities for promoters who sponsored the winners. Of all the bizarre contests that became fads and entertainment in the decade – among them skipping derbies, ball-bouncing records, yo-yoing, gum chewing marathons, peanut pushing, staying awake, egg, doughnut or spaghetti eating – flagpole sitting and marathon dancing became the most popular. Alvin 'Shipwreck' Kelley began his flagpole sitting career in 1924 in a thirteen-hour sit as a publicity stunt for a Hollywood movie theatre. He and copycat rivals seeking to break his record quickly became a national phenomenon that continued throughout the decade. In one year Kelley managed to sit on a pole for 145 days, while his non-stop record was 49 days in Atlantic City, a feat witnessed by more than 20,000 spectators who watched him eat, shave, have his hair cut and catnap on the pole. By 1928 he was able to charge \$100 a day for his performance, plus a share of the receipts, a wage that fuelled further competitors to challenge him.⁷⁸

Kelley may have taken inspiration from a new fad that had taken off in 1923 when Alma Cummings won the first dance marathon contest in the US. Cummings had danced for twenty-seven hours non-stop in a New York ballroom, wearing out six partners and several pairs of shoes, an achievement that led to a national craze for record-breaking endurance dancing.⁷⁹ Within three weeks the record for non-stop dancing had risen to ninety hours and ten minutes and, by 1928, dance marathons lasting at least a week and with big prizes were being held throughout the nation. By pitting men against women, the individual against the clock, allowing audiences a popular vote

and turning working-class dancers into amateur celebrities, marathon dances embodied, performed and tested the new frontiers of recent social, work and gender transformations.⁸⁰ Such popular performances played out the possibilities and dangers of the efficiently trained mind and body and explored the boundaries of excess, balance and control in machine culture. While reformers opposed such trivial, exhausting and dangerous 'time wasting', shows like Kelley's replayed the drama of the frontier and the precariousness of existence in a hostile environment. Such performances were a form of self-manufacture in which 'time wasting' turned into individual triumph over adversity and anonymity. The heroism of such feats and their symbolic value to the nation reached an apotheosis in 1927, when a barely known aviator turned personal endurance into a national public celebration.

Charles Lindbergh's Transatlantic Flight (1927)

When twenty-five-year-old aviator Charles Lindbergh flew alone across the Atlantic in the single-engine *The Spirit of St. Louis* on the first non-stop solo flight from New York to Paris in 1927, his achievement became a national symbol of epic proportions. Since 1919 aviators had sought the prestige and \$25,000 prize money that Raymond Orteig had offered for the first non-stop transatlantic flight, and numerous lives had been lost in the attempt. The danger of the trip was considered so great that Lloyds of London gave odds of 10 to 1 against any successful attempt and later refused all bets on Lindbergh as too great a risk.⁸¹ Six pilots had lost their lives in the attempt in 1926. Just a fortnight before Lindbergh's attempt, two French aviators, Nungesser and Coli, had left Paris for New York but were still missing, while others died later trying to repeat his success. So when the young and relatively unknown Lindbergh took off in the single-engine *Spirit of St. Louis* with a packet of sandwiches, some water and his passport, few believed he would be seen again.

Lindbergh's flight was certainly a feat of courage and endurance. He had not slept the night before and had to keep himself awake for an additional thirty-three and a half hours while he navigated alone over vast stretches of sea and ice. Yet despite the gruelling physical and mental challenges he faced during the flight, Lindbergh was completely unprepared for what faced him when he landed in Paris. The whole world, now connected by telephone, telegraph and radio, had waited for news of the aviator and by the time the pilot landed, a crowd of 150,000 had gathered at the airfield to catch sight of him. As the crowd surged and grabbed at him the hysteria was palpable, recorded by a laconic entry into his flight log that read: 'Fuselage fabric badly torn by souvenir hunters'.⁸² From that moment, Lindbergh was catapulted into world fame and placed under a constant media spotlight. As excitement snowballed around the world he finally

returned to New York to a rapturous homecoming reception in New York City attended by more than four million hero-worshippers. Within a few weeks Lindbergh had become the most famous and most photographed man in the world.

His celebrity was soon accompanied by numerous requests for appearances, product endorsements and new fashion trends. Shoes, hats, pants, bread, toys, games and cigars appeared bearing 'Lindy' logos or incorporating plane propellers in their design.⁸³ 'Lindy' could sell anything. Movies about aviation proliferated with titles such as *Won on the Clouds*, *Cloud Riders*, *Wings* and *Flight* and movie moguls offered vast sums in order to get Lindbergh to star in pictures, most of which the shy airman rejected.⁸⁴ His flight was the spur for the emergence of an additional American icon when Walt Disney made his first Mickey Mouse cartoon, *Plane Crazy* (1928), a comedy of Mickey's failure to emulate his hero Lindbergh. Fitzgerald wrote:

In the spring of '27, something bright and alien flashed across the sky. A young Minnesotan who seemed to have nothing to do with his generation did a heroic thing, and for a moment people set down their glasses in country clubs and speakeasies and thought their old best dreams. Maybe there was a way out by flying, maybe our restless blood could find frontiers in the illimitable air.⁸⁵

This emotional response to Lindbergh's success came to represent 'a mass ritual in which America celebrated itself more than it celebrated Lindbergh'.⁸⁶ In such materialistic, cynical and corrupt times, Lindbergh signified the return of innocence, the revival of the frontier spirit, the triumph of the individual and the glory of the machine. The American ambassador in Paris wired President Coolidge immediately to tell him that 'we could not have found a better type than young Lindbergh to represent the spirit and high purpose of our people'.⁸⁷ Lindbergh's success revived traditional notions of individualism unconnected with the selfishness or greed of the corporate-minded era. The *Chicago Tribune* ran a cartoon titled 'The Pioneer Spirit Still Survives' showing a covered wagon in one panel with Lindbergh taking off in the next, while reports of his success claimed that he had conquered a 'new frontier'.⁸⁸ This frontier spirit contrasted with the moral and cultural vacuum that had plagued the nation and the media quickly latched on to Lindbergh's act as a symbol of promise in a 'grubby world', as one journalist wrote at the time.⁸⁹ To one journalist he was 'US personified. He is the United States'.⁹⁰

The symbol of Lindbergh became cathartic because it offered a solution to the tension between tradition and modernity. By flying from New York to Paris he created 'a bridge between the two great nations' that linked old and new worlds and his story of individual survival counteracted the sense that individual acts were impossible in an era of mechanisation and mass production.⁹¹ His success was both man- and machine-made: President Coolidge congratulated his airplane as the 'silent partner' who 'represented American genius and industry'.⁹² Counteracting prevalent fears of

Anglo-Saxon 'race suicide', the blonde, blue-eyed Lindbergh also came to represent fantasies of Nordic ascendancy. A lifelong believer in eugenics, Lindbergh was himself convinced that all of the world's problems could be solved by the scientific breeding of the race.

Around this single man a structure of mythic values cohered that synthesised the contradictory and conflicting views about the American past and present. Emblematic of both pastoral and industrial visions of America, he became a paradigm of dualist tensions of the 1920s, something he acknowledged in his autobiography:

I loved the farm, with its wooded river and creek banks, its tillage and crops, and its cattle and horses. I was fascinated by the laboratory's magic: the intangible power found in electrified wires, through which one could see the unseeable. Instinctively I was drawn to the farm, intellectually to the laboratory. Here began a conflict between values of instinct and intellect that was carried through my entire life, and that I eventually recognized as inherent in my civilization.⁹³

In light of the conflict he represented, it is not surprising that the mythic structure surrounding Lindbergh collapsed. After the kidnap and murder of his baby son in 1932 he left America to live in England and in an ambassadorial role for the American aviation industry in 1936 he was honoured by the Nazis. His refusal to condemn the regime and his later spokespersonship for the isolationist anti-war 'America First Campaign' called his politics, his patriotism and his status as all-American hero into question.

Despite his fall from grace he continued to be a pulse of the times: a man who befriended both the first man to fly a plane and the first man to walk on the moon. Although his success provided a catalyst for the growth of the air, space and missile industries, he remained ambivalent about his achievements and became a committed conservationist who worked to preserve threatened animal and native populations around the world. Like Henry Ford, he paradoxically spent much of his later life using his success and wealth to seek out the peace and order of pre-industrial simplicity.⁹⁴

Conclusion

The collapse of the mythic structure around Lindbergh was presaged in the collapse of business culture in late 1929. The unsustainable excesses and paradoxes of business civilisation, reflected in pursuits that turned social anxieties and tensions into popular performance and display, began to strain as the stock market nose-dived from unprecedented altitudes in the autumn of 1929. Up until then, like the risk-taking Lindbergh, gambling was surrounded by an aura of heroic individualism and masculinity that counteracted the conformism, consumerism and control of modern industrial culture. Walter Lippmann even commented that the unplanned activities of businessmen were 'more

winners and record-breakers into overnight success stories, so too, it seemed, had business speculation. Frederick Lewis Allen reflected on the widespread popularity of such speculation in *Only Yesterday*:

Across the dinner table one heard fantastic stories of sudden fortunes: a young banker had put every dollar of his small capital into Niles-Bement Pond and now was fixed for life; a widow had been able to buy a large country house with her winnings in Kennecott. Thousands speculated – and won, too – without the slightest knowledge of the nature of the company upon whose fortunes they were relying, like the people who bought Seaboard Air Line under the impression that it was an aviation stock. Grocers, motormen, plumbers, seamstresses, and speakeasy waiters were in the market. Even the revolting intellectuals were there: loudly as they might lament the depressing effects of standardization and mass production upon American life, they found themselves quite ready to reap the fruits thereof. Literary editors whose hopes were wrapped about American Cyanamid B lunched with poets who swore by Cities Service, and as they left the table, stopped for a moment in the crowd at the broker's branch office to catch the latest quotations; and the artist who had once been eloquent only about Gauguin laid aside his brushes to proclaim the merits of National Bellas Hess. The Big Bull Market had become a national mania'.

While it seemed that everyone was playing the business game, with roughly 4 million out of the total population of 120 million owning stock, most investments were actually concentrated in very few hands.⁹⁷ The unequal distribution of wealth created by business deregulation, cuts in federal spending and tax cuts for the rich had been concealed behind an unprecedented growth of consumer credit. In his inaugural speech of March 1929 President Hoover uttered total confidence in the system, saying that he had 'no fears for the future of our country' that was 'bright with hope'.⁹⁸ Yet despite the return of political isolationism after the war, American banks had become entwined in a global economy that made them reliant on European debtors' ability to repay extensive loans or purchase mass-produced goods, while the severe depression of 1920–2, downturns in 1924 and 1927, the market collapse in Florida of 1926 and the ongoing agricultural depression all provided warning signs that the economic system was not as robust as such rhetoric maintained.⁹⁹

As stock speculation became frenzied, the Federal Reserve Board issued a warning in early 1929 that their member banks should not

make loans for speculative purposes and raised interest rates to deter speculation further. It was already too late: as building contracts declined and consumer spending fell from a 7.4 per cent rise in 1927–8 to a 1.5 per cent rise in 1928–9, production slowed and commodity prices fell. Despite these signs the stock market continued to rise by buying ‘on margin’ – using loans to buy further stock – causing prices to double or triple in just a few months. From September 1929 the stock market started to falter, leading to huge falls on 19 October and a further severe drop on 24 October. Confidence was briefly restored as a group of bankers created a \$240 million reserve fund to help balance the market but their efforts appeared fruitless when on 28 and 29 October the stock exchange plummeted again. Within the month \$30 billion had been lost and the Dow Jones average had declined from \$364.90 to \$62.70 per share, destroying investor and business confidence.¹⁰⁰

While the 1929 Wall Street Crash was not the only cause of the Great Depression, the economic realities of the decade had been far easier to ignore in the speculative environment of business prosperity that claimed uplift for all but offered no security or equality.¹⁰¹ In the end the Crash highlighted the instability of a political system based solely on business ideals, in which the seemingly ‘solid plateau of values was nothing but arrant nonsense’.¹⁰² By 1930 the ideals of a business civilisation had collapsed and intellectuals like Chase and Dewey had their views of ‘pecuniary’ business culture cruelly confirmed. Dewey reflected on the inability of collective enrichment to lead to the elevation of civilisation in his *Individualism Old and New* (1930), blaming a ‘perversion of the whole ideal of individualism’ on ‘the practices of a pecuniary culture’.¹⁰³ Such observers now called for new collectivist ideals based on a planned economy in which the insecurity of random stock market ‘orgies’ and boom and bust cycles would become a thing of the past.

A political cartoon of 1931 depicting a farmer, a worker and an ‘honest businessman’ at a poker game, demanding a ‘new deal’ from dishonest speculators and politicians, depicted the transition from big business ‘games’.¹⁰⁴ The social scientist replaced business leadership as Roosevelt’s New Deal Government aimed to remove insecurity and risk-taking, replacing it with a system of social security that would balance out the inequalities of capitalist culture. This formula aimed not to destroy the faulty system, but to get it working again, for, as Chase wrote, ‘The going financial structure, my friends, is as temperamental as a cigar lighter. Sometimes it works and sometimes it doesn’t’.¹⁰⁵

Notes

Introduction

1. F. Scott Fitzgerald, 'Echos of the Jazz Age' (1931), reprinted in Loren Baritz (ed.), *The Culture of the Twenties* (New York: Bobbs-Merrill Co., Inc, 1970), p. 414.
2. Lawrence Levine, 'Progress and Nostalgia: The Self-Image of the Nineteen Twenties', in Lawrence W. Levine, *The Unpredictable Past: Explorations in American Cultural History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 189–205.
3. Henry Adams, *The Education of Henry Adams: An Autobiography* (New York: Houghton and Mifflin Co., 1918).
4. Thorstein Veblen, 'Dementia Praecox', *The Freeman* (21 June 1922), reprinted in Baritz (ed.), *The Culture of the Twenties*, p. 29.
5. Sean Dennis Cashman, *America in the Twenties and Thirties: The Olympian Age of Franklin Delano Roosevelt* (New York: New York University Press, 1989), p. 511.
6. Alan Bilton and Philip Melling (eds), *America in the 1920s: Literary Sources and Documents* (Robertsbridge, UK: Helm Information, 2004), pp. 249–50.
7. African American journalist and NAACP leader Walter White documented the lynchings and mob violence in his *Rope and Faggot: A Biography of Judge Lynch* (New York: Knopf, 1929).
8. William E. Leuchtenburg, *The Perils of Prosperity: 1914–32* (University of Chicago Press, 1993), p. 39.
9. Warren Harding, 'Return to Normalcy' (1920), in Cynthia Rose (ed.), *American Decades Primary Sources: 1920–1929* (Detroit, MI: Gale Publishing, 2004), p. 262. The original recorded speech is available at: <http://lcweb2.loc.gov/ammem/nfhtml/nfexpe.html>
10. Malcolm Cowley, *Exile's Return: A Literary Odyssey of the 1920s* (New York: Penguin Books, [1934] 1994), p. 215.
11. Reprinted in Baritz (ed.), *The Culture of the Twenties*, p. 414.
12. Ibid.
13. Ibid.
14. Barbara Haskell, *The American Century: Art and Culture, 1900–1950* (New York: Norton, 1999), p. 153.

15. Lewis Mumford, *The Golden Day* (New York: Boni and Liveright: 1926), pp. 275–6.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 282.
17. Harold Evans Stearns, *Civilization in the United States* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1922), p. vii.
18. Warren Susman, *Culture as History* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution, 2003), p. 137.
19. Clarence Hooker, *Life in the Shadows of the Crystal Palace, 1910–1927: Ford Workers in the Model T Era* (Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1997), pp. 83–4.
20. Terry Smith, *Making the Modern: Industry, Art, and Design in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), pp. 15–159.
21. Antonio Gramsci, ‘Americanism and Fordism’, in *Selections From the Prison Notebooks* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1971), p. 303.
22. Mumford in Stearns, *Civilization in the United States*, p. 13.
23. The museum site is online at: <http://www.hfmvgv.org/village/default.asp>. Historic preservation was all the rage for industrialists in the 1920s; oil magnate John D. Rockefeller also began the restoration of Colonial Williamsburg in 1926.
24. Cashman, *America in the Twenties and Thirties*, p. 5.
25. Baritz (ed.), *The Culture of the Twenties*, p. 415.
26. Cowley, *Exile’s Return*, p. 93.
27. Lewis Mumford, *Story of Utopias* (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1922), p. 17.
28. See John Dewey, *Reconstruction in Philosophy* (New York: H. Holt & Co., 1920). Dewey’s publications over the 1920s included: *Human Nature and Conduct: An Introduction to Social Psychology* (1922); *The Public and its Problems* (1927); *The Quest for Certainty* (1929); *Experience and Nature* (1929); *Individualism Old and New* (1930).
29. Dewey, *Reconstruction in Philosophy*, p. 211.
30. John Dewey, ‘The Need for a Recovery of Philosophy’ (1917), in Louis Menand (ed.), *Pragmatism: A Reader* (New York: Vintage Books, 1997), pp. 220, 228, 231.
31. *Ibid.*, p. 229.
32. *Ibid.*, p. 232.
33. George Cotkin, ‘Middle-Ground Pragmatists: The Popularization of Philosophy in American Culture’, *Journal of the History of Ideas* 55.2 (1994), 283–302. See also Laura M. Westhoff, ‘The Popularization of Knowledge: John Dewey on Experts and American Democracy’, *History of Education Quarterly* 35.1 (1995), 27–47.
34. See Dewey’s book on this subject, *The Quest for Certainty* (New York: Minton, Balch, 1929).
35. Martin Bulmer, *The Chicago School of Sociology: Institutionalization, Diversity and the Rise of Sociological Research* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), pp. 29–32. See also J. David Lewis and Richard L. Smith, *American Sociology and Pragmatism: Mead, Chicago Sociology, and Symbolic Interaction* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980).
36. Bulmer, *The Chicago School of Sociology*, p. 200.
37. On anthropology and ethnography as intellectual anxiety over culture see Paul R. Gorman, *Left Intellectuals and Popular Culture in Twentieth-Century*

- America* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), pp. 95–107.
38. Warren Susman stated that '[b]y 1922 an exceptional and ever-growing number of Americans came to believe in a series of changes in the structure of their world . . . based on the extraordinarily rapid accumulation of both new knowledge and new experience', which led to increased awareness of, as well as anxiety over, the changing face and pace of modern culture. Susman, *Culture as History*, p. 106.
 39. Preston William Slosson, *The Great Crusade and After: 1914–1928* (New York: Macmillan, 1931), p. 384.
 40. *Ibid.*, p. 383.
 41. Available online at <http://www.vintagetooncast.com/2006/11/einstein-theory-of-relativity.html>. The impact of Einstein's theory on ethics and beliefs was discussed in James Truslow Adams, *Our Business Civilization: Some Aspects of American Culture* (New York: A. and C. Boni, 1929), p. 73.
 42. Paul A. Carter, *Another Part of the Twenties* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977), p. 74.
 43. David J. Rhees, *Public Images of Science In America: Science News-Letter, 1922–1929*, available online at <http://scienceservice.si.edu/essay/>.
 44. Alfred B. Kuttner, 'Nerves', in Stearns (ed.), *Civilization in the United States*, p. 434. Freud was first translated into English by A. A. Brill in 1913. For Freud's influence in this early period see Frederick Hoffman, *Freudianism and The Literary Mind* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1957), pp. 44–80. For a thorough discussion of the history of Freud's influence in America see Nathan Hale, *The Rise and Crisis of Psychoanalysis in the United States: Freud and the Americans, 1917–1985* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995) and Hendrik Ruitenbeck, *Freud and America* (New York: Macmillan, 1966).
 45. Baritz (ed.), *The Culture of the Twenties*, p. 35.
 46. Sigmund Freud, *The Future of an Illusion*, ed. James Strachey (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1964), p. 2.
 47. Stearns, *Civilization in the United States*, p. 136.
 48. Frederick Hoffman, *Freudianism and The Literary Mind* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1957), p. 251.
 49. Carolyn Kitch, 'Family Pictures: Constructing the "Typical" American in 1920s Magazines', *American Journalism* 16.4 (1999), 57–75.
 50. 'Is Freudianism Destined to Live?', *Current Opinion* (September 1920), 355–7; George Sylvester Viereck, 'Freud: Columbus of the Subconscious', *Forum* (March 1925), 302–12; Cornelia Stratton Parker, 'The Capital of Psychology', *Survey* (15 August 1925), cited in Gary Dean Best, *The Dollar Decade: Mammon and the Machine in 1920s America* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003), pp. 2–5.
 51. Hale, *The Rise and Crisis of Psychoanalysis*, p. 27.
 52. For the popular reception of Freud's ideas see Hoffman, *Freudianism and the Literary Mind*, pp. 44–77.
 53. Stearns, *Civilization in the United States*, p. 434.
 54. Lucy T. Benjamin and David N. Dixon, 'Dream Analysis by Mail: An American Woman Seeks Freud's Advice', *American Psychologist* 51.6 (1996), p. 461.
 55. Hale, *The Rise and Crisis of Psychoanalysis*, pp. 91–3. For an excellent introduction and collection of primary documents concerning the trial see Douglas

- Linder, *Illinois v. Nathan Leopold and Richard Loeb: An Introduction*, at <http://www.law.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/leoploeb/leopold.htm>.
56. Hale, *The Rise and Crisis of Psychoanalysis*, pp. 89–91.
 57. Ann Douglas, *Terrible Honesty: Mongrel Manhattan in the 1920s* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1995), p. 21.
 58. Freud, *The Future of an Illusion*, p. 25.
 59. 'Religion Doomed', *New York Times* (27 December 1927), p. 6.
 60. Shailer Matthews, *The Faith of Modernism* (New York: Macmillan, 1924), pp. 22–3.
 61. Charles H. Lippy, 'Religious Liberalism, Fundamentalism, and Orthodoxy', in Mary Kupiec Cayton et al. (eds), *Encyclopedia of American Cultural and Intellectual History*, Vol. 1 (New York: Scribner's, 2001), pp. 713–22. For a general survey of religion in the decade see Lynn Dumenil, *The Modern Temper: American Culture and Society in the 1920s* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1995), pp. 169–200.
 62. George M. Marsden, *The Shaping of Twentieth Century Evangelicalism, 1870–1925* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), p. 159.
 63. Harry Emerson Fosdick, 'Shall the Fundamentalists Win?', *Christian Work* 102 (10 June 1922), pp. 716–22.
 64. John Thomas Scopes, *The World's Most Famous Court Trial: State of Tennessee v. John Thomas Scopes. Complete Stenographic Report . . . Including Speeches and Arguments of Attorneys* (New York: Da Capo Press, [1925] 1971), p. 5.
 65. Cited in Sheldon Norman Grebstein (ed.), *Monkey Trial: The State of Tennessee vs. John Thomas Scopes* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1960), p. 195.
 66. Lawrence Levine, cited in Edward J. Larson, *Summer for the Gods: The Scopes Trial and America's Continuing Debate over Science and Religion* (New York: Basic Books, 1997), p. 39.
 67. Bryan cited in Grebstein, *Monkey Trial*, p. 164.
 68. Darrow cited in Grebstein, *Monkey Trial*, p. 164.
 69. Larson, *Summer for the Gods*, pp. 140–203.
 70. Scopes, *The World's Most Famous Court Trial*, p. 87.
 71. Grebstein, *Monkey Trial*, pp. 158–9.
 72. *Ibid.*, pp. 20, 195.
 73. H. L. Mencken, 'The Monkey Trial: A Reporter's Account' (1925), online at <http://www.law.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/scopes/menk.htm>.
 74. John Dewey, 'The American Intellectual Frontier' (1922), reprinted in Bilton and Melling (eds), *America in the 1920s*, pp. 98, 96.
 75. *Ibid.*, p. 98.
 76. Carter, *Another Part of the Twenties*, p. 79.
 77. Stanley Cobden, *Rebellion Against Victorianism: The Impetus for Cultural Change in 1920s America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), pp. 136–56. See also Dumenil, *The Modern Temper*, pp. 235–49.
 78. Michael E. Parrish, *Anxious Decades: America in Prosperity and Depression 1920–1941* (New York: Norton, 1993), p. 119.
 79. *Ibid.*, p. 118.
 80. Rolf Lunden, *Business and Religion in the American 1920s* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1988), p. 60. See also R. Laurence Moore, *Selling God: American Religion in the Marketplace of Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).

81. Shailer Matthews, 'Business – Maker of Morals' (1927), cited in Lunden, *Business and Religion*, p. 36.
82. Susan Nance, 'Mystery of the Moorish Science Temple: Southern Blacks and American Alternative Spirituality in 1920s Chicago', *Religion and American Culture* 12.2 (2002), 123–66; Susan Nance, 'Respectability and Representation: The Moorish Science Temple, Morocco, and Black Public Culture in 1920s Chicago', *American Quarterly* 54.4 (2002), pp. 623–59.
83. See Randall K. Burkett and David W. Wills, 'African American Religious History, 1919–1939', <http://www.amherst.edu/~aardoc/Biblio.html>. See also Randall K. Burkett, *Garveyism as A Religious Movement: The Institutionalization of a Black Civil Religion* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1978).
84. John White, *Black Leadership in America* (London: Longman, 1985), pp. 83–104.
85. Stanley Cobden, *Rebellion Against Victorianism: The Impetus for Cultural Change in 1920s America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), pp. 74–90.
86. Marcus Garvey, *The Philosophy and Opinions of Marcus Garvey*, ed. Amy Jacques Garvey, [1923] <http://www.wordowner.com/garvey/>.
87. W. E. Burghardt Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (Chicago: A. C. McClurg & Co., 1903). Available online at <http://www.bartleby.com/114/2.html>.
88. Lothrop Stoddard, *The Rising Tide of Color Against White World-Supremacy* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1920), pp. xxix, xxxii.
89. *Ibid.*, p. 61.
90. *Ibid.*, pp. 219–21.
91. *Ibid.*, p. 255.
92. For a detailed discussion of the rise of anti-immigration and the passage of the acts see David J. Goldberg, *Discontented America: The United States in the 1920s* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), pp. 140–66.
93. Grant Overton, *American Nights Entertainment* (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1923), p. 381.
94. *Ibid.*, p. 382.
95. 'Shall the Negro be Encouraged to Seek Cultural Equality?', *Report of Debate Conducted by the Chicago Forum. Affirmative: W. E. B. Du Bois; Negative: Lothrop Stoddard, March 17, 1929* (Chicago: Chicago Forum Council, 1929). See also Jane Kuenz, 'Black No More: George Schulyer and the Politics of Racial Culture', Victor A. Kramer and Robert A. Russ (eds), *Harlem Renaissance Re-Examined*, (Troy, NY: Whitston Publishing Co., 1997), p. 202.
96. See Daylanne K. English, *Unnatural Selections: Eugenics in American Modernism and the Harlem Renaissance* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2004).
97. Laban Carrick Hill, *Harlem Stomp: A Cultural History of the Harlem Renaissance*, (New York: Little, Brown, 2003), pp. 56–7.
98. *Survey Graphic* special edition, *Harlem: Mecca of the New Negro* (March 1925) available online at <http://etext.virginia.edu/harlem/>.
99. Alain Locke, *The New Negro: Voices from the Harlem Renaissance* (New York: Simon and Schuster, [1925] 1997), p. 8.
100. *Ibid.*, p. 15.
101. Douglas, *Terrible Honesty*, p. 332.

102. Barbara Foley argues that Locke's formulation of the New Negro was a retreat from radical class-based politics into 'cultural romanticism'. See Foley, *Spectres of 1919: Class and Nation in the Making of the New Negro* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2003).
103. Locke, *The New Negro*, p. xix.
104. *Ibid.*, p. 10.
105. Dumenil, *The Modern Temper*, pp. 98–144.
106. Stearns, *Civilization in the United States*, p. 135.
107. *Ibid.*, p. 145.
108. *Ibid.*
109. *Ibid.*, p. 182.
110. *Ibid.*, p. 438.
111. Kathleen M. Blee, 'Women in the 1920s Ku Klux Klan Movement', *Feminist Studies*, 17.1 (1991), p. 67. See also Kathleen M. Blee, *Inside Organized Racism: Women in the Hate Movement* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2002).
112. Blee, 'Women in the 1920s', p. 73.
113. Daniel J. Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics: Genetics and the Uses of Human Heredity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), p. 90.
114. Margaret Sanger, *The Pivot of Civilization* (New York: Brentano's, 1922).
115. The law was not repealed until 1974. See Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics*, p. 100.
116. John Dewey, in Albert Einstein et al., *Living Philosophies* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1931), p. 33.
117. Baker Brownell, *The New Universe: An Outline of the Worlds in Which We Live* (New York: D. Van Nostrand, 1926), p. 290.
118. Krutch, 'The Modern Temper' (1927), reprinted in Bilton and Melling (eds), *America in the 1920s*, pp. 132, 134.

1. Fiction, Poetry and Drama

1. Willa Cather, *The Professor's House* (London: Virago Press, [1925] 2003), p. 150.
2. See Douglas, *Terrible Honesty*, p. 41.
3. Malcolm Cowley, *Exile's Return: A Literary Odyssey of the 1920s* (New York: Penguin Books, [1934] 1994), p. 9.
4. Krutch reprinted in Baritz, *The Culture of the Twenties*, p. 371. Cowley, *Exile's Return*, p. 9.
5. George Santayana, *Character and Opinion in the United States: With Reminiscences of William James and Josiah Royce and Academic Life in America* (New York: Scribner's, 1920), p. 172.
6. Douglas, *Terrible Honesty*, p. 23.
7. F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Crack Up* (New York: New Directions, [1945] 1962), p. 20.
8. Sigmund Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, trans. James Strachey (New York: Norton, 1961), p. 30.
9. Thomas Stearns Eliot, *The Waste Land* (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1922).
10. Frederick Hoffman, *The Twenties: American Writing in the Postwar Decade* (New York: Free Press, 1965), p. 78.

11. John Dos Passos, *One Man's Initiation: 1917* (New York: George H. Doran Co., 1922), p. 86.
12. Dos Passos, *One Man's Initiation*, p. 113.
13. John Dos Passos, *Three Soldiers* (New York: George H. Doran Co., 1921), p. 201.
14. Ernest Hemingway, *The Essential Hemingway* (London: Arrow Books, 2004), p. 333.
15. Quoted in Ronald E. Martin, *American Literature and the Destruction of Knowledge: Innovative Writing in the Age of Epistemology* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1991), p. 216.
16. Ernest Hemingway, *The Essential Hemingway* (London: Random House, [1947] 2004), p. 7.
17. Alan Trachtenberg and Benjamin DeMott (eds), *America in Literature*, Vol. 2 (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1978), p. 1917.
18. Claude McKay, *Home to Harlem* (Lebanon, NH: Northeastern University Press, [1928] 1987), p. 156.
19. Alain Locke, *The New Negro*, p. 14.
20. Alan Locke, 'Harlem', *Survey Graphic* (March 1925), p. 629. Available online at <http://etext.virginia.edu/harlem/LocHarlF.html>.
21. *Ibid.*
22. Jessie Fauset, 'Nostalgia', *The Crisis* 22 (August 1921), pp. 154–8.
23. Sterling A. Brown et al. (eds), *Negro Caravan* (New York: Dryden Press, 1941), p. 368. Available online at <http://cai.ucdavis.edu/uccp/wearyblues.html>.
24. F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby* (London: Penguin Books, [1926] 2000), p. 106.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 114.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 79.
27. *Ibid.*, pp. 8, 106.
28. *Ibid.*, p. 9.
29. *Ibid.*, p. 170.
30. *Ibid.*, p. 26.
31. *Ibid.*, p. 131.
32. Hearst began building his castle in California in 1919; it was a patchwork of architectural styles from Roman, Greek, Egyptian, Gothic and Medieval Spanish. Like Ford, Hearst didn't just recreate buildings but dismantled and imported originals from around the world and had them reconstructed on his land.
33. Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, pp. 171–2.
34. Gertrude Stein, 'Composition as Explanation' (1926). Available online at <http://academic.evergreen.edu/curricular/fopa/theatre/texts/stein.htm>.
35. Ezra Pound, *Machine Art and Other Writings: The Lost Thought of the Italian Years*, ed. Maria Luisa Ardizzzone (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996).
36. See Lisa M. Steinman, *Made in America: Science, Technology and American Modernist Poets* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1987).
37. Gertrude Stein, *The Making of Americans: Being a History of a Family's Progress* (The Dalkey Archive Press, [1925] 1995), p. 3.
38. *Ibid.*, p. 186.
39. Thomas Stearns Eliot, *The Sacred Wood* (London: Methuen, 1920), online at <http://www.bartleby.com/200/>.

40. T. S. Eliot, 'Tradition and the Individual Talent' [1919], published in *The Sacred Wood*.
41. Marianne Moore, *Selected Poems* (New York: Macmillan, 1935), p. 99.
42. Carol Donley, "'Springtime of the Mind": Poetic Responses to Einstein and Relativity', in Dennis P. Ryan (ed.), *Einstein and the Humanities* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1987), p. 119.
43. See Cecilia Tichi, *Shifting Gears: Technology, Literature, Culture in Modernist America* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1987), p. 267.
44. Archibald MacLeish, 'Einstein', in *Collected Poems* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1985), p. 143.
45. William Carlos Williams, *Selected Poems* (New Directions, 1985), pp. 44, 55. An archive of recordings (including 'To Elsie') is available at <http://writing.upenn.edu/pennsound/x/Williams-WC.html>.
46. Pound, *Machine Art*, p. 81. On Pound's interest in science and mathematics see Ian F. Bell, 'The Poundian Fourth Dimension', *Symbiosis* 11.2 (October 2007), pp. 61–84.
47. Frederick J. Hoffman, 'The Technological Fallacy in Contemporary Poetry: Hart Crane and MacKnight Black', *American Literature* 21.1 (March 1949), 94–107.
48. Langston Hughes, 'The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain', *Nation* 72 (23 June 1926), p. 693.
49. Oliver M. Sayler, 'Training the Playwright of the Machine Age', in Oliver Sayler (ed.), *Revolt in the Arts: A Survey of the Creation, Distribution and Appreciation of Art in America* (New York: Brentano's, 1930), p. 175.
50. Mardi Valgemmae, *Accelerated Grimace: Expressionism in the American Drama of the 1920s* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1972), pp. 73, 91.
51. See Constance D'Arcy Mackay, *The Little Theatre in the United States* (New York: Henry Holt, 1917); Oliver M. Sayler, *Our American Theatre* (New York: Brentano's, 1923); Weldon B. Durham (ed.), *American Theatre Companies, 1888–1930* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1987). On black little theatre see Yvonne Shafer, *American Women Playwrights, 1900–1950* (New York: Peter Lang, 1997), p. 159.
52. Carme Manuel, 'A Ghost in the Expressionist Jungle of O'Neill's *The Emperor Jones*', *African American Review* 39 (Spring 2005), 67–85. For a vast collection of scholarship and original documents from the era see the Eugene O'Neill electronic archive at <http://www.eoneill.com/>.
53. W. David Sievers, *Freud On Broadway: A History of Psychoanalysis and the American Drama* (New York: Cooper Square Publishers, [1955] 1970), pp. 104–5.
54. *Ibid.*, p. 98.
55. *Ibid.*, p. 115.
56. See Tamsen Wolff, "'Eugenic O'Neill" and the Secrets of *Strange Interlude*', *Theatre Journal* 55 (2003), p. 221.
57. Hoffman, *The Twenties*, p. 256.
58. Eugene O'Neill, *The Collected Plays of Eugene O'Neill* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1988), p. 806.
59. Adams, *The Education of Henry Adams*, at <http://xroads.virginia.edu/~HYPER/hadams/eha25.html>.

60. Mardi Valgema, 'Civil War among the Expressionists: John Howard Lawson and the "Pinwheel" Controversy', *Educational Theatre Journal* 20.1 (March 1968), pp. 8–14. See also Dennis G. Jerz, *Technology in American Drama, 1920–1950: Soul and Society in the Age of the Machine* (New York: Greenwood Press, 2003).
61. Elmer Rice, *Elmer Rice: Three Plays* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1993), p. 61.
62. Elmer Rice, *The Subway: A Play in Nine Scenes* (New York: S. French, 1929), pp. 94–5.
63. Valgema, *Accelerated Grimace*, p. 94.
64. *Ibid.*, p. 92.
65. *Ibid.*, p. 88.
66. *Ibid.*, p. 87.
67. For other types of drama such as vaudeville see Arthur Gerwitz and James J. Kolb (eds), *Art, Glitter and Gritz: Mainstream Playwrights and Popular Theatre in 1920s America* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2004).
68. Sinclair Lewis, *Main Street: The Story of Carol Kennicott* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Howe, 1920), p. 265.
69. *Ibid.*
70. Sinclair Lewis, *Babbitt* (New York: New American Library, [1922] 1961), p. 5.
71. *Ibid.*, p. 8.
72. *Ibid.*, p. 16.
73. Raegis Michaud, *The American Novel To-Day: A Social and Psychological Study* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1928), pp. 145–6.
74. H. L. Mencken, 'Sahara of the Bozart' [1917], reprinted in Huntington Cairns (ed.), *The American Scene: A Reader* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1977), pp. 157–8.
75. *Ibid.*, p. 160.
76. In fact, Mencken provided succour to these magazines and the Southern renaissance. See Richard H. King, *A Southern Renaissance: The Cultural Awakening of the American South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), p. 14.
77. Richard Gray, *A History of American Literature* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), p. 464.
78. Paul V. Murphy, *The Rebuke of History: The Southern Agrarians and American Conservative Thought* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), p. 29.
79. All quotes from Hoffman, *The Twenties*, p. 174.
80. For the influence of 'The Waste Land' see Murphy, *The Rebuke of History*, p. 12.
81. John Tyree Fain and Thomas Daniel Young (eds), *The Literary Correspondence of Donald Davidson and Allen Tate* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1974), p. 189.
82. Religion was central to the agrarians who saw it as the path towards moral unity. See Murphy, *The Rebuke of History*, p. 55.
83. Susan V. Donaldson, 'Introduction', *I'll Take My Stand: The South and the Agrarian Tradition* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 2006), p. x. Paul K. Conkin, *The Southern Agrarians* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1988); Richard Gray, *Writing the South: Ideas of an American Region* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

84. Hoffman, *The Twenties*, p. 181.
85. *Ibid.*, p. 181. See also Benedict Anderson, 'The South of the Agrarians', in Michael Kreyling (ed.), *Inventing Southern Literature* (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 1998), p. 5. The critical historiography of the Southern Renaissance is outlined by John M. Grammer, 'Reconstructing Southern Literature', *American Literary History* 13.1 (Spring 2001), pp. 126–40.
86. Donaldson, *I'll Take My Stand*, p. xxiv.
87. Clifford E. Wulfman, 'Sighting/siting/citing the Scar: Trauma and Homecoming in Faulkner's Soldiers' Pay', *Studies in American Fiction* 31.1 (2003), p. 29. Faulkner had volunteered but had not been able to serve in the war.
88. Gray, *A History of American Literature*, p. 448.
89. William Faulkner, *The Sound and the Fury and As I Lay Dying* (New York: Modern Library, 1946), p. 19.
90. Faulkner, *The Sound and the Fury*, p. 95. For a discussion of Faulkner's modernism see Daniel J. Singal, *William Faulkner: The Making of a Modernist* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1997). See also Doreen Fowler and Ann J. Abadie (eds), *Faulkner and the Southern Renaissance* (Jackson, MS: University of Mississippi Press, 1982).
91. Adams, *The Education of Henry Adams*, p. 382.
92. See John R. Cooley, *Savages and Naturals: Black Portraits by White Writers in Modern American Literature* (Newark, DE: University of Delaware Press, 1982); Susan Gubar, *Racechanges: White Skin, Black Face in American Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997); Michael North, *Dialect of Modernism: Race, Language, and Twentieth-Century Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).
93. T. S. Stribling, *Birthright* (New York: Century, 1922).
94. Lynn Moss Sanders, *Howard W. Odum's Folklore Odyssey: Transformation to Tolerance through African American Folk Studies* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2004), p. 438; see also Singal, *The War Within*, pp. 115–53. See excerpt of *Black Ulysses* at: <http://www.africanaheritage.com/OdumRainbowRound.asp>.
95. Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, ed. James Strachey (New York: Norton, 1961), p. 33.
96. See, for example, Elazar Barkan and Ronald Bush (eds), *Prehistories of the Future: The Primitivist Project and the Culture of Modernism* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1995); Susan Hegeman, *Patterns for America: Modernism and the Concept of Culture* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999).
97. Houston A. Baker, *Modernism and the Harlem Renaissance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987).
98. Charles T. Davis, 'Jean Toomer and the South: Region and Race as Elements Within a Literary Imagination', Victor A. Kramer and Robert A. Russ (eds), *Harlem Renaissance Re-Examined* (Troy, New York: Whitston Publishing Co., 1997), p. 217.
99. Jean Toomer, *Cane: An Authoritative Text, Backgrounds, Criticism*, ed. Darwin T. Turner (New York: Norton, 1988), p. 121.
100. *Ibid.*, p. 136.
101. *Ibid.*, p. 4.
102. *Ibid.*, p. 6.

103. *Ibid.*, p. 14.
104. Davis, 'Jean Toomer and the South', p. 222.
105. Gorham B. Munson, *Destinations: A Canvass of American Literature since 1900* (New York: J. H. Sears & Co., 1928), p. 181.
106. Toomer, *Cane*, p. 7.
107. *Ibid.*, *Cane*, p. 42.
108. Barbara Foley, "'In the Land of Cotton": Economics and Violence in Jean Toomer's *Cane*', *African American Review* 32.2 (1998), p. 181.
109. Toomer, *Cane*, p. 109.
110. Mark Helbling, *The Harlem Renaissance: The One and the Many* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1999), pp. 131, 130.
111. *Ibid.*, p. 131.
112. Arthur A. Schomburg, 'The Negro Digs Up His Past', *Survey Graphic* (March 1925), 670. Available online at <http://etext.virginia.edu/harlem/SchNegrF.html>.
113. The full text of James Weldon Johnson's *God's Trombones*, with illustrations by Aaron Douglas, is available online at <http://docsouth.unc.edu/southlit/johnson/johnson.html>.
114. Sociologist Robert E. Park reviewed all of these in one extended review in *The American Journal of Sociology* 33.6 (May 1928), pp. 988–95.
115. Jordan Miller and Winifred Frazer, *American Drama Between the Wars: A Critical History* (Boston: Twayne Publishers 1991), p. 252.
116. Alain Locke, 'Negro Youth Speaks', in *The New Negro*, p. 49.
117. W. E. B. Du Bois, 'Criteria of Negro Art', *The Crisis* 32 (October 1926), pp. 290–7. Available online at: <http://www.webdubois.org/dbCriteriaNArt.html>.
118. George S. Schuyler, 'The Negro-Art Hokum', *Nation* 122 (16 June 1926), pp. 662–3. Available online at <http://www.westga.edu/~sboyd/George%20Schuyler%20negro%20art%20hokum.pdf>.
119. Hughes, 'The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain', p. 693.
120. Bruce Nugent, 'Smoke, Lilies, Jade', available online at <http://www.brucenugent.com/Assets/Text/Smoke.htm>.
121. Zora Neale Hurston, 'How It Feels to Be Colored Me', *World Tomorrow* 11 (May 1928), pp. 215–16. Available online at: <http://xroads.virginia.edu/~MA01/Grand-Jean/Hurston/Chapters/how.html>.
122. David Krasner, 'Migration, Fragmentation, and Identity: Zora Neale Hurston's *Color Struck* and the Geography of the Harlem Renaissance', *Theatre Journal* 53 (2001), p. 534.
123. Some of her unpublished plays are available at the Zora Neale Hurston digital archive online at <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/znhhtml/znhhome.html>. *Color Struck* is available at: <http://xroads.virginia.edu/~MA01/Grand-Jean/Hurston/Chapters/supporting/color.html>.
124. Published in *Crisis*, 1925; see Heather E. Spahr, 'Marita Bonner (1898–1971)', in Emmanuel S. Nelson (ed.), *African American Authors, 1745–1945 A Bio-Bibliographical Critical Sourcebook* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2000), p. 31.
125. Joyce Flynn and Joyce Occomy Stricklin (eds), *Frye Street and Environs: The Collected Works of Marita Bonner* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1987).
126. Shafer, *American Women Playwrights*, p. 431.
127. Deborah Parsons, *Djuna Barnes* (Tavistock: Northcote House, 2003), p. 29.

128. Karen Jackson Ford, *Gender and the Poetics of Excess: Moments of Brocade* (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 1997), p. 96. See also Ford's 'Essay on Patriarchal Poetry' at the *Modern American Poetry* archive online at http://www.english.uiuc.edu/maps/poets/s_z/stein/ford.htm.
129. Dorothy Parker, *The Collected Dorothy Parker* (London: Penguin Books, 2001), p. 201.
130. Anita Loos, *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes: The Illuminating Diary of a Professional Lady* (New York: Penguin Books, [1926] 1998), p. 90.

2. Music and Performance

1. Paul Whiteman quoted in Isaac Goldberg, *Tin Pan Alley: A Chronicle of the American Popular Music Racket* (New York: John Day, 1930), p. 291. Most of the original recordings mentioned in this chapter can be heard at the *Red Hot Jazz Archive* at <http://www.redhotjazz.com>.
2. Kathy Ogren, *The Jazz Revolution: Twenties America and the Meaning of Jazz* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 5–6.
3. Sigmund Spaeth quoted in Lawrence Levine, *The Unpredictable Past*, p. 182.
4. Anne Shaw Faulkner, 'Does Jazz Put the Sin in Syncopation?', *Ladies Home Journal* (August 1921), pp. 16–34. Online at <http://faculty.pittstate.edu/~knichols/syncopate.html>.
5. Paul Whiteman quoted in Goldberg, *Tin Pan Alley*, p. 291.
6. Okeh Records advert reproduced in Derrick Stewart-Baxter's *Ma Rainey and the Classic Blues Singers* (London: Studio Vista, 1970), p. 60.
7. J. A. Rogers, 'Jazz at Home', *Survey Graphic* (March 1925), p. 665, online at <http://etext.virginia.edu/harlem/RogJazzF.html>.
8. *Ibid.*
9. *Ibid.*, p. 667.
10. F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby* (London: Penguin Books, [1926] 2000), pp. 102, 51.
11. Quoted in Sascha Feinstein, *Jazz Poetry: From the 1920s to the Present* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1997), p. 17.
12. Vachel Lindsay, *Collected Poems* revised ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1925), p. 401.
13. Joel Dinerstein, *Swinging the Machine: Modernity, Technology, and African American Culture between the World Wars* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2003), p. 112.
14. For a detailed history of the role of ethnicity and race in the early recording industry see William Howland Kenney, *Recorded Music in American Life: The Phonograph and Popular Memory, 1890–1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999)
15. Stewart-Baxter, *Ma Rainey*, p. 12.
16. David Evans, 'The Development of the Blues', in Allan Moore (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Blues and Gospel Music*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 27.
17. Amiri Baraka, *Blues People: Negro Music in White America* (New York: W. Morrow, 1963), p. 129.
18. *Victor Records; Vocal Blues, Religious Spirituals, Red Hot Dance Tunes, Sermons,*

126. Roland Marchand, *Advertising the American Dream: Making Way for Modernity, 1920–1940* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1985), p. 140. See also Jackson Lears, *Fables of Abundance: A Cultural History of Advertising in the United States* (New York: Basic Books, 1994), p. 325.
127. Graham Howe and G. Ray Hawkins, *Paul Outerbridge Jr: Photographs 1921–39* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1980).
128. Paul R. Gorman, *Left Intellectuals and Popular Culture in Twentieth-Century America* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), p. 71. See also Lears, *Fables*, pp. 305–6.
129. Lears, *Fables*, p. 313.
130. Zabel, *Assembling Art*, p. xx.
131. Clock Wheels available online at http://artgallery.yale.edu/pages/collection/popups/pc_prints/enlarge03.html.
132. Zabel, *Assembling Art*, p. 98.
133. *Ibid.*, p. 59.
134. Grad, 'Stuart Davis and Contemporary Culture', p. 169.
135. Zabel, *Assembling Art*, p. 14. For *Miss Woolworth* see Corn, *The Great American Thing*, p. 18.
136. Haskell, *The American Century*, p. 182.
137. Park, *New Backgrounds*, p. 132.

5. Consumption and Leisure

1. Stuart Chase, *Prosperity: Fact or Myth* (New York: C. Boni, 1929), p. 22.
2. Glen Jeansonne, *Transformation and Reaction: America 1921–1945* (New York: HarperCollins, 1994), p. 63. On business ideology in the era, see James W. Prothro, *The Dollar Decade: Business Ideas in the 1920s* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1954).
3. Michael E. Parrish, *Anxious Decades: America in Prosperity and Depression 1920–1941* (New York: Norton, 1993), p. 54.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 66.
5. Leo Wolman, 'Consumption and the Standard of Living', in *Recent Economic Changes in the United States* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1929), available online at <http://www.nber.org/books/comm29-1>.
6. Robert Lynd, 'The People as Consumers', in Mitchell (ed.), *Recent Social Trends*, p. 857.
7. Wolman, 'Consumption', p. 58.
8. Chase, *Prosperity*, p. 37.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 43.
10. Wolman, 'Consumption', p. 59.
11. Lendol Calder, *Financing the American Dream: A Cultural History of Consumer Credit* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), p. 18. See also Martha Olney, *Buy Now, Pay Later: Advertising, Credit, and Consumer Demand in the 1920s* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1991).
12. Robert and Helen Lynd, *Middletown: A Study in Contemporary American Culture* (New York: Harcourt, Brace/Harvest Books, [1929] 1957), pp. 254–5.
13. Calder, *Financing the American Dream*, p. 21.
14. Adams, *Our Business Civilization*, p. 35.

15. Herbert Hoover, 'Rugged Individualism' (1928), reprinted in Rose (ed.), *American Decades*, p. 315.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 316.
17. Adams, *Our Business Civilization*, p. 36.
18. Robert S. McElvaine, *The Great Depression: America 1929–41* (New York: Times Books, 1993), p. 16.
19. Cited in Simone Weil Davis, *Living Up to the Ads: Gender Fictions of the 1920s* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000), p. 55. See also Lundén, *Business and Religion in the American 1920s*, pp. 15–17.
20. Chase, *Prosperity*, p. 40.
21. Adams, *Our Business Civilization*, p. 10.
22. F. Scott Fitzgerald, 'My Lost City' (1932), in *The Crack Up* (New York: New Directions [1945] 1962), p. 30.
23. Lewis, *Babbitt*, p. 212.
24. Jackson Lears, *Fables of Abundance: A Cultural History of Advertising in the United States* (New York: Basic Books, 1994), pp. 318–19, p. 305.
25. Edward Bernays, *Propaganda* (New York: Ig Publishing, [1928] 2004), p. 37. See also John C. Burnham, 'The New Psychology: From Narcissism to Social Control', in John Braeman et al., *Change and Continuity in Twentieth-Century America: The 1920s* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1968), pp. 351–98.
26. *Ibid.*, pp. 75–6.
27. Walter Lippmann, *Public Opinion* (New York: Courier Dover Publications, [1920] 2004), p. 135.
28. Stuart Chase, *The Tragedy of Waste* (New York: Macmillan, 1925), p. 108.
29. The entire text of *Your Money's Worth* is online at the Library of Congress website, <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.gdc/amrlg.lg07>.
30. On fear of crowds and their easy manipulation, see Lears, *Fables of Abundance*, pp. 222–34.
31. See Niall Palmer, *The Twenties in America: Politics and History* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), pp. 97–8.
32. W. F. Wamsley, 'How Financial "Speakeasies" Net Suckers', *New York Times* (25 August 1929), XX3.
33. Andrew Sinclair, *Prohibition: The Era of Excess* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1962), p. 47.
34. David E. Kyvig (ed.), *Law, Alcohol, and Order: Perspectives on National Prohibition* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1985), p. 7.
35. John J. Rumbarger, *Profits, Power, and Prohibition: Alcohol Reform and the Industrializing of America, 1800–1930* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1989), p. 184.
36. Harry S. Warner, *Prohibition, an Adventure in Freedom* (Westerville, OH: World League Against Alcoholism, 1928), p. 221.
37. Sinclair, *Prohibition*, p. 222.
38. *Ibid.*, pp. 187–8.
39. *Ibid.*, p. 220.
40. *Ibid.*, p. 222.
41. Stuart A. Rice (ed.), *Methods in Social Science: A Case Book* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1931), p. 511.

42. Kyvig, *Law, Alcohol, and Order*, p. 4.
43. Preston William Slosson, *The Great Crusade and After, 1914–1928* (New York: Macmillan, 1930), p. 128.
44. Parrish, *Anxious Decades*, p. 82.
45. Chase, *Prosperity*, p. 24.
46. Wolman, 'Consumption', p. 78.
47. For working conditions and wages for blue- and white-collar workers in this period see Dumenil, *The Modern Temper*, pp. 56–76.
48. William Trufant Foster and Waddill Catchings, *The Road to Plenty* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1928), p. 194.
49. Lynd and Lynd, *Middletown*, p. 7.
50. *Ibid.*, pp. 7–8.
51. *Ibid.*, p. 6.
52. *Ibid.*, p. 6.
53. Mark C. Smith, *Social Science in the Crucible: The American Debate over Objectivity and Purpose, 1918–1941* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1994), p. 136.
54. Richard Wightman Fox, 'Epitaph for Middletown: Robert S. Lynd and the Analysis of Consumer Culture', in Richard Wightman Fox and Jackson Lears (eds), *The Culture of Consumption: Essays in American History, 1880–1980* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1983), p. 113.
55. *Ibid.*, p. 122.
56. Conference on Unemployment, *Recent Economic Changes in the United States* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co. Inc., 1929), available online at National Bureau of Economic Research Website, <http://www.nber.org/books/comm29-1>.
57. Adams, *Our Business Civilization*, p. 306.
58. Cindy S. Aron, *Working at Play: A History of Vacations in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 203.
59. Adams, *Our Business Civilization*, p. 19.
60. *Ibid.*, p. 58.
61. *Ibid.*, p. 32.
62. Mary K. Coffey, 'The American Adonis: A Natural History of the Average American (Man), 1921–32', in Susan Currell and Christina Cogdell (eds), *Popular Eugenics: National Efficiency and American Mass Culture in the 1930s* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2006), p. 200.
63. William Fielding Ogburn, *Social Change with Respect to Culture and Original Nature* (Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, [1922] 1964), p. 313.
64. Raymond B. Fosdick, *The Old Savage in the New Civilization* (New York: Doubleday, Doran & Co., Inc., 1928), p. 21.
65. Lucy T. Benjamin Jr and William H. M. Bryant, 'A History of Popular Psychology Magazines in America', in Wolfgang G. Bringmann et al. (eds), *A Pictorial History of Psychology* (Chicago: Quintessence, 1997), p. 585.
66. Chip Rhodes, *Structures of the Jazz Age: Mass Culture, Progressive Education, and Racial Discourse in American Modernism* (London: Verso, 1998), p. 109.
67. George E. Mowry (ed.), *The Twenties: Fords, Flappers, and Fanatics* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1963), p. 157.
68. Frederick Lewis Allen, *Only Yesterday. An Informal History of the Nineteen-Twenties* (New York City: Blue Ribbon Books, 1931), p. 180.

69. Parrish, *Anxious Decades*, p. 78.
70. Joseph F. Kett, *The Pursuit of Knowledge Under Difficulties: From Self-Improvement to Adult Education in America, 1750–1990* (CA: Stanford University Press, 1994), p. 348. Joan Shelley Rubin, *The Making of Middlebrow Culture* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), p. 232.
71. See Rubin, *The Making of Middlebrow Culture*, p. 94, and Megan Benton, “‘Too Many Books’: Book Ownership and Cultural Identity in the 1920s”, *American Quarterly* 49.2 (1997), pp. 268–97.
72. B. Stolberg, ‘Degradation of American Psychology’, *The Nation*, 113 (15 October 1930), pp. 395–8.
73. Lorine Pruette and Harry Elmer Barnes, *Women and Leisure: A Study of Social Waste* (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1924), p. xi.
74. Elizabeth Ellis Hoyt, *The Consumption of Wealth* (New York: Macmillan, 1928), p. 162.
75. Slosson, *The Great Crusade*, p. 155.
76. Catherine Manton, *Fed Up: Women and Food in America* (Westport, CT: Bergin and Garvey, 1999), p. 53. On the history of dieting, see Hillel Schwartz, *Never Satisfied: A Cultural History of Diets, Fantasies and Fat* (New York: Free Press, 1986).
77. Drowne, *The 1920s*, pp. 152–3.
78. Charles Panati, *Panati’s Parade of Fads, Follies, and Manias: The Origins of Our Most Cherished Obsessions* (New York: HarperPerennial, 1991), pp. 120–1. See also Drowne, *The 1920s*, pp. 146–54.
79. Carol Martin, *Dance Marathons: Performing American Culture of the 1920s and 1930s* (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 1994), pp. 5–21.
80. *Ibid.*, pp. 10–11.
81. A. Scott Berg, *Lindbergh* (London: Pan Books, [1998] 1999), pp. 104, 116.
82. John W. Ward, ‘The Meaning of Lindbergh’s Flight’, *American Quarterly* 10 (Spring 1958), pp. 3–16.
83. Berg, *Lindbergh*, pp. 161–2.
84. Ann Douglas, *Terrible Honesty*, p. 456.
85. F. Scott Fitzgerald, ‘Echos of the Jazz Age’ (1931), reprinted in Baritz (ed.), *The Culture of the Twenties*, p. 421.
86. Ward, ‘The Meaning of Lindbergh’s Flight’, p. 7.
87. *Ibid.*, p. 6.
88. *Ibid.*, pp. 5, 10.
89. *Ibid.*, p. 6.
90. *Ibid.*
91. Berg, *Lindbergh*, p. 141.
92. Ward, ‘The Meaning of Lindbergh’s Flight’, p. 14.
93. Charles Lindbergh, *Autobiography of Values*, cited in Susan M. Gray, *Charles A. Lindbergh and the American Dilemma: The Conflict of Technology and Human Values* (Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1988), p. 1.
94. Berg, *Lindbergh*, p. 8.
95. Lippmann quoted in Schlesinger, *The Crisis of the Old Order*, p. 147.
96. Chase, *Prosperity*, p. 12.
97. McElvaine, *The Great Depression*, pp. 43–44.

98. Schlesinger, *The Crisis of the Old Order*, p. 159.
99. On economic organisation leading up to the Crash, see Edwin F. Gay and Leo Wolman, 'Trends in Economic Organization', in Mitchell (ed.), *Recent Social Trends*, pp. 218–67.
100. Jeansonne, *Transformation and Reaction*, p. 112.
101. For the various arguments about the causes and consequences of the Great Depression, see McElvaine, *The Great Depression*, pp. 25–50.
102. Chase, *Prosperity*, p. 11.
103. John Dewey, *Individualism Old and New* (New York: Minton Balch & Co., 1930), p. 18.
104. Michael Szalay, *New Deal Modernism: American Literature and the Invention of the Welfare State* (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 2000), p. 56.
105. Chase, *Prosperity*, p. 10.

Conclusion

1. Frederick Lewis Allen, *Only Yesterday. An Informal History of the Nineteen-Twenties* (New York City: Blue Ribbon Books, 1931), pp. 3–4.
2. F. Scott Fitzgerald, 'Echoes of the Jazz Age' (1931), reprinted in *The Crack Up*, (New York: New Directions, [1945] 1962), p. 21.
3. Jason Scott Smith, 'The Strange History of the Decade: Modernity, Nostalgia, and the Perils of Periodization', *Journal of Social History* 32.2 (1998), p. 277.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 269.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 272.
6. See Graham Thompson, *American Culture in the 1980s* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007) pp. 1–6, 179–183; and David Eldridge, *American Culture in the 1930s* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008).
7. Eldridge, *American Culture in the 1930s*, p. 189.
8. Smith, 'The Strange History of the Decade', p. 274.
9. Irene Taviss Thomson, 'The Transformation of the Social Bond: Images of Individualism in the 1920s versus the 1970s', *Social Forces* 67.4 (June 1989), pp. 851–70.
10. Gregory Bergman, 'The 1920s and the 1980s – a Comparison', *Monthly Review* 38.5 (October 1986), pp. 29–36.
11. McElvaine, *The Great Depression*, p. 14.
12. Bergman, 'The 1920s and the 1980s', p. 29.

EYEWITNESS HISTORY

The Roaring Twenties

Revised Edition

Tom Streissguth

 **Facts On File**
An imprint of Infobase Publishing

The Roaring Twenties, Revised Edition

Copyright © 2007, 2001 by Tom Streissguth
Maps and graphs © 2007, 2001 by Infobase Publishing

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or utilized in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage or retrieval systems, without permission in writing from the publisher. For information contact:

Facts On File, Inc.
An imprint of Infobase Publishing
132 West 31st Street
New York NY 10001

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Streissguth, Thomas, 1958—

The roaring twenties / Tom Streissguth. — Rev. ed.

p. cm.—(Eyewitness history)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0-8160-6423-7

1. United States—History—1919–1933. 2. United States—History—1919–1933—Sources. 3. United States—History—1919–1933—Chronology. 4. Nineteen twenties. I. Title.

E784.S76 2007

973.91—dc22

2006021723

Facts On File books are available at special discounts when purchased in bulk quantities for businesses, associations, institutions or sales promotions. Please call our Special Sales Department in New York at 212/967-8800 or 800/322-8755.

You can find Facts On File on the World Wide Web at <http://www.factsonfile.com>

Text design by Joan M. McEvoy
Cover design by Cathy Rincon
Maps and graphs pp. 430–448 by Sholto Ainslie

Printed in the United States of America

VB JM 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

This book is printed on acid-free paper.

APPENDIX C

Maps, Graphs, and Tables

MAPS

1. Major Railroads in the United States, 1900–1920
2. Great Migration, 1916–1945
3. Prohibition on the Eve of the Eighteenth Amendment, 1919
4. Improved Roads in the United States, 1920
5. Presidential Election of 1920
6. Presidential Election of 1924
7. Airmail Routes in the United States, 1927
8. Presidential Election of 1928
9. Prohibition, 1929
10. Reapportionment of 435 Seats in the House of Representatives, 1930

GRAPHS

1. Sources of U.S. Immigration, 1891–1940
2. Average Daily Attendance in Public Schools, 1918–1930
3. High School Graduates, 1918–1930
4. Public School Expenditures, 1918–1930
5. Hiring Rate and Salary of Teachers in Public Schools, 1918–1930
6. Institutions of Higher Education, 1918–1930
7. Average Per Capita Consumption of Foods, 1920–1930
8. Patents Issued to Domestic and Foreign Corporations, 1921–1930
9. Patent Applications Filed and Patents Issued for Designs, 1921–1930

TABLES

1. Degrees Conferred, at Institutions of Higher Education, by Sex, 1918–1930
2. Gross National Product in Billions of Dollars, 1918–1930
3. Motor Vehicle Sales, 1918–1930
4. People Lynched in the United States, 1918–1930
5. Standard and Poor's Index of the Share Prices of Common Stocks, 1918–1930
6. Unemployment, 1918–1930
7. Value of Exports and Imports in Millions of Dollars, 1918–1930
8. Average Weekly Earnings and Hours of Manufacturing Workers, 1919–1930
9. Women State Legislators Statistics, 1919–1929
10. Major Occupation Groups of Female Workers, 1920 and 1930
11. New Public Construction in Millions of Dollars, 1920–1930

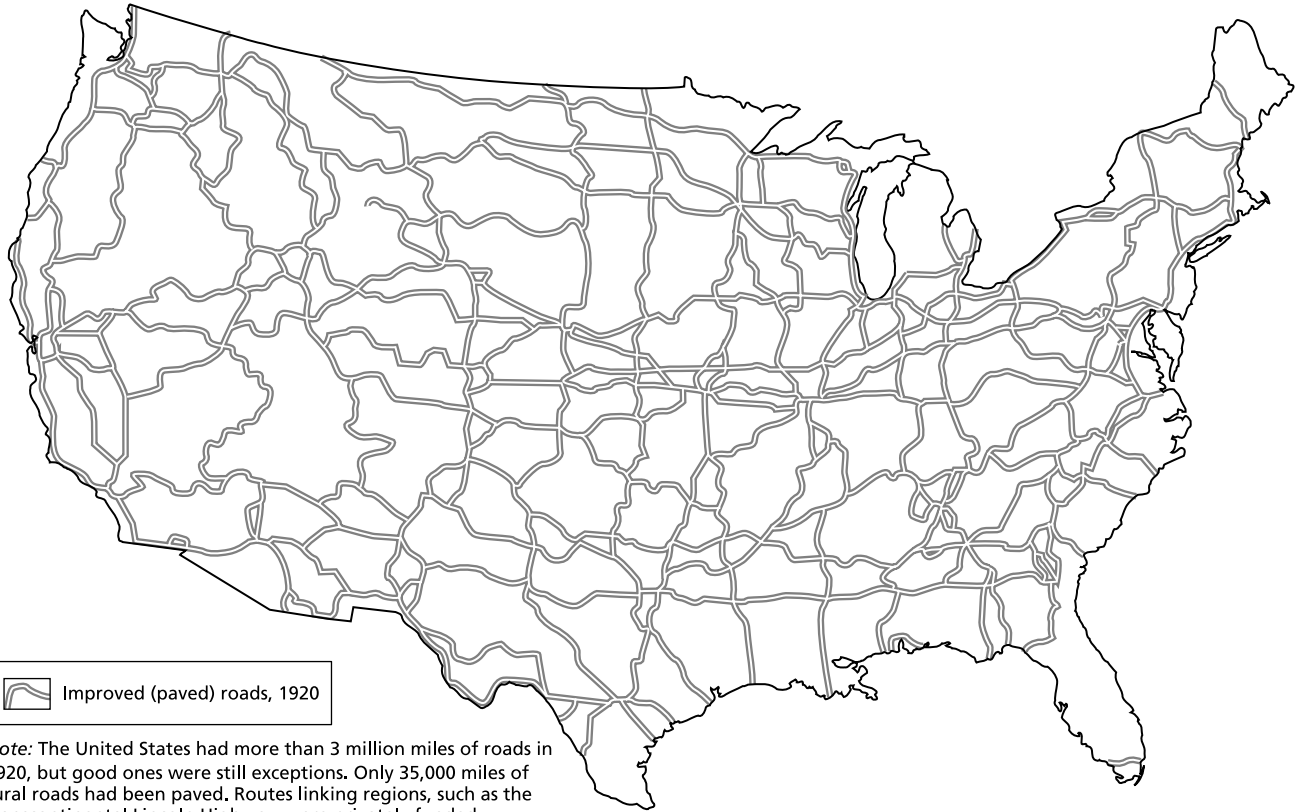
12. Admissions to Spectator Amusements in Millions of Dollars, 1921–1930
13. Operating Broadcast Stations (AM)—Radio Sets Produced and Households with Sets, 1921–1930
14. Minimum Annual Cost of Living for a Family of Five, 1924


MAJOR RAILROADS IN THE UNITED STATES, 1900–1920





IMPROVED ROADS IN THE UNITED STATES, 1920



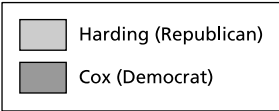
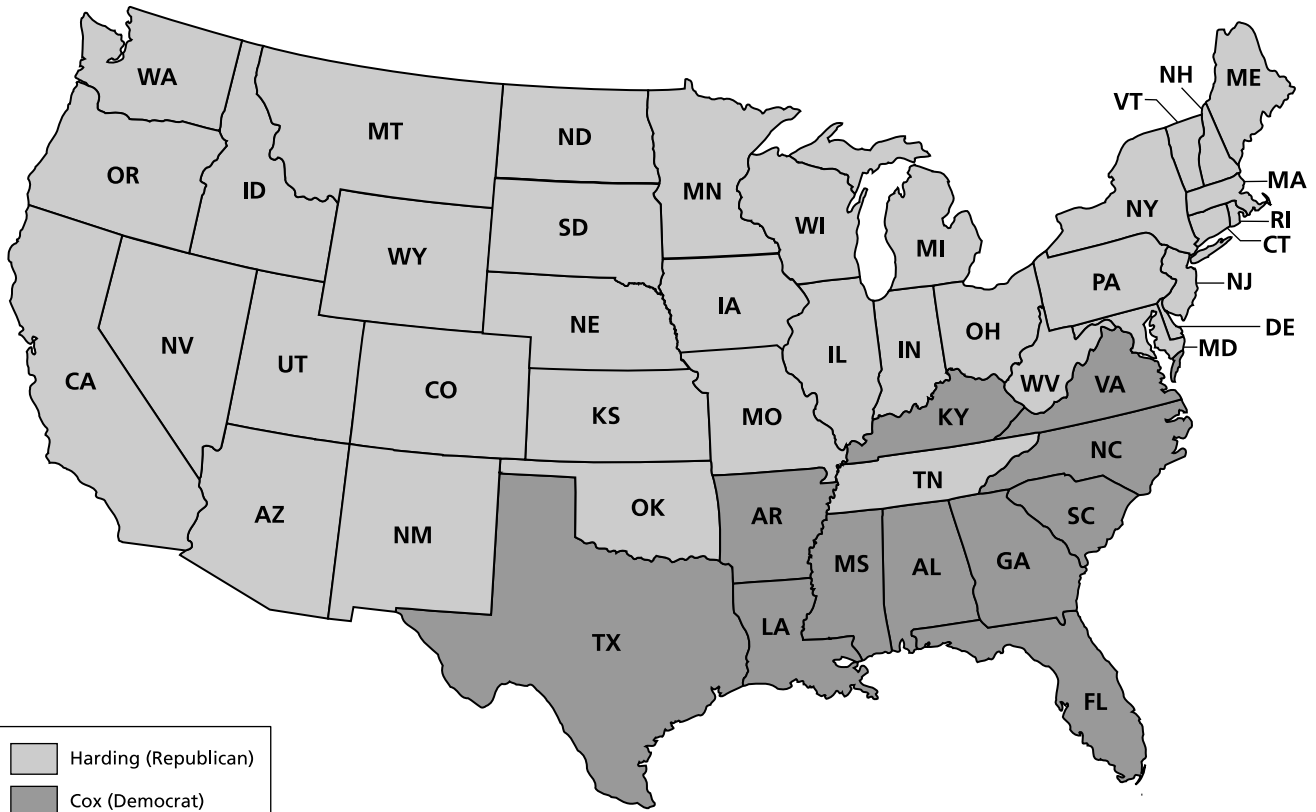
 Improved (paved) roads, 1920

Note: The United States had more than 3 million miles of roads in 1920, but good ones were still exceptions. Only 35,000 miles of rural roads had been paved. Routes linking regions, such as the transcontinental Lincoln Highway, were privately funded. Road improvement and new construction averaged tens of thousands of miles each year.

Source: Data from *Historical Atlas of the United States, Centennial Edition*. Washington, D.C.: National Geographic Society, 1988

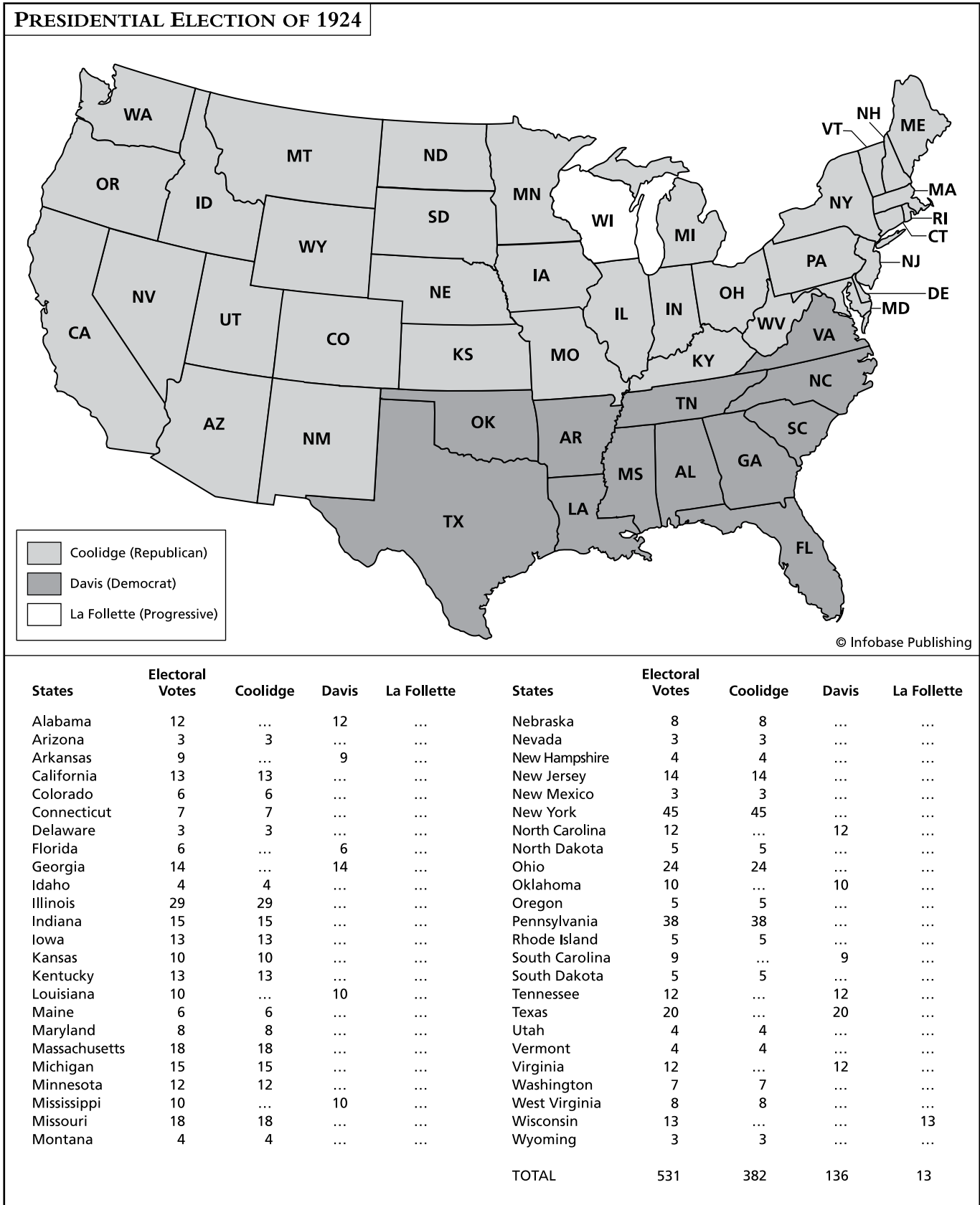
© Infobase Publishing

PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION OF 1920

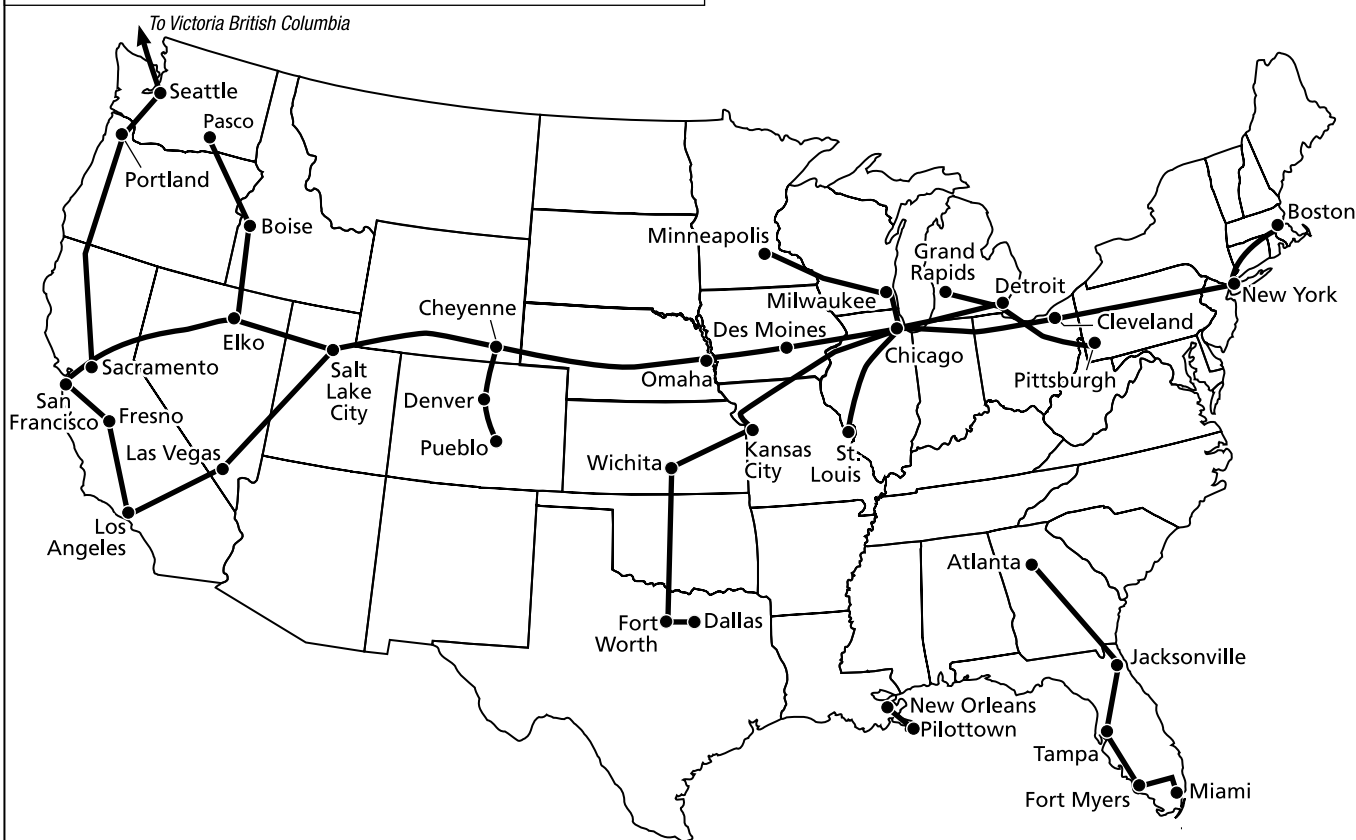


© Infobase Publishing

States	Electoral Votes	Harding	Cox	States	Electoral Votes	Harding	Cox
Alabama	12	...	12	Nebraska	8	8	...
Arizona	3	3	...	Nevada	3	3	...
Arkansas	9	...	9	New Hampshire	4	4	...
California	13	13	...	New Jersey	14	14	...
Colorado	6	6	...	New Mexico	3	3	...
Connecticut	7	7	...	New York	45	45	...
Delaware	3	3	...	North Carolina	12	...	12
Florida	6	...	6	North Dakota	5	5	...
Georgia	14	...	14	Ohio	24	24	...
Idaho	4	4	...	Oklahoma	10	10	...
Illinois	29	29	...	Oregon	5	5	...
Indiana	15	15	...	Pennsylvania	38	38	...
Iowa	13	13	...	Rhode Island	5	5	...
Kansas	10	10	...	South Carolina	9	...	9
Kentucky	13	...	13	South Dakota	5	5	...
Louisiana	10	...	10	Tennessee	12	12	...
Maine	6	6	...	Texas	20	...	20
Maryland	8	8	...	Utah	4	4	...
Massachusetts	18	18	...	Vermont	4	4	...
Michigan	15	15	...	Virginia	12	...	12
Minnesota	12	12	...	Washington	7	7	...
Mississippi	10	...	10	West Virginia	8	8	...
Missouri	18	18	...	Wisconsin	13	13	...
Montana	4	4	...	Wyoming	3	3	...
				TOTAL	531	404	127



AIRMAIL ROUTES IN THE UNITED STATES, 1927

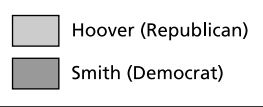
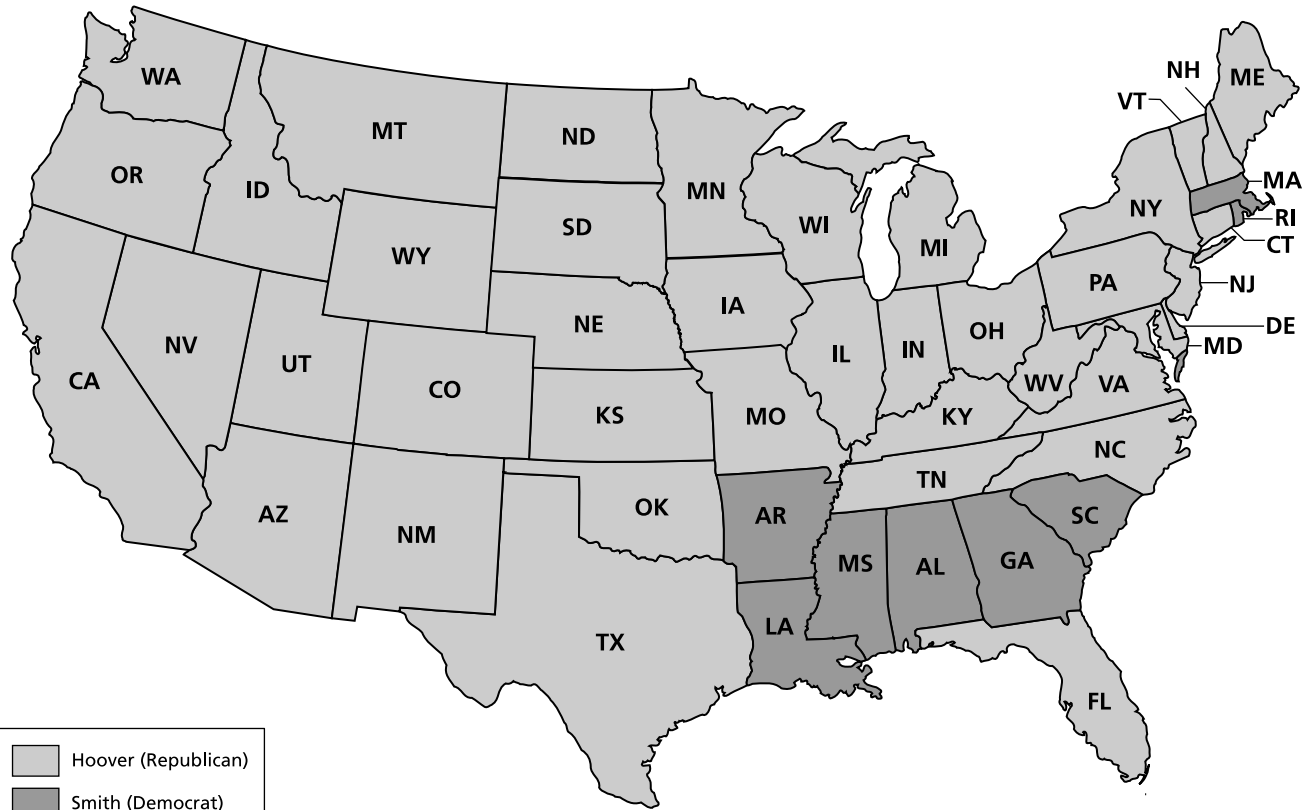


Note: The first U.S. airmail flight took off in 1918. By 1927 mail was flown on 24 major routes. To beat the trains, mail planes had to fly at night and in all weather, which led to the development of instruments that made flights more reliable. Airmail service also accelerated the development of air routes, airports, and navigation systems.

Source: Data from *Historical Atlas of the United States, Centennial Edition*. Washington, D.C.: National Geographic Society, 1988

© Infobase Publishing

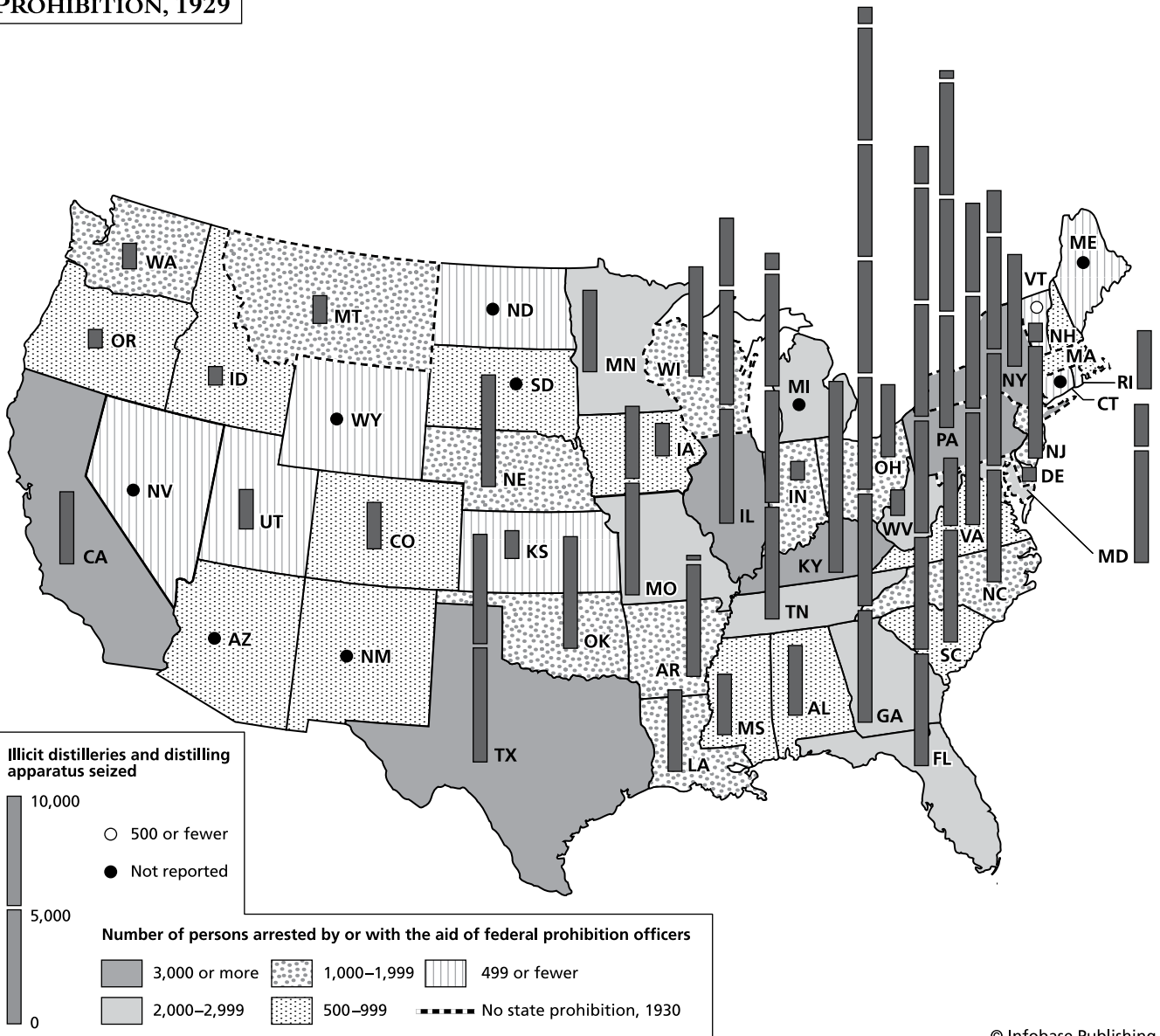
PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION OF 1928



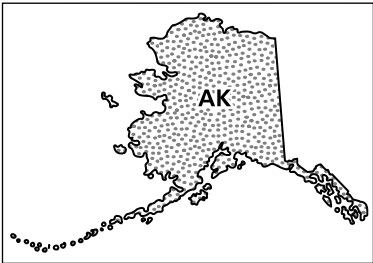
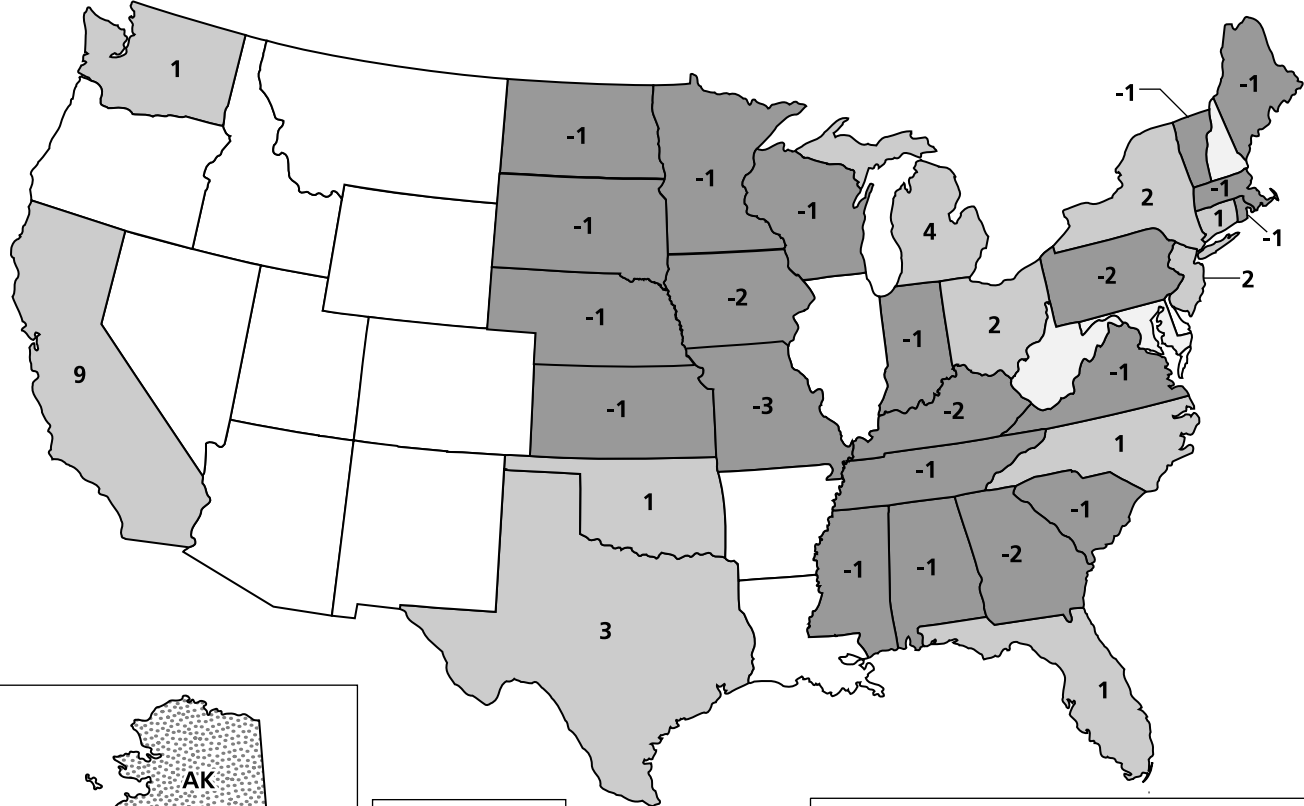
© Infobase Publishing

States	Electoral Votes	Hoover	Smith	States	Electoral Votes	Hoover	Smith
Alabama	12	...	12	Nebraska	8	8	...
Arizona	3	Nevada	3
Arkansas	9	...	9	New Hampshire	4	4	...
California	13	13	...	New Jersey	14	14	...
Colorado	6	6	...	New Mexico	3	3	...
Connecticut	7	7	...	New York	45	45	...
Delaware	3	3	...	North Carolina	12	12	...
Florida	6	6	...	North Dakota	5	5	...
Georgia	14	...	14	Ohio	24	24	...
Idaho	4	4	...	Oklahoma	10	10	...
Illinois	29	29	...	Oregon	5	5	...
Indiana	15	15	...	Pennsylvania	38	38	...
Iowa	13	13	...	Rhode Island	5	...	5
Kansas	10	10	...	South Carolina	9	...	9
Kentucky	13	13	...	South Dakota	5	5	...
Louisiana	10	...	10	Tennessee	12	12	...
Maine	6	6	...	Texas	20	20	...
Maryland	8	8	...	Utah	4	4	...
Massachusetts	18	...	18	Vermont	4	4	...
Michigan	15	15	...	Virginia	12	12	...
Minnesota	12	12	...	Washington	7	7	...
Mississippi	10	...	10	West Virginia	8	8	...
Missouri	18	18	...	Wisconsin	13	13	...
Montana	4	4	...	Wyoming	3	3	...
				TOTAL	531	444	87

PROHIBITION, 1929



REAPPORTIONMENT OF 435 SEATS IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, 1930

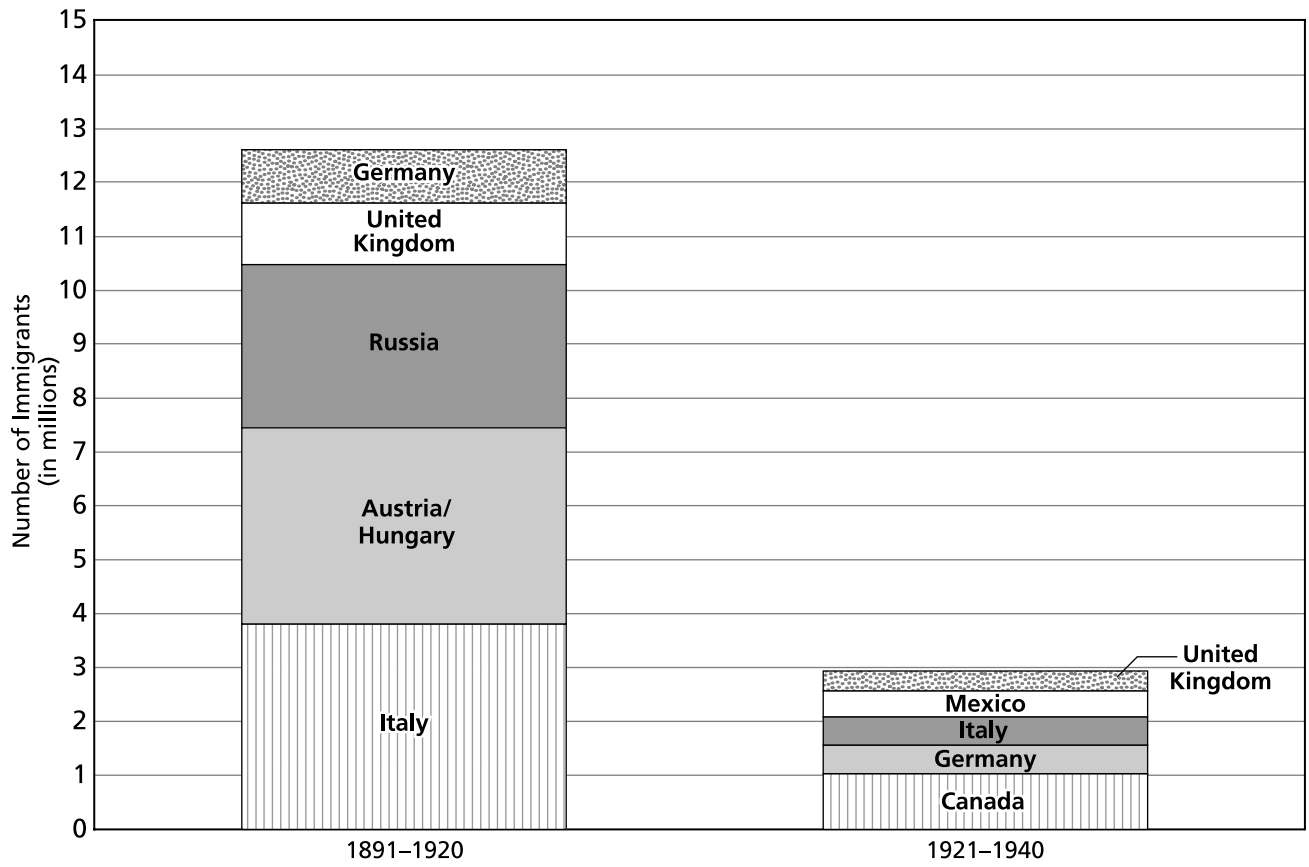


	Gain in seats		Loss in seats
	No change		U.S. territory (i.e., Alaska and Hawaii)

Note: There was no reapportionment for 1920 census.

© Infobase Publishing

SOURCES OF U.S. IMMIGRATION, 1891–1940

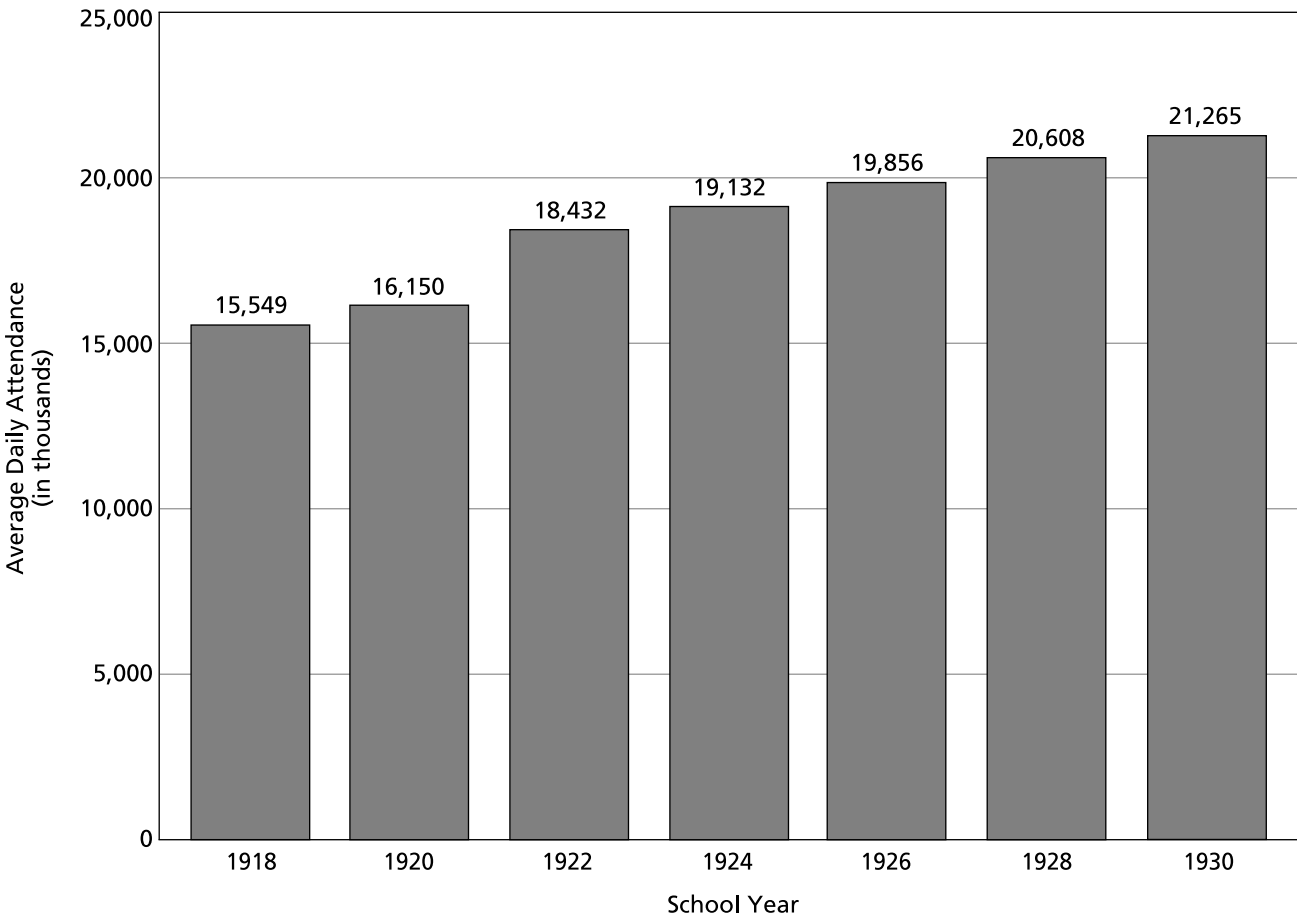


Note: This graph shows only the top five countries.

Source: U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service.

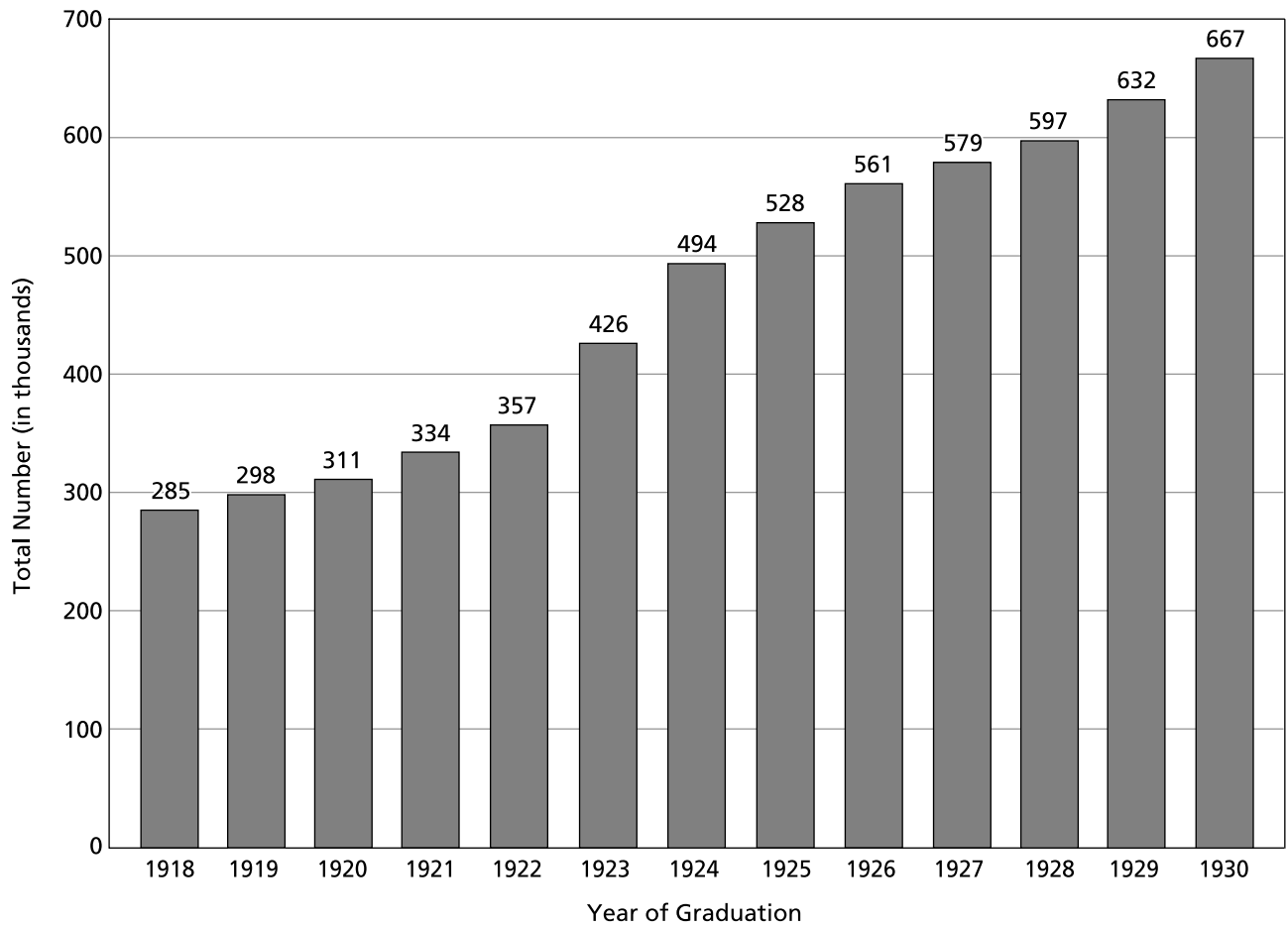
© Infobase Publishing

AVERAGE DAILY ATTENDANCE IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS, 1918–1930



Source: Data from George Thomas Kurian. *Datapedia of the United States*. Lanham, Md.: Bernan Press, 2004, p.170.

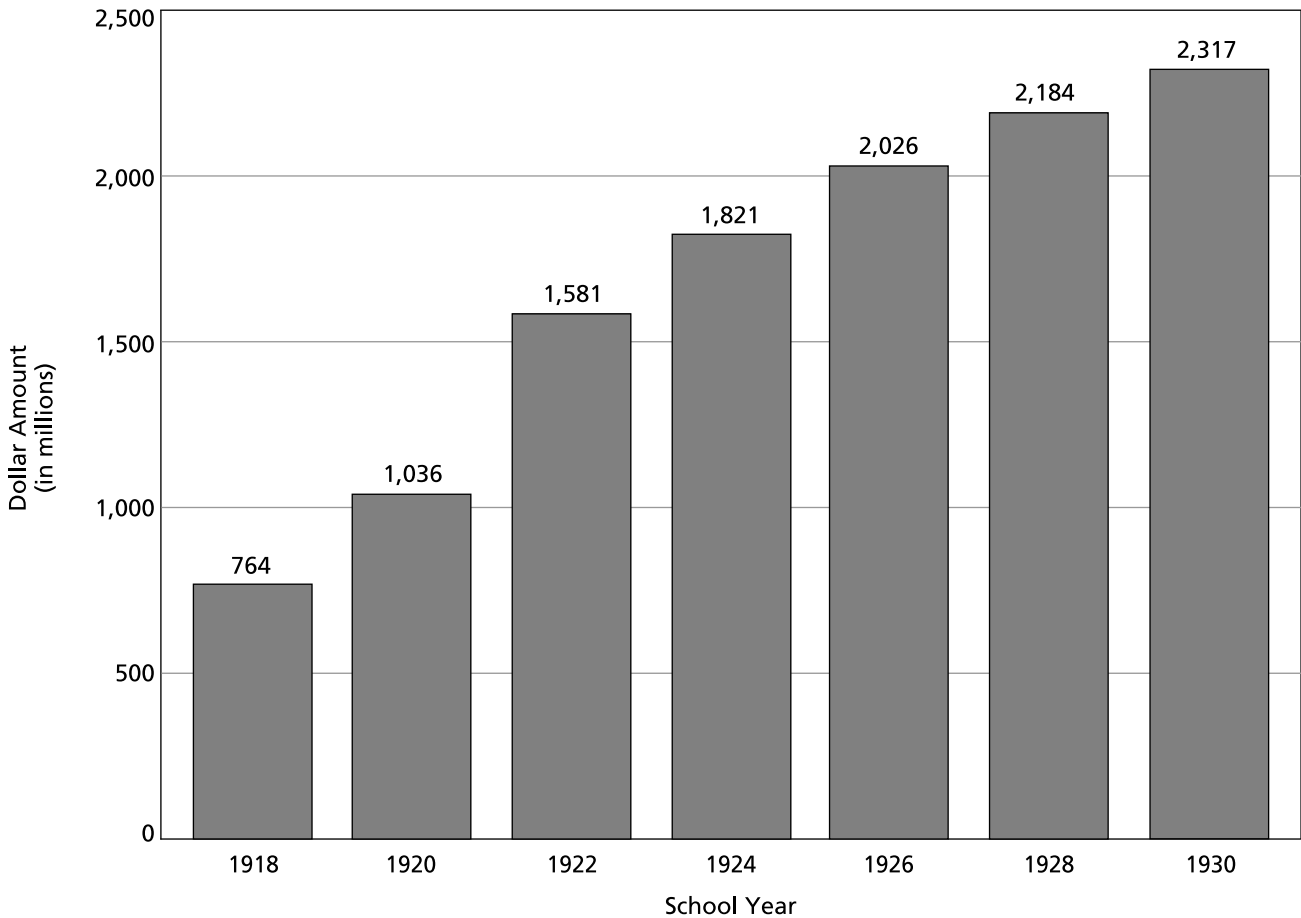
HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES, 1918–1930



Source: Data from George Thomas Kurian. *Datapedia of the United States*. Lanham, Md.: Bernan Press, 2004, p.170.

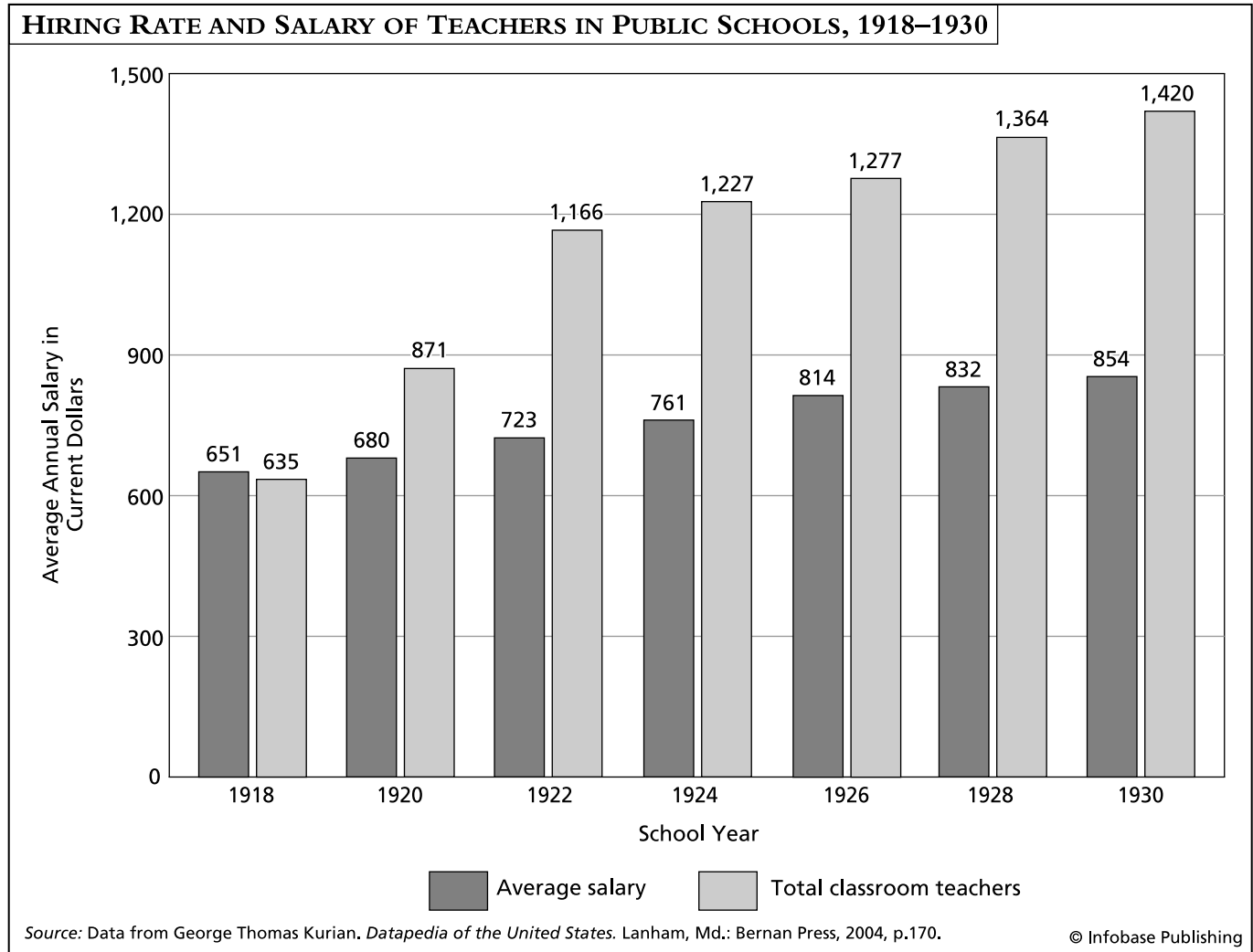
© Infobase Publishing

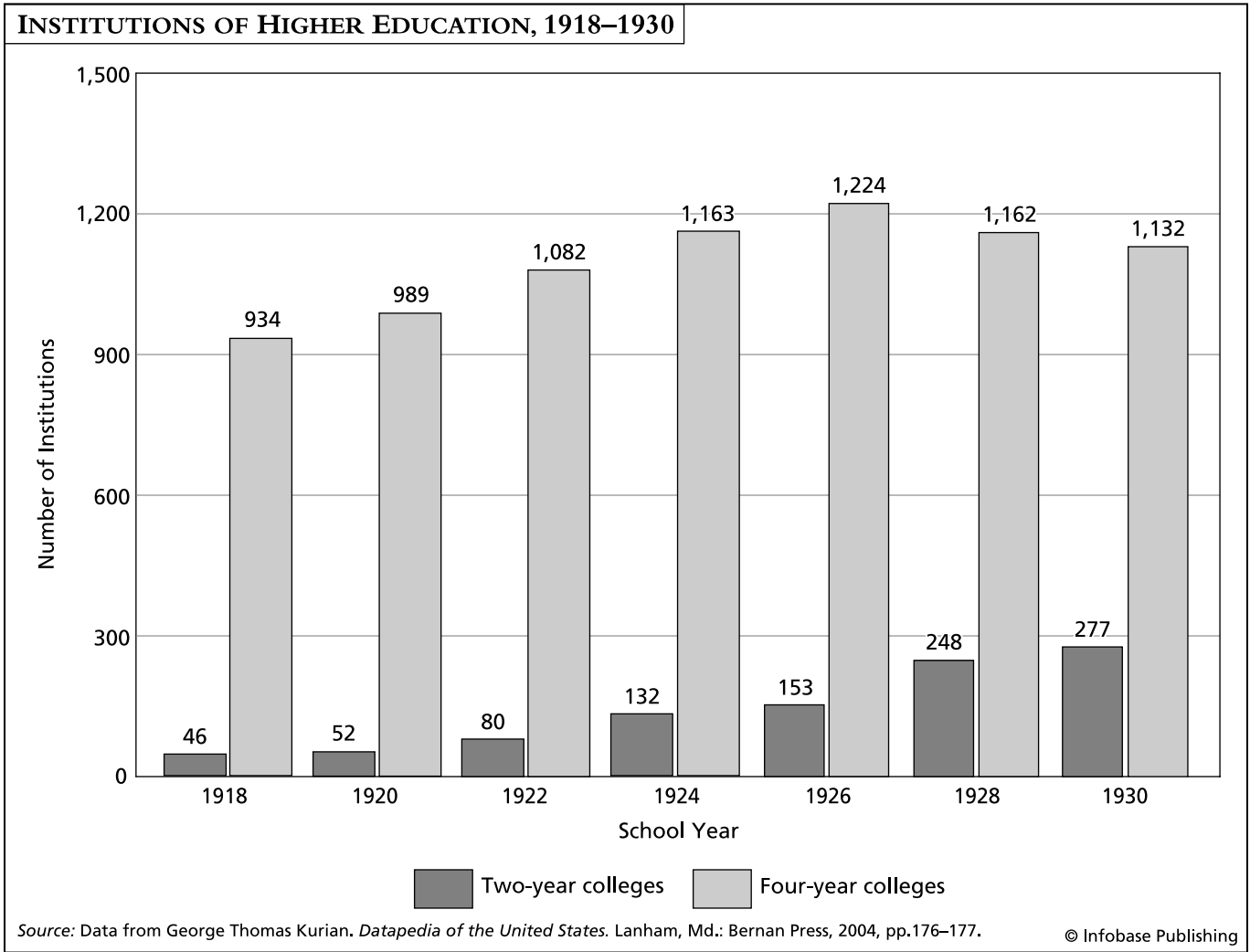
PUBLIC SCHOOL EXPENDITURES, 1918–1930

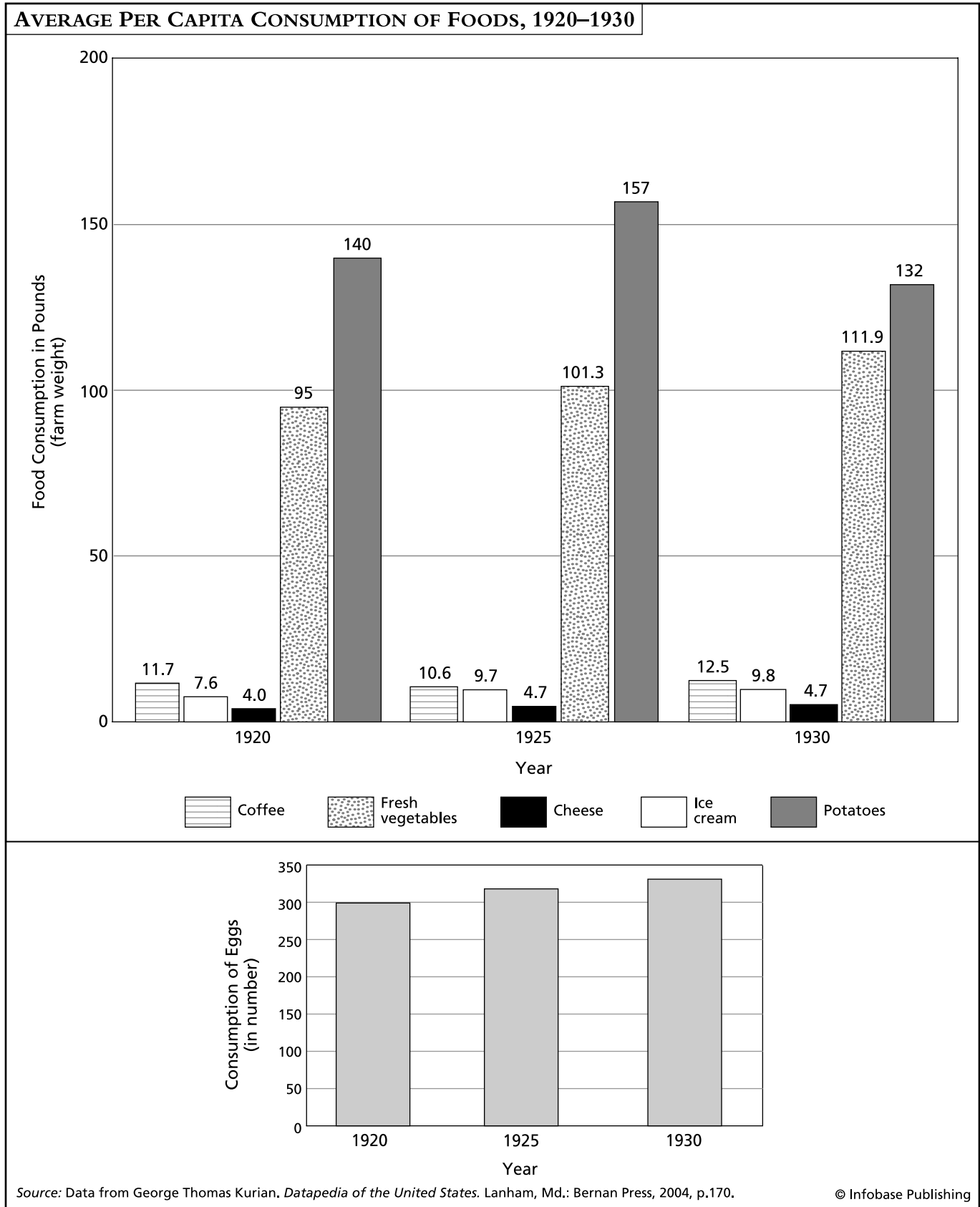


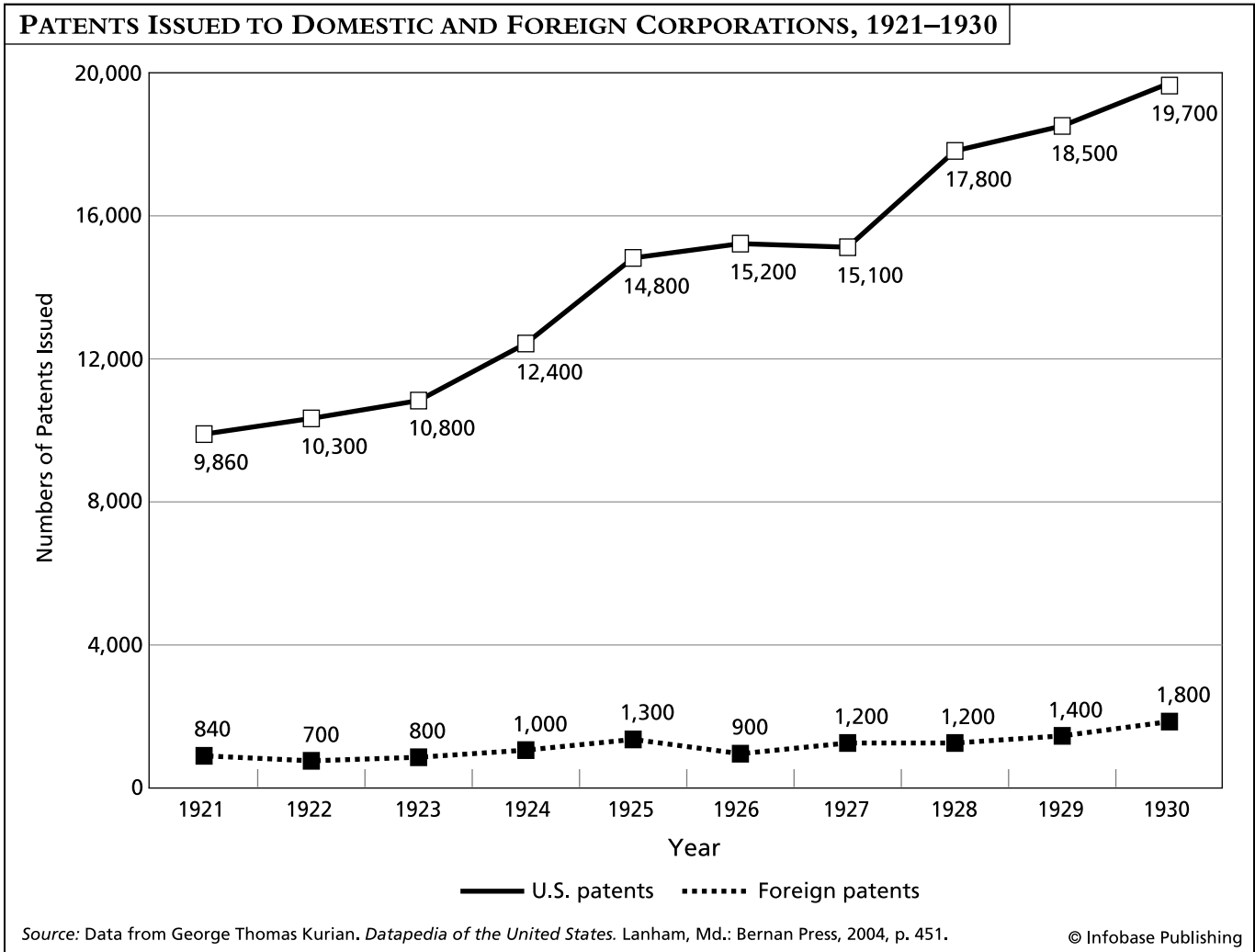
Source: Data from George Thomas Kurian, *Datapedia of the United States*. Lanham, Md.: Bernan Press, 2004, p.170.

© Infobase Publishing

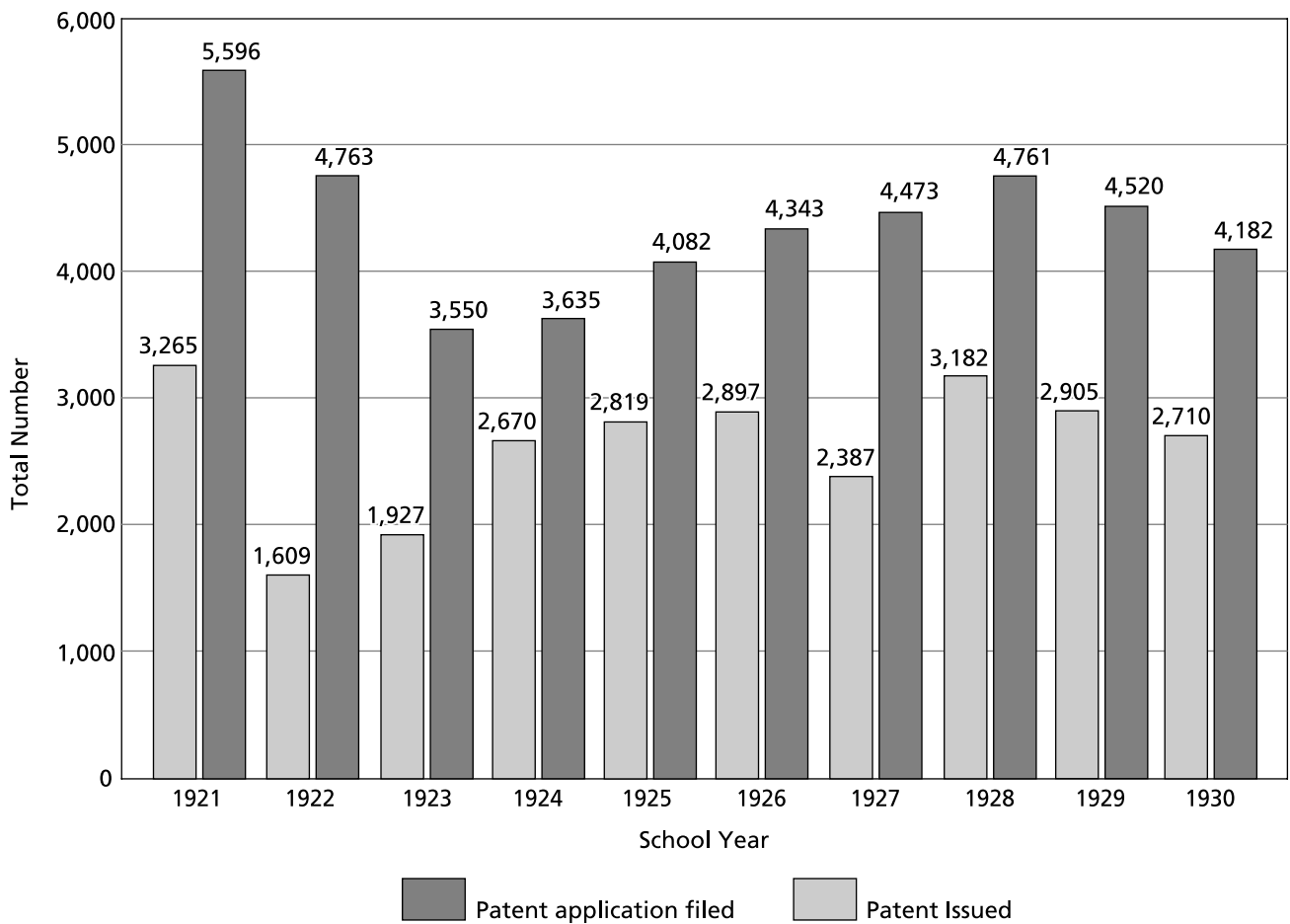








PATENT APPLICATIONS FILED AND PATENTS ISSUED FOR DESIGNS, 1921–1930



Source: Data from George Thomas Kurian. *Datapedia of the United States*. Lanham, Md.: Bernan Press, 2004, p.170.

© Infobase Publishing

DEGREES CONFERRED, AT INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION, BY SEX, 1918–1930

School Year Ending	Total, All Degrees	Bachelor's or First Professional		Master's or Second Professional		Doctor's or Equivalent	
		Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
1918	42,041	26,269	12,316	1,806	1,094	491	65
1920	53,516	31,980	16,642	2,985	1,294	522	93
1922	68,488	41,306	20,362	4,304	1,680	708	128
1924	92,097	54,908	27,875	5,515	2,701	939	159
1926	108,407	62,218	35,045	6,202	3,533	1,216	193
1928	124,995	67,659	43,502	7,727	4,660	1,249	198
1930	139,752	73,615	48,869	8,925	6,044	1,946	353

Source: Kurian, George Thomas, *Datapedia of the United States, 1790–2000: America Year by Year*, Lanham, Md.: Berman Press, 1994, pp. 144–145.

GROSS NATIONAL PRODUCT IN BILLIONS OF DOLLARS, 1918–1930

Year	Current Prices
1918	76.4
1919	84.0
1920	91.5
1921	69.6
1922	74.1
1923	85.1
1924	84.7
1925	93.1
1926	97.0
1927	94.9
1928	97.0
1929	103.1
1930	90.4

Source: Kurian, *Datapedia of the United States, 1790–2000*, p. 89.

MOTOR VEHICLE SALES, 1918–1930

Year	Number of Passenger Cars	Number of Motor Trucks and Buses*
1918	943.4	227.2
1919	1,651.6	224.7
1920	1,905.5	321.7
1921	1,468.0	148.0
1922	2,274.1	269.9
1923	3,624.7	409.2
1924	3,185.8	416.6
1925	3,735.1	530.6
1926	3,692.3	608.6
1927	2,936.5	464.7
1928	3,775.4	583.3
1929	4,455.1	881.9
1930	2,787.4	575.3

*A substantial portion of the number of trucks and buses consists of chassis only, without bodies.

Note: Number sold includes sales of military vehicles.

Source: Kurian, *Datapedia of the United States, 1790–2000*, p. 267.

**PEOPLE LYNCHED IN THE UNITED STATES,
1918–1930**

Year	Total	White	African American
1918	64	4	60
1919	83	7	76
1920	61	8	53
1921	64	5	59
1922	57	6	51
1923	33	4	29
1924	16	...	16
1925	17	...	17
1926	30	7	23
1927	16	...	16
1928	11	1	10
1929	10	3	7
1930	21	1	20

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Historical Statistics of the United States*, Washington, D.C.: Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, 1960, p. 422.

**STANDARD AND POOR'S INDEX OF THE SHARE
PRICES OF COMMON STOCKS, 1918–1930**

Year	Total
1918	7.54
1919	8.78
1920	7.98
1921	6.86
1922	8.41
1923	8.57
1924	9.05
1925	11.15
1926	12.59
1927	15.34
1928	19.95
1929	26.02
1930	21.03

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Historical Statistics of the United States*, p. 1,004.

UNEMPLOYMENT, 1918–1930

Year	Percent of Civilian Labor Force
1918	1.4
1919	1.4
1920	5.2
1921	11.7
1922	6.7
1923	2.4
1924	5.0
1925	3.2
1926	1.8
1927	3.3
1928	4.2
1929	3.2
1930	8.7

Note: Data presented are in thousands of persons 14 years and over.
Source: Kurian, *Datapedia of the United States, 1790–2000*, p. 75.

NEW PUBLIC CONSTRUCTION IN MILLIONS OF DOLLARS, 1920–1930

Year	Educational Buildings	Military Facilities	Highways, Roads, and Streets	Sewer and Water Systems	Conservation and Development
1920	190	161	656	153	55
1921	274	49	853	178	52
1922	342	25	876	201	48
1923	346	16	805	203	65
1924	353	9	987	263	79
1925	400	8	1,082	278	73
1926	399	11	1,067	285	61
1927	367	12	1,222	312	63
1928	378	15	1,289	300	72
1929	389	19	1,266	253	115
1930	364	29	1,516	343	137

Source: Kurian, *Datapedia of the United States, 1790–2000*, p. 233.

ADMISSIONS TO SPECTATOR AMUSEMENTS IN MILLIONS OF DOLLARS, 1921–1930

Year	Total	Motion Picture Theaters	Theater Entertainment (Plays, Operas, etc.) of Nonprofit Institutions, except Athletics	Spectator Sport
1921	412	301	81	30
1923	528	336	146	46
1925	588	367	174	47
1927	769	526	195	48
1929	913	720	127	66
1930	892	732	95	65

Source: Kurian, *Datapedia of the United States, 1790–2000*, p. 153.

OPERATING BROADCAST STATIONS (AM)—RADIO SETS PRODUCED AND HOUSEHOLDS WITH SETS, 1921–1930

Year	Operating Broadcast Stations (AM)	Households with Radio Sets (in thousands)
1921	1*	...
1922	30	60
1923	556	466
1924	530	1,250
1925	571	2,750
1926	528	4,500
1927	681	6,750
1928	677	8,000
1929	606	10,250
1930	618	13,750

*First station to receive regular license as of September 15; other stations in operation experimentally.

Note: Figures are as of June 30 for each year.

Source: Kurian, *Datapedia of the United States, 1790–2000*, p. 300.

MINIMUM ANNUAL COST OF LIVING FOR A FAMILY OF FIVE, 1924*

Food	\$627.08
Clothing	
Husband	87.14
Wife	105.70
Boy (12)	73.03
Girl (6)	41.71
Boy (2)	31.38
Total	338.96
Furniture (annual replacement)	60.00
Cleaning supplies	40.13
Rent	300.00
Fuel and light	80.69
Miscellaneous	
Insurance	113.25
Life: \$7,500 (straight life)	1.87
Fire: on \$700 (furniture)	115.12
subtotal	
Carfare	
Husband	30.00
All others	20.80
subtotal	50.80
Help—one day a week (or laundry)	145.60
Maintenance of health	67.00
Amusements	25.00
Newspapers (daily and Sunday)	10.40
Church	15.00
Labor organizations	24.00
Telephone, postage, tobacco, etc.	20.00
One good magazine	1.00
Total	473.92
Grand total	\$1,920.87

*Based on the "Minimum Quantity Budget Necessary to Maintain a Worker's Family of Five in Health and Decency," U.S. Bureau of Labor (*Monthly Labor Review*, Vol. X, No. 6, June 1920).

Note: Middletown was the pseudonym given to Muncie, Indiana, whose sociologists Robert and Helen Lynd conducted the first detailed, objective examination of an American city. Prices are in all cases Middletown prices in 1924, determined by records kept over a period of weeks by a small group of cooperating Middletown working class housewives and by consultation with retailers.

Source: Lynd, Robert Staughton, and Helen M. Lynd, *Middletown: A Study in Modern American Culture*, New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1924, p. 518.

OXFORD WORLD'S CLASSICS



EDITH WHARTON

The Age of Innocence



Edited with an Introduction and Notes by
STEPHEN ORGEL

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

OXFORD

UNIVERSITY PRESS

Great Clarendon Street, Oxford OX2 6DP

Oxford University Press is a department of the University of Oxford.
It furthers the University's objective of excellence in research, scholarship,
and education by publishing worldwide in

Oxford New York

Auckland Cape Town Dar es Salaam Hong Kong Karachi
Kuala Lumpur Madrid Melbourne Mexico City Nairobi
New Delhi Shanghai Taipei Toronto

With offices in

Argentina Austria Brazil Chile Czech Republic France Greece
Guatemala Hungary Italy Japan Poland Portugal Singapore
South Korea Switzerland Thailand Turkey Ukraine Vietnam

Oxford is a registered trade mark of Oxford University Press
in the UK and in certain other countries

Published in the United States
by Oxford University Press Inc., New York

Introduction, Explanatory Notes © Stephen Orgel 2006
Chronology © Martha Banta 1994

The moral rights of the author have been asserted
Database right Oxford University Press (maker)

First published as an Oxford World's Classics paperback 2006

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced,
stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means,
without the prior permission in writing of Oxford University Press,
or as expressly permitted by law, or under terms agreed with the appropriate
reprographics rights organization. Enquiries concerning reproduction
outside the scope of the above should be sent to the Rights Department,
Oxford University Press, at the address above

You must not circulate this book in any other binding or cover
and you must impose this same condition on any acquirer

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
Data available

Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication Data
Data available

Typeset in Ehrhardt
by RefineCatch Limited, Bungay, Suffolk
Printed in Great Britain by
Clays Ltd., St. Ives plc

ISBN 0-19-280662-9 978-0-19-280662-8

CONTENTS

<i>Acknowledgements</i>	vi
<i>Introduction</i>	vii
<i>Note on the Text</i>	xx
<i>Select Bibliography</i>	xxi
<i>A Chronology of Edith Wharton</i>	xxiii
THE AGE OF INNOCENCE	I
<i>Explanatory Notes</i>	255

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am indebted to Michael Wyatt for information, for a series of energetic conversations about Wharton, and for providing the ideal setting, Florence, where this edition was completed. Villa I Tatti, where Wharton paid many visits to her dear friend Bernard Berenson, was as warmly welcoming to me as it had been to her, and I thank Joseph Connors, the director, for his hospitality, and the librarian and staff for their manifold kindnesses. Leonard Barkan gave me the benefit of his expertise to illuminate a viticultural point. Judith Luna has once again been the ideal editor.

INTRODUCTION

The Age of Innocence was Edith Wharton's first novel after the end of the First World War. Settled in Paris since 1910, she had been intensely active in war work throughout the conflict, and her admiration for her adopted country was immense and unqualified. But with victory came the growing realization that the war had changed her own world for good. The Paris she had loved, that had served her as a refuge from the materialism of her own country and the miseries of her marriage, a culture rich in emotional, spiritual, and sensual satisfactions, she now found transformed beyond recognition. It was, she wrote to her friend Bernard Berenson in 1919, 'simply awful—a kind of continuous earthquake of motors, busses, trams, lorries, taxis and other howling and swooping and colliding engines, with hundreds of thousands of U.S. citizens rushing about in them and tumbling out at one's door'.¹ The fact that the chief agent of change in this account is 'U.S. citizens' gives her sense of her own place in the events of the past five years a particular poignancy—in working to save France from the barbarians she has helped to Americanize it. She had determined, even before the war's end, to leave Paris and find a place in the country. The house, in the village of Saint-Brice-sous-Forêt in the northern suburbs of Paris, required much restoration, and finally became her principal home in 1919. In moving there she was escaping from herself as much as from her unwelcome compatriots; and it is not coincidental that her imagination turned to the reconstruction of a past that was uniquely her own and gave her an opportunity not to remake her history, but to contemplate how she came to be herself.

The novel is set in the 1870s, and gives a detailed anatomy of the narrow segment of old New York society in which Wharton grew up. Several of the characters are recognizably members of Wharton's own family, and the social topography of New York and Newport, where the group spent the summers, is precise and specific. New York, for this society, is still centred on Washington Square, though the the more affluent are beginning to move further north—

¹ Cited in R. W. B. Lewis, *Edith Wharton* (New York, 1975), 419–20.

Madison Square, where Broadway crosses Fifth Avenue at 23rd Street, had recently become fashionable; Central Park had been created, and defined the upper precincts of social distinction, on its east side from Fifth to Fourth Avenue, which was, in two decades, after the building of Grand Central Station, to be renamed, and to become the most fashionable of the streets, Park Avenue. The new districts were quickly colonized by a different sort of aristocracy, the far richer industrialists, railroad magnates, bankers—men like Henry Clay Frick, Cornelius Vanderbilt, Jay Gould, J. P. Morgan—who were remaking New York on a much grander scale, and whose new money afforded them a degree of luxury and conspicuous display that old New York both contemned and envied; but also viewed, correctly, as an omen of its own obsolescence. At the time of the novel, only the eccentric matriarch Mrs Manson Mingott builds herself a mansion ‘in an inaccessible wilderness near the Central Park’. Wharton herself was born in a house on 23rd Street just west of Fifth Avenue, a socially impeccable neighbourhood; but living fashionably put enough strain on the family’s budget that they moved to Europe, where life was less expensive, from 1866 to 1872—the novel’s world is the one Wharton returned to at the age of 10, not a world she was familiar with, but one she observed and discovered on the verge of adolescence.

Wharton took particular care with her allusions to cultural events—who sang *Faust* at the old Academy of Music in 1874; whom Newland Archer would have seen playing Dion Boucicault’s *The Shaughraun*, and at what theatre; what one saw at the new Metropolitan Museum of Art; what new books Archer, with his taste for the latest in literature and social theory, would have received from his London bookseller in 1875. These are, with a very few exceptions, accurately imagined (there is, indeed, a subversive pleasure to be experienced in finding the small number of anachronisms, which are indicated in the glosses to this edition): Wharton had a researcher checking such references at the Yale and New York Public Libraries, and they give the novel a very precise time scheme, which locates, and thereby contributes significantly to the pathos of, Archer’s repeatedly missed opportunities.

As the novel’s central figure, Archer is a thorough product of this society, charming, tactful, enlightened; and though he accepts its standards and abides by its rules he is intelligent and independent

enough to recognize its limitations. For the first half of the novel, indeed, he regards his social world with a good deal of ironic detachment. The novel opens with his engagement to May Welland, ostensibly the perfect wife for him: socially impeccable, beautiful, responsive, charming, the epitome of womanhood as conceived by his world. The attractions and defects of the epitome are recognized even by Archer. He watches his fiancée at the opera during Faust's seduction of Marguerite:

'The darling!' thought Newland Archer . . . 'She doesn't even guess what it's all about.' And he contemplated her absorbed young face with a thrill of possessorship in which pride in his own masculine initiation was mingled with a tender reverence for her abysmal purity. (p. 5)

That 'abysmal purity' is his to transform; but his ambitions for it are thoroughly conventional:

He did not in the least wish the future Mrs Newland Archer to be a simpleton. He meant her (thanks to his enlightening companionship) to develop a social tact and readiness of wit enabling her to hold her own with the most popular married women of the 'younger set,' in which it was the recognised custom to attract masculine homage while playfully discouraging it. . . .

Wharton continues, 'How this miracle of fire and ice was to be created, and to sustain itself in a harsh world, he had never taken the time to think out.' His view of his future wife is simply the view of all the young men of his social circle.

In matters intellectual and artistic Newland Archer felt himself distinctly the superior of these chosen specimens of old New York gentility; he had probably read more, thought more, and even seen a good deal more of the world, than any other man of the number. Singly they betrayed their inferiority; but grouped together they represented 'New York,' and the habit of masculine solidarity made him accept their doctrine on all the issues called moral. He instinctively felt that in this respect it would be troublesome—and also rather bad form—to strike out for himself. (p. 6)

The avoidance of the 'troublesome' and the profound distaste for 'bad form' are ironically invoked here, but they are to be among the most powerful motivations in the novel.

But Archer's social circle is not entirely closed. May's cousin Ellen Olenska has just entered—or re-entered—it. The Countess

Oleńska, in old New York's terms, is an exotic, an American who has married a Polish count and has lived a brilliant life in Europe among aristocrats, artists, musicians, gamblers. The count was, however, brutal and unscrupulous, and she has now left him—according to rumour, via an affair with his secretary—and returned to her family. In ordinary circumstances, Ellen would not even be received by the people she grew up with; but her family, presided over by the eccentric, independent, gigantically fat matriarch Mrs Manson Mingott, welcomes her, and the support of the family is the critical element: to snub Ellen is to insult the clan. Granny Mingott, however, is not discreet in her welcome, nor does she undertake to educate Ellen in the rules of her new milieu. Ellen appears publicly at the opera in the family box, pays calls on socially dubious people, is seen walking with a married gentleman of notoriously loose morals. And despite the claims of family, the snub is duly administered: Mrs Mingott invites her social peers to a dinner 'to meet the Countess Oleńska', and almost without exception the invitations are declined.

It is Archer who rescues the situation, through a diplomatic appeal to the acknowledged leaders of old New York society, the elderly van der Luydens. The Dutch name is significant: their New York heritage reaches back more than two centuries, to the time when New York was still *Nieuw Amsterdam*. Most of Wharton's families are more recent arrivals, with English surnames, and for all this group's insistence on their special status as 'old' New Yorkers and their distrust of things foreign, many, including the van der Luydens, claim connections with the English aristocracy. Ellen's case is put to the van der Luydens, and the response is firm and unquestionable: 'as long as a member of a well-known family is backed up by that family it should be considered—final.' They enforce their judgement by including Ellen in their own dinner for a visiting titled English relative. For Ellen to appear at such a table constitutes an unimpeachable imprimatur. Like it or not, New York society has accepted her.

The growth of Archer's inevitable passion for Ellen provides Wharton with some of her most exquisitely conceived dramatic moments. It also provides the novel with its largest ironic dimension, as Archer increasingly sees, through his passion for Ellen, everything that is lacking in his world, and in his fiancée May Welland. Ellen has re-entered that world as a safe haven from the misery of her life in

Europe, and can see in her reception nothing but good will and kindness—naturally the intended slights have been concealed from her, and her own family has been unfailingly supportive. But if she is to remain as a part of the New York world, she has everything to learn, and it falls to Archer to educate her—initially, as both an incipient cousin by marriage and a lawyer, to dissuade her from taking the unthinkable step of seeking a divorce. A divorced woman, however wronged, is anathema in this world. Archer is successful and Ellen, to everyone's relief, agrees to abandon the divorce; but the process is an education for Archer too, as, alone in his library or debating with his colleagues, he indignantly questions the standards decreeing that women should not seek redress for manifest injuries or reclaim what is rightfully theirs.

Divorce was a central issue for Wharton throughout her fiction, both defining the place of women in society and serving as an index to the radical instability of the social assumptions within which her own sensibility was formed. Divorced women were effectually banished from the world of the Mingotts, Wellands, and van der Luydens. This had little to do with religious scruples—divorce was not forbidden in the Episcopal Church—and nothing whatever to do with a sense of social justice. It derived, on the contrary, from a conviction that the only valid options for women were marriage or spinsterhood, and that having exercised the option of marriage one had to stick with it. To admit that marriage might be a reversible step was fatally to weaken the institution on which these tightly knit, much intermarried families depended. If to marry was the goal of a woman's life, to remarry was a form of promiscuousness. Wharton's attitudes on the matter, if indeed they were ever those of her upbringing, were obviously no longer so by the time she divorced her own husband Teddy, who had been chronically unfaithful and had embezzled large sums from her trust fund. The divorce became final in 1913, the year she completed her satiric masterpiece *The Custom of the Country*, with its heroine Undine Spragg, whose extraordinary mobility within the worlds of old New York society, the French aristocracy, and new big money is enabled precisely by her willingness to divorce a sequence of husbands, and her adeptness at doing so without fatally tarnishing her social respectability. The novel also unquestionably assumes that divorce is no solution to the dissatisfactions of marriage; but it shows even more powerfully something

Wharton in her own life felt only too keenly, the real (and in the novel inevitable) dissatisfactions of marriage itself.

The Custom of the Country is about how far America has come from the genteel, ingrown world depicted in *The Age of Innocence*, how far, in a single generation, that society's social and moral norms have been marginalized or even rendered irrelevant. But even in Wharton's old New York, society accepted large double standards and tolerated considerable promiscuity, even within the central institution of marriage. Ellen finds comfort and safety in the Wellands and Mingotts, but for real companionship she turns to Julius Beaufort, a showy outsider who has married into the group, a foreigner. Beaufort is said to be English, but the character was immediately identified by Minnie Jones, Wharton's close friend, a relative by marriage, and from time to time her literary agent (an inside reader if there ever was one), as modelled on the millionaire August Belmont, a socially prominent Jew—the claim was denied by Wharton (R. W. B Lewis argues that she had a philandering and embezzling uncle of her own in mind);² but the ascription of Beaufort's social insidiousness to Judaism has a social logic in the period that is all the more powerful for being simplistic. In fact, *The Age of Innocence* includes nothing so exotic as a Jew—the bohemian artists and writers Ellen admires remain as firmly offstage as does her Polish husband, and when Archer finds a literate Frenchman he enjoys talking with and proposes inviting him to dinner, May firmly dismisses the idea, declaring the man 'dreadfully common'. So society is kept uncontaminated.

But is it not contaminated already? Beaufort keeps mistresses and is not scrupulous about hiding the fact; nevertheless, he is accepted by the group partly because his wife is one of them, but more significantly, though this is scarcely acknowledged, because his money enables their pursuits and pleasures: he is their banker, and their cultural institutions receive large sums from his charitable pockets. That Ellen should be seen walking with him, should allow him to call on her alone, should accept and even solicit his advice, is shocking only because Ellen sees no need to conceal these things; indeed, she acknowledges that Beaufort's worldliness is for her the fresh air that she misses in the stuffy safety of New York. As Archer explains it to

² Lewis, *Edith Wharton*, 431.

himself, she has lived 'so close to the powers of evil . . . that she still breathed more freely in their air', and in this construction, Beaufort is the local representative of evil. Archer is determined 'to make her see Beaumont as he really was, with all he represented—and abhor it'.

If this is melodramatic on Archer's part, it is surely gently satiric on Wharton's. But the evil of blatant promiscuity is not limited to Julius Beaufort. Larry Lefferts, the person responsible for scuttling Mrs Mingott's dinner party for the Countess Olenska, a smug, small-minded gossip whom Archer considers an ass, but who nevertheless enjoys an unquestioned social position, has 'frequent love-affairs with other men's wives', which are spoken of openly, even to the van der Luydens. Newland himself has had a 'secret love affair' with a married woman, which was 'not too secret to invest him with a becoming air of adventure'. Archer's affair, in fact, leads Wharton to a telling summary of the sexual ethics of old New York society:

The affair, in short, had been of the kind that most of the young men of his age had been through, and emerged from with calm consciences and an undisturbed belief in the abysmal distinction between the women one loved and respected and those one enjoyed—and pitied. In this view they were sedulously abetted by their mothers, aunts and other elderly female relatives, who all shared Mrs Archer's belief that when 'such things happened' it was undoubtedly foolish of the man, but somehow always criminal of the woman. (p. 68)

The only thing surprising about this is its banality. Under the circumstances, Archer is risking much less than Ellen in pursuing his passion for her; but the question of sex between them is scarcely touched on. At one point, late in the novel, Ellen finally explicitly agrees to go to bed with him 'once—and then go home', back to the Europe of the powers of evil: this is the price, for them, of one act of illicit sex. The time is set for two days hence, but Ellen does not keep the assignation; and even the missed appointment is elided—the narrative picks up again ten days later. 'Archer had no sign from her but that conveyed by the return of a key wrapped in tissue paper, and sent to his office in a sealed envelope addressed in her hand.' The key constitutes, in fact, an extraordinary act of evasion on Wharton's part: when does Archer give it to Ellen? There is really no time in the novel for him to do so. He cannot have given it to her at their last

meeting, in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, when, as they are about to part, the assignation is proposed by Ellen; and he certainly cannot have sent it to her the next day, while she was living at Mrs Mingott's, in an envelope to be seen by the servants and delivered to her over breakfast. It is not even clear what it is a key to. Does Archer keep a suite for assignations?

The episode, with its promise of sex and then its casual withdrawal, is particularly striking in view of Wharton's original plans for the novel. Here is R. W. B. Lewis's account of the scenario she initially proposed to her New York publishers, Appleton & Company:

It bore the working title 'Old New York' and the scene was laid in 1875. The two main characters, Langdon Archer and Clementine Olenska, are both unhappily married. Falling in love, they 'go off secretly,' Edith explained, 'and meet in Florida where they spend a few mad weeks' before Langdon returns to his pretty, conventional wife in New York, and Clementine to an existence, separated from her brutish husband, in Paris. (p. 423)

The New York editors loved the proposal; serial rights were sold immediately for \$18,000, and Appleton paid her a \$15,000 advance against royalties on the book—this was more than Wharton had earned in a single year since 1906. Running away for a few weeks of mad sex was now the stuff of successful literature; on the basis of this scenario Edith Wharton was expected to produce a best-seller.

In an alternative preliminary sketch for the novel described by Cynthia Griffin Wolff, Archer breaks his engagement to May and marries Ellen, but though their honeymoon is magical, when they settle in New York, 'he and Ellen are not happy together. There is no shared sense of reality: she misses the life in Europe that she has always known; he misses the familiar amenities of old New York; and finally they separate and return to their separate worlds'³—she to Europe, and he to a bachelor life again with his mother and sister.

Both these plots, with their passion and disillusion, are clearly indebted to those novelists Wharton considered her benchmarks, Balzac, Tolstoy, and Trollope, 'grown-up' novelists, as she described

³ Cynthia Griffin Wolff, *A Feast of Words* (Oxford, 1977), 327. Wharton's notes for both this and the scenario summarized by Lewis above are in the Beinecke Library at Yale.

them to Berenson.⁴ But the scenarios register even more intensely her continuing attempt to come to terms with the transport and disillusion of her own very late sexual awakening. In 1908 Wharton became the lover of the American journalist Morton Fullerton, Paris correspondent of the *London Times*, a man of immense charm and erudition, but, as Wharton knew perfectly well, an incorrigible philanderer, with men as well as women—an unmarried, infinitely more charming, utterly polymorphous Julius Beaufort. He came to her with the best of credentials, an introduction from Henry James. Their passion developed, at first tentatively, like Archer's and Ellen's; and Wharton, now locked in a marriage as embattled as Ellen's, and in many of the same ways, did not resist. Within a year they were discreetly, but definitively, lovers. How powerfully she responded to the sexual aspect of the affair is recorded in her astonishing Whitmanesque poem called 'Terminus', about a romantic episode with Fullerton in the Charing Cross Hotel in London in 1909:

Wonderful was the long secret night you gave me, my Lover,
Palm to palm, breast to breast in the gloom. The faint red lamp
Flushing with magical shadows the common-place room of the inn,
With its dull impersonal furniture, kindled a mystic flame. . . .⁵

The sexual part of the relationship ended, not by Wharton's choice, in 1910; her fascinating novel *The Reef*, published in 1912, reworks the affair into a superbly realized anatomy of her complex feelings about both Fullerton and her own awakened and subsequently frustrated passion. A decade later, in the three versions of Archer's and Ellen's romance, she again replays her own passion and disappointment—Archer, ironically, is allowed one of the original plots as a fantasy of escape: 'In that train he intended to join her, and travel with her to Washington, or as much farther as she was willing to go. His own fancy inclined to Japan.' But the final decision to deny the lovers any sexual satisfaction at all is entirely in keeping with Wharton's imaginative relation to her own experience throughout her writing: her protagonists characteristically lose the battles she had won, however briefly in this instance. Perhaps the most revealing element in Wharton's final version of the story is that it is Ellen who is sexually in control, continually drawing back at the last moment,

⁴ *Letters*, ed. R. W. B. Lewis and Nancy Lewis (New York, 1988), 575.

⁵ The complete poem is printed and discussed in Lewis, *Edith Wharton*, 258–60.

and the pursuing Archer (how aptly named!) who continually misses his target.

Early in the novel Archer thinks of his society as 'a hieroglyphic world', though he has no doubts about his ability to decipher the hieroglyphics. But in fact, having pressed his fiancée repeatedly for an early wedding, confident of his desires and of May's suitability as his wife, confident above all of his control over a clearly mapped future, he is struck by a moment of incomprehension:

That terrifying product of the social system he belonged to and believed in, the young girl who knew nothing and expected everything, looked back at him like a stranger through May Welland's familiar features; and once more it was borne in on him that marriage was not the safe anchorage he had been taught to think, but a voyage on uncharted seas. (p. 30)

The innocent May, 'terrifying', 'like a stranger', is the crucial hieroglyph he has not deciphered, an index to everything he fails to understand about his world, and thereby about the course to which he is committing his life. May is innocent, but she is shrewd and subtly manipulative, and it is very quickly clear, though not to Archer, that she is in control of their relationship. From the first she understands him a great deal better than he understands her; when she asks Archer if the reason he is so eager for an early marriage is that 'you're not certain of continuing to care for me', and suggests that he might want, once and for all, 'to settle the question', she is dead right. When she offers to release him from the engagement if there is someone else he loves, she confronts him with his own desires in a way he has not been able to confront himself.

May is apparently at this point unaware of Archer's attraction to her cousin; her reference is to his old love affair, but the offer might put him on notice that she will always know more than she reveals. Less than three months into the marriage he is finding it 'chilling', like being buried alive, whereas Ellen, on the rare occasions when they meet, is all warmth and life. Seeing May at her most strikingly beautiful, Diana-like, 'Archer felt the glow of proprietorship that so often cheated him into momentary well-being', and he wonders whether May's 'niceness' might not be 'only a negation, the curtain dropped before an emptiness'. A terrifying hieroglyph indeed. Increasingly, Archer sees his world through Ellen's eyes, suddenly aware of all he has been blind to, and at these moments 'New York

seemed much farther off than Samarkand'. His oldest friends, the rulers of his world, relaxing on the Beauforts' lawn at Newport 'shocked him as if they had been children playing in a graveyard'—he suddenly sees himself living in a world of children, surrounded by a dead past; the adults are Ellen, and the intrusive Julius Beaufort, and beyond the Atlantic that society of intellect, creativity, good conversation, and dubious morals. We do, in fact, very occasionally get a sense of the basic childishness behind the stuffy good manners and relentless social codes. Unexpectedly descending upon the Chiverses' 'up the Hudson' in the hopes of finding Ellen at the van der Luydens' nearby, 'about midnight, he assisted in putting a goldfish in one visitor's bed, dressed up a burglar in the bath-room of a nervous aunt, and saw in the small hours by joining in a pillow-fight that ranged from the nurseries to the basement'. Does this sum up the ultimate reality behind these leaders of old New York, the essential frivolity of all these men who live on their inherited wealth, these women who fill their time with opera and dinners and social calls?

Archer sees his pursuit of Ellen as a series of attempted escapes repeatedly foiled at the last minute: as he is poised to speak, May's telegram agreeing to an early wedding arrives, or (more than once) Julius Beaufort intrudes, or May reveals that she is pregnant—and reveals as well that she has told Ellen so two weeks before she knew it was the case. Gradually he comes to realize the degree to which he has been managed throughout, not only by May, but by the family as a whole. Learning quite casually that he has been systematically excluded from discussions about Ellen's future, he determines to go to see her in Washington, to make one more attempt to escape with her. To May, he claims he is going on business. Her response is 'The change will do you good'; it prompts Wharton's most detailed analysis of the linguistic strategies of the New York that formed her sensibility:

It was the only word that passed between them on the subject; but in the code in which they had both been trained it meant: 'Of course you understand that I know all that people have been saying about Ellen, and heartily sympathise with my family in their effort to get her to return to her husband. I also know that, for some reason you have not chosen to tell me, you have advised her against this course, which all the older men of the family, as well as our grandmother, agree in approving; and that it is owing to your encouragement that Ellen defies us all. . . . Hints have indeed not

been wanting; but since you appear unwilling to take them from others, I offer you this one myself, in the only form in which well-bred people of our kind can communicate unpleasant things to each other: by letting you understand that I know you mean to see Ellen when you are in Washington, and are perhaps going there expressly for that purpose; and that, since you are sure to see her, I wish you to do so with my full and explicit approval—and to take the opportunity of letting her know what the course of conduct you have encouraged her in is likely to lead to.’ (p. 187)

But when Archer finally does propose to Ellen that they escape together ‘into a world . . . where we shall be simply two human beings who love each other’, it is the worldly Ellen who speaks directly and openly, not in code:

‘Oh, my dear—where is that country? Have you ever been there?’ she asked, and as he remained sullenly dumb she went on: ‘I know so many who’ve tried to find it, and believe me, they all got out by mistake at wayside stations: at places like Boulogne, or Pisa, or Monte Carlo—and it wasn’t at all different from the old world they’d left, but only rather smaller and dingier and more promiscuous. . . . We’re near each other only if we stay far from each other.’ (p. 203)

Archer is always the romantic; Ellen is always quite clear about the terms of their passion for each other—that it can exist only so long as it is, not merely unconsummated, but unrealized. Out of this impasse, Wharton produces one of the great ironic scenes in her fiction, the farewell dinner for Ellen, finally about to move back to Europe, ‘an elaborate ritual’, as R. W. B. Lewis puts it, ‘masking what is in effect the ejection of the disturbing Ellen Olenska from New York society’.⁶ During the course of the evening Archer gradually realizes that everyone in the room assumes he and Ellen have in fact been lovers all along.

Archer settles, in the end, for the life that has been mapped out for him—the life he has, after all, chosen. It is, in most respects, a good life; ‘. . . It did not so much matter if marriage was a dull duty, as long as it kept the dignity of a duty. . . . Looking about him, he honoured his own past, and mourned for it. After all, there was good in the old ways.’ He has missed the ultimate prize, ‘the flower of life’, but to repine at that seems to him like repining at not winning first prize in a lottery; and he comes to think of Ellen as an imaginary

⁶ *Edith Wharton*, 432.

beloved in a book or a picture, the composite vision of all he had missed.

Need he, in fact, have missed it? The novel ends by giving Archer yet another chance at the love of his life. It is thirty years later, May has died, and Archer and his son Dallas are in Paris, where Dallas, who has learned from his mother that Archer had been in love with Ellen (it is not clear whether he believes they had been lovers) has arranged for them to visit her; she has been living on the Left Bank—in Wharton's Paris, friends with Wharton's writers and artists and brilliant conversationalists—for decades. There is now nothing to keep them apart, not even age: as Archer observes to himself, contemplating the imminent reunion, 'I'm only 57' (Wharton's own age in 1919, when she was writing the novel, was 57). But Archer, at a loss before his son's openness about the darkest secrets of his life, hesitates, and finally decides against seeing Ellen. Even at the end, she would mean giving up too much—giving up all those things he honoured about 'the old ways'.

Wharton always insisted that *The Age of Innocence* was not an exercise in nostalgia; and certainly there is little that is idealized in the world depicted in the book. But the irony—and Wharton could be savage—is muted, even affectionate. The earliest reviewers were almost universal in their praise, though a certain amused condescension is sometimes detectable, as when William Lyon Phelps wrote in the *New York Times* that 'Those who are interested in good dinners—and who is not?—will find much to admire in these brilliant pages.'⁷ The very richness of Wharton's detail is an anatomy of what we have lost, and few readers have left the novel's world without some regret. Carl van Doren, writing in *The Nation*, summed up her achievement with an epigrammatic elegance that must have pleased her: 'Mrs. Wharton's triumph is that she has described these rites and surfaces and burdens as familiarly as if she loved them and as lucidly as if she hated them.'⁸ The book won the Pulitzer Prize in 1921.

⁷ Reprinted in James W. Tuttleton et al. (eds.), *Edith Wharton: The Contemporary Reviews* (Cambridge, 1992), 284.

⁸ *Ibid.* 287.

NOTE ON THE TEXT

The Age of Innocence first appeared serially in four issues of the *Pictorial Review*, July–October 1920. It was published in book form, much revised, in the same year by D. Appleton and Company, in both New York and London. Wharton continued to make corrections throughout the early reprintings of the novel, which she considered to be in its final form only in the sixth impression of the first edition. That is the text followed in the present edition.

SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

Biography

- Auchincloss, Louis, *Edith Wharton; A Woman in her Time* (New York, 1971).
Benstock, Shari, *No Gifts from Chance: A Biography of Edith Wharton* (New York, 1994).
Dwight, Eleanor, *Edith Wharton: An Extraordinary Life* (New York, 1994).
Lewis, R. W. B., *Edith Wharton: A Biography* (New York, 1975).

Letters

- The Letters of Edith Wharton*, ed. R. W. B. Lewis and Nancy Lewis (New York, 1988).

Relevant Works by Edith Wharton

- The Custom of the Country* (1913).
Old New York (4 vols., 1924): *False Dawn (The Forties)*, *The Old Maid (The Fifties)*, *The Spark (The Sixties)*, and *New Year's Day (The Seventies)*.
A Backward Glance (New York, 1934).

Criticism

- Ammons, Elizabeth, *Edith Wharton's Argument with America* (Athens, Ga., 1980).
Erlich, Gloria C., *The Sexual Education of Edith Wharton* (Berkeley, 1992).
Fracasso, Evelyn E., 'The Transparent Eyes of May Welland in Wharton's *Age of Innocence*', *Modern Language Studies*, 21/4 (Fall 1991).
Gargano, James W., 'Tableaux of Renunciation: Wharton's Use of *The Shaughraun* in *The Age of Innocence*', *Studies in American Fiction*, 15/1 (Spring 1987).
Goodman, Susan, *Edith Wharton's Women: Friends and Rivals* (Hanover, NH, 1990).
Tuttleton, James W., et al. (eds.) *Edith Wharton: The Contemporary Reviews* (Cambridge, 1992).
Wolff, Cynthia Griffin, *A Feast of Words* (New York, 1977).

Further Reading in Oxford World's Classics

- Wharton, Edith, *The Custom of the Country*, ed. Stephen Orgel.

- Wharton, Edith, *Ethan Frome*, ed. Elaine Showalter.
——— *The House of Mirth*, ed. Martha Banta.
——— *The Reef*, ed. Stephen Orgel.

A CHRONOLOGY OF EDITH WHARTON

- 1862 (24 January) Edith Newbold Jones, only daughter of George Frederick Jones and Lucretia Rhineland, born in New York City. Early years alternate between houses in Newport and Manhattan. Called 'Pussy' by her family and 'Lily' by friends.
- 1873 Writes first story and verses.
- 1877 Completes novella, 'Fast and Loose' (unpublished). Avid reader of Goethe (*Faust* her favourite), Keats, and the Elizabethan dramatists.
- 1878 *Verses*, collection of poems, privately printed. 'Comes out' at her society debut; has many male admirers.
- 1879–80 First publication: three poems appear in *Atlantic Monthly* and *New York World*. (Ten years pass before she publishes again.)
- 1880 To Europe for an extended stay.
- 1882 Father's death in Cannes on the French Riviera; returns with her mother to Newport; breaks engagement with Harry Stevens.
- 1883 Brief romance with Walter Berry; meets Edward (Teddy) Wharton of Boston.
- 1885 (29 April) marries Wharton; six weeks later learns of Harry Stevens's death. Settles in Newport, with frequent trips abroad.
- 1888 Receives handsome legacy from a relative, which, when added to her trust fund and Teddy's allowance, provides the Whartons with solid financial security.
- 1889 Begins to suffer attacks of asthma, nausea, extreme fatigue. Rents house on New York's Madison Avenue. Starts writing lyric poetry after hiatus of ten years. Poetry published in *Scribner's Magazine*, starting her long professional relationship with editor Edward Burlingame.
- 1890 Burlingame accepts 'Mrs Manstey's View' (short story), Wharton's first published work of fiction.
- 1891 Purchases small house on Park Avenue and builds large house in Newport.
- 1897 Co-author of *The Decoration of Houses* with Ogden Codman. Receives first royalty cheque for \$39.60.
- 1898 Suffers nervous collapse; placed under the care of S. Weir Mitchell, famous Philadelphia physician whose rest-cure works for her

- as it had not for Charlotte Perkins Gilman. Walter Berry re-enters her life and becomes her closest friend and literary adviser.
- 1899 Publishes first collection of short stories, *The Greater Inclination*.
- 1900 Publishes novella, *The Touchstone*.
- 1901 *Crucial Instances*, her second short-story collection, is published. Death of her mother.
- 1902 Appearance of *The Valley of Decision*, her first full-length novel. With Teddy, moves into The Mount, the house she designed in Lenox, Massachusetts. Keeping a separate bedroom, her health improves; Teddy becomes frequently ill and increasingly dependent. Plans new novel entitled 'Disintegration', which does not appear until 1925 as *The Mother's Recompense*. Involved in a variety of literary activities: translations, reviews, poetry, essays on Italy, several unfinished plays.
- 1903 Publishes novel, *Sanctuary; Italian Villas and their Gardens*. Meets Henry James. Teddy's health deteriorates.
- 1904 Third collection of short stories, *The Descent of Man*. Begins work on new novel, first entitled 'A Moment's Ornament', then 'The Year of the Rose', and finally *The House of Mirth*.
- 1905 *The House of Mirth* appears serialized in *Scribner's Magazine* between January and November. The book is published by Charles Scribner's Sons on 14 October.
- 1907 Publishes novel, *The Fruit of the Tree*. Starts planning *The Custom of the Country* but puts it aside. Teddy suffers major nervous collapse. After meeting Morton Fullerton, starts writing her 'love diary' in October.
- 1908 Begins love affair with Fullerton. Reading Nietzsche. Publishes travel book and another collection of stories.
- 1909 *Artemis to Actaeon and Other Verse* is published. Teddy seriously mismanages her funds.
- 1910 *Tales of Men and Ghosts* appears. Affair with Fullerton ends. Settles in Paris.
- 1911 Publishes *Ethan Frome*, the novella she claimed ended her apprenticeship.
- 1912 *The Reef*, her first major novel since *The Fruit of the Tree*, published by Appleton, marking the conclusion of her long relationship with Scribner's.
- 1913 Marriage to Teddy ends in divorce. Publishes novel, *The Custom of the Country*.

- 1914 Travels extensively in North Africa. Takes up permanent residence in France and becomes active in war-relief.
- 1915 Visits battle-areas and publishes essays, *Fighting France*.
- 1916 Edits *The Book of the Homeless* to raise funds for war-relief. Publishes *Xingu and Other Stories*. Begins work on novel, *The Glimpses of the Moon*.
- 1917 The novella, *Summer*, appears, her 'hot' pairing to her 'cold' story, *Ethan Frome*.
- 1918 Publishes *The Marne*; begins the never-completed novella, *The Necklace*, and *A Son at the Front*, not published until 1923. Purchases eighteenth-century house outside Paris.
- 1919 Publishes essays, *French Ways and their Meanings*; buys château on French Riviera.
- 1920 During this productive year publishes novel, *The Age of Innocence*, and essays, *In Morocco*. Writes fragment of 'Beatrice Palmato', proposed story about incest.
- 1921 Awarded the Pulitzer Prize for *The Age of Innocence*.
- 1922 Publishes novel, *The Glimpses of the Moon*.
- 1923 Makes final visit to the States; granted honorary degree from Yale. Appearance of *A Son at the Front*.
- 1924 Publishes four novellas under the title *Old New York*.
- 1925 *The Mother's Recompense*, first outlined in 1901, is published, as is *The Writing of Fiction*.
- 1926 Publishes *Here and Beyond*, collection of stories.
- 1928 Publishes novel, *The Children*.
- 1929 Publishes novel, *Hudson River Bracketed*. Almost dies of influenza.
- 1930 Short story collection, *Certain People*, appears.
- 1932 Publishes *The Gods Arrive*, sequel to *Hudson River Bracketed*.
- 1933 Another collection of short fiction, *Human Nature*, appears.
- 1934 Publishes reminiscences, *A Backward Glance*. Begins work on final novel, *The Buccaneers*, which is never finished.
- 1936 *The World Over*, containing some of her best-known short stories, is published.
- 1937 Dies on 11 August of heart failure and is buried at Versailles.

BEYOND GATSBY

***How Fitzgerald, Hemingway, and
Writers of the 1920s Shaped
American Culture***

Robert McParland

ROWMAN & LITTLEFIELD
Lanham • Boulder • New York • London

Published by Rowman & Littlefield
A wholly owned subsidiary of The Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group,
Inc.
4501 Forbes Boulevard, Suite 200, Lanham, Maryland 20706
www.rowman.com

Unit A, Whitacre Mews, 26-34 Stannary Street, London SE11 4AB


Copyright © 2015 by Rowman & Littlefield

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form or by any electronic or mechanical means, including information storage and retrieval systems, without written permission from the publisher, except by a reviewer who may quote passages in a review.

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Information Available

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

McParland, Robert.
Beyond Gatsby : how Fitzgerald, Hemingway, and writers of the 1920s shaped American culture / Robert McParland.
pages cm. – (Contemporary American literature)
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 978-1-4422-4708-6 (cloth : alk. paper) – ISBN 978-1-4422-4709-3 (ebook)
1. American fiction–20th century–History and criticism. 2. Popular culture–United States–History–20th century. I. Title.
PS369.M37 2015
813'.5209–dc23
2014042912

 TM The paper used in this publication meets the minimum requirements of American National Standard for Information Sciences Permanence of Paper for Printed Library Materials, ANSI/NISO Z39.48-1992.

Printed in the United States of America

CONTENTS

Preface	ix
Introduction: The 1920s	xix
1 Beyond the Wasteland: T. S. Eliot and the Postwar World	1
2 Ernest Hemingway and F. Scott Fitzgerald: Friendship and Rivalry	15
3 William Faulkner: A Southern Voice in the Age of Modernism	45
4 Modernism and Popular Culture in the Age of Ezra Pound and James Joyce	65
5 Midwestern Vision and Values: Sherwood Anderson, Sinclair Lewis, Willa Cather	87
6 Sounds of the City: Theodore Dreiser, John Dos Passos, Anzia Yezierska, Langston Hughes	123
7 History and Mythmakers: Edith Wharton, William Carlos Williams, Stephen Vincent Benet, John Steinbeck	155
Notes	181
Bibliography	205
Index	221
About the Author	231

PREFACE

Nearly one hundred years ago, F. Scott Fitzgerald's *This Side of Paradise* (1920) heralded a new era. A new generation appeared in its pages: one with a zest for life in a changing America. It also marked the beginning of a decade in which writers would change the face of American fiction and shape the American imagination. The first printing of 3,000 copies of Fitzgerald's novel about college life, published March 26, 1920, sold out in three days. With a subsequent printing, sales quickly reached 20,000 copies. Fitzgerald soon sold nine short stories to magazines, including his first to the *Saturday Evening Post*. Some 50,000 copies of *This Side of Paradise* had been sold by the end of 1922. Clearly, something about the novel had caught the spirit of the times. It seemed as if a new adventure had begun.

Fitzgerald cast images of the 1920s that became central to how the era is seen and interpreted. Youthful and energetic, he provided the picture of his age that we most remember. He set the tone and offered the image that the "Roaring Twenties" constituted a glamorous time of jazz, dancing flappers, and ecstatic spontaneity. His short story collection *Flappers and Philosophers* supports this image. *The Beautiful and Damned*, appearing in early 1922, reached sales of 40,000 to 50,000 copies. *The Great Gatsby* (1925), with a 20,780-copy first printing, was less successful commercially. Yet, it is the most enduring of his works and the chief source of our popular images of the period he called the "jazz age."

The extravagant parties in *The Great Gatsby* make for intriguing imagery and symbols on the page and splashy effects on the movie screen; however, the lights and glamour of Jay Gatsby's parties only offer a partial picture of a broader and more complex social phenomenon. Certainly, the image that the Roaring Twenties was entirely a matter of exuberance, dancing, and drinking has to be qualified. The literature of the 1920s provides a crucial reference point to help us understand the American dream. These stories reveal the hopes and concerns that people held and the changes that were in process in the America they knew. Perhaps in response to the Great War, Prohibition, and the Victorian age, the new generation depicted by Fitzgerald did indulge, but any period is more complex and varied than this.

While there were fads and frenetic flappers, the roar of motors of cars and airplanes, and the blare of jazz horns, there were lives that were modest and staid, as well as those that were indulgent and wild. Some may have danced through a time of spectacle and decadence. Others looked to the notion of a "lost generation" that Hemingway inscribed in an epigraph to his first novel, *The Sun Also Rises* (1926). That generation brought startlingly novel voices to American literature, including those of F. Scott Fitzgerald, Ernest Hemingway, and William Faulkner. The 1920s brought social critiques from Sinclair Lewis and John Dos Passos, and reflections on American culture from Willa Cather and the writers of the Harlem Renaissance. In the craft and innovations of these writers, something new, something vital, perceptive, and lasting, was emerging.

This book explores this crucial turning point in American literary history and assesses the literary landscape that the reading audience responded to. Nearly one hundred years later, the cultural milieu of the 1920s is not our own; however, the imagery, issues, and concerns of the 1920s still speak to us. Film has recently given us Leonardo DiCaprio in *The Great Gatsby*. Television has given us *Boardwalk Empire* and *Downton Abbey*. Yet, even clearer images of the 1920s and their continuing relevance can be found in the literature of that time. Some of that literature is of a lasting quality, addressing what is universal in human life and cultural experience. As Bob Batchelor observes, "Literature and literary figures can be used to establish context in debates that seem far removed from the era in which the work appeared."¹

This volume is about the contexts that the novels of the 1920s offer for our present debates. It is about the cultural responses that they engendered in their own time. It is also about the wonder of reading and imagination, and the continuing relevance of stories written nearly one hundred years ago. The focus on American writers of that era is intended to provide a better understanding of the continuing value of the classic works of American fiction. The dynamic relationship between America's major authors and their readers is investigated to highlight the ongoing relevance of reading and thinking about the issues in our own lives. This study looks at how that "one bright book of life," as D. H. Lawrence called the novel in the 1920s, shaped the modern American imagination.² Narratives offer us ways of organizing life. They create a space in which we might think about our lives and feel along with characters who suggest the experience of other people's lives. Stories help us put ourselves "in another person's shoes." That empathy is strikingly important in the debates of today's global environment.

The importance of reading persists throughout the generations. Readers in the 1920s were captivated by the novels discussed here. Revisiting them, we have some control with regard to how we imagine and construct this experience. When we watch television or film, the physical image and voice of a character are given to us. So is a particular angle of vision and the pace at which the story moves. When we read, we can adjust that pace by reading faster or slower. We can close the book and put it aside. We can also imagine a character based on the description the writer gives us. We can imagine the setting that character is in and hear that character's voice.

The novels of the 1920s still spark the imagination. While our era is, in many respects, quite different from the 1920s, the thought, styles, and voices of that period remain something more than quaint nostalgia. By taking classic 1920s novels off the shelves, we are not merely dusting off old relics. Many stories of the 1920s address the human condition, and with them we may also look at our own time, as if in a historical mirror. A novel may continue to have life and relevance beyond its time, long after its moment of popular consumption. Indeed, some novels that were less than popular during their time—James Joyce's *Ulysses*, William Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury*, or F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*—have grown in stature throughout the years. Characters in 1920s fiction presented sharp images of their time.

These novels not only portrayed life, for some readers they provided markers of how to negotiate life. They helped people find meaning in the disparate chaos of the modern world. Oftentimes something about these characters transcended their era. In that sense, they are relevant to us today.

Books continue to be part of America's national psyche. Some years ago, political scientist Benedict Anderson theorized that the exchange of print culture fostered what he called "imagined community." We will never meet everyone in a broad, expansive nation like the United States, but we may imagine our connection through shared media. Such awareness that others are reading some of the same books and periodicals, Anderson believed, has supported the development of nations. This awareness might be defined as a public consciousness informed by commonly shared news and media, collective memory, and archetypes.

To explore American consciousness, we turn to the texts of the 1920s for their cultural relevance. A goal of this study is to encourage further inquiry into how readers assimilated these works and how these books affected and connected people. American fiction provided readers with familiar narratives and common characters, images that people shared culturally. Mass media emerged from this distribution network, and these stories became part of the common language of American culture. They reflected human aspirations, brought readers imaginatively to new places, and prompted reflection on values.

Media globalization, digital technologies, and electronic texts have become part of a world of changing reading habits. We live in an information age filled with a plethora of facts. So why do we read fiction? Robert Penn Warren once simply said, "because we like it." Fiction, "as an image of life," he told the readers of the *Saturday Evening Post* in 1986, "stimulates our interest in life." It is, he said, "life in motion."³ A novel can dissect or disclose the world. It might even create a public conversation, as occurred with Sinclair Lewis's *Main Street* (1920) and *Babbitt* (1922). A novel may reveal life in its aesthetic form and characters, enabling us to enter other lives and situations.

The novel is also a cultural marker, one that records a slice of experience and may help us think about our world, our nation, and people's lives in different ways. With books like Sherwood Anderson's *Winesberg, Ohio*, James Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist* and *Ulysses*, and D. H. Lawrence's *Women in Love*, "you tear the masks from off your fellows,"

wrote Louis Kantor in 1922.⁴ “It can help you not to be dead in life,” D. H. Lawrence writes of the novel. Characteristically, he emphasizes “aliveness” and he says that a good novel could “make the whole man alive tremble.” A person ought to be fully alive, he insists, not “like a pianoforte with half the notes mute.”⁵

Many people in our time have held that something important happens when we read good fiction. Gordon Hunter has spoken of “how the talk about books becomes the sound of culture conversing with itself.”⁶ Elizabeth Long observes that reading fiction “sharpens social skills, expands perspective, and augments the ability to empathize.”⁷ In his *New York Review of Books* blog (March 26, 2012), Tim Parks writes that a historically dense and complex story provides a sense of the unique individual beneath “surface transformations,” “dilemmas,” and “conversations.”⁸

Novels are like windows into national consciousness. American fiction assists us in discovering “Americanness,” for these novels are, in a variety of ways, representative of this. When political scientist Michael J. Sandel argues in *Democracy’s Discontent* that we should “not become storyless,” he underscores the insight that stories are central to our lives and the life of our communities.⁹ They embody past and present, reflect culture and individual effort, and present and illuminate ideas. In the 1920s, the novel helped some people make sense of their surroundings. They might also help us make further sense of ours.

To read a novel from the 1920s may require some patience. It is a bit like yoga, as Susan Shillinglaw suggests in her study of John Steinbeck: It forces a person to be deliberate.¹⁰ Yoga forces one to focus on each muscle and one’s breathing. To read is to set aside that high speed Internet connection and slow down; however, the time spent in these imagined worlds may help us better understand the themes and issues of American culture then as now. This book takes the view that we might more fully comprehend our national character by looking back at the 1920s through these stories. Significant American writers emerged in the 1920s. Such voices as those of Ernest Hemingway, F. Scott Fitzgerald, William Faulkner, Willa Cather, and the writers of the Harlem Renaissance have contributed to our cultural consciousness and shaping the American imagination and the American dream in the present.

The American novel will be our focus. Drama and poetry are considered here only in passing, although they too were vital features of the

literary landscape. Poets of the 1920s, from Robert Frost, Wallace Stevens, and Carl Sandburg to Marianne Moore, Hart Crane, and Ezra Pound, are mentioned briefly. The sustained attention their poetic contributions to 1920s culture merits would comprise another study. T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* is presented only as a suggestive figure representing the times or one way of viewing the postwar early 1920s. There is no attempt made to analyze Eliot's poem. It serves as a marker of the period.

The novel is presented here as reflective of American culture. This study is concerned with how critics and readers received major American novelists in their own time and how they made a lasting impact on American literary culture. The stories of these writers ought not be seen as merely mimetic of that 1920s culture. Rather, they are complex, imaginative works that are given to audiences of readers, including us, who may interpret them in a myriad of ways.

These writers merit our close attention. Yet, it would also be interesting to know more about their readers and begin to find those readers across region, race, gender, and class. In this respect, we might discover how the novels of the 1920s were received by readers other than professional critics. I gesture toward this project here, but it is one that will take further efforts amongst cultural historians of reading and literature to accomplish.

Attention here primarily focuses upon novels and novelists who have endured into our own time—at least for some readers. They have received critical regard and been valued by many readers outside the literary establishment. Such novels have staying power beyond their milieu, not only when they have been made into feature films or have been taught as required texts in classrooms. They endure—at least in reputation, if not also in actual readership—because they have compelling characters and touch on universal themes. They are stories that may still enable readers today to understand their world—or wonder at it.

* * *

One hundred years ago, World War I drew the attention of Americans overseas. As a spokesman for a generation of postwar youth, F. Scott Fitzgerald suggested what it meant to be alive in the 1920s. In his lyrical

fiction, he examined what it meant to dance the Charleston, deal with Prohibition, listen to jazz, or ride a trolley. He and his contemporaries wrote stories that still speak to us about the courage of characters, their aspirations, and the efforts of their lives. As a result, novels like *The Great Gatsby*, or Ernest Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises*, or Theodore Dreiser's *An American Tragedy* continue to be significant. From a variety of viewpoints, these novels repeatedly address the American dream or the hopes of modern people wrestling with the human condition. They also remind us that fiction and the culture from which it emerges are inseparable. These novels help us to study the past so that we might better know the present.

Today we might download Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms* or Cather's *One of Ours* onto our Kindle or read Lewis's *Babbitt* on an iPad. One might have a DVD of the film version of Edith Wharton's *The Age of Innocence* or see Leonardo DiCaprio star as Jay Gatsby in Baz Luhrmann's film and then turn to the book as a listener of Nick Carraway's narrative read by an actor on CD. In the 1920s, readers held these books in their hands; they turned the pages of the physical book: paper, ink letters, the heft of a hardcover, and pages perfect bound. We may wonder how they entered the fictional dream, that willing suspension of disbelief that allows a reader to feel the atmosphere of another place, the wonder of words, the design and pattern of images and story in an imaginative encounter. People clearly took the time to reflect on books. Sometimes they saw themselves or their society reflected in them.

Our world has changed since the 1920s and so has the reputation of many writers of that time. We may seldom read Nobel Prize-winning author Sinclair Lewis these days, except, perhaps, in school. Yet, in today's political rhetoric we hear about "Main Street," as well as Wall Street. Babbitt, Lewis's famous character, serves as an archetype of a superficial, provincial man of limited scope and taste, whose self-worth is attached to his purchase of the latest electronic gadget or Xbox video game. On the evening news, one might hear about questionable Elmer Gantry figures: evangelical charlatans or clerical pedophiles whose hypocrisy casts clouds over organized religion but cannot undermine the faithfulness and good works of devoted clergy that go on each day. The 1920s produced the sounds and images of the jazz age, which still cling to the air of modern America. They were in the Harlem Renaissance, its

assertion of a dream deferred, a black arts movement revived during the 1960s and later. The 1920s saw the first works of Hemingway, whose image of stoicism and athleticism blended with the World War II image of masculinity, the Marlboro man, and John Wayne films of the 1950s and 1960s.

The 1920s changed American culture, and the classic novels of the decade seem to have declared that American literature had finally arrived on the world stage, with its own voice, style, and subject matter. The American novel engaged in and encouraged critical thinking about society. It sought the American vernacular. As we look back from a point in time nearly one hundred years afterward, we do so living in a context that developed from those times. Novels and the humanities continue to be significant—indeed necessary—for modern society. To read the American classic novels of the 1920s is not merely to engage in an act of nostalgia; it is to discover America and an era's search for meaning through a variety of stories and literary forms. It is to recognize that elements of that past are reflected in our present time. Just as the Homeric epics bound together Greek society or Native American tales illuminated the life of indigenous cultures, the stories of America recall and illustrate the American dream. They provide clues to our dreams, struggles, and expectations, for they are the myths of our possibility. Our stories are an important part of who we are.

The classic novel of the 1920s continues to speak to our contemporary society and remind us of the creative energy of our predecessors. A novel, while it may imagine a life, is never as rich as the story of any single human life. Each of our ancestors lived a unique life and had his or her own story. Yet, the fictional imagination can give us a window to their lives and lasting contributions to the human enterprise. The best stories endure, with their archetypal heroes, like the rocky faces of Mount Rushmore. Human emotions live on, generation after generation, and the best writers feel them and craftily grasp them like fireflies caught in a child's hand on a warm summer evening.

We may ask what it means for a novel to enter the cultural mindset of the nation. Readers interpreted these novels differently as they brought their lives and concerns into their reading. Still, they also knew that other people were reading these same novels, that they were part of a conversation in the imagined community just as much as the Super Bowl or televised Academy Awards shows may be today. Novels written

in the 1920s participated in culture, and they were read by people who did not have television to fill their leisure hours.

Several novels of the 1920s interrogated American culture. The American dream of the characters in some of these stories intersected with readers' sense of America and the narrative of their own lives. They could see that the rags-to-riches Horatio Alger myth was not effective in the life of Dreiser's Clyde Griffiths in *An American Tragedy*. Nor was the small town of Sherwood Anderson's *Winesberg, Ohio* a community. Soldiers like Hemingway's Harold Krebs returned from war with posttraumatic stress disorder, although it was then called "shell shock," and they felt they had no one they could talk to about what they were going through.

We might ask whether this is any different from the experiences of today's veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts. When George Babbitt is reduced to the acquisition of trinkets and boosterism, one can imagine him standing in line at Target, Walmart, or Best Buy in quest of a digital device. In the 1920s, he desired toasters and esteemed Warren Harding; today he buys iPads and reveres Bill Gates. He fills material needs and social needs for belonging, as one might see in Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs, without aspiring to self-actualization and social contribution.

These novels of the 1920s continue to offer us predicaments that are relevant to our own time. Like Dreiser's Clyde Griffiths, young men are still allured by the lights of the city, gaudy hotels, and dreams of business success. The young man from a small town who desires a society girl from the bright lights and big city acutely feels Gatsby's longing for Daisy, beset as he is by social stratification. Lewis's Carol Kennicott still comes from a little town and has the desire to reshape society. Perhaps America has changed enough that this woman, unlike Carol, can now do so. Today from Nebraska come those like Cather's Claude Wheeler, a young man who sought to grow; he has felt a sense of responsibility to the land and nation, and he goes off to defend America's liberties on the field of war. Like the young reporter George Willard in *Winesberg, Ohio*, the rookie broadcast news reporter of modern times is sent out to some godforsaken locale in the rain to cover a story. She discovers people with shattered lives or distorted dreams who need to tell their stories. Like Sherwood Anderson's character, she becomes a listener and an interpreter.

Through novels, readers of the 1920s were interpreting themselves. They were looking at where life was going during a time of precipitous change. For some readers, such novels were not only a means of escape or solace, they were cultural signposts. A reader might use them to interpret the nation or local society. The 1920s saw the rise of consumer culture and abandonment of Victorian notions of thrift. Advertisements began to saturate American culture, as they do now. They appeared in the front and back pages of books, in magazines and newspapers, on billboards, and in store windows. This world of signs and images promised health, beauty, love, and economic advancement. It prodded consumers to purchase items on credit. The green light of Jay Gatsby's dreams flickered across the water. The magic glittering balls of hotel chandeliers lured Clyde Griffiths, and bright ads for new toasters enticed Babbitt. Novels from the 1920s satirized a new world, sending out warnings about the Siren's tempting call. Images came from the movies as well: Mae West was a shrewd and tantalizing Circe figure. Buster Keaton was a comic figure baffled by modernity. Charlie Chaplin was a sympathetic tramp with a bowler hat and little mustache, satirizing modern times. Novels and their film versions influenced how people saw the world and thought about America—about love and belonging, wealth and power, and dreams and ideals. Novels offered insights, as well as entertainment. They were mirrors of culture, refracting that bit of light and the images they portrayed. Read in many different ways by their readers, they participated in the cultural work of making America.

INTRODUCTION

The 1920s

Some critics have called the 1920s a golden age of American literature. The 1920s, the “jazz age,” saw a new generation of writers beginning to appear that would change the direction of American writing. Following World War I, these writers shared a new world with their readers. Some believed that a coherent order of civilization had been lost to the war. Postwar disillusionment was a reality for many of America’s expatriates. The themes of the wasteland and the lost generation are often repeated by critics. Yet, this does not seem to have characterized the tone of the nation in 1920 or afterward. The 1920s that is evoked in much popular culture is ebullient: It is the “Roaring Twenties,” a time of prosperity and glamour. Before we begin investigating the literature and writers of this period, let us take a look at the cultural atmosphere.

The *carpe diem* spirit of the times was observed by Frederick Lewis Allen, who attributes some of the “eat, drink, and be merry for tomorrow we die spirit” to World War I.¹ In the September 1920 installment of *Atlantic Monthly*, John F. Carter writes, “The older generation had certainly pretty well ruined this world before passing it on to us.”² Walter Lippmann comments that what most distinguished the new generation was their disillusionment with their own rebellion.³ A sense of disillusionment hung in the air alongside that *Gatsby* image that looms large in our way of looking at the 1920s.

In our time, it seems that flappers, bootleggers, and Al Capone have taken on new life. A recent biography of Calvin Coolidge, HBO's *Boardwalk Empire*, the BBC show *Downton Abbey*, and Baz Luhrmann's film *The Great Gatsby* have once again turned our attention to the 1920s. Reading the novels of that time period provides us with a way of looking at our own lives and our own time in the mirror of the past. The classic novels—those of Sinclair Lewis, Willa Cather, and John Dos Passos, as well as Ernest Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises*, F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, and William Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury*—not only mark prodigious advances in American fiction, they show us the wonder, struggle, and promise of the American dream.

The Great Gatsby films of 1974 and 2013 have kept Fitzgerald's novel and characters in public awareness, as Bob Batchelor demonstrates in *Gatsby: The Cultural History of the Great American Novel* (2014). Meanwhile, film has made Gatsby more concrete than the elusive and mysterious figure of Fitzgerald's novel. Thinking of the character, one tends to see Robert Redford or Leonardo DiCaprio. Nick Carraway's first-person point of view and limited knowledge cannot be easily reproduced.

In the 1974 film, romantic scenes occur between Gatsby and Daisy that Nick could not possibly know of personally. His narrative is a work of interpretation and not entirely reliable. For example, he begins in the novel by insisting that his father told him never to judge and then proceeds to spend the rest of the narrative judging everything and everyone. We begin our acquaintance with Gatsby by being told by Nick that he turned out all right in the end, suggesting that the best way for us to grasp Fitzgerald's creative vision is to read his novel.

LITERARY CHARACTERS AND CULTURAL DREAMS

Few characters in literature attain the mythic or iconic status to which Gatsby has risen throughout the years; however, the 1920s developed numerous archetypal heroes and antiheroes. The audience knew the soldier returning from the front and the financier seeking power and fortune. It responded to Lewis's image of Babbitt, striving within his locale, and his controversial Elmer Gantry, who became the image of a hypocritical preacher out to bilk his congregation. The Hemingway

masculine image also had considerable force in twentieth-century America. Stoic and a man of few words, he exemplified the tough-guy image of noir detective fiction and the resolve of John Wayne, *Gun-smoke*, and the Marlboro Man. The fiction of the 1920s instigated these characters and images.

When the automobile rolled out of Ford's dreams, World War I came to an end and the bright lights began to come on as soldiers returned home, and the sky was filled with the possibilities of thrilling flight, the conditions became ripe for the age of jazz, flappers, and novelty. The 1920s brought mass-media culture to America. Radio, film, and advertising influenced how people thought of themselves and their world. Popular culture introduced such fads as crossword puzzles, Mah-Jong, and the Charleston. Images of pop stars and heroes appeared, from singer Rudy Vallee and actress Clara Bow to pilot Charles Lindbergh. It was an exciting time in American literature and a pivotal period in modern American history; it was a time of new technologies and rapid change, much like today. Of course, the "Roaring Twenties" is a convenient label for the spirit of the times that characterize this period. The trends of the 1920s began at an earlier time and continued for a few years thereafter.

Changes in writing and reading were afoot in the 1910s with modernism, and they were heightened by the war, as Gertrude Stein then noticed and many critics since have pointed out. Features of the decade continued into the early 1930s, despite the widespread effects of the Great Depression. Still, to say "Roaring Twenties" is to point to a period of American life characterized by rapid change and creativity that remains quite relevant in modern times, for this time period generated, in literature and the arts, media and popular culture, the beginnings of what America has since become.

To speak of the 1920s also reminds us that writers and their readers live in history, in a place and time. With this comes what Malcolm Bradbury calls the "communal consciousness of a generation."⁴ In the 1920s, that consciousness included an awareness that change was in the air. It was a more hopeful age for American women, for women's suffrage had emerged after the war, in an amendment ratified and completed on August 18. Flappers wore thin dresses with short sleeves or sleeveless dresses that revealed their bare shoulders. Their legs were visible to the knee; some women wore their stockings rolled up. Some

of the girls smoked and drank liquor. Short, bobbed hair, shorter skirts, and slender figures were the rage. When young women went out on dates, the automobile increased freedom and motion across a greater geographical range. As the 1920s proceeded, more cars were produced with closed tops. According to Allen, there were 6,771,000 cars on the road before 1920 and 23,121,000 by 1929.⁵ Roads now crisscrossed the nation. There were garages, like the one run by Wilson in *The Great Gatsby*. There were rest stops, restaurants, camping sites, and hot dog stands.

Movies, radio, and mass-circulation magazines created popular culture, as skyscrapers, airplanes, automobiles, retail chains, and a culture of credit was changing the social landscape of America. In *Only Yesterday*, Allen calls it a time of transformation. Women had been given the right to vote. Prohibition made liquor illegal—a law resisted by many. Shared public events arrived with the advent of radio, with the first radio broadcast taking place in East Pittsburgh on November 2, 1920. During the winter of 1921–1922, writes Allen, the world was suddenly filled with the sounds of the radio. From 1922 to 1929, radio sales increased from 60,000,000 to 842,548,000.⁶ The radio cabinet became a proud feature in living rooms, and rooftops were dotted with antennae. Radio advertising became big business. By 1930, radio broadcasting had become a “billion-dollar industry.”⁷ George W. Gray estimates that the number of radio stations grew from 508 in 1922 to more than 700 in 1926. He also points to the rise of radio advertising and the income that the National Broadcasting Company (NBC) derived from it, including some \$150 million in 1929. His article enumerates the commercial possibilities of radio, citing the success of toothpaste sales.⁸

This was an age of advertising and salesmanship, marketing an abundance of commodities. Allen notes the appearance of “cigarettes, refrigerators, telephones, chemical preparations (especially cosmetics), and electrical devices.”⁹ Advertising had turned into a \$3 billion business by 1929.¹⁰ The craft of catching the American public’s attention became a profession. Radio was enlisted to promote products, and sponsors targeted ads for items that seemed appropriate for the show’s content. This advertising was soon the financial backing for radio broadcasts. Media, advertising, and the popular arts fueled popular culture. Meanwhile, American business, largely unaffected by the Great War, grew in leaps and bounds during those years when Lewis’s Babbitt sought gad-

gets and new toasters. The economy received a boost in the “prosperity years” of the mid-1920s. Allen points out that American employees increased their purchasing power at a rate of more than 2 percent annually.¹¹ Consumers were increasingly buying on credit. In Allen’s view, what many wanted was “to be young and desirable, to be rich, to keep up with the Joneses.”¹²

Keeping up materially was accompanied by the need to keep up with the new pace of life in America’s cities. In the 1920s, America’s youth experienced a decade that was driven by the clock, the appearance of the wristwatch, the pulse of time. In poetry, T. S. Eliot presented J. Alfred Prufrock’s insistence that “there will be time,” as his days elapsed in convention and inaction, “measured with coffee spoons.” In Eliot’s *The Waste Land* (1922), there is the phrase “hurry up please it’s time.” American life sped up in the 1920s. Allen observed the disillusionment of youth and says that the “decade was unhappy.”¹³ Recalling this time, Ann Douglas adds that it “was the most theatrical generation” in American history.¹⁴ Yet, it was also a time of Eliot’s “The Hollow Men” (1925), in which the ash heaps of *Gatsby* recall Eliot’s *The Waste Land* and Fitzgerald’s *The Beautiful and Damned*.

AMERICAN CITIES AND NEW VOICES

American cities grew rapidly between 1900 and 1930, largely because of immigration. In the 1920s, Chicago was a thriving city of industry, one beset by the legendary crimes of Al Capone. New York City developed the look it still has today through the steady construction of skyscrapers, highways, bridges, subways, tunnels, commercial offices, and apartment housing. The Chrysler Building, Chanin Building, Daily New Building, Bank of Manhattan Trust, and Empire State Building were constructed during this time. The Holland Tunnel was finished in 1927, followed by the George Washington Bridge in 1931. New York emerged as a center for finance, as well as for radio networks, record labels, theater, and publishing. The garment industry thrived there. Industries were also centered in other major cities, namely automobile manufacture in Detroit, steel manufacturing in Pittsburgh, and meatpacking and shipping in Chicago.

The black arts movement in Harlem emerged with the voices of Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston, Jessie Fauset, Jean Toomer, and others. They spoke of the creative spirit of African Americans and addressed a wasteland of racial inequality with vibrant imagination and determination. The Harlem Renaissance set its vitality against the challenges of urban life, which were compounded by socioeconomic need and the broader reality of racial prejudice in America. The vitality that arose in Harlem has to be set within the larger framework of America. Harlem was transformed by the arrival of African Americans from other regions of the country and the world. Zora Neale Hurston came from Alabama. Claude McKay arrived from the Caribbean. Jean Toomer was the mulatto son of an upper class family in Washington, DC. He traveled to Wisconsin to study agriculture and then to Massachusetts and other states before arriving in New York. Langston Hughes was born in Joplin, Missouri, and grew up in Lawrence, Kansas. Scholar William Edward Burhardt (W. E. B.) Du Bois spent his early years in Massachusetts and attended Harvard University. Jessie Fauset was the daughter of an African Methodist Episcopal minister in Camden, New Jersey.

The world of Harlem was one that was familiar with adversity. In theory, black Americans were free. In practice, they were frequently shut out. Some found Harlem to be a locale where they might develop a private life, a sense of freedom and connection with others. From that culture, sentiment, and state of mind emerged art, music, and literature. The Harlem Renaissance is considered by some to be one creative moment in a process that is ever at work in modern times.

NEWS OF THE 1920S

Newspapers carried the national news to readers throughout the country. Along with books and radio, newspapers continued to be one of the binding forces of the imagined community of America. They reported that in Chicago, a legendary crime wave had begun with the actions of the notorious Al Capone, the poster child of bootlegging during Prohibition. The news declared that radicalism was in the air. On September 16, a bomb exploded in New York across from the J. P. Morgan firm's offices in front of the Assay Office. In April 1920, two men shot a

paymaster and a guard carrying the payroll of a shoe factory. Police arrested two Italian radicals and charged them with the crime. Sacco and Vanzetti were tried before Judge Webster Thayer, and a jury found them guilty. During the next several months, the radical press of France, Italy, and Spain publicized the case. Doubts were raised about the guilt of the convicted men. Appeals delayed the death sentence for seven years.

After World War I, the United States retreated from world affairs in a decade of isolationism. The U.S. Senate defeated the bill to join the League of Nations. Domestic affairs captured the attention of America's readers, and newspapers had much to report. In 1923, the Harding administration was unsettled by the Teapot Dome Scandal, in which Secretary of the Interior Albert B. Fall was implicated, along with Harry F. Sinclair of the Mammoth Oil Company and Edward F. Doheny of the Pan-American Company. Corruption in the Veteran's Bureau administration would land Charles R. Forbes in jail in 1926, for fraud. Attorney General Harry Daugherty was brought to trial in 1927, for influence peddling, but the indictment against him was dismissed. He did not take the stand in the trial. Accounting records had been conveniently burned. There were claims that he received kickbacks from bootleggers, who sought federal protection.¹⁵ President Warren G. Harding did not live to see this. In the summer of 1923, he visited Alaska. He returned to San Francisco after ptomaine poisoning and developed pneumonia and died on August 2.

When in public, Calvin Coolidge, Harding's successor, was "as silent as a cake of ice."¹⁶ The new president represented a steady work ethic. He said little that was striking or new and repeated maxims of diligence and piety. Quiet as a Vermont snowfall, he was not the sort of man that one would find today on a late night talk show with Jimmy Fallon. Allen describes him as "pale and diffident" and says that he was as cool as ice.¹⁷

In contrast with the laconic president, boisterous sensationalism and novelty drew public interest during these years: the wonder of Lindbergh's transatlantic flight and the stirring ticker-tape parade that celebrated the hero's return, the intensity of murder trials, Jack Dempsey's boxing and Babe Ruth's home runs, mahjong and crossword puzzles. Mass media began to come into its own with national advertising, publicity, product sales, the emergence of radio, tabloid newspapers, mass-

circulation magazines, and fewer major newspapers with larger circulations. Radio broadcasters and press agents, as well as film stars and syndicated columnists, appealed to the public imagination, and America's novelists explored the pulse of contemporary society in fiction.

THE SEARCH FOR RENEWAL

In the wake of World War I, American society turned to sensation and the creation of celebrities and heroes. Among the most sensational events of the decade was Charles Lindbergh's transatlantic flight from New York to Paris. On May 20, 1927, Lindbergh took off from Roosevelt Field for Paris in the *Spirit of St. Louis*. He landed at La Bourget, prompting headlines and mass enthusiasm. Some 1,800 tons of shredded paper flew from New York's office buildings. Reflecting on the acclaim accorded to the 1927 Lindbergh flight, Allen surmises that the American public was essentially disillusioned and there was "something that people needed" that was "missing from their lives . . . romance, chivalry, self-dedication."¹⁸ Even with the fanfare, Allen suggests that a "sense of disillusionment . . . was the keynote of the 1920s."¹⁹

In *The Modern Temper* (1929), Joseph Wood Krutch argues that the scientific paradigm had drained the world of God and thus reduced humanity. He contends that if God is only a psychological need or an intellectual principle of order, there is no vitally transcendent resource for people. Eliot refers to this need of the times in *The Waste Land*. Jewish theologian Martin Buber referred to the "eclipse of God." Paul Tillich spoke of the ground of Being and urged courage and faith amid the "shaking of the foundations," while Karl Barth advocated neo-orthodoxy. Religion was popularly discussed in many books and popular magazines as a "debatable subject," Allen notes. In his survey of public attitudes, he observed that commentators of religion were asking if the war was at fault for a decline of "moral energy" or if prosperity had encouraged a "comfortable belief."²⁰

In the interim, people turned to films, sports, and fads for recreation. Film attendance increased, with films drawing millions of moviegoers, while church attendance decreased. On January 1, 1924, Richard Simon and Max Lincoln Schuster started Simon and Schuster, originally known as the Plaza Publishing Company. Their crossword puzzle book

became a national fad. Meanwhile, sports seized the public's attention. Arriving in New York in 1920, George Herman Ruth became the undisputed home run king of baseball. The Yankees began a streak of pennant victories. In 1921, Babe Ruth hit fifty-nine home runs, one shy of the record of sixty he would hit in 1927. Ruth's sixty-homerun year was followed by the famous 1927 World Series in which the Yankees played against the Pittsburgh Pirates. In 1921, boxer Jack Dempsey beat Georges Carpentier in three rounds at Boyle's Thirty Acres in Jersey City. Reporting on the fight, the *New York Times* recalls Aaron Burr's fateful trip to New Jersey for a duel. Bobby Jones was becoming a legendary golfer, and William Tilden was setting records in tennis. Tilden beat William Johnson at Forest Hills in 1920. In the football locker room in South Bend, Indiana, Knute Rockne was urging Notre Dame to "win one for the Gipper." In Illinois, Red Grange was running past defensive linemen. On October 19, 1924, the *New York Times* announced the football exploits of a "flashing, red-haired youngster."²¹ Grange, who scored five of his team's six touchdowns against the University of Michigan, would become one of the greatest running backs in the history of the game.

MODERNISM AND POPULAR CULTURE

Literature had a unique place within this popular culture. It could provide entertainment, like the college football game, or it could be an engagement with characters and ideas that stirred thoughts and feelings. Likewise, literature could be an aesthetic experience, an encounter with the art and craft of how writers use language. It could enlist a reader's sympathy or create a sense of wonder—an "ah-ha" experience of recognition.

One way of reading this period in literary terms has been to point to the origins of modernism before World War I. Then there are the great postwar works of Eliot, Pound, Joyce, and Woolf. From this perspective, one considers the momentous works of 1922 in English literature—like *Ulysses* and *The Waste Land* and *Mrs. Dalloway*, and then begins to see a cohort that emerged and endured into the 1930s. In America, we prize the laconic minimalism of Hemingway and verbal flights of Faulkner. The former, who threw tight punches to the body as

an amateur boxer, created clean prose that pummeled dialogue back and forth. The other, who once flew Royal Air Force training maneuvers, performed death defying aerial twists of language as if smoke-writing on air. He plumbed the depths of the psyche as he once flew the heights of the sky. These unique stylists, Hemingway and Faulkner, were modernists. Their modernism has been canonized as not only belonging to this period, but characterizing it. Oftentimes branded elitist or considered difficult, modernist literature fit into American culture, existing alongside popular novels and popular culture, interacting with American readers.

The late nineteenth century industrialized books. The expansion of literacy, growth of complex urban culture, and institution of compulsory education promoted the development of the book. By the 1920s, the movement of publishers toward commercialized mass-market production had increased. Some thirty literary agencies had merged in London by 1914, and many more had appeared in New York by the last year of World War I. The Book-of-the-Month Club started its mail-order distribution of selected titles in the 1920s and effectively became a literary manager of textual production. Modernist work, with little magazines and small press runs, painstaking craft, and linguistic difficulty, separated itself from the widely distributed works that became popular.

Meanwhile, popular novels and pulp fiction magazines of the 1920s, like today's television programs, provided their audiences with a release from the pressures of modernity. The popularity of mass-market titles may tell us something about the tastes and attitudes of people in the 1920s; however, the literary novel of the time, or the literary middle-brow novel, more deeply explored the human condition through the artistry and craft of powerful writers. It is to these novels that we turn here. Those who bought popular fiction were not necessarily the same people who bought and read well-wrought literary novels. Clearly, both types of novels sold well, although popular novel sales usually far outstripped sales of the literary novel. We can ask what these works might tell us about the national ethos and the relationship to their world that readers saw in these books.

The Roaring Twenties began with a variety of popular books. British writer H. G. Wells's *Outline of History* was the best-selling nonfiction book of 1921–1922. Subsequent nonfiction best sellers included *Story of Mankind* (1922) by Hendrik Van Loon, Emily Post's *Etiquette*

(1923), J. Arthur Thomson's *The Outline of Science* (1922), and *The Story of Philosophy* (1927) by Will Durant.²² America's creative writers were also creating a new literature. The once-prestigious Boston literati—Longfellow, Whittier, and Lowell—fell out of public esteem, and other voices began to enter the canon: Melville, Twain, Dickinson, and Whitman. The biographical debunking of Victorian figures by Lytton Strachey in *Eminent Victorians* had its counterpart in American biographies, for instance, Rupert Hughes's critique of George Washington. At the same time, Lewis's *Main Street* (1920) and *Babbitt* (1922) revealed small-town pettiness, prejudice, and lack of culture. With acid satire that matched that of the cynical H. L. Mencken, Lewis portrayed the yearnings and limitations of the residents of Gopher Prairie and the ambitions of Zenith. While his novels humanized these individuals beyond caricature, they largely neglected what Allen refers to as the "friendly sentiment and easy generosity" of these people,²³ which, as we will see, caused sharp reactions amongst some Midwestern readers.

H. L. Mencken, whose social criticism was even more acerbic than that of Lewis, seemingly stood against everything. His "idol-smashing" wit was aimed at mass behavior, religion, conservative thinkers, notions of patriotism, and social inconsistencies. Democracy, he believed, led to mass-mindedness. He approached his rejection of the common man—"homo boobarus Americanus"—with the fervor of philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche, whom he translated and rewrote in a form idiosyncratically his own. When asked why he bothered living in the United States if he was so critical of it, Mencken flippantly replied, "Why do men go to zoos?"

Men and women went to work in factories, and humanists everywhere reacted to mechanization. Charlie Chaplin reflected on the problem of living in the machine age in *Modern Times*. In the theater, Elmer Rice critiqued it in *The Adding Machine*, and Eugene O'Neill responded to it in *Dynamo*. Lewis Mumford, in the *Freeman* (September 17, 1929), criticizes artificial values, "energetic, immature minds," dehumanization, and Ford Motors. Aldous Huxley would satirize Ford in his novel of the future, *Brave New World* (1932), set in the "year of our Ford." Sherwood Anderson lashed out against standardization in an essay in *Vanity Fair* in November 1926. For him this was not a new theme. He had treated the topic in his novel *Poor White* (1920), observing the machine-oriented abstraction of industrial progress and a Mid-

west society's development from a simple to a complex economy. Waldo Frank, in the *New Republic* (November 18, 1925), argues that American society needed "metaphysical consciousness." "Primitivism" also was considered a feasible response. Created by whites, this notion distorted racial realities. Some equated primitivism with instinct or something precivilized. A spontaneous and visceral way of living would oppose standardization and science in its social applications. Jazz became a musical signature of this for some; it held the promise of breaking out. It was a time when musical innovation sounded in dozens of nightclubs, and songs were captured on recording devices.

TIN PAN ALLEY AND POPULAR SONGS

An extraordinary phase of American song emerged from vaudeville and the blues and jazz. George M. Cohan, a star performer, wrote a string of hit songs, including "Yankee Doodle Boy," "You're a Grand Old Flag," "Give My Regards to Broadway," and "Over There," the most popular wartime song of the Great War era. By the 1920s, "Tin Pan Alley" had begun to emerge. At Union Square, music publishers developed the idea that songs could be created for special events and distributed by song pluggers. M. Witmark distributed free sheet music to performers from vaudeville. One technique was to plant singers in the crowd in theaters to extend the chorus of a song and get the house singing.

Irving Berlin developed into a giant of songwriting during this time—the king of Tin Pan Alley syncopation—with many of his songs drawing on ragtime. Born in Russia, his given name was Israel Baline. Berlin began as a lyric writer. He wrote lyrics to other people's melodies and became a staff writer for Seminary Music Company. The *New York Journal* paid him to write verses for the newspaper. After his lyrics came his melodies. His famous "Alexander's Ragtime Band" is a march. "Everybody's Doin' It" started a "turkey trot" dance craze. The musical *Watch Your Step* was filled with ragtime. Berlin provided material for the Ziegfeld Follies, and "A Pretty Girl Is Like a Melody" became its theme song. Later, for Kate Smith, he wrote "God Bless America," sung for the first time on the radio on Armistice Day, November 10, 1938. It was subsequently recorded on the Columbia Record label. Berlin's shows on Broadway included *This Is the Army* and *Annie Get Your*

Gun. He also wrote lyrics and music for film. He was one of America's central popular song composers. Oscar Hammerstein once famously commented on the sound of Berlin's line, saying, "all alone by the telephone."

Words and music form a symbiotic relationship in the songs sometimes described as the "Great American Songbook." The lyricists of the 1920s and 1930s frequently worked within a 32-bar format. The main part of the song was typically introduced by a verse in which the vocalist moved somewhere between speech and song. Lyrics to songs would appear in AABA structure. The chorus provided most songs with a popular and memorable center. Collaboration with a composer was at the center of the art of these lyricists. Ira Gershwin wrote clever lyrics to his brother George's pentatonic melodies, as in "I Got Rhythm." While George experimented with jazz harmony, Ira offered sparkling wit. Wittiness also appears in the lyrics of Lorenz Hart, for example, in "Mountain Greenery" and "To Keep My Love Alive," written with Richard Rodgers. Lorenz Hart was a master of surprising rhymes. In collaborating with Richard Rodgers, both Hart and Oscar Hammerstein needed to listen for Rodgers's tendency to hold long notes or provide surprising notes at the end of phrases.

Cole Porter, who wrote both lyrics and music, represents the truth that lyrics and music need to be inseparable in a song. As a composer, Porter often exchanged major and minor modes, and his lyrics observed the contrast, as in "Night and Day." Porter wrote clever lyrics to such snappy compositions as "Begin the Beguine" and "Let's Do It," and he provided many memorable hits, most notably "I've Got You Under My Skin," for future vocalists like Frank Sinatra. The lyrics were usually about romantic love. In songwriters' frequent creation of love songs, we begin to see a pattern that has continued to this day.

While Larry Hart, like a medieval troubadour, sobbed about unrequited love ("This Can't Be Love," "Glad to Be Unhappy"), Ira Gershwin wondered about falling in love. Cole Porter made wry observations about relationships and played with end rhymes. For the Gershwins, George's music usually preceded Ira's lyrics, and Ira worked off of his brother's rhythmic figures. Richard Rodgers's music and ideas for titles often started Lorenz Hart on his lyrics, as Hart listened for what was most unique in Rodgers's melody; however, when Oscar Hammerstein worked with Richard Rodgers, his lyrics often came first. To write this

way, a lyricist has to be attentive to pauses, held notes, and rhythms, as well as the needs of the potential singer of the song and the style of the composer with whom he or she is working.

Operetta developed in the 1920s through the work and vision of Oscar Hammerstein and the composing of Sigmund Romberg, Jerome Kern, and others. Dorothy Donnelly wrote lyrics to Sigmund Romberg's *The Student Prince* (1924). Oscar Hammerstein and Otto Harbach set lyrics to Romberg's *The Desert Song* (1926). Dorothy Fields brought lyrics to Romberg's *Up in Central Park* (1945). *Show Boat* was the first fully American operetta, drawing on American scenes and themes. Hammerstein's lyrics supported a book in which he broke barriers by treating romance, miscegenation, and race relations. In *Show Boat*, Hammerstein and Kern's "Ol' Man River" moved audiences with its baritone echoes of African American tradition. "Can't Help Lovin' Dat Man" introduced the mood and attitude of the blues into the American musical. Hammerstein also wrote *Music in the Air* (1932) with Jerome Kern. A significant amount of American poetry and fiction developed in relation to a sense of music and within the musical and artistic context of the time.

AMERICAN LITERATURE COMES OF AGE

Van Wyck Brooks had announced *America's Coming of Age* in 1915. Nonetheless, at the end of the 1920s, Joseph Wood Krutch, in *The Modern Temper* (1929), observes a loss of belief in American society. People had no rational or unreasoning faith, he says. Science had divided the modern soul. One could no longer write tragedy with faith in the nobility of humanity or human heroism. Krutch wrote at a time when poets like Carl Sandburg (in *Smoke and Steel* [1920]) were reacting to the force and power of technology, industry, and the machine. He did not comment on recent advances in science, for instance, Einstein's theory of relativity or quantum physics and how they opened up areas of mystery and inquiry that were likely to change this equation.

The Stock Market Crash of 1929 was a blow to national faith in the economy. After the October economic collapse, thousands of businesses went into bankruptcy. The U.S. Bank followed suit in 1930, and more than 4,000 uninsured deposits were lost. Unemployment escalat-

ed during the next three years. Nearly one-quarter of the U.S. population faced unemployment in 1932, when Franklin Delano Roosevelt became president. People lost their apartments and houses. About 1.25 million New Yorkers were on relief. In Manhattan, makeshift attempts at housing, sometimes called “Hoovervilles,” appeared along the borders of the Hudson and East rivers. F. Scott Fitzgerald’s personal demise has sometimes been seen as mirroring the 1930s decline.²⁴

* * *

Throughout this period, two of the most illuminating chroniclers of the literary 1920s were Malcolm Cowley and Edmund Wilson. Cowley takes the position that he can be a representative voice for his generation. Early in his recollections, he states that the forces that contributed to his generation were “already in motion.”²⁵ In *Exile’s Return* (1950), his account of the literary 1920s, Cowley immediately asserts that Fitzgerald or Hart Crane never spoke of a lost generation.²⁶ In his view, this was a useful tag through which an older generation could begin to describe a generation that was recognizably different from their own.²⁷ He does suggest that writers like Fitzgerald and Crane were “representatives of a new age”²⁸ and that his generation had developed a “common attitude” during this time of “rapid change,” one that Fitzgerald called the “greatest, gaudiest spree in history.”²⁹ Yet, perhaps the term *lost generation* had some credence. Before arriving at what Cowley calls “their achievements,” members of the postwar generation were uprooted, and they attempted to break with the values of their elders and seek another way of life. Some of these writers chose “exile,” a key word in Cowley’s assessment of the age. In his view, they were not Dantean exiles, disillusioned in a wasteland. Their era was shaken, and they were looking for direction during a time of transition.

Cowley believes that in the early 1920s many members of his generation were too immature to be as depressed about the modern world as T. S. Eliot apparently was.³⁰ Still, Cowley soon gives us an image of a site in Weehawken where Alexander Hamilton and Aaron Burr faced one another on a fatal day early in our history. The image is one of a street veering off into limbo, where he and Kenneth Burke stood, sometime before 1920, watching barges bobbing in the Hudson River across from 42nd Street.³¹ New York, he says, was a place where every-

one came from another town.³² He calls New York the “metropolis of curiosity and suspicion,” a “city of anger.” It is, he says, a place of impermanence, where “violent emotions” circulate “moment to moment . . . at the tips of the nerves.”³³

The Greenwich Village “bohemians” came from the same class as readers of the *Saturday Evening Post*, Cowley observes.³⁴ Nevertheless, he sees the village’s bohemia as a form of self-expression and spontaneous living in the moment. The ideal was a sense of liberty, equality for women, and openness to change. The natural child, as in Jean Jacques Rousseau’s sense, could live freely, sexually unrepressed, in a new paganism.³⁵ Cowley suggests that the war made it increasingly possible to write about love, adventure, and death.³⁶ He returned to the United States in August 1923. Recalling his return, he presents the image of exiles returning to the United States, with the Statue of Liberty in the background. The song “Yes, We Have No Bananas” is in the air. While there may be no bananas, there is liquor, despite Prohibition. Cowley’s associative thinking moves from the stock market to the idea that American literature was also “entering a period of excitement and inflation.”³⁷ Returning from Europe, young Americans wanted to remake their environment, he insists.³⁸ He also claims that people imitated fiction. College girls were modeling themselves after Brett Ashley in *A Sun Also Rises*. Men were posing as Hemingway heroes.³⁹

Edmund Wilson, like Cowley, was one of the key literary critics of this decade and beyond. In *The Shores of Light*, Wilson gathered his essays on literature and culture in the 1920s and 1930s. Looking back from the 1930s, Wilson observes that the dynamics and trends of the 1920s would not help America in its new situation. He begins his essay “The Literary Consequences of the Crash” by noting that 1920s attitudes already seemed a “long way off.”⁴⁰ He offers a brief retrospective of features of the 1920s before assessing the repercussions of the 1929 Stock Market Crash. He lists the superior attitude of the ironic Menck-en-style, as well as the “smugness” of some of the old New England stock and those who dreamed that American prosperity and progress would reveal America’s exceptionality; however, what Wilson calls the “mad hilarity and heartbreak of jazz” did not last, and he says that many people now recognize the superficiality of these attitudes and fads. The United States is now faced with a real crisis. Wilson asserts that the “dignity of the Parthenon” cannot be found in the stock exchange and

that the world is run by salesmen and brokers. He begins to sound like someone waving an “Occupy Wall Street” sign.

Wilson was also an important voice for the 1920s because he embraced popular culture. Like his friend Gilbert Seldes, he saw the potential of popular culture in America. With *The Seven Lively Arts* (1924), Seldes expressed what Wilson calls this new orientation. Seldes loved the Krazy Kat cartoons, vaudeville, and Charlie Chaplin movies. Radio and movies, Wilson observed in 1950, were to Seldes the “great engines of democratic entertainment and culture,” but if they moved toward uniformity they could mean a destruction of democracy.⁴¹ Popular culture, Wilson insists, must remain varied and energetic.

In *The Shores of Light*, the first of his books on the 1920s, Wilson refers to many writers, Ring Lardner, Sherwood Anderson, Willa Cather, and Eugene O’Neill among them. The text brings together descriptive journal entries, published reviews, and a variety of essays. Wilson diverges into a discussion of George Gurdjieff, the theosophical mystic, whom he criticizes as a charlatan. Gurdjieff brought mystical reflection, movement, and dance with him to the United States. A. R. Orage, a writer and editor, was his strongest American disciple and proselytizer. He edited a publication called *The New Age*. Wilson mentions that during the 1920s, people sought faith or meaning within church settings, as well as outside them, but that he resisted all of it and “caught a wave” from Marxism. He had become more politically oriented with the onset of the 1930s. He points out that the writers and artists of his generation, those of the “Big Business era,” were not put off by the economic slump. They had been critical of the age of Harding, Coolidge, and Hoover and were energized by the “unexpected collapse of that stupid gigantic fraud.” The bankers were troubled, but the writers and artists were “exhilarated” and felt a new energy for their work.⁴²

Wilson’s ideas on literary criticism and social life evolved throughout the 1920s. He devotes sections of *Axel’s Castle* (1931) to James Joyce, Gertrude Stein, Marcel Proust, T. S. Eliot, William Butler Yeats, and French poets Paul Valery and Arthur Rimbaud. His focus is on modernism in Western Europe, and hardly a word is spoken about either Fitzgerald or Hemingway. *Axel’s Castle* contains an essay on Gertrude Stein in which Wilson discusses Stein’s *Three Lives* and *The Making of Americans*.

To read Wilson is to encounter many critical judgments on the writers of the age. In *The Shores of Light*, he recognizes the literary quality in Lardner's short stories, when Lardner was still being categorized as a popular journalist. Wilson compares him with Anderson, in whom he sees a "poet's sensibility."⁴³ Anderson's *Many Marriages* is a disappointment after *The Triumph of the Egg*, Wilson concludes. "I found it tedious," he writes.⁴⁴ Do we really need another story about a man who gets tired of his wife and runs off with another woman? That wife is unreal, no more than a phantom, he says. When Anderson is on track, he writes with beauty and ease, and his insight is like a "diving bell" going to depths of human nature.⁴⁵ Nonetheless, *Many Marriages*, Wilson asserts, is far from his best.

Cather's fiction is well-crafted, in Wilson's view, but boring. "If only *One of Ours* had more vitality," he laments.⁴⁶ He believes that Cather is a writer of "real feeling" who brings "real distinction" to the Midwest, but he finds the cramping of Claude Wheeler's passions on a farm a weak premise for a story and Wheeler's experience of the war lacking vitality. We are given great "accuracy," but we are not given what the war did to the "soul" of this character. Of course, at this point, in 1922 and 1924, Wilson admits that he had yet to read Cather's *My Antonia*. Thus, he had a somewhat limited view of the scope of Cather's work, and so he reiterates, "Willa Cather is a good craftsman, but she is usually rather dull."⁴⁷

In 1922, Wilson regarded much of Eugene O'Neill's stagecraft as naturalism, even though he experimented with expressionism.⁴⁸ When he writes more in the vernacular about "humble people" he is like Anderson, Wilson says.⁴⁹ In 1924, Wilson saw expressionism in theater as an effort to break from realism, comparable to the cubism of Braque and Picasso.⁵⁰ Meanwhile, poetry also received his attention. Wallace Stevens was a poet who Wilson saw great promise in. He reviews *Harmonium* in the same piece in which he considers e.e. cummings, whose work he found innovative but less convincing.⁵¹

The emergence of Hemingway is something for which Wilson appears to take some responsibility. He was one of the first critics to review Hemingway's *Three Stories and Ten Poems* and *In Our Time*, which was published in the October 1924 edition of the *Dial*. Wilson calls Hemingway's work "prose of the first distinction," saying that it is "strikingly original" and represents a "distinctively American develop-

ment in prose.”⁵² Hemingway responded that he valued Wilson’s opinion as the only U.S. critic he had any respect for.⁵³

Hemingway appeared as one of Wilson’s hopes for the future of American fiction. In a June 30, 1926 essay, Wilson recognizes the “cause of an American national literature in independence of English literature” and the importance of contemporary ideas positioned against those of preceding generations.⁵⁴ He acknowledges the literary quality of Jean Toomer’s fiction. Zona Gale is “given to terrible lapses into feminine melodrama,” he writes.⁵⁵ Cabell was too filled with southern sentimentality.⁵⁶ Then he sets forth his hope in the new generation of writers: “I feel more interest in F. Scott Fitzgerald and Dos Passos than any of the writers mentioned [earlier]: they are younger than the others, and one does not feel that one knows exactly what to expect of them.”⁵⁷ Wilson adds that Carl Van Vechten and Ben Hecht “applied the formulas of naturalism.” Along with Fitzgerald, they expressed a “certain interest” in the history of American culture. He found the characters in Sherwood Anderson’s novels to be “vague” but applauds his short stories as having an “almost perfect instinct.”⁵⁸ Hemingway, Anderson, Stein, and Lardner, despite the geographical distances between them, seemed to represent a new school of fiction writing, and Hemingway has read and been influenced by all of them.⁵⁹

Literary critic Joseph Wood Krutch found in Hemingway’s *In Our Time* a “weariness too great to be aware of anything but sensations.”⁶⁰ But Wilson saw something different in the author. Reviewing *Men without Women*, Hemingway’s second story collection, Wilson points to “A Simple Inquiry” as a “glimpse of one aspect of army life.”⁶¹ Hemingway was writing about the kind of individual who had come a long distance from the character who liked a three-day fishing trip in the “Big-Hearted River.” Hemingway, Wilson writes, was a writer “preoccupied” with the “problems of natural cruelty” and “barbarity of the world since the war.”⁶² In contrast with Dos Passos, Hemingway looks at men broken by the war who were resigned to human agonies.⁶³ Wilson concludes that like his characters, Hemingway is himself oppressed.⁶⁴

When, on April 17, 1929, Wilson wrote “Dos Passos and the Social Revolution,” he concluded that Hemingway, Wilder, and Fitzgerald were writers who “confront their own little corners” and not the entire situation.⁶⁵ John Dos Passos, in contrast, had a big canvas and tried to

capture everything. Yet, Wilson was concerned that Dos Passos, who he considered more intelligent than Upton Sinclair or communist Michael Gold, misapplied his resentments, affecting his politics.⁶⁶ Dos Passos often emphasizes the “importance of America,” Wilson writes, but there is “something lacking.”⁶⁷ He always looks at the social organism; however, in *Manhattan Transfer*, in trying to make his characters sympathetic, he also puts them down.⁶⁸

With Dos Passos’s novel *The 42nd Parallel*, Wilson saw a movement from *Manhattan Transfer* and New York to a consideration of the United States in relation to the world. Dos Passos was so capable of rendering colloquial American speech and so keenly aware of America’s tendency to ascribe everything about life to the values of business and advertising, “out of which they make their salaries and in terms of which they conceive their ambitions.”⁶⁹ Dos Passos capably moves from city to city in his story, showing the culture of each place: Chicago, Minneapolis, and Pittsburgh. He intersects newsreels or scraps of news items with the biographies of contemporary American figures and weaves them into his narrative. These characters were submerged in the culture, Wilson reckons. “Dos Passos seems the only one of the novelists of this generation concerned with the large questions of politics and society” (March 26, 1930).⁷⁰

Concerned with international relations and metaphysical meaning was Thornton Wilder, who was among Wilson’s favorite writers. Wilder, who is best known as a playwright, wrote two novels during the 1920s. *The Bridge of San Luis Rey* (1927) won the Pulitzer Prize and was made into a film in 1929. He followed it with *The Woman of Andros* (1930). This novel shows the return from the dead of a man who relives an ordinary day from when he was fifteen years old. While set in a Greek underworld, the novel develops on the same motif Wilder would use for his character Emily in *Our Town* (1928), the play for which he is best known. Wilder suggests that each of us is most fully alive when we recognize the blessings we have in our everyday lives. Wilder is the only American to have won Pulitzers for both fiction and drama. In the 1930s, in the theater, Wilder broke with traditional forms. *The Skin of Our Teeth* (1942) asserts that people can survive any odds. It won the Pulitzer Prize during World War II. Wilder, who had been at Fort Adams in Rhode Island during World War I, reenlisted and served in U.S. Air Force Intelligence in Italy and North Africa. He was awarded

the Bronze Star and Legion of Merit, and Britain made him an honorary officer.

The subtle meditation on life and death that gave shape to Wilder's *The Bridge of San Luis Rey* seems to have emerged from his family context. It was one that was steeped in literature and Biblical understanding. Wilder's father, a man with solid New England Puritan values, was an American consul in Hong Kong, and several of the Wilder children, including Thornton Wilder, spent some of their childhoods in China. The elder Wilder was also a newspaper owner and editor in Madison, Wisconsin, as well as in California, and he seems to have adhered to a strict moral code. His wife was a teacher, a poet, and an enthusiastic reader of literature who passed her ambitions on to her children.

Their eldest son, Amos Wilder (1895–1993), was a collegiate tennis star in the 1920s and played mixed doubles at Wimbledon. He published two volumes of poetry in the 1920s through the Yale Younger Poets Series: *Battle Retrospect* (1923) and *Arachne* (1928). Amos became a prominent minister who concluded his career as an endowed professor of theology at Harvard University. Like Hemingway and Dos Passos, he served as an ambulance driver in World War I. In his books on New Testament theology, he sometimes reflects on the power of narrative and story.

Isabel Wilder (1900–1995) wrote three novels and was probably the closest to Thornton Wilder, living in nearby Hamden, Connecticut, and acting as his personal agent, hostess, and spokesperson. Their sister Charlotte (1898–1980) was also a poet and a professor of English. After receiving a master's degree from Radcliffe, she taught at Wheaton College and Smith College. She moved to New York in 1934 and, with Ben Bellit, received the Shelley Memorial Award in 1937. Her health deteriorated following a nervous breakdown in 1941. Janet Wilder studied zoology rather than poetry. She married attorney Toby Dakin, and her interest in horses and equestrianism led to a book on training a Morgan horse.

Wilder's one-act plays and sketches of the 1920s were preparation for his playwriting thereafter. His work presented a self-conscious theater that made use of symbolism. The actors in his plays are not working to be convincing characters, but they allow themselves to be viewed as

participants in a theatrical experience. A Wilder play is a “deliberate artifice,” says Travis Bogards; it is a play that knows itself as a play.⁷¹

In August 1928, Wilson wished that Wilder would turn his “feeling for national temperaments” on the people of the United States. In *The Cabala*, Wilder writes of other places and appears to be influenced by Proust. In *The Bridge of San Luis Rey*, he shifts his attention to South America. Wilder obviously knew something about China and the culture of the French and the Italians, but “now we need him at home,” Wilson declares.⁷² On to the ancient world went Wilder’s imagination, and Wilson was soon reviewing *The Woman of Andros* and a time before the beginnings of Christianity. He echoes his earlier call: Because Wilder is such a first-rate writer, “one would like to see him more at home.”⁷³

Wilson had written on Wilder before in an unsigned editorial in the *New Republic* (November 26, 1930). He comments on Wilder’s attention to social situations and the likeness of his prose to that of Proust. Finally, Wilson turns his criticism on American capitalism. He remarks that the beauty in Wilder’s imagination may be a “sedative for sick Americans.”⁷⁴ People are attempting to bring such idealism to their occupations, he observes. Yet, the present economic system requires that to be successful they must be “swindling” and “cutting one another’s throats.”⁷⁵ Still, on May 4, 1932, Wilson responded after Michael Gold attacked Wilder as bourgeois in the *New Republic*. He recognized this as an appearance of Marxist issues.⁷⁶

Wilson calls Wilder’s novel *Heaven’s My Destination* (1934) “his best book.”⁷⁷ George Brush, the religious textbook salesman, was his most complete, well-rounded character. Wilson notices that Wilder brings humor to his portrayal of the life and misfortunes of George Brush. The material is similar to that of Lewis and told gracefully. Wilson compliments the lack of sentimentality and Wilder’s reflections on the collapse of the San Luis Rey Bridge, which he views as “implausible to the nonbeliever.”⁷⁸ He appreciates Wilder’s rendering of an “imperfect and suffering humanity.”⁷⁹

That is the gift of these American writers: their ability to bring joy, insight, and a vision of imperfect and suffering humanity. Wilson recognizes that Wilder was one of America’s most important literary voices in both fiction and theater. Wilder was able to reach the American public because at the heart of his work was a storyteller’s imagination. As we

look back on Hemingway, Fitzgerald, and Faulkner, to read their works again is to discover imagination that brings light to our age, for the strength of their stories carries our imaginations along. Where we are now in time and society, of course, makes a difference in how we read and interpret any narrative. These stories and songs are tied to their time, but they transcend their historical moment and speak to our time as well in interesting ways.

BEYOND THE WASTELAND

T. S. Eliot and the Postwar World

The wasteland stands as that desolate no man's land between the trenches, where breath met mud and opposing armies shot at one another in the smoke-filled air across the craters left by artillery shells. Beyond the battlefield, the enemies to humanity were impersonal economics, standardization, and priorities that dehumanized people. For the young generation, their elders had made these mistakes of war because they remained stuck in their archaic mindset. Yet, it was the young who were sacrificed to the war. For Fitzgerald, the wasteland included those areas surrounding our great cities, where refuse and ashes, oil tanks and machinery, covered the pavement. In *The Great Gatsby*, these were the zones of Wilson's garage, the eyes of T. J. Eckleburg gazing out through the dull electric light that never reached all the shadows.

This was the world of T. S. Eliot, who, in his long poem *The Waste Land*, provides the image of a Dante figure making his pilgrimage through arid modernity. But all was not wasteland if one embraced the energy emerging in America. Popular culture enlivened the Roaring Twenties. The young were breaking free from enervated late Victorian categories and attitudes. Frederick Hoffmann has seen the wasteland motif as archetypal: loss of meaning, inability to believe, walking numbly in circles. Yet, Frederick Lewis Allen, writing in 1930, saw the decade as one of vivacity, as well as one of disillusionment. That contrast was a

central feature of the 1920s, one that found its way into the literature of the era.

Eliot's *The Waste Land* (1922) offers a symbolic framework for this age. We hear in Eliot a voice inaugurating the modern era. Eliot himself called claims that his poem reflected the anxieties of an age an exaggeration. Still, the work serves as a useful figure for the postwar period. We see the image of the wasteland and the disillusionment it suggests repeated by other writers of this time period. It is vividly presented in the valley of ashes in Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, where the watchful eyes of T. J. Eckleberg gaze across the desolate terrain that includes the Wilson's garage. It is in the bleak conclusion of *A Farewell to Arms* (1929), in which Hemingway, resisting grand words like glory and honor, seeks concrete language. It echoes in the phrase "the lost generation," which Hemingway used as a caption to his first novel, *The Sun Also Rises* (1926).

But this image of a wasteland refers to the moral texture of life more so than the disillusionment brought on by the war, and some critics have rejected the wasteland idea altogether. In *Exile's Return*, Malcolm Cowley insists that his generation was not the disillusioned one characterized by Eliot's piece. He maintains that the wasteland image was a product of Eliot's own idiosyncratic reading of the times. Jonathan Ebel contends that rather than casting the American nation into disillusionment and doubt, World War I prompted the reattachment of Americans to religious forms and structures. In letters and diaries, people suggest that the war, despite its horrors, was deeply meaningful. Some believed that something profound was at work amid the suffering.

Eliot's *The Waste Land* is important to a contemporary perspective on the 1920s novel because Eliot, writing in vers libre, in fragments, connects a city and spiritual wasteland in a quest myth that has implications for an entire era. Any dreams of the city as a pinnacle of civilization are contested by the poem, which begins with a caption from Dante and suggests the moral inversions of Dante's *Inferno* and the City of Dis. The loss of faith, tradition, and classical culture is suggested by Eliot, and this theme of loss is treated in various ways in the novels of this time. John Dos Passos's *Manhattan Transfer* (1925) extends the wasteland image into a city of broken and anxious lives. Anderson, in *Winesberg, Ohio* (1919), and Lewis, in *Main Street* (1920) or in the Zenith of *Babbitt* (1922), each find the wasteland in the American Mid-

west. Those who would put an ecological spin on the notion of wasteland only need look at the opening pages of Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms*, where the landscape has been devastated by war.

These novels emerged from and reflect the age in which they were written. Henry James once pointed out that people want to see in literature their own image and some description of the world as they know it. Novels showed readers of the 1920s their world. With the Great War, that image seemed to shift, displaced from conventional mimesis. This created a shift in the critical atmosphere. Modernism had already begun this process, but the war heightened it.¹ Eliot's poem suggests the fragmentary nature of modern life, a loss of fertility and sustaining values, and a desperate need for cultural renewal. The age's literary novelists were, in their own ways, each feeling this atmosphere of their time.

Much of Eliot's concern was driven by his response to secularism. He sensed a waning of religious belief in Europe similar to that characterized by such poems as Matthew Arnold's "Dover Beach," which was written long before the alarms of the Great War in France and Belgium could be heard from Dover's rocky cliffs. Eliot recognized that prior to World War I, vitalism had become a watchword of intellectual society amid increased secularization. In *Goodbye to All That* (1929), Robert Graves speaks of priests in the war's trenches, a search for belief, the difficulty of burying the war dead, superstitions, and stories of miraculous or curious happenings. After the war, the problem arose of how to restore and reconcile faith and reason. Some religious thinkers offered new perspectives. After serving in the trenches or in close proximity to the field of battle, Teilhard de Chardin and Paul Tillich, for example, both intensely reflect on religious meaning. In *The Future of an Illusion* (1928), Sigmund Freud calls belief in God wish fulfillment. By then, Eliot had begun his own movement from the Unitarianism of his youth, through what was likely agnosticism, to his conversion to orthodoxy. These concerns entered his poetry and later underpinned his plays.

World War I ended nineteenth-century notions of progress and rationality. War destroyed a framework, the idea of history as steady progress. This affected novelists like Hemingway, Fitzgerald, and Dos Passos. It was questionable whether anyone could have confidence in a world so shattered. During the years before the war, there had been, in

intellectual circles, much desire to connect the sacred and the secular. Edwardian synthetic philosophy “tried to make everything a part of everything else,” observes Jonathan Rose. War strained secular religion and the Edwardian synthesis. For many, war destroyed faith, and churchgoing declined. Others sought information about life after death, turning to spiritualism. As Rose points out, “Spiritualism pointed toward a new religion far more easygoing than the old Christianity—a Christianity stripped of all its unpleasantness, moral strictures, and demands of faith.”² Post–World War I Britain saw the diminishment of neo-Hegelian philosophy and the increasing influence of logical positivism (or logical atomism). In this milieu, orthodox Christianity also saw a resurgence, including the works of Karl Barth, C. S. Lewis, and G. K. Chesterton. Perhaps this was, in part, a reaction to the horrors of war.

As fragmented as a stained glass window, Eliot’s 1922 poem refracts the light of its age and ages past as it engages in a search for form and renewal. As the poem begins its first of five sections, we begin to see the outlines of the themes that are to follow. It loosely follows the search for the Holy Grail and the story of the Fisher King and suggests not only decline and fall, but also ways to bring life back to Western culture. Eliot also sends his readers on something of a quest in search of an understanding of the poem. He challenges readers with his lack of transitions and draws attention to the process of reading. Moreover, he alienated some readers by the eclectic gathering of foreign-language phrases, literary allusions, and references to Buddhism and Hinduism. While abstruse, the poem calls for a revitalization of symbols, love, faith, and fertility. The modern condition itself seems to call for this. Eliot reiterates this concern with modern society in *The Hollow Men* (1925).

Given a poem that seems so obscure, it is easy for a reader to believe that Eliot was intentionally trying to alienate readers and distance his work from anything that could be popular. Yet, during the 1920s, he was a transatlantic poet and critic who wrote about the border of high culture and the popular arts. Eliot sensed the social presence of music, as T. Austin Graham observes.³ Song emerges at several points in *The Waste Land*; one hears ragtime, Wagnerian music drama, Hindu chants, and drinking songs. Eliot’s exposure to ragtime came when he was a child in St. Louis. There the St. Louis Blues were born amongst the Chestnut Street and Market Street bars and brothels. Ragtime filled

late nineteenth-century St. Louis, and Eliot puts forth bits of street piano songs in his early poems. In the “Game of Chess” section of *The Waste Land*, the O sounds of vocalizing precede the oddly spelled Shakespeherian.⁴ In the “Fire Sermon” section, we read of the typist who taps typewriter keys rather than a piano. Her life is as repetitive as the click of the typewriter: “She smoothes her hair with automatic hand/ And puts a record on the gramophone.”

The Waste Land sometimes sounds a lament that classical culture has been shattered and had given way to the typist, ragtime jazz, and Madame Sosostriis. On the other hand, Eliot’s work and his letters show that he had a strong interest in jazz and black minstrelsy, as well as opera, radio, print, and film and Marx Brothers’ comedy.⁵ The poet was aware of the auditory impact of changes in contemporary music. Eliot’s poem was written at a time when such composers as Arthur Schoenberg and Igor Stravinsky had pulled away from traditional harmony. He had recently attended a performance of Stravinsky’s *The Rite of Spring*.

Eliot also knew that the modern listener carries many songs in his or her mind.⁶ *The Waste Land* was published two years after radio broadcasting began, and songs were increasingly available on radio and gramophone. A tune might, unbidden, suddenly pop into one’s mind. Graham points out that musical references create an intimacy between Eliot’s poem and its readers. He inspired associations in their minds.⁷ Ralph Ellison later commented on the work, writing, “*The Waste Land* seized my mind. I was intrigued by its power to move me while eluding my understanding.”⁸

Those readers who listened to classical repertoire recognized a section of Eliot’s poem that is modeled on the song of the Rhine daughters from Richard Wagner’s *Das Rheingold*. The poem itself presents similarities to Wagner’s musical technique of leitmotif. In *Tristan and Isolde* we find motivic development. “The Tristan Chorus” pulls away from traditional harmonies and moves toward some dissonance, in the direction that would later be taken up in atonal composition by Schoenberg. Wagner practices harmonic suspension: beginning a theme and interrupting it, and later returning to it in resolution. Wagner builds on cadences, drawing audience expectation. He introduces discordance. He takes a theme, breaks off, and resurrects it later. Eliot suggests something similar with his poem. From the rutty grooves of earth, or the grooves of a record, this age might modulate to a new key.

The wasteland idea took on a different shape in American fiction. In the 1920s, the United States was shaping its own voice, or, as Ann Douglas puts it, shedding its borrowed past.⁹ In literature, as Van Wyck Brooks recognized, America was coming-of-age. The expatriate Eliot believed that English literature was of one piece, and he said little about “American” literature per se. In “Tradition and the Individual Talent,” Eliot addresses the need for writers to recall and interact with the literary voices of the past. He insists that a new work of literature belongs insofar as it is connected with what has preceded it. For him, this meant an indissoluble link of American writers to their English forebears. The novels of the 1920s emerged from a preceding heritage, just as our contemporary works maintain a relationship to the novels of previous generations. Eliot’s literary allusions in *The Waste Land* are an appeal to societal memory of a long literary tradition.

In his social thinking, Eliot was greatly influenced by T. E. Hulme, whose most important work was written before the commencement of World War I. Eliot describes it as the “antipodes of the eclectic, tolerant, and democratic mind of the last century.”¹⁰ Hulme experienced World War I as an “ash-heap of cinders,” with no connection, no “order.” One had to impose order like a “kind of manufactured chess board laid on a cinder-heap.”¹¹ In *The Waste Land*, Eliot states, “I can connect/Nothing with Nothing.” In “The Second Coming,” William Butler Yeats delivers the following arresting lines: “Things fall apart; the center cannot hold/Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world.”

Eliot recognized that Hulme’s solution to such a crucial time was that one must create ethical values. Hulme asserts that a return to orthodoxy and transcendent religion could confront the division between sacred and secular, an “absolute division,” and the “reestablishment of the temper or disposition of mind that can look at a gap or chasm without shuddering.”¹² Hulme had a powerful impact on Eliot, as well as the Imagists. Both Eliot and Ezra Pound objected to the weak Romanticism of the late nineteenth century. The Imagists sought to express themselves concisely, with concrete imagery, and avoid abstraction. Hulme had anticipated that poets of a new century would avoid Romanticism and write “dry, hard, classical verse.”¹³ As Imagist poets did this, Eliot, in his literary criticism, developed ideas that would be valuable to the New Critics. He became one of the twentieth century’s most important voices in the fields of poetry, drama, and literary criti-

cism. The notion of the wasteland reverberated throughout American fiction.

OVER THERE: “THE WAR TO END ALL WARS”

The wasteland theme was concerned with modernity. The Great War, which dwelled in recent memory, was a stark expression of the collapse of values in the modern age. To American youth, it seemed like a disaster. America had arrived late to the war in Europe. While young men engaged in the conflict “over there,” most Americans were spectators, imagining something afar in France. In April 1917, Germany began submarine warfare, putting American shipping at risk. The United States declared war on April 6, 1917. There was a quick mobilization and deployment of troops following the first nationwide draft in U.S. history.

American writers of war fiction had gone to Europe before the United States joined the fight in April 1917. Hemingway, Dos Passos, Cummings, Faulkner, and others sought action. Some became ambulance drivers. Faulkner joined the British Royal Air Force. Dos Passos later said that he was “very anxious to see things at firsthand.”¹⁴ Experiencing the war brought these young men close to violence, to the encounter with death nearby. Hemingway was injured when a shell burst nearby while he was in camp on the front in Northern Italy. Faulkner was injured in a plane crash while in training. Cummings was falsely arrested in France, and he and his friend, Walter Slater Brown, were incarcerated at La Ferte Mace for more than four months (August 1917 to January 11, 1918) in a harrowing incident he recalls in *The Enormous Room*. He insisted that their arrest for suspected “treasonable correspondence” underscored the absurdity of France’s wartime official bureaucracy. Affected by his experience of the enormous room, Cummings became a decidedly unconventional poet.

Paul Fussell writes that war prompted the vision of “binary deadlock.” People saw “simple antithesis everywhere”—us versus them. In this condition, the “mode of gross dichotomy came to dominate perception and expression everywhere, encouraging finally what we can call the modern versus habit,” in which one thing is ever opposed to another.¹⁵

In the United States, the war advanced reforms for women. A sense of mission and series of temperance crusades promoted by women had led to Prohibition. With the war, a cry went out to boycott the German beer industry. Appeals for suffrage reform emerged, with a call for the vote. Many women entered the labor force while soldiers were away in Europe. The energy of their support for the United States during the war was obvious, and Woodrow Wilson addressed the U.S. Congress September 30, 1918, on behalf of women's suffrage. The United States concluded its part in the war on November 11, 1918, Armistice Day, a day we continue to recognize as Veterans Day. America lost 126,000 men in the war. European countries were devastated, with heavy losses. Treaty of Versailles negotiations were underway by late 1918. Most of Woodrow Wilson's "Fourteen Points" were defeated, and the United States did not support his goal of a League of Nations.

According to Gertrude Stein, World War I brought forth and accelerated the modern spirit. The war "forced . . . everyone" to be contemporary and self-conscious, she writes in "Composition as Explanation."¹⁶ Meanwhile, Ann Douglas contended that the American imagination was working to keep up with a reality moving at "speeds hitherto unknown."¹⁷ She calls this a "culture of momentum."¹⁸ Into this changing environment came the novels of young writers, offering their recollections of the war. The American readership was primed for their stories by the events of the war. These writers were generally critical of the war. Hemingway distrusted inflated language. The poetry of Cummings and his name were written in lower case. What words stood for was being scrutinized. The rhetoric of high ideals had been used in speeches, slogans, and battle plans to support an impossible war. It was now time to begin again, to make language new, forceful, and true.

Among the first war novels was *One Man's Initiation* (1920) by John Dos Passos. In it, Martin Howe and his friend Randolph see the destruction of not only physical structures, but also nobility. The devastation of art represents the callous destruction of the human spirit. Civilization itself is represented in an abbey torn to shreds by German artillery. In *Three Soldiers* (1921), John Andrews is in a hospital, thinking about the disintegration of everything that people value; what had been preserved in intellectual tradition has been shattered. Andrews muses, "There must be something more in the world than greed and hatred and cruelty."¹⁹ The wisdom of "Democritus, Socrates, Epicurus, Christ"

seems to have been devoured. The culture that Matthew Arnold once prized, that of the best that has been thought, has been turned into empty clichés. Andrews imagines that he might turn misery into music, recalling the rebellious John Brown in a composition he will entitle “The Body and Soul of John Brown.” For how else, he wonders, can a man find meaning when he is trapped in a mechanism in which past values no longer seem to matter? Dos Passos’s readers encountered his arguments against dehumanization. The individual, lying in a hospital bed, has been subjected to formation in “Making the Mould” and blasted by a cruel war of “Machines,” “Rust,” and “Under the Wheels.” In his introduction to the 1969 reprinting of *One Man’s Initiation*, originally printed in 1917, Dos Passos calls Woodrow Wilson’s change from American neutrality to involvement in the war a “bitter disappointment” that turned him toward Socialism, for it soon became clear that “war was the greatest evil.”²⁰

American readers also consumed Ford Madox Ford’s four-novel cycle dealing with the “world as it culminated in the war.” It was a world that, in moral terms, had mismanaged the war. *The Good Soldier* is the most acclaimed and enduring of these novels. Tietjens, the protagonist, is a determined member of the ruling class. The soldiers might say that this class “caused the war to happen,” and Tietjens feels a sense of responsibility for the outcome of the conflict. His participation is a matter of honor. He lives by a moral code that is pulling away from conventions. In his earlier collaborations with Joseph Conrad, Ford explores this theme of a moral code in a changing world. The postwar scene is revealed as one of irrationality in the final novel of the tetralogy, *The Last Post*. Erich Maria Remarque’s *All Quiet on the Western Front* echoes this irrationality with its thesis that the Great War was unreasonable, bloody, and pointless. For Dos Passos’s characters, this is summarized by one of Martin Howe’s friends, who casts the war as unreal, “like Alice in Wonderland, Drury Lane pantomime, like all the dusty futility of Barnum and Bailey’s circus.”²¹

The postwar American reader included many soldiers and their families. More than 1 million Americans served overseas in World War I. About 350,000 of these men were African Americans who served in segregated troops. Among returning veterans, some 204,000 of them had been physically wounded. In addition, there were many undocumented cases of traumatized soldiers or shell-shocked veterans. In June

2012, in “Shell Shock,” Dr. Edgar Jones of King’s College in London described the symptoms of these World War I soldiers as “fatigue, tremors, confusion, nightmares,” and impairment of sight or hearing.²²

Hemingway had a sure sense of this struggle of the physically or psychologically wounded veteran. The implication in the short story “Soldier’s Home” is that a soldier, like his character Howard Krebs, could not go back to his hometown and former life. He had experienced something momentous and life changing and could not adjust to the conventions of his home. After the war, some returning soldiers experienced disenchantment—a loss of faith in that world. In distancing themselves from the habits of their culture, they had become that “lost generation.” Harry Crosby’s war letters were published in 1932, following his suicide. He had witnessed “shell-gutted ravines, pock-marked hillsides, frightful roads, masses of debris.”²³ As he stood by the ambulance he was about to drive, he saw a boy injured by an exploding shell. Sacredness itself seemed desecrated as artillery tore through a church, leaving only a statue of Christ, arms stretched in crucifixion over the debris.²⁴ He was chilled by a night attack by the Germans.²⁵ In his postwar letters, Crosby appears to cling to something religious to sustain him. He seeks normalcy in his home environment. Crosby’s *Shadows of the Sun* (1928) chronicles his revisiting of the battlefields, of which he says, “It is still a wasteland.”²⁶ The book is filled with suggestions that he was a shell-shocked veteran trying to adjust but unable to cope.

For Hemingway and Dos Passos, it was impossible to live conventionally after the war. Hemingway’s Frederic Henry, in *A Farewell to Arms*, and Dos Passos’s Martin Howe, in *One Man’s Initiation*, were both scathed by the experience. Hemingway’s Harold Krebs returns home psychologically shattered. Dos Passos’s John Andrews searches for meaning amid the disintegration of values. The characters of these writers who experienced the war firsthand are quite different from those of Wharton and Cather, whose values were anchored in tradition. Wharton responded to the war with personal humanitarian aid, assisting the Red Cross in Paris. In her fifties when war broke out, she approached these times with a sense of mission. In her novel *Son at the Front*, George Campton is principled and eager, but the psychological complexity of Hemingway’s Harold Krebs and Frederic Henry is miss-

ing. In contrast with Wharton's fiction, there is a vivid intensity to the works of Hemingway and Dos Passos.

Dos Passos was particularly incited about the effects of systems on the individual. His emphasis on visual and structural techniques may suggest that he became increasingly distrustful of words.²⁷ Against the mechanistic forces that would crush him, the fragmented world of the individual must be given voice or be newly formulated. The novel itself would be a new construction, an architecture that would involve the reader in a visual aesthetic and the new rhythms and patterns of a changing world. The fragmented individual would find integrity within the diverse features of this world. In Dos Passos's view, mechanistic ideologies or empty rhetoric should not manipulate the person or deny an individual's hope.

Both Dos Passos and Hemingway point out the destruction of the landscape by the machinery of war. In *Three Soldiers*, the military machine tears through the Loire Valley, betraying the artistic beauty of the place. The world can no longer express an "ideal state of wholeness" or provide a "basis for . . . a faith in man."²⁸ As John Andrews is arrested, a windmill positioned against the sky is "turning, turning," like a circular machine, a wheel of fortune gone wrong. In the first pages of *A Farewell to Arms*, the impact of the war on the land is equally clear. We see a shattered landscape, the machines of war camouflaged within it.

Dos Passos became a member of the Norton Harjes Ambulance Corps in 1917. He was a multitalented artist who had attended Harvard and could work in several media, including painting, theatrical scene design, and poetry. His poems in *Pushcart at the Curb* (1922) appeared first, before his fiction and experimental drama. In his first novel, *Streets of the Night*, his character Wenny commits suicide. Fanshawe, an intellectual, resigns himself to prosaic repetition. Nan cannot give herself to either of them, and she vanishes into Boston and tries to contact Wenny's spirit with a Ouija board. *One Man's Initiation* sold only sixty-three copies in the first year after its publication. Martin Howe seeks experience on the Western Front and recognizes his need for initiation. With *Three Soldiers*, Dos Passos faces the war, crafts an original style, and appeals to some members of the war generation. The novel is long—more than four hundred pages—and critiques Western civilization. Like Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who begins *Emile* with the thought that man is free but is everywhere in chains, Dos Passos sees

modern men and women in a similar dilemma. Fuselli comes from San Francisco and Chrisfield from the Midwest, and John Andrews is a musician from Virginia, who, like Dos Passos himself, has attended Harvard. Their war is one of mechanism and devastating irony, much like we see in Stanley Kubrick's film *Paths of Glory*. H. L. Mencken applauded Dos Passos's *Three Soldiers* as the best of the war novels to appear soon after the war. About 3,000 to 4,000 copies were distributed, and they sold well.

Dos Passos's art seems to have developed in him a uniquely spatial sense, as well as a curiosity about time. The war confined space into a broken field: that muddy, blasted zone of territorial combat. Fussell has written of the "gross dichotomies" of safety in the trenches and "no man's land."²⁹ Officers attempted to control time in coordinated movements of troops; however, an individual's personal experience of time, or *duree*, was something else, as Proust or Bergson would show. Time was indeed out of joint. Postwar writers like Joyce, Faulkner, Dos Passos, and Virginia Woolf would explore the simultaneity of events within a stream of consciousness. In *To the Lighthouse* (1925), for example, Woolf devotes many pages to the Ramsey family's long day in the Hebrides and less than a dozen to the many years of war in a section called "Time Passes." Dos Passos marks sections of his work as "Time Before" and "Time After."

Space and time were reconstituted in visual art by the cubists. The impressionists had challenged nineteenth-century realism many decades before. Paul Cezanne worked to redefine ways of seeing and imagining landscapes and space. Cubism emerged from his innovations. These painters would present multiple angles of vision simultaneously on a series of planes. Cubists, considering how the eye sees, across a series of microseconds, fragmented the object. The changing view emphasized subjectivity. Such writers as Hemingway and Dos Passos were drawn to cubism in developing their styles. *The Sun Also Rises* shows suggestions of cubist influence in his descriptions of landscapes. In *Three Soldiers*, Dos Passos attempts to reflect a convergence of simultaneous happenings, and in this respect, it is a precursor to his more developed cubist style in *Manhattan Transfer* and the *U.S.A.* trilogy.

The "impressionistic" technique used by Stephen Crane in *The Red Badge of Courage* may be seen as a precursor to Dos Passos's *Three Soldiers*. Crane records the impressions or sensory moments of Henry

Fleming's experience of battle as they occur. Dos Passos uses a similar method, moving into the consciousness of each soldier and placing the men in juxtaposition to suggest simultaneous experiences. Their sensory experiences intersect with one another. As Gertrude Stein claims, the war advanced cubism and reflected fragmentation.³⁰ The works of Picasso and Gris were a visual complement to the experimental tendencies in Hemingway and Dos Passos.

Such experimentalism was a feature of the poetry that Dos Passos's friend Cummings was writing. In *The Enormous Room*, the poet's single lengthy prose work, he offers an account of the kind of delays in law that one sees in Dickens's *Bleak House*. His story suggests deprivations of imprisonment that one would later find in the prison camps of World War II or the caricature of incompetent war leadership that one sees in Stanley Kubrick's films *Paths of Glory* or *Full Metal Jacket*.

Edith Wharton, who carried out extraordinary relief efforts for the French and Belgians through the Red Cross, experienced a different kind of contact with the war. In Frederick J. Hoffmann's view, the Great War was a "mission for her."³¹ In Wharton's *A Son at the Front* (1923), John Campton recognizes that his son George must perform his duty to fight in the war against Germany. He goes off to Europe, even as Wharton realized that some "meaning had evaporated" out of words like "honor."³² Wharton returned to her novel *Son at the Front*, begun in 1917, after she had written *The Age of Innocence*, her story of New York elites in a "long vanished America." As Hoffmann points out, Wharton provides a hero whose "splendid death" speaks of a somewhat Victorian notion of heroism rather than the experience of bitter alienation. Her concern was with French culture and tradition, and an America that might best develop through its contact with the high culture of the old world of Britain and France.³³

Further off from the war was Cather, whose *One of Ours* (1922) garnered a Pulitzer Prize for Fiction. In her novel, Claude Wheeler discovers culture in France that he did not know in Nebraska. Wheeler represents values, a sacrifice for what is loved, and nobility that may be likened to the Homeric sense of *arête* in Hector in *The Iliad*. Wheeler is not disillusioned like the characters of Dos Passos and Hemingway. Cather's experience was not anything like that of Hemingway, who wrote to Edmund Wilson that Cather had to get her war experience secondhand.³⁴ Her ideals were strong, but, like Wharton, she was a

noncombatant. Both women were also two decades older than younger writers like Hemingway and Dos Passos, who appear to have directly experienced the psychological trauma of war and a search for meaning.

Faulkner, in his training with the Royal Air Force, remained concerned throughout the 1920s about the impact of the war. When his character Donald Mahon returns to Georgia in *Soldiers' Pay* (1926), his face is disfigured. Bayard Sartoris appears to have returned home undamaged, but he is wounded mentally. He is clearly struggling with posttraumatic stress disorder, as he misses the heightened energy of war and has to substitute drunkenness, hunting, and racing cars for being active in the war. The problems we see in *Sartoris* are contemporary ones for some soldiers who have returned from conflict in Iraq or Afghanistan. In Faulkner's fiction, Horace Benbow comes back home from Y.M.C.A. service and runs off with Belle Mitchell, another man's wife. In "All the Dead Pilots," the narrator says that the survivors all died on November 11, 1918, Armistice Day. Their days of daring were over. They had to go home to suburban lives and forever sit behind desks, getting fat.³⁵ None of them was quite prepared for ordinary life. In the meantime, those who were too young to go, like Julian Lowe, lament that they could not participate in the adventure.³⁶

The war brought to Europe writers like Hemingway, Dos Passos, and Faulkner, who began their work in small magazines on the continent. A strikingly imaginative novelist, Fitzgerald, would soon join them there. The publication of his first blockbuster novel, *This Side of Paradise*, had been accompanied by his marriage to southern belle Zelda Sayre, and the wild acclaim the novel received brought a reputation that followed them as they moved to Paris.

2

ERNEST HEMINGWAY AND F. SCOTT FITZGERALD

Friendship and Rivalry

America's most influential writers of the first part of the twentieth century found their testing ground and launched their careers during the 1920s. Ernest Hemingway and F. Scott Fitzgerald were uniquely different literary stylists of the same generation who began writing from within the context of this extraordinary milieu of the Roaring Twenties. The contact between Hemingway and Fitzgerald, who first met in Paris, has sometimes been described as a literary friendship; however, the relationship grew agonistic, especially in later days. A thread of competition existed between the two men.

Alongside this competitiveness, these writers had quite different visions and markedly individual writing styles. Hemingway wrote sparse dialogue in his short fiction. He searched for the right word, the concrete detail. He omitted things. Fitzgerald filled his short stories to overflowing with social gestures, fabulous characters, firecracker dialogue, and lyricism. These writers profoundly shaped the American imagination in their own unique ways.

HEMINGWAY IN PARIS

America in 1922 was a memory for Ernest Hemingway, one closely held, like winter air in the lungs, Paris in bad weather, or the pencil and blue notebook and the café au lait in the cup before him. From the Place St.-Michel, a good café, he could think of the United States and imagine a cold, windy day in Michigan, one of those brisk days with clear skies, far from the smoke of war, and put pencil to paper and, in short, clean lines, describe it. Not far away, at 27 Rue de Flueres, was Gertrude Stein, who took his stories seriously. She read them as she sat under paintings by Picasso, Cezanne, Gris, and Matisse, and she knew of such young writers as John Dos Passos and e.e. cummings and Hemingway, the boys who had been to war and become disillusioned, determined men. One day she said to Hemingway, "You are all a lost generation." The garage keeper had said that and Stein repeated it, and Hemingway would one day inscribe it as a caption on the flyleaf of his first novel.

In those days, Hemingway often wrote in an upstairs room that looked out on the rooftops of Paris. After writing steadily each morning from Rue Cardinal Lemoine, he might walk the steep road to the river, follow the Seine to the bookstalls for cheap American books, or go to Sylvia Beach's book shop, Shakespeare and Company, on the Rue d'Olean, where books lined the shelves. There he could see the author photos that filled the walls, and he might catch a passing glimpse of James Joyce, in conservative suit and rimless eyeglasses, or the bearded Ezra Pound in his sinister cape and Spanish hat. Hemingway knew that American reading audiences liked popular fiction. It was his intention to write something different—to make words count, to pin the world down in concrete images and spare, sure language.

The 1920s world of Paris that Hemingway recalled in *A Moveable Feast* (1964) years later was a place in which writers like Fitzgerald, Dos Passos, Faulkner, and others rediscovered their sense of America. There they began to shape the new American novel. So began a generation of American writers and a succession of their readers: men who talked like Hemingway characters, new women animated by the frenetic jazz age images of Fitzgerald, readers who wondered at the beautiful and damned, and the few who pondered the human terror under the magnolia and cypress shadows of Faulkner's southern world. Those

readers were caught up in a world of change—that new era of advertising, radio, motor cars, and popular culture, and these novelists, in their fiction, captured this and made an impact on readers' lives. "Their sense of being different," Malcolm Cowley says, can be seen in their stories, as when Fitzgerald writes in "The Scandal Detectives" that some generations follow one another closely, but for others there is a "gulf . . . infinite and unbridgeable" between them.¹

Hemingway, Fitzgerald, and Faulkner were of a new generation. The innovations that had begun to reshape the American novel came to them through older writers: Anderson, Wharton, Dreiser, and Cather among them. Hemingway was selective in his reading and sharp in his comments about the older writers. In 1920, Lewis's *Main Street* became a best seller, critiquing the American small town; however, for Hemingway this was already yesterday's fiction. He was after a new style, a new contemporary voice. He had begun to craft his own style, while observing the innovations of Stein and the textures of Anderson's fiction. He had become aware of new voices, like that of James Joyce, and had heard of F. Scott Fitzgerald and his novel of college life.

Hemingway knew that Fitzgerald's *This Side of Paradise* was wildly popular and that it signaled the appearance of a younger generation, his own generation. He also realized that Fitzgerald's novel made a good deal of money, although he was willing to subordinate the quest for income to a search for craft and sureness in his own work. In 1919, Fitzgerald earned \$800 from his writing, but *This Side of Paradise* changed his fortunes. The publication of the novel and short stories for the *Saturday Evening Post* ballooned his income to \$18,000 in 1920. Readers were becoming increasingly aware of a youth culture, the new woman, flappers, and the pulse of jazz—an indigenous African American art now transposed by white orchestras. They were, as of yet, unaware of Hemingway and Faulkner, both of whom had traveled overseas to Paris in the early 1920s. John Dos Passos had given readers his accounts of the war in *One Man's Initiation* and *Three Soldiers*. Fitzgerald's novel entertained readers with his account of college life at Princeton. A new generation of writers and their stories was beginning to break into American consciousness.

American fiction was changing with these new writers. Modernist writers, like Hemingway in *The Sun Also Rises*, let go of plot in favor of a wandering story. Before 1925, Hemingway published in journals with

small circulations, while Fitzgerald was writing for such mass-market magazines as the *Saturday Evening Post*. Hemingway worked painstakingly on his fiction, producing his story cycle *In Our Time*, published by Three Mountains Press. Scribner's editor, Maxwell Perkins, learned about the book from Fitzgerald, who insisted that Hemingway (whose name he misspelled with two m's) had a "brilliant future." In October 1924, Edmund Wilson reviewed Hemingway's story collection, then entitled *in our time*, in lowercase. Fitzgerald began reading Hemingway and, upon his move to Paris, met with Hemingway at the Dingo bar in April 1925. The trade edition of *In Our Time* appeared half a year later. In March 1926, Fitzgerald's enthusiastic review of the book appeared in the *Bookman*. Thus began the long and often frequently conflicted relationship of these two writers, often discussed by literary historians and critics.

Fitzgerald played an instrumental role in bringing Hemingway's work to a wider audience through his contact with Perkins at Scribner's. Boni and Liveright had offered Hemingway a three-book contract. To fulfill this contract, Hemingway rapidly wrote *Torrents of Spring* (1925), critiquing Sherwood Anderson's *Dark Laughter*. Boni and Liveright, the firm that published Anderson, declined to publish the book. His next book was now free to be published by another firm. Fitzgerald recommended Hemingway to Scribner's, and *The Sun Also Rises* appeared in 1926. Hemingway's audience and sales would grow throughout time. His style, perhaps more than that of Fitzgerald or Faulkner, would influence a future generation of writers.

VISITING WITH GERTRUDE STEIN

Behind Hemingway's work at his craft at this time towered Gertrude Stein, who was in Paris beginning in 1903, and Anderson. They recognized in Hemingway a style that embraced conciseness, focus, simplicity of expression, and sensitivity to the weight of words. Hemingway thought about perspective and point of view in a narrative. The rugged naturalism of Stephen Crane, Frank Norris, and Theodore Dreiser held some appeal for him. In contrast, Wharton's *The Writing of Fiction* (1925) was remote from his style and purposes. He preferred the short

stories of Anderson, who wrote of how word played against word, relating sound to sound.²

Hemingway frequently visited Stein's rooms at Rue de Fleures, and he encouraged Ford Madox Ford to serialize Stein's *The Making of Americans* in his *the transatlantic review*. Stein was proud of *The Making of Americans*—a long work and one that must be read with patience. Stein's work on the book dates from 1903 to 1911, but it was not published as a book until Robert McAlmon did so in 1925, through his Contact Press. The novel is subtitled *The Story of a Family's Progress*. Yet, it is hard to know if the family featured in the story progresses much at all. Stein's consciousness circles around, and the rhythmic pattern of phrase and nonlogical language appears to draw most of our attention. The Dehnings and the Herslands appear in the first of seven sections. Julia Dehning marries Alfred Hersland. In the next sections readers meet the Hissings and their daughter Fanny, as well as three women named Shilling, who are seamstresses. Fanny and her husband David's children are introduced in the next sections. If anything about America is suggested by this family, it may be a sort of dislocation. There are divorces as marriages, family, and community fail. Style takes precedence, and repetition becomes an important feature.

Stein appreciated Hemingway and mentions him in her memoirs, which are narrated as if they were from her companion, Alice Toklas. She titled the book *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, and Wilson thought that was a neat trick. Through Toklas's point of view, Stein looks at herself and her literary and artistic circle. In Wilson's review (October 1933), he points out that Stein truly creates a distinct individual character in Toklas, as if this account were a novel. For Wilson, the most interesting part of Stein's book is her recollection of World War I and her discovery of the works of Matisse and Picasso. He describes this section as one of "artistic adventure," as Toklas enters the Stein context. Jean Cocteau referred to this period as the "heroic age," and it was a time of nostalgia for independent magazines and art shows. Stein notes that sadness followed the death of Guillaume Apollinaire in the war. It seemed as if history had intruded upon their artistic circle.

Wilson calls the remainder of the book "less exciting."³ Still, it gives expression to Stein's attitudes toward such familiar figures as Pound (a "village explainer") and Hemingway. The latter comes in for criticism as a pupil who "does it without understanding." Stein and Anderson were

“funny” about him, says the narrator, Toklas, since “Hemingway had been formed by them.”⁴ Wilson believes that Stein’s view was partly biased because she was the “ruler of a salon,” and once her protégés left she believed less in them.⁵

Hemingway began to draw away from Stein by 1926. At the time, she was writing in *Composition as Explanation* (1926) that a writer ought to maintain a continuous present, “using everything,” beginning again and again. Time and repetition and the movement from sentence to paragraph were the concern of the writer of fiction, she asserted. Her method argued for attention to the present immediacy of the thing seen. Hemingway was then writing with attention to the concrete image. The rhythm of repetition of the word *and* occurs in his novel *The Sun Also Rises*. The perspective he observed by looking at Cezanne’s paintings is also in evidence here. For example, the location and movement of a truck is given spatially, in planes, as if on a canvas. The reader is given the foreground, and one’s eye follows a truck up the road, riding toward the background. Commenting on this technique, Hemingway mentions that he learned something from Cezanne.⁶

Hemingway sought concrete facts, sure words, and action. His work sought dreams of order, writing as an alternative to the disorder of society. The individual deprived of ultimate purpose has to create. Performance was a way to create a goal. Jake Barnes only wanted to know how to live life. In *The Sun Also Rises*, his physical wound is also part of the psychic wound of expatriates adrift from their American past. In Hemingway’s *The Sun Also Rises*, Frederick Hoffmann sees the “post-war landscape of unreason.”⁷ The novel portrays a cast of isolated individuals who are cut off from tradition and on a wandering journey. There is aimless sequence and a lack of order or meaningful happening.⁸ The war wound of Jake makes him impotent. The character Brett drifts with a lost quality and has no normal or lasting relationships. The characters move from Paris to Spain and the Pyrenees, to Pamplos and the bullfights. In *The Sun Also Rises*, Wilson saw “heartlessness” and “atrocious behavior” in Hemingway’s characters. The novel, he suggests, was about the attempt to either escape this world or find a code whereby to live in it.⁹

The first British edition of *The Sun Also Rises* was entitled *Fiesta*. As the novel circulated more widely, it became an important part of the Hemingway mystique. He was viewed as a man who liked women,

sports, and violence. Hemingway repeated the bullfighting interest with *Death in the Afternoon* (1932). The Twentieth Century Fox film version of *The Sun Also Rises*, made in 1957, brought the story to a later audience. It was directed by Daryl Zannuck, with a cast of Tyrone Power, Ava Gardner, Errol Flynn, Eddie Albert, Mel Ferrer, and Julie Greco. The films of Hemingway's novels tend to focus on romance and sensationalism for a middle-class viewing audience. By 1954, when he won the Nobel Prize, Hemingway had become an iconic figure, and his style was frequently imitated by other writers.

A Farewell to Arms (1929) appeared during the same year as *All Quiet on the Western Front*. Both stirred recollections of World War I. Hemingway's tragic love story moved readers in Europe, as well as the United States. Erich Maria Remarque's novel embodied his plea that the Great War be the war to end all wars. Whereas Remarque underlines his argument with a call for pacifism, Hemingway is understated, working by pointing to concrete things. His words denote objects, things that can be pinned down. In the United States, the Book-of-the-Month Club distributed about 67,000 copies of *All Quiet on the Western Front* to subscribers.¹⁰ *A Farewell to Arms* sold approximately 70,000 copies.

In Hemingway's novel, the romance of Frederic Henry and Catherine Barkley is driven by an attempt to escape the war. In their search for meaning, Frederic and Catherine find one another. The five books of the novel comprise a drama that includes the war, a romance, the retreat at Caporetto, Frederic's decision to escape with Catherine into Switzerland, and the fateful conclusion. Frederic recounts his story. He is an ambulance driver from the United States who is on the Italian front, at war with Austria. He has joined the war for adventure rather than any sense of purpose; he was able to speak Italian and there was a war in Italy, so he joined. Injured and convalescing in a hospital in Milan, he begins a relationship with his nurse, Catherine, who is English.

The war in Italy has become costly and difficult, and Frederic is going to be sent back to the front; however, Catherine informs him that she is pregnant. When Frederic leaves for the front, with this on his mind, he learns that the Italians have lost a significant battle at Caporetto. We receive a vivid description of their retreat in the rain. Frederic has decided to desert the army and bring Catherine with him. They

make a dramatic escape to Switzerland. Perhaps because of their arduous journey, Catherine's pregnancy is disastrous. Hemingway offers a stoical approach to biological necessity, whose consequence is a kind of doom. It appears that Frederic could not help but fall into Catherine's arms any more than he fell into the arms of war. They bid good-bye to the military conflict but soon struggle with a serious conflict awaiting them. Catherine's very life must be saved, and tragedy strikes just when they seem to have escaped. In the end, there is the rain as they descend from the mountains—and with the rain comes loss.

Readers opened the pages of *A Farewell to Arms* a little more than a decade after the war had ended. Some critics saw surface realism in Hemingway. Yet, others recognized that he was a writer who made use of implication. When Cowley introduced *The Portable Hemingway* in 1940, he suggested that Hemingway was no realist but, rather, that he belonged with Poe, Hawthorne, and Melville as one of the “haunted and nocturnal writers.”¹¹ In Hemingway, Cowley saw an “instinct for legends, for sacraments, for rituals, for symbols appealing to hopes and fears.”¹² In Hemingway, the inner battle within his characters is often more important than the outer one. He writes laconically, with scenes stripped down, focusing on the action of his ordinary heroes.

A Farewell to Arms was launched to considerable public acclaim. Hemingway had completed revisions while in Key West, where he was visited by Maxwell Perkins. Scribner's offered \$16,000 to run the story as a serial in their magazine. On June 24, 1929, Hemingway completed his work in Paris. He later told a reporter that he had revised his last page often, so he could “get the words right.”¹³ It appears that most readers responded enthusiastically to his novel, but Boston censors had moved to ban Scribner's magazine's run of the story, objecting to the unmarried love affair between Frederic and Catherine. Hemingway called this move an unhealthy one for a significant book.

The book was then published by Scribner's in the United States and Jonathan Cape in England. When Scribner's first printing of 31,050 copies was issued, each copy sold for \$2.50. A second printing of 10,000 copies soon followed. The first edition of *The Sun Also Rises*, in comparison, had seen a print run of 6,000, followed by two more printings of 2,000. *A Farewell to Arms* was something different indeed: By January 1930, sales had surpassed 70,000 copies.

Letters from readers who are critical of Hemingway's novel appear in the Scribner's archives at the Firestone Library at Princeton University. These readers take issue with the stories on moral grounds, objecting to the affair between Frederic and Catherine and the pregnancy outside of marriage. A man from Maine wrote, "What modernists call realism reminds me of an artist picking out for a still life picture a half-empty milk bottle with milk souring and flies crawling over it, some stale and rotting vegetables and molding bread."¹⁴ Nevertheless, there are also notes from fans of Hemingway and stories of those fans that later made efforts to locate him. In August 1944, after U.S. troops had entered Paris, twenty-five-year-old J. D. Salinger sought out Hemingway at the Ritz Hotel. The man who would write *The Catcher in the Rye* was then with the Counter-Intelligence Corps, and he drove his jeep to the hotel in search of one of his favorite authors.

A Farewell to Arms was Hemingway's first novel to be adapted into a film, and he was not entirely pleased with the result. Yet, the film catapulted the novel to greater sales. Director Frank Borzage and screenwriters Benjamin Glazer and Oliver H. P. Garrett took some liberties with Hemingway's story. Paramount advertised the film as a romance and considered two different endings. The writers wondered whether the story should end happily ever after or miserably, as Hemingway had written it. One of their endings shows Frederic (Gary Cooper) carrying Catherine (Helen Hayes) to a window, saying the word *peace* as the bells toll outside. It is a sad but poignant conclusion. In the other version, Catherine is healed and comes to life as the war ends on Armistice Day, and everyone outside cheers. Hemingway, needless to say, did not like that ending at all. Borzage highlights the romance between the couple rather than the war, which so greatly impacts their lives.

In his novel, Hemingway implies much about the stress of war. Frederic's desertion is likely a response to his malaise and anxiety, and Catherine's death mirrors war's bleak devastation of life. For Borzage, the war is a setting for the plot to unfold within: It is the context in which the couple's romance blossoms. Paramount had no difficulty filming the retreat from Caporetto: It won an award for cinematography. They censored the premarital sex between Frederic and Catherine, however. The couple had to be married and her pregnancy to be lengthened. Meanwhile, the Italians were embarrassed by the defeat at

Caporetto, and Benito Mussolini banned Hemingway's book. Paramount heard that the Italian dictator had insisted that all American films be banned in Italy if they contained any signs of Italian soldiers giving up or deserting the army. As a result, the film provides no verbal mention of Caporetto and only the mention of another battle that resulted in an Italian victory.

Ben Hecht's later screenplay for the remake of *A Farewell to Arms* is a bit different. He wrote more closely to Hemingway's novel. David O. Selznick had purchased the film rights from Warner Brothers and chosen Hecht, with whom he had worked on *Gone with the Wind*. As director, Charles Vidor replaced John Huston, who had begun work on the film but had a difference of opinion with the producer. Hecht builds the chaplain (Albert Sordi) into a hero, as Hemingway does in his novel. He gives us the retreat from Caporetto with no careful omissions and has Catherine die, as in the novel, without glossing over the tragedy of this. Vidor and Hecht attempted to include Frederic's interior monologues as Frederic (Rock Hudson) dwells upon Catherine (Jennifer Jones) and death and dying in the war. Hemingway did not like this film either, nor did the Catholic League of Decency, which called the film morally objectionable.

All Quiet on the Western Front by Erich Maria Remarque (*Im Westen Nicht Neues*) (1929) also became a popular film. The novel, written a decade after the war, reveals the war's harsh destruction and human cost. Remarque's story, partly autobiographical, is a pacifist response that underlines dehumanization and alienation. Paul Baumer and his fellow soldiers, many of whom were his comrades from school, are behind the lines on the Western Front. Baumer begins to see that ideas of heroism are empty and that they are caught in a hostile place. By the time Baumer meets a French soldier, he is no longer the nationalistic individual bent on heroism that he once had been. He becomes the last survivor within his military squad. Tormented by this loss, he is finally killed by enemy gunfire.

Lewis Milestone's film won the Academy Award in 1930 for best film. In his novel, Remarque makes use of fragmentation and impressions; however, the film moves along chronologically, following the scenes in Remarque's novel. There are scenes of warfare, and Baumer's experience provides the film's center. Milestone is faithful to the novel's theme: its pacifism and reflection on the effects of war. Baumer, who is

played by Lew Ayres, is portrayed as a victim. Milestone creates several visual images that are not in Remarque's novel. In one, Baumer reaches his hand toward a butterfly that is fluttering above the trenches. A series of crosses are superimposed.

F. SCOTT FITZGERALD ON *THIS SIDE OF PARADISE*

When F. Scott Fitzgerald entered basic training in Montgomery, Alabama, he began writing hurriedly, certain that the war would claim him; however, what claimed him was the fascination of Zelda Sayre, whom he met at a dance in July. Inspired, he took *The Romantic Egoist*, a 120,000-word novel he had submitted to Scribner's, and recast it as *This Side of Paradise*. It was a story that Scribner's editor Maxwell Perkins became enthusiastic about, and he accepted it for publication on September 16, 1919. Fitzgerald's agent, Harold Ober, also sold "Head and Shoulders" to the *Saturday Evening Post*, which circulated to as many as 2 million readers. About twenty stories were sold to *Scribner's Magazine* and other publications that year.

Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald married at St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York on April 3, 1920, two weeks before *This Side of Paradise* appeared. Fitzgerald was suddenly the young writer of adolescent college exuberance—one who described a young generation's drinking, petting and kissing, and materialistic quest for success. Scribner's advertised the novel widely, calling it a "Novel for Flappers Written for Philosophers." Fitzgerald took this as a title for his short story collection *Flappers and Philosophers*. He cast himself as the dandy philosopher and his southern belle Zelda, with bobbed hair, as a flapper, and they were ready for prime time: The party was on. The public got its first taste of indulgence and alcohol-fueled antics. Scott and Zelda became the popular image of what he called the jazz age. Writing, however, requires discipline, method, and conscious planning. Fitzgerald was a professional writer, and he needed to curb the Dionysian frenzy and bacchanalia of partying to focus on writing.

There is a patchwork variety to *This Side of Paradise*, which is a composite of other works. Fitzgerald assembled a series of incidents and combined *The Romantic Egoist* with "Babes in the Woods," his "Debutante" play of 1919, and his undergraduate verse. *This Side of*

Paradise is the story of Amory Blaine's drift through his Princeton education and his efforts to live in a dreamlike world. He passes through World War I and becomes increasingly disenchanted. Filled with desire for life, a "sphere of epicurean delight," Amory imagines himself on-stage or in love: "Oh to fall in love like that—to the languorous magic melody of such a tune."¹⁵ He imagines an idealized existence and that the real world can be masked by theatricality. After all, Amory and Isabelle are "described in theatrical terms," as T. Austin Graham observes.¹⁶ They also fall into a romance. Amory writes a love letter to Isabelle from his dorm room at Princeton: "O Isabelle dear—it's a wonderful night. Somebody is playing 'Love Moon' on a mandolin far across the campus, and the music seems to bring you to the window. Now he's playing 'Good-bye Boys, I'm Through' and how well it suits me. For I am through with everything."¹⁷ As Graham points out, this song appeals to the memory of the reader, who then has to match it with the text.¹⁸

Drawn toward their first kiss, they hear in the background Jerome Kern's melody from the musical *Very Good Eddie* (1915), "Babes in the Wood." Alternating male and female voices join together. Yet, Schylur Greene's lyrics suggest that the ballad "Babes in the Wood" is not about passion. They are simply in the "same canoe," and the narrator says the moonlight is bright and tells the person he is speaking to that she ought to kiss him like a sister. As Graham notes, it is a "remarkably chaste selection for a novel that was considered quite racy in its time."¹⁹ Perhaps, for Amory, it is more about the dream and less about the reality of a relationship. "It was always the becoming he dreamed of, never the being."²⁰

When *This Side of Paradise* was published by Collins in London in May 1921, it was met with negative critical reviews from the *Times Literary Supplement* and slow sales of less than 1,000 copies. Some considered the first novel bereft of structure. Still, it can be said that modernist works were intended to be innovative and diffuse. Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises* wanders like its characters. Hemingway consciously avoided plotting his novel like a popular thriller. Fitzgerald's patchwork quilt of a novel was within the spirit of the time. With *The Beautiful and Damned*, he sought form but ended up giving "care to the detail."²¹ *Metropolitan Magazine* serialized the story in September 1921. It appeared in book form with a slightly different ending.²²

This Side of Paradise sold 49,000 copies in its first year. Its popularity has prompted speculation from critics about the novel's audience. Were they drawn to his images of youth culture, college life, or romantic scenes? Was the novel popular because it captured social attitudes that were in the air and the spirit of the times? Was there a response to an underlying tone of disenchantment or the spirit of independence evoked by the novel?²³ The novel describes a generation, one that Fitzgerald would be associated with throughout his life. To be young in the 1920s, Kirk Curnutt suggests, is to be able to use entertainment in the construction of identity.²⁴ This is what Amory Blaine attempts to do. Fitzgerald's characters Amory Blaine, Nick Carraway, and Judy Jones in "Winter Dreams" encounter an intense life of passionate vitality. Fitzgerald wonders at a world of wealth and sense of privilege, which he critiques for its ostentation, lack of taste, sophistication, and pretense. Yet, he marvels at glitter and sparkle, social mobility, and freedom. He presents the youth culture of the flapper, bright and beautiful, and the choreographed movements of individuals of vanity and egotism. This is a culture at play, jazzed, seeking the ecstatic.

American youth were excited to see Amory's world in *This Side of Paradise*. Others were puzzled by it. The novel became talked about and was widely distributed on a wave of rumor and newfound popularity. *This Side of Paradise* was considered by some to be an insightful sociological study of youth culture. Fitzgerald seems to have caught on to the nation's changing attitudes toward youth. The *Bookman* called the novel a "Chronicle of Youth by Youth," and the *Philadelphia Evening Public Ledger* announced that in it, "Youth Writes about Youth."²⁵ Young people had become increasingly segregated amongst their own peers and, by the 1920s, had developed values, language, dress, and behavior specific to their own generational cohort. Fitzgerald himself announced that an author should write for his own generation.²⁶

Edmund Wilson was harsh. In his March 1922 review, he describes Fitzgerald as a "rather childish fellow."²⁷ His novel is quite alive, but he is too occupied with himself and too little with the world, says Wilson. In contrast, Thomas Woodward (1898–1935) and Peggy Woodward (1898–1965) of Minneapolis assert that Fitzgerald was far more than a "flapper novelist." In 1922, Thomas replied sharply in the *St. Paul Daily News* to Wilson's review of *The Beautiful and Damned* in the *Bookman*.²⁸ Wilson then called Fitzgerald's *Tales of the Jazz Age* "spontane-

ous nonsense” and sarcastically criticized “The Lees of Happiness,” a story of which Peggy Woodward said, “I read it . . . and wept over it.”²⁹ The Woodwards’ comments in a Minnesota newspaper did not carry the same weight as those of Wilson, who was writing for such national publications as the *Bookman* and the *New Republic*. Peggy had published a novel *The Love Legend* in 1922, and Thomas published his novel *Through the Wheat* in 1923. It was thought that Fitzgerald had been instrumental in getting these works printed. Hence, their critical opinions were not highly valued.³⁰

CELEBRITY AND CULTURAL CRITICISM

In H. L. Mencken’s review of *Flappers and Philosophers* (1920), he observes Fitzgerald’s pursuit of both commercial success and critical success as causing a kind of dichotomy in his personality. Mencken refers to Fitzgerald as “ambidextrous.”³¹ Meanwhile, newspapers began to include gossip about Fitzgerald’s own audacious behavior. The flappers he wrote about were theatrical, performing, making a show with dance, affectation, mannerism. Fitzgerald recorded in his fiction a cultural grasp of the sights and sounds of the 1920s, the onstage behavior of his peers, much as sociologist Erving Goffmann would later offer in more staid language in *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, in which he thoughtfully examines a society of gestures, poses, and roles. The 1920s initiated a time when commodities were heralded as marks of distinction for the middle class. Cars, clothes, and other material products became signs of belonging. Amory Blaine is attentive to clothing, fabric, color, and other sartorial surfaces that would give Thomas Carlyle’s *Sartor Resartus* heartburn, and he proceeds to dress like a dandy. His life becomes a semiotic social landscape of signs and appearances.

Fitzgerald was an astute observer of social change, a professional writer who seemed to search for some moral grounding in a shifting world. His own odyssey brought the temptations of Circe. With notoriety came excess, a quest for drama, and a theatrical self that reflects today’s Hollywood obsession with facelifts and image. Today our popular media can project Fitzgerald’s world of spectacle with special effects. As in the 1920s, entertainment, fads, and reality television have

promoted a culture of pleasure and fun rather than one of self-development and civic responsibility in building community, nation, and world.

Fitzgerald's fiction was mostly autobiographical. He could dash off some short fiction, relying on his imagination and lyrical gifts, but for other stories he became a conscious planner.³² *The Beautiful and Damned*, his second novel, required some planning. It sold more than 50,000 copies, and he followed with a short story collection, *The Jazz Age*, which sold 24,000 copies. In the fall of 1922, Fitzgerald moved to Great Neck, Long Island. In 1923, he sent scripts and scenarios to film studios and earned about \$13,500 for film rights from his stories; however, Edmund Wilson and John Peale Bishop, both of whom were familiar with Fitzgerald from their days at Princeton, criticized the uneven quality of his work. Many of his stories, they concluded, were ephemeral, like noisy New Year's Eve party horns—squealing, sensational, and dispensable. This affected Fitzgerald's critical reputation, even while such stories as "Diamonds as Big as the Ritz" and the well-crafted "Winter Dreams" were clearly works of quality. Stories like "Winter Dreams" (1922), "Absolution" (1924), and "The Sensible Thing" (1924) deal with the theme of a poor boy in love with a rich, inaccessible girl, and they associate romantic love with money. These stories would lead to *The Great Gatsby* (1925), which has become one of the touchstones of twentieth-century American writing.

The Beautiful and Damned is principally about the decline and fall of Anthony Patch, a privileged hedonist in New York who aspires to be a writer but loses his family inheritance, joins the army, fears he has an unfaithful wife, cannot keep a job, and never writes the work he says he is going to write. In his bathroom, Anthony sings "My Beautiful Lady" from the musical *The Pink Lady* (1911), imagining that he is the seductive violinist described in the lyrics. Anthony listens to "Ring Ting-a-Ling," a song sung by Ada Jones, accompanied by a brass band, which has a melody punctuated by the ringing of a phone. Listeners can hear the comic, conversational delivery. Muriel arrives with songs: "You ought to have a phonograph out here in the country," she says, "just a little Vic—they don't cost much. Then whenever you're lonesome you can have Caruso or Al Jolson right at your door."³³

The *Saturday Evening Post* printed many of Fitzgerald's stories between 1923 and 1924, earning him \$16,450. Scott and Zelda went to the French Riviera, where they met Gerald and Sara Murphy, a cultivated

couple who were trendsetters and supportive friends. While in France, Zelda's affair with French aviator Edouard Joze created difficulties in the marriage from which the couple would never quite recover. Nonetheless, they stayed together, in spite of financial difficulties and Zelda's breakdowns.

CREATING GATSBY

In the spring of 1924, Fitzgerald was determined to write an “intricately patterned” novel with a focused plot and sense of mystery. *The Great Gatsby* was revised several times, including following Maxwell Perkins's suggestions late in 1924. The extensive revisions that Fitzgerald applied to his novel show him as a craftsman of literature. Attracted, dazzled, and enticed by glitter and laughter like the sound of money, we are suspended, caught in Nick's anticipations, ever wondering with him just who this Gatsby fellow is. Even as the darkness settles on West Egg, even as the waves of the Sound lap upon the shore fifty yards from Nick Carraway's home, we watch with him the lights going on, distantly flickering across the seemingly vast reach of night between those who, like the ambitious Gatsby, have much and those—the affluent and charming—who have ever more. There is Gatsby, who Nick says “turned out all right,” yet who, with calculated ambition, fell into a mistaken path with his fabricated chivalry and is caught in Nick's troubadour lament of courtly love.

The Great Gatsby is filled with imagined jazz, vaguely described “yellow cocktail music,” and several identifiable pop songs.³⁴ When Nick is with Jordan Baker in Manhattan, they hear girls singing in the West Fifties “The Love Nest,” a song from George M. Cohan's musical *Mary*, with lyrics by Otto Harbach and music by Louis A. Hirsch. Still familiar to contemporary audiences is the frequently covered “Ain't We Got Fun” (1921). “Beale Street Blues” can be found on YouTube, with *Louis Armstrong Plays King Oliver* (1954). The song “Sheik of Araby” (1921) was written by Ted Snyder, with lyrics by Harry B. Smith and Francis Wheeler, following a novel of that title that became a film.

When “Three O'Clock in the Morning” appears in *The Great Gatsby*, Nick wonders about the song's effect on Daisy. He wonders what in the song “seemed to be calling her back inside.”³⁵ It is a three-quarter

time waltz by Julian Robledo (music) and Dorothy Terriss (lyrics) dated 1922—that watershed year for modernism during which *The Waste Land* first appeared. On YouTube, one can find Irish tenor John McCormack singing the song. Also on YouTube, the Paul Whiteman Orchestra plays the song as an instrumental. Inserted into the song is a tinny, ringing sequence of notes that have since been used for doorbells. Nonetheless, “Three O’Clock in the Morning” suggests the passage of time, the waning of the night, song, and romance. Music is characterized by change in time, repetition, a passing that may only be retrieved by replaying the record. Gatsby might believe he can repeat the past. Yet, at best he can replay the phonograph record. At the end of the Redford film, it repeats it over and over, as life dissolves.

On March 12, 1925, Fitzgerald wrote to Perkins that he wanted his book’s title changed to “Gold-hatted Gatsby” and that he still liked “Trimalchio” as a title. In his correspondence, he spells Hemingway with two m’s and said he would “look him up” in Paris. On April 10, 1924, he wrote to the editor that he hoped to finish his novel in June.³⁶ By June, he was telling August Fowler that he felt “old too, this summer” and remarked to Perkins that he was thinking of the poet Percy Bysshe Shelley: “Shelley was a God to me once.”³⁷ The novel, he suggests in his letters, was about the “loss of those illusions that give such color to the world.”³⁸ Fitzgerald wrote *The Great Gatsby* during that summer into the autumn of 1924 and revised during the winter. On October 10, 1924, he urged Perkins to keep an eye on that young writer named Hemingway, who, he said, “has a brilliant future.”³⁹ Days later, on October 27, 1924, Perkins received a manuscript of a little more than 50,000 words. On November 18, Perkins wrote to Fitzgerald, saying, “I think the novel is a wonder.”⁴⁰ He then called *The Great Gatsby* an “extraordinary book” and offered some suggestions for chapters six and seven. From Rome, Fitzgerald corresponded with Perkins on December 20 and again in January, typing a letter about revisions.

The novel was published on April 10, 1925. Fitzgerald told Perkins that he was sick of rewriting it five times. Zelda liked the book’s dust cover jacket. Fitzgerald, who had devoted a great deal of time to refining his work, returned to the magazine story writing that brought about \$2,000 per story. In the interest of maintaining his lifestyle, he also began to think about writing for motion pictures. In the spring of 1925, Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald moved to Paris.

The Great Gatsby initially sold about 25,000 copies. Two weeks after the novel was published, Fitzgerald met Ernest Hemingway at a café, the Dingo Bar. Fitzgerald deeply admired Hemingway's writing and encouraged his publication at Scribner's. Hemingway would later become one of Fitzgerald's critics—puzzled by his inability to hold his liquor, recalling Fitzgerald's insecurity about his anatomy and sexuality, and calling Zelda “phony as a rubber check.”⁴¹ While living at 14 Rue de Tilsitt on the Right Bank, Fitzgerald wrote to Edmund Wilson that Hemingway was taking him to meet Gertrude Stein.⁴²

Fitzgerald's work was much appreciated by Jewish avant-garde writer Gertrude Stein, a rich woman who weighed some two hundred pounds and was sharply in contrast with her dark-eyed, wiry companion, Alice Toklas. Stein had studied psychology at Radcliffe and medicine at Johns Hopkins. On her walls were paintings by Pablo Picasso, Henri Matisse, and Juan Gris. She was writing experimentally, creating *The Making of Americans*, and thinking about generations, culture, and history.

Fitzgerald was also in contact with other authors. In April, Fitzgerald wrote from Capritto to Willa Cather, mentioning *My Antonia* and *A Lost Lady* and her short stories “Paul's Case” and “Scandal.” He recognized that he had been reading *A Lost Lady* while writing *The Great Gatsby*.⁴³ To Sinclair Lewis he sent a copy of the novel, noting that he had sent for *Arrowsmith*. He told Lewis that he hoped that his own book would be the “second best book of the spring.”⁴⁴

With Marya Mannes, Fitzgerald shared the idea that female readers “haven't generally cared for it.”⁴⁵ This was, he thought, possibly because of the novel's emotionally passive characters. Hazel “Patsy” McCormack, an aspiring writer from St. Louis, was one of the readers who had been critical of several of Fitzgerald's stories in 1924, and Fitzgerald began a lengthy correspondence with her. “The stories you objected to were necessary,” he wrote, asserting the worth of “Absolution” and “The Baby Party.” He calls his novel in progress, *The Great Gatsby*, “wonderful” and conveys his hope that it would be “out by the spring.”⁴⁶ McCormack wrote again in May 1925 that she had read and liked *The Great Gatsby*. Fitzgerald wrote back that her letter had done much to “lift [him] up from the fact that it isn't going to sell. Not like the others.”⁴⁷

Before long, Fitzgerald was wondering if *The Great Gatsby* would be published in England.⁴⁸ Perkins confirmed that it would be, and Fitzgerald responded on October 20, 1925, noting that 19,640 copies had been sold in the United States. There would not be strong sales in England, however. One reviewer insisted that the subject matter was too American. T. S. Eliot, in a letter, brightened Fitzgerald's spirits by telling him that *The Great Gatsby* was the "first step" in American fiction since Henry James.⁴⁹ Fitzgerald inscribed a copy to him in Paris in October 1925.

Fitzgerald's reading public in Britain always remained relatively small compared with that in the United States. His short story collections *Flappers and Philosophers* and *Tales of the Jazz Age* were published by Collins in London; however, the publisher rejected *The Great Gatsby*. Perkins told Fitzgerald that they had called the novel's "atmosphere . . . extraordinarily foreign to the English reader."⁵⁰ Chatto and Windus published the novel in England in 1926. The reviewer for the *Times Literary Supplement* recognized *The Great Gatsby* as "undoubtedly a work of art and of great promise" but disliked the characters.

* * *

Clearly, Fitzgerald's themes in *The Great Gatsby* resonated far beyond the 1920s. Bob Batchelor, in the first book in this series, refers to *The Great Gatsby* as a particularly culturally significant work, pointing to a "meta-Gatsby" that resonates throughout American culture. It is the book by Fitzgerald that is most often read, taught, and adapted. Some contemporaries saw the merits of the novel. Gilbert Seldes reviewed *The Great Gatsby* twice, in the *Dial* and *New Criticism*. William Rose Benet relates that Fitzgerald had unearthed the "depth of philosophy."⁵¹ The reviewer for the *New York World* disparaged it, with a headline that asserts, "F. Scott Fitzgerald's Latest a Dud."⁵² One may look back on the curious irony of such a criticism. Whereas the *New York World* was discontinued long ago, *The Great Gatsby* is still very much alive in our culture.

The popular image of 1920s as being filled with fun and good times that appears in Fitzgerald's novel might be described as a kind of breaking away from the Victorian emphasis on self-improvement and austerity. In Freudian terms, it was the bursting free of the superego. Sensual

dance and syncopated rhythms suggested a kind of sexual liberation—intimate, throbbing, twisting, and breaking free of corsets and garters. Fitzgerald implies this in the parties in *The Great Gatsby*, where flappers dance “quite individualistically,” as well as quite clearly in *Tender Is the Night*, where Dick and Rosemary dance closely, “clinging together,” and later entwine in the coatroom.⁵³ The dancing at the Gatsby party is fueled by alcohol, and the Eighteenth Amendment and the Volstead Act are futile, unable to stop the buzz. And so Fitzgerald propagates a myth of the libidinous pulse and stereoscopic swirl of 1920s abandon. These Roaring Twenties were only heard by some. Most Americans were not invited to Gatsby’s parties. Still, these images stay in our minds, almost one hundred years later, as one of the chief features of this lively era.

“You’ve got to sell your heart,” Fitzgerald once told Frances Turnbull, a young correspondent, in November 1928. “This is especially true when you begin to write,” he said. Before a writer has developed the tricks of the trade that make characters interesting, what makes fiction convincing to readers is a writer’s emotions. “This is the experience of all writers,” Fitzgerald added, pointing to Dickens’s *Oliver Twist*, Hemingway’s *In Our Time*, and his own *This Side of Paradise*, of which he said, “I wrote about a love affair that was still bleeding.”⁵⁴ A love affair still bleeding was also at the center of Jay Gatsby’s dream.

The Great Gatsby captures many of the trends and concerns of the 1920s: romance, crime, and consumer spending. As Curnutt and others have pointed out, Fitzgerald presents the automobile as a way of seeing human life becoming increasingly mechanical.⁵⁵ Thus, Daisy Buchanan, distracted by something other than texting with her friends, drives Jay Gatsby’s car into a fatal crossroads, where it strikes her husband Tom’s mistress, Myrtle Wilson. People have succumbed to mechanism, and Myrtle, a pathetic aspirant to glamour, has died in the impersonality of it all. Yet, in the midst of the tragic dream of Jay Gatsby, the man who believed he could repeat the past, there is the archetypal quest of the American dream. Jay Gatsby can be read in multiple ways, and so can the horizons of that dream.

A POPULAR STORY WRITER

Fitzgerald's third short story collection, *All the Sad Young Men* (1926), appeared less than a year after *The Great Gatsby*. It sold about 16,000 copies in the first year. The collection contains the stories "Winter Dreams" (1922), "Absolution" (1924), and "The Rich Boy" (1926). In the *Chicago Daily News*, Harry Hansen enthusiastically writes that Fitzgerald's stories are ones that "scintillate." Yet, in comparing the collection with Hemingway's *In Our Time*, he preferred Hemingway's artfulness. Reviewing the collection for the *Saturday Review*, Benet comments that Fitzgerald was caught in a conflict between money and art. Fitzgerald, he says, had an "astonishing facility" for writing marketable stories; however, it seemed to Benet that Fitzgerald was denying "his true nature."⁵⁶

It was more doubtful whether Fitzgerald's "true nature" could be found in Hollywood. He received an offer from United Artists in 1926 to write for film. He headed to California by train in January 1927. Attempts had already been made by Hollywood studios to turn *The Beautiful and Damned* and *The Great Gatsby* into movies. In Hollywood, Fitzgerald's effort on a script, "Lipstick," was rejected. He would return to Hollywood in 1931 and spend his last years struggling to write screenplays.

In April 1928, Scott and Zelda were back in Paris, at 58 Rue Vaugirard, which was near Gertrude Stein's place on Rue de Fleures. Fitzgerald met James Joyce during this time through Sylvia Beach, owner of the Shakespeare and Company bookstore on l'Odean. Zelda wrote and took ballet lessons from the Daighilev ballet school, presumably trying to dance away her inner demons. Living in an increasing alcoholic haze, the Fitzgeralds returned to the United States in September 1928. In response to some criticism from Hemingway, Scott suggested that his great creative output between 1919 and 1924, while "living at top speed," was something that "may have taken all I had to say too early."⁵⁷

It seems that life got in the way of the innovative follow-up to *The Great Gatsby* that Fitzgerald hoped for. He wrote fifty to sixty stories during the decade between *The Great Gatsby* and *Tender Is the Night*. Still, the hoped-for novel about Francis Melarky, an American expatriate, did not take shape. The work had to be reconceived and reworked into the story of Dick and Nicole Diver, which became *Tender Is the*

Night. The reception of *Tender Is the Night* in the 1934 depression-era United States might have been called lukewarm. The difficulties of Zelda's breakdowns and issues of finances delayed work on the novel that many critics call *The Last Tycoon*. Fitzgerald planned the work with many notes, but the difficulties of life likely contributed to the fragmentary qualities of his final narrative.

THE JAZZ AGE

F. Scott Fitzgerald coined the term the *Jazz Age* as a title for his second collection of short stories in 1922. "Jazz age" was a name for manners and culture, a designation given to a society in the grip of change. "Jazz" was, for Fitzgerald, not only music, it was a lifestyle. "The word jazz in its progress toward respectability first meant sex, then dancing, then music," Fitzgerald writes.⁵⁸ Jazz was a "state of nervous stimulation, not unlike that of big cities behind the lines of a war." The word *jazz* reflects the social mood of a generation, which came of age in the 1920s. The word *jazz* meant flappers, petting, and glitz. It meant recklessness, immediacy, the tinkling sound of money, and the jitterbug of a new nervousness. For a largely white culture, it intersected with the rhythms of African American life, where jazz and blues were the song of daily life. For American culture, World War I was an "emotional stimulant from which it was not easy to taper off," writes Frederick Lewis Allen in his close-up retrospective of the 1920s, *Only Yesterday*.⁵⁹ Fitzgerald concurred, saying that something had to be done with all that nervous energy.

The Great War, as World War I was then called, brought about a state of mind that encouraged a *carpe diem* attitude, Allen believed that one should eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow they could die. This was a time of ferment in which the growing independence of women promoted the suffrage movement, Freudian analysis revealed the unconscious mind, and the automobile changed the landscape of the United States and Americans' sense of mobility. It was an era of Prohibition, films, confessional magazines, and sensational news stories, an age in which advertising and popular culture increasingly influenced society, and the United States came into its own as an international power. "I am restless. My whole generation is restless," says Amory Blaine, Fitz-

gerald's prototype of the disaffected 1920s youth.⁶⁰ Indeed, this was a restless generation, experiencing the push and pull of a new world in the making.

The old order was breaking apart. Beneath the transition was uncertainty. In Britain, young writers like Lytton Strachey sharply critiqued the conventions of his Victorian predecessors. "You are all a lost generation," Stein told Hemingway, even as she pointed out that World War I had emphasized changes and trends that were already in motion. "The circumstances of American life have been transformed," Allen tells readers on the first page of his book.⁶¹ As the 1920s came to a close, Allen saw American culture spinning like a ride at Coney Island. Jack Dempsey was taking punches. Babe Ruth was hitting home runs. Women had lifted their skirts above their ankles. Allen acknowledges that some smoked cigarettes, danced, and "got blotto." A presumably sophisticated and smart set were contesting conventions, tossing off modesty, embracing trifles, and finding new enthusiasms. Perhaps they were running from the darkness of a postwar wasteland, seeking the city lights beyond the ash pits and the gaze of T. J. Eckleberg, the oculist billboard ad of Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*. "It was an age of miracles," Fitzgerald noted: one of art, excess, and satire. In this vibrant, transitional time, as Allen recognizes, an "upheaval of values was taking place."⁶²

Fitzgerald documents this new world in his fiction. In Amory Blaine, in his first novel, *This Side of Paradise*, we see a rather brash, self-centered young man working hard at being sophisticated and smart, testing out roles, and figuring out the rules of life. By the end of the novel, Amory is questioning the values by which American society has been traditionally structured. Amory, the flawed and sometimes irritating protagonist, is perhaps now open to change and the idea that a new world is in the making. By 1925, this image of a boy-like dreamer had grown into the figure of Jay Gatsby, a man lost in his illusions and for whom money is the key to persona and self-creation. Gatsby and his outrageous parties glittered, but in many ways he was merely "jazz": a tinkling surface that masked the ambitious yearnings of a lonely man.

In his review of *The Great Gatsby* for the *Baltimore Sun*, Mencken suggests that we might cast Fitzgerald as a social historian. Fitzgerald, he says, was a witness to the "florid show of American life," to a "high carnival" of people of wealth who indulged in their "idiotic pursuit of

sensation.” Mencken, a sharp wit who criticized almost everything, complains that Fitzgerald’s books were like the “improvisations of a pianist playing furiously by ear but unable to read notes.” The analogy with jazz musicians of his time is clear. Mencken’s perspective on the fierce and fluent production of Fitzgerald’s commercial fiction takes us back to jazz: a highly improvisational form.⁶³

Perhaps the nervous energy that Fitzgerald spoke of in “Echoes of the Jazz Age” and “The Crack Up” found its complement in the brisk vigor of jazz music. Ragtime, with its ragged, syncopated rhythms, emerged in popular music during the first decades of the century. Dixieland bands from New Orleans and Chicago—King Oliver, Louis Armstrong, Bix Beiderbecke, and Fletcher Henderson among them—brought the novelty of new sounds to white audiences. They were sounds that were, at first, perhaps better understood by the black culture that initially created them. Jazz was often misunderstood, called a “slew of fancy noise,” a sound that “concealed all the tune and melody,” by one Cornell University student. Jazz had replaced the romantic violin with the “barbaric saxophone.”⁶⁴ Such impressions of jazz are, of course, shallow. Nonetheless, there appears to be a similar notion operating in Fitzgerald’s treatment of jazz music as something not quite as substantial and serious as the European classics, as he associates jazz music and dance with the popular culture of “jazz.”

For example, in the opening pages of “A Freeze Out” (1931), culture and personal taste appear to be at stake as Forrest Winslow of Minnesota steps into a music store. High culture and low culture appear to clash as Forrest reads, “with horror,” such song titles as “When Voo-do-odo Boop-boopa doop, There’ll Soon Be a Hot Cha-Cha.” A girl standing nearby asks for Prokofiev’s “Fils Prodiqie,” and Forrest is resigned to purchase “Huggable, Kissable You.” Another customer asks for a copy of Stravinsky’s *Firebird* and Chopin waltzes: a mix of atonal innovation and nineteenth-century chromaticism. The next titles on Forrest’s list of potential purchases are “Digga Diggity,” “Ever So Goosy,” and “Bunky Doodle I Do.” Reflecting uneasily on this, Forrest thinks to himself, “Anybody would take me for a moron.” He crumples up his list and asks for Beethoven’s “Moonlight Sonata.”

Prokofiev and Stravinsky works were, at this time, stretching the boundaries of concert music. Stravinsky’s *Firebird* (1909–1910), with its almost mechanistic rhythmic pulse, was a precursor to *The Rite of*

Spring (1911–1913), which shocked and dismayed its audience with its syncopation, dissonance, and rapid changes. Prokofiev's piano pieces, with their experimental harmony and dissonant percussive effects, including *Suggestion Diabolique* (1908), *Sarcasms* (1912–1914), *Visions Fugitives* (1915–1917), had their premieres before 1921. These are modernist musical innovators who, like the best jazz musicians, were creating musical gestures that became physical in dance or pieces that were often strikingly rhythmic and propulsive. Forrest's selection is of a standard tune, Beethoven's "Moonlight Sonata," which had been domesticated.

Aesthetic taste and moral taste are likewise in question in *The Great Gatsby* (1925). Jazz plays a role in Fitzgerald's novel, suggesting the superficial life of a party that is fundamentally empty beneath its dazzling surface. The story's narrator, Nick Carraway, tells us of the music that came from his neighbor's house on summer nights. With the motion of the earth into darkness came lights, "yellow cocktail music," and voices, excitedly rising to a "key higher." This modulation suggests increased giddiness and drunken excitement: a wide lawn and rooms filled with voices and a patio humming with music and laughter. We can imagine a flapper dancing her frenetic dance of nervous sensation, an energetic romp of physical contortions. The party has begun. Old men dance with young girls in "eternal graceless circles." People grab banjos from the orchestra and begin to strum them. They perform "stunts." The moon rises like a silver coin reflecting the water of the Long Island Sound. The air is full of sparkle and champagne, and the moon trembles to the "tinny drip of banjos on the lawn."⁶⁵

Jay Gatsby stands apart. He has called upon the sound of unfamiliar guests—their tinkling voices, music, and laughter—to fill his rooms. During his party, it is announced that Gatsby has requested a jazz piece by Vladimir Tostoff, whose name, like that of Prokofiev and Stravinsky, is clearly Russian, perhaps suggesting something revolutionary. This imaginary piece by an imaginary composer bears the pretentious title "The Jazz History of the World." The presumptuously entitled jazz piece is indicative of Gatsby's lack of taste. It is notable that neither Nick nor Gatsby actually listen to the music. As the piece begins, Nick's eyes fall on Gatsby, who is "alone on the marble steps." Gatsby is conspicuously alone.

Gatsby is the hollow man: a man who, without roots in culture and history, is the ephemeral romantic song of the times. He is a symbol of jazz age dreams, its illusion, and its disillusion. Gatsby invents himself, like a solo jazz player improvising; however, he invents only embellishments. He jazzes his life up, creating a hollow world of appearances, a play of sound and lights lacking substance. While daydreaming of Daisy Buchanan, Gatsby has made moral compromises to purchase his gaudy palace at West Egg. He has brought to it an illusion of Camelot filled with wine, glitter, and excitement: Jazz for everyone. Gatsby's jazz party gives way to disillusionment. While Gatsby holds on to his dream to the tragic end, with Nick we begin to see the emptiness of his life. Jazzby's chaotic jazz-jam has disappeared, and all that remains is the lone, solemn blues trumpet of Nick's narrative thoughtfully bidding him farewell.

The blues are the downside of jazz. In many respects, the blues are at the roots of jazz, offering a state of mind that is given to self-expression. The blues provides the emotional, poetic soul of jazz, and from the blues jazz derives its phrasing. What distinguished the younger generation, writes Walter Lippmann, was their "disillusionment with their own rebellion." Allen calls this disillusionment the "keynote of the 1920s."⁶⁶ In music, the key is the tonal center of a musical composition. If we were to compare the 1920s with a piece of music, the jazz age would be music with some flats in the key signature. It might be suggested that the apparent frivolity of the jazz age had a darker side, one rooted in the blues.

America's new experiences of jazz music and new experiments with atonal music and "primitivism" were reflective of the times, for the jazz age was a time of great experimentation. The old harmony had changed and now came a dissonance and new rhythm. Jazz music is syncopated, that is, its accents or beats are varied; its stresses are set in unexpected places. Likewise, the stresses and accents of the jazz age fell in unexpected places. Jazz is a genre of music that may happen spontaneously as players solo and improvise. It expresses itself as inventive musical language. The 1920s marked the emergence of one of the most innovative periods of literature and art in America and Europe in recent times. Writers and artists offered new ways of looking at the world. In Harlem and Paris, there was a strong interplay of collaboration within creative communities. When William Wisner wrote his ragged montage of those

days in Paris, he called his book *The Crazy Years*. The title may be suggestive of the times. The irrational arose from the depths or became more obvious at a time when Sigmund Freud was mapping the strange territory of the human unconscious. Society's unconscious seemed to break forth. One might claim that the strong superego structures of the enlightened Age of Reason and the Victorian age were cracking open. A wild, adolescent Id sprung forth, imbibing prohibited alcohol and dancing the Charleston.

Yet, there was something serious going on amid this so-called "craziness." A deep and lasting change in how people looked at themselves and their world was taking place. Artists led the way in their search for a new language, a new sense of meaning and purpose to live by. Ernest Hemingway insisted on a code by which a person would create his or her life. At the center of this code was an emphasis on truth, discipline, awareness, and an honesty and purity or style in one's action. From this would come a sense of meaning—a purpose to live by. In a world disrupted by the war, Hemingway sought to pin down reality in clear, concrete terms, as he points out in *A Farewell to Arms*. T. S. Eliot responded to a perceived loss of meaning in the modern world by seeking fundamental truths of the human condition as expressed in myth. Eliot worked to carve out a core of meaning that seemed to some to be lost or hidden during this time of transition.

Fitzgerald, in contrast, appears to have been fascinated with the emerging popular culture, writing for the movies and popular market stories for the magazines. In one of his early stories, "Dice, Brassknuckles, and Guitar" (1922), the meaning of Fitzgerald's term "jazz age" is suggested. A man from Georgia introduces himself to a woman named Amanthis. His car has broken down on the road. He tells Amanthis that he was planning on making use of the car as a taxi in New York City. The man presents his business card: James M. Powell, J. M. The J. M. stands for jazz master. Powell has operated a jazz academy. We soon learn that this "jazz" school teaches not jazz instruments and musicianship, but the jazz that "first meant sex, then dance." Of course, the students' parents assume it is a music academy and dancing school. The jazz academy is popular amongst the younger generation, but it is not approved of by the fashionable and flurried Mrs. Poindexter Katzby (one may note the name) and Mrs. Clifton Garneau. They are in search of their daughters. Their "old music" is played by the orchestra, while

James Powell insists to Amanthis that “our music” is the new music of jazz, the music that is claimed by the younger generation as its own. In this story, the horns are “fashionable” and people “shuffle” to the beat.⁶⁷

In “Offshore Pirate” (1920), a group of black singers gather on the deck of a luxury cruise ship, which is the central setting for the story. Ardita, a narcissist, is on deck reading a book one day when she sees men in a rowboat and hears them singing. In the playful lyric they sing, Fitzgerald rhymes carrots and peas with knees and breeze, and fellows and bellows with Goldbergs, Greens, and Costellos. The group’s leader, Curtis Carlyle, is standing on the bow of the boat waving a baton. Ardita asks if she is seeing the varsity crew or escapees from the country nut farm. The voices of the Negroes on deck with Carlyle rise in a haunting melody. Adapting a blues-folk form, the singers recall a dialogue between Mamma and Pappy. Meeting Ardita, Curtis calls her a “flapper,” which she resists. Meanwhile, Trombone Mose, the biggest of the singers, changes the name of the cruise ship from the *Narcissus* to the *Hula-Hula*. We learn that Curtis Carlyle’s musical experience began in Tennessee, where he played the kazoo and at piano parties. He later played a battered violin in little cafes in Nashville. With the “ragtime craze,” he brought six Negro singers with him on the Orpheum circuit and went on to Broadway, exploiting both the blacks and his sense of rhythm.

A sense of rhythm: According to a character in Fitzgerald’s sketch “The Lost Decade” (1939), that is what composer Cole Porter came back to the United States from Paris for. Porter returned because “he felt that there were new rhythms around.”⁶⁸ New rhythms: That was part of it all. This was the new age of the automobile, the radio, advertising, and a pace of commercial urban life that brought new rhythms to American society. It brought *jazz*—a term resonant with a variety of connotations. Jazz was the lifestyle of Fitzgerald’s flappers and philosophers. Jazz was, at times, a kind of superficiality and pretentiousness devoid of good taste. Yet, even so, jazz was fun. Whatever its “lack of taste” the jazz age brought significant changes to the landscape of American life and culture. As girls “dramatized themselves as flappers” and youth “corrupted its elders and eventually overreached itself,” as F. Scott Fitzgerald observes, the novelist captured the images, voices, and movements of change in fiction.⁶⁹ The novelist and short story writer F.

Scott Fitzgerald was, as Mencken notes, a social historian of this period of change. Yet, so were they all, these novelists, in their various ways, critics of culture, observers of a bright and unique era.

REVIVING FITZGERALD THE ROMANTIC

F. Scott Fitzgerald was a Romantic at a time when T. S. Eliot and others were eschewing the weak Romanticism of the late nineteenth century and asserting that it did not fit with the spirit of modernism. He was lyrical, ornate, and formal, focusing on dreamy possibilities and tragic relationships. Eliot and Pound implicated the vital Romanticism of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, although they both, in their teens, read a steady diet of the work of British Romantic poets. The young Eliot was given the works of Keats and Shelley for his birthday. Ezra Pound was deeply attracted to the troubadour poets of Provençal, and the favorite poet of his friend William Carlos Williams was John Keats. Now Eliot and Pound and the New Critics who followed them attacked romanticism as escapist and too emotional. Modernity called for experimental styles, technique, and detachment. One had to “make it new” and put away Victorian and the Romantic predecessors.

Fitzgerald, however, was not about to give up on the fantastic, the moody, or the ups and downs of human emotion. He believed that writers like Joyce were breaking with the past and that his generation was formulating something new; however, a new cynicism in the wake of the war included romance and that sense of loss so well captured in Wordsworth’s *Prelude*, “Ode: Intimations of Immortality,” or “Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey.” Romantic disillusionment, as portrayed by Keats in “La Belle Dame sans Merci” or Coleridge in “Dejection” would be important to *The Great Gatsby* and *Tender Is the Night*. Amory Blaine’s quest in *This Side of Paradise* is likewise a romantic, heroic journey for some ideal self. Imagination and what Amory refers to as “consuming introspection” would transform the world. Likewise, the disenchantment of the world of Dick Diver is romantic. *Tender Is the Night* takes its title from John Keats’s poem “Ode to a Nightingale,” a poem of longing in which the speaker unhappily regards the nightingale’s brightness and the changing season.

Fitzgerald was a self-making seeker of grandeur, a romantic who was no stranger to modernist techniques like the stream of consciousness interiority of a character, shifting point of view, or the symbolism of a stark modern wasteland that arises so forcefully in the bleak terrain surrounding Wilson's garage in *The Great Gatsby*. He combined theatricality, marketplace savvy, and a romantic sensibility with modernist awareness and a keen eye for the culture of his age.

The revival of Fitzgerald began after World War II. In 1950, Lionel Trilling viewed Fitzgerald as a moralist.⁷⁰ Stephen Vincent Benet, who appears to have anticipated the future potential for nuclear radiation in "By the Waters of Babylon," saw the future in Fitzgerald, the writer of "Babylon Revisited," when he forecasted that Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* and his strongest stories would bring about his acclaim as an important American writer.⁷¹ Curnutt points out the progress of this rediscovery of Fitzgerald at a time when critics sought to dissociate Fitzgerald from the 1920s. Early in the 1950s, Mizener's biography of Fitzgerald, *The Far Side of Paradise* (1951), was a best seller. Several critics argued that Fitzgerald's primary theme in *The Great Gatsby* is the "American dream." With this in mind, Marcus Bewley wrote "Scott Fitzgerald's Criticism of America" (1954).

The 1960s and thereafter brought what Curnutt sees as an attempt to historicize Fitzgerald: To see him very much within the context of the 1920s.⁷² This historical contextualizing appears in Curnutt's *A Historical Guide to F. Scott Fitzgerald* (2004) and Ruth Prigozy's *The Cambridge Companion to F. Scott Fitzgerald* (2001). In 1981, *Some Sort of Epic Grandeur*, by Fitzgerald scholar Matthew Bruccoli, appeared, leading the way for many other biographies of the lives of Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald. The ongoing competitiveness between Hemingway and Fitzgerald is illustrated in Scott Donaldson's *Hemingway vs. Fitzgerald: The Rise and Fall of a Literary Friendship* (1999). Whatever one's definition of "friendship" may be, it is clear that their interaction spurred each of them onward. It is also clear that their drive to create resulted in some of the most significant and lasting fiction of this era.

3

WILLIAM FAULKNER

A Southern Voice in the Age of Modernism

William Faulkner is unquestionably one of the most important American novelists of the twentieth century. He became a critically acclaimed author following many years of obscurity. The closest that Faulkner came to touching mass popularity was as a screenwriter behind the scenes, a silent partner in Howard Hawks's films in the 1930s and 1940s. His fiction, bursting from conventional form, is often a fascinating and difficult read. Although it deals with sensational, psychological disturbances, as well as sex, violence, and mystery, a Faulkner novel is seldom what we might call a page-turner. Rather, it is more often an exploration of the abyss.

The social and cultural context of Faulkner's writing is significant. He shows us a different picture of the 1920s than the one we have been looking at to this point. The historical ground of Faulkner's fiction predates this decade; however, it reflects issues that still burned in his conscience during the time that he was writing.

Faulkner was a haunted writer, one who dealt with such troubling subjects as racial tension, miscegenation, incest, the fracturing of families, and distortions of southern culture. He was also a modernist writer of searing vision. As Richard Brodhead points out, the first generation of Faulkner's readers "failed to recognize his greatness."¹ He has most often been the subject of literary criticism that remarks on his experimentalism with form. Recent works, however, have corrected the "defi-

ciency” that Brodhead saw in 1983, in Faulkner criticism that primarily focused on the writer’s stylistic and formal innovations. Today Faulkner is recognized as a great American writer whose imaginary world of Jefferson and Yoknapatawpha County intersected with historic regional and national issues. Even so, he is seldom read outside of classrooms. Even there, students encounter his work with some difficulty.

A social world surrounded Faulkner’s fiction. Unique in his vision and often private in his life, he was embedded in this social world. To approach him from the vantage point of southern intellectual history has some limitations, observes Eric J. Sundquist.² We might consider the myth of a South gone with the wind, a “fallen aristocratic dream,” or a romantic continuity as in Wilbur Cash’s idea of the “mind of the South.” Yet, Faulkner and Cash are critics of that romantic consciousness, adds Sundquist, who points out that Faulkner perhaps tells us most about one major issue: race and the problems that arise from it.³ The resurgence of Jim Crow laws and the Ku Klux Klan in the 1920s is a historical fact. On movie screens, the white-hooded figures of the Klan appear in D. W. Griffith’s *The Birth of a Nation*. In the 1920s, the estrangement of the races was a situation that Faulkner inevitably had to deal with in what Irving Howe calls a “journey of self-education.”⁴ Faulkner faced the social problems of his age and region as a man troubled, observing, inquiring.

Faulkner’s first novel, *Soldiers’ Pay* (1926), is a postwar narrative that might be read alongside Dos Passos or Hemingway. For his next novel, *Mosquitoes* (1927), Faulkner meditated on aesthetics, which did not intrigue as many readers as his first. With *Flags in the Dust*, later retitled *Sartoris* (1929), Faulkner began to find characters of his southern locale that he would develop in future novels. *Sartoris* was a rambling gathering of many strands that would be improved by later editors. Faulkner’s friend Ben Wasson had insisted that it was six novels rolled into one. *The Sound and the Fury* (1929), which soon followed, is widely regarded as Faulkner’s pivotal work, a stunning experiment of modernist thought that many have considered the launching point of Faulkner’s greatness as a novelist. In this story, he explores the interior stream of consciousness of three brothers—Benjy, Quentin, and Jason Compson—as they think of their sister Caddy and unfold the troubled life of their dysfunctional family.

Faulkner was a student at the University of Mississippi during the same years Fitzgerald attended Princeton. It was probably not easy to teach a student as recalcitrant and independent-minded as Faulkner. When he was asked by his English professor, D. H. Bishop, what Shakespeare had in mind in giving lines to *Othello*, Faulkner responded, "How should I know . . . I wasn't there."⁵ Despite this obstinacy, he published poems, stories, and drawings in the *Mississippian*, including "Landing in Luck," about a military pilot's first solo flight. Some of his ink drawings are reminiscent of the art of Aubrey Beardsley. Faulkner told his war stories to Wasson, who would later become a lawyer and Faulkner's agent. Professor Calvin S. Brown, who wrote about the relations of music and literature, encouraged Faulkner with an annual prize. Later, in response to Faulkner's racy novel *Sanctuary*, he wondered why anyone would ever write a novel like that.

CONVERSATIONS WITH SHERWOOD ANDERSON

In 1922, Faulkner met with Sherwood Anderson when he was in New Orleans. Faulkner had briefly worked at a bookstore in New York City with Elizabeth Prall, who would later be Anderson's wife. Anderson stayed in an apartment in the Pontalba Buildings on the south side of Jackson Square. Faulkner would meet the writer with the deep-set eyes and sit with him on a bench in Jackson Square, near the cathedral. He would make use of Anderson's library and read James Frazier's *The Golden Bough*.⁶ He was soon living in an apartment with artist William Spratling in a place called Orleans Alley, which overlooked St. Anthony's Garden.⁷ He spent many afternoons listening to Anderson's tales.

Faulkner was working on the novel *Mayday*, which later became *Soldiers' Pay*. He wrote longhand and later typed what he had written so that he could revise it as he was doing so. Among his best stories was one he told to people he met. He said that his plane had been shot down in the war and he had a plate in his head and that he drank to numb the pain. Of course, Faulkner had never seen active combat, but it was a good excuse for drinking. Recalling his time as a Royal Air Force pilot, he wrote the essay "Literature and War," a piece consisting of only five paragraphs in which he reviews the World War I writings of poet Siegfried Sassoon, novelist Henri Barbusse, and novelist R. H.

Mottram, who had written about British soldiers in France in *Spanish Farm*.⁸

Faulkner's story "Mirrors of Chartres Street," featuring a beggar who uses the narrator's money to go to a movie instead of getting food, was printed in the *Times-Picayune* on February 8, 1925. "Damon and Pythias Unlimited" followed on February 15, with the story's narrator being brought to the horseracing track by someone named Morovitz, who is met by his accomplice, a former jockey named McNamara, who has "certain death in his eyes."⁹ For this story, Faulkner played with the detective mystery genre. He bought yellow copy paper at Canal Street, bothered the other tenants of the building with his typing, and carried his work over to the *Times-Picayune*. Three more stories came in April 1925.¹⁰ There was Jack Potter in "Cheest"; a "wanderer" in "And Now What's To Do"; and a seventeen-year-old vagabond in "Out of Nazareth," which appeared in the *Times-Picayune* on April 12, 1925.¹¹ Joseph Blotner, one of Faulkner's principal biographers, also charts other stories, including "Nympholepsy," "Chance," "Sunset," and "The Kid Learns" (May 31, 1925), a story about bootleggers in which "little Sister Death" appears to at last claim Johnny.

Many of Faulkner's stories take place in the area around the fictional town of Jefferson. This creation of a locality recalls the model of Anderson's *Winesberg, Ohio*, or the single day in Dublin of Joyce's *Ulysses*. The people of one small town might be made to speak, and they would appear as a microcosm of the larger society.¹² Faulkner read Anderson's *Winesberg, Ohio*, as well as his short story collection *Horses and Men*, and recognized that Joyce was, in part, behind the rhythms of Anderson's novel *Dark Laughter*. He appreciated the older writer's work and identified him as a "giant of [his] generation" but he later suggested that Anderson was really only a one- or two-book man.¹³ Anderson was, Faulkner thought, most effective as a short story writer. The falling out between the two men was characterized by Elizabeth Anderson as a case of two sensitive men who were "too much alike."¹⁴

Anderson introduced Faulkner's work to publisher Horace Liveright at Boni and Liveright. Those close to Liveright said that the publisher seldom read books but that he had a shrewd and intuitive sense of what would sell. Faulkner later said that Liveright should have been a stockbroker. When Liveright first entered the business, he had married the daughter of a paper company owner, who made him president of a

toilet paper company. When the prospects for toilet rolls spun out of control, he headed for New York and teamed up with Albert Boni, a newspaperman. An investment of \$25,000 from Liveright's father-in-law got the Modern Library going, and the Boni and Liveright Publishing Company was born.

Boni and Liveright became one of the most successful New York publishing firms of the 1920s. From under its roof emerged Theodore Dreiser's *An American Tragedy* (1925); Hemingway's first short story collection, *In Our Time* (1925); and Faulkner's first novel, *Soldiers' Pay*. Anita Loos was successful with *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes: The Illuminating Diary of a Professional Lady* (1925).

THE EARLY STORIES

In Oxford, Mississippi, where spring brought magnolias and roses, Faulkner brought his stories to his friend Phil Stone, while Sallie Simpson typed them. Out the stories would go to magazines, and they would often come back again, rejected. During the summer, he wrote at the home of the Bairds on wooden benches constructed in the shade of a powerful oak on the front lawn. *Soldiers' Pay* received positive reviews. Blotner writes that E. C. Beckwith applauded the novel in the *New Republic* as unique among the fiction of veterans. Larry Barrette of the *Herald Tribune* calls it "almost a great book," but one lacking restraint and discipline. L. S. Morris of the *New Republic* recognizes a "nervous, swift talent." In the *International Book Review*, Louis Kronenberger echoes this sentiment but acknowledges that the story "achieves a vividness." Writing for the *Nashville Tennessean*, Donald Davidson saw Joyce's techniques at work and placed Faulkner with Dreiser, Lewis, and Dos Passos.¹⁵ Perhaps more interesting was the noncritical reception of the veterans who identified with the book.

In New Orleans, Faulkner lived in the French Quarter with William Spratling, in an apartment that looked out on St. Peter's Square. They made gin with alcohol in gallon cans. Faulkner went for coffee in the mornings, walking down toward the river and the French Market.¹⁶ In the meantime, he was waiting for word on his second novel, *Mosquitoes*. In New York, it was being read by a young publishing assistant, Lillian Hellman, who would become one of America's significant play-

wrights. She recommended the novel—a story of Mississippi hill people and the tenant farmers who came in to take their land. The story is set in the town of Jefferson, the town that would become a center of Faulkner's fictional world of Yoknapatawpha County. He began writing the story of Flem Snopes, a man with a hard stare in his eyes and a tight mouth who chews tobacco as he stands in the twilight. His working title was *Father Abraham*, and he scrawled it on legal paper in small black print. With some sense of his own mortality, he wrote fiercely, turning to the history of what he then called Yocomo County, creating the legends of a local family, old Bayard Sartoris leaning over the memorabilia in his attic: a Bible, swords, and two pipes. It is a family inclined to embrace lost causes.¹⁷

In Paris, in late summer of 1925, Faulkner wrote a novel he called *Elmer*. Drawing on Joseph Conrad's experiments with point of view and shifts in chronology, he developed techniques—unconventional ways of telling his stories. Joyce and Flaubert were also behind his early work, claims Blotner, who adds that Faulkner's style increasingly became more like that of Honoré de Balzac, who was more concerned about people and what he called the human comedy to worry much about style.¹⁸ He walked along the Seine, watching children, feeding bread to sparrows, seeing wagons loaded with vegetables or flowers passing by.¹⁹ Faulkner talked with William Hoffmann, appreciatively read Margaret Kennedy's *The Constant Nymph*, and lived the life of a bohemian artist in the French Quarter. Blotner surmises that a "brief angry involvement" with Lewis Lewisohn's "Literature and Life" prompted Faulkner's own aesthetic reflections.²⁰

In December 1925, Faulkner returned to the United States aboard the *Republic* and arrived at the docks in Hoboken, New Jersey, on December 19. Blotner speculates that he immediately caught the ferry across the Hudson River to Manhattan and visited the offices of Boni and Liveright on 48th Street. The brownstone on 48th Street, between 5th and 6th avenues, stood next door to a speakeasy called Toni's. Neither is still there.

From New York, Faulkner took a train back to Mississippi. Once home, he turned his attention to writing short stories: "Divorce in Naples," "Mistral," and "The Devil Beats His Wife."²¹ Then came the idea for *Sanctuary*, one of his most notable and best-selling novels. In Memphis, he heard from a woman in a nightclub the story of a gangster who

was impotent and used objects to compensate for his sexual inadequacies. The woman described how a gangster raped a woman. Faulkner mulled over the horrible story and embellished the gangster figure, one that critics have identified as one Neal Kerens Pumphrey, known locally as Popeye. With his short story "The Big Shot," Faulkner began creating a character. A frame narrator introduces him, much like Joseph Conrad had a frame narrator introduce his sailor-narrator Marlow. In this story the gangster is protected by a political boss from charges for traffic offenses. He shields the gangster from prosecution again, only to find out that the victim of the gangster's hit-and-run accident was his own daughter. This story of corruption was the seed for Faulkner's controversial novel *Sanctuary*.

Meanwhile, *Soldiers' Pay* appeared in February 1926, with a first printing of 2,500 copies. Faulkner, while living in New Orleans, read Anita Loos's *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes*, which was on its way to becoming a best seller. During the summer, he spent time with Helen Baird at Pascagoula, writing his novel *Mosquitoes* on a bench under a group of oak trees. He dated his conclusion of the story "Pascagoula, Miss/1 Sept 1926."²² He returned to his rooms in the French Quarter with Spratling and began to think about the South and its history, and a cold man he named Flem Snopes. In small black print on white pages, he began a story he called *Father Abraham* and another story he would call *Flags in the Dust*.

As 1927 began, Phil Stone was pitching an announcement of Faulkner's *Mosquitoes* to the *Oxford Eagle*. He mentioned the novels his friend was working on. One was the historical saga of the Sartoris family: high-minded but sadly destined to dissolution. In the meantime, Faulkner made some extra money by painting houses. In the summer of 1926, he created a forty-seven-page book for the Baird girl, Victoria, called Cho-Cho, offering her a fairy tale he called *The Wishing Tree*. A girl named Dulcie awakens to wonder at a red-haired boy named Maurice, who is standing next to her bed. They go in search of the wishing tree and discover a castle, where Maurice works his magic. There is an old man with a beard of silver whom the narrator calls the "good Saint Francis." Dulcie receives a bluebird for a present, and the reader learns that St. Francis has given her some words of wisdom: "If you are kind to helpless things, you don't need a Wishing Tree to make things come true."

The vulnerability of a little girl and a wishing tree may lie behind Faulkner's masterpiece, *The Sound and the Fury*. The name Maurice may have become transmuted to "Maury," who becomes the retarded Benjy Compson, in whose jumbled thoughts we begin the story. Benjy is indeed a "helpless thing," and the tree that Caddy climbs to see into her grandmother Damuddy's funeral is a central figure in that novel. Other connections with Faulkner's later work have been made by Blotner. The figure of Saint Francis makes a curious appearance in *Mayday*, in which "little Sister Death" appears. In his canticle, Saint Francis speaks gently of "brother sun, sister moon" and "sister bodily death." Blotner sees the golden flecks in Maurice's eyes in those of Pete in *Mosquitoes*, and a phrase concerning "gentle ponies" is repeated in *Father Abraham*.

In writing *Flags in the Dust*, Faulkner was examining generations, how times had changed, and how a way of life had disappeared. The town of Jefferson, his story's central location, was about twenty-five miles from Oxford, Mississippi. It was a "mythical town," Blotner notes, one that shared characteristics with New Albany, Ripley, and other places in the area.²³ With *Flags in the Dust*, Faulkner was creating a milieu, the groundwork for many novels. This was a world of the South peopled with the burdened, faded aristocracy of the Sartoris family and yeoman farmers, white sharecroppers, Negro workers. From it rose characters like Horace Benbow—the "poet"—a man trapped in futility. This is the novel that Wasson said included six novels rolled together. In a sense, he was right. In it are the roots of the Faulknerian world of Yoknapatawpha County and novels yet to come.

Mississippi was troubled that year, beset by flooding. In 1927, the Mississippi River rose and broke through the levees, pouring tons of water into the Mississippi Valley—the most destructive and far-reaching flood in U.S. history. The scene was similar to the destruction caused by Hurricane Katrina, which damaged New Orleans, only the calamity in 1927 was geographically more widespread. River waters flooded areas from southern Illinois and Missouri to Arkansas, and thousands of workers tried to reinforce the levees of New Orleans. By April 20, some 25,000 people were homeless, and the waters showed no signs of receding. The flood covered 9,000 square miles, raising fears of typhoid and the need for a remedy to prevent an epidemic. The Red Cross came. On April 30, dynamite was used to blow up a dam at

Poydras. Faulkner's *Mosquitoes* was published in New York on a day when the threat of mosquitoes carrying germs had become quite real in Mississippi. Tornados came in May, adding further injury and threat to the Atchafalaya Basin. People were evacuated. Others ran into the wilderness. Towns were submerged. Muddy water and earth left silt, waste, and destruction. Damage was estimated at \$236 million. The human distress was incalculable.²⁴

Faulkner had published two well-received, although not so popular, novels by the summer of 1927. That autumn, he waited on word about *Flags in the Dust*. The message arrived in November. Liveright had rejected the novel, remarking to Faulkner, "you don't seem to have any story to tell."²⁵ Faulkner, unhappy, asked for the novel back and decided to dissolve his relationship with the publisher. Of course, he still had to fulfill a contract that called for a book for Liveright. He sent Wasson to act as his agent in search of a publisher. Meanwhile, he worked on short stories. He taped a list of magazines to the back of his closet door. He wrote the name of a story and the date he sent it out next to each one. He might have marked the date each story came back rejected. Not a single one was published, but at least he had decorated his closet.

During this time, while painting houses and doing odd jobs, Faulkner crafted additional short stories. One in particular intrigued him—the story of the Compson children. According to Blotner, "That Evening Sun" took shape from earlier sketches like "Never Done Weeping When You Wanted to Laugh." In this eight-page piece, Nancy, a Negro cook and laundress, appears in a story told by Quentin Compson, who is recalling his childhood. Quentin, Candace, and their younger brother Jason see that Nancy is going through a difficult time. Her lover Jesus is creeping around outside near her cabin, jealous and angry that she is pregnant with the child of a white man. In the darkness, Jesus holds a razor. The shadow of Faulkner's troubled tales of miscegenation had begun to lengthen. In "That Evening Sun Go Down," Faulkner contrasts the adult world with that of children.

He followed this with "A Justice," in which Quentin listens to the story of Sam Feathers, a Negro-Indian blacksmith. With the onset of winter, he began a story he called "Twilight," and it began to expand. One moment, the children were splashing one another in a brook. Then Caddy was climbing out on a branch to see the corpse of Damuddy.

Faulkner was soon absorbed in the wandering thoughts of a retarded boy, behind his iron fence on the edge of the golf course, where men were “hitting.” He was one who lived forever in the moment, amid the smell of trees and the sight of Caddy’s muddy pants disappearing. He was unable to interpret anything. The reader, feeling perhaps disoriented in Benjy’s world of sensation, has a lot of interpreting to do.

With the rejection of *Flags in the Dust* by Boni and Liveright, Faulkner seemed to have hit his own personal wasteland, a desolation in which he decided to simply write for himself, with no care for any market. From this marginality, came the voice of Benjy—innocent, tortured, searching for the missing sensitivity of his sister, who he could no longer find in this world. From these sensations, inarticulate moans, and confusing sighs for a lost love came a new kind of story: one of voices, images of timepieces, a tree shading a stream, water and mud and funerals and clocks, children growing to adulthood trapped in obsessions.²⁶ This would begin Faulkner’s series of formal experiments—*As I Lay Dying*, *Light in August*, and *Absalom, Absalom!* In these novels there is a tension of the regressive and the innovative, as David Minter points out.²⁷ They seem to ask if any sense of purposeful chronological time or a moral, meaningful world can be found in modernity. The town of Jefferson begins to take shape on this uncertain nexus of family, home, and childhood.

In the interim, a contract for *Flags in the Dust* came from Harcourt Brace and Company, dated September 28, 1928. Wasson had pitched the manuscript to his friend Hal Smith, one of the company’s editors. Smith had previously read *Soldiers’ Pay* and liked it. He was less certain about the new book, which was now being called *Sartoris*. He wondered if the novel could be trimmed a bit. Faulkner was adamant that he did not want to cut anything. Smith asked Wasson to talk to him. “The trouble is,” Ben told Faulkner, “you had about six books in here.”²⁸

THE SOUND AND THE FURY

In the fall of 1928, Ben Wasson was living in a brownstone at 146 MacDougal Street in Greenwich Village. Faulkner went to New York City to visit him and again joined his friend William Spratling in a

nearby apartment. There he worked on his revision of *The Sound and the Fury*. An ink marking on the carbon typescript for the novel indicates that Faulkner finished typing in New York in October 1928. Wasson recalls that Faulkner walked into his room, tossed the manuscript on the bed, and said, "Read this, Bud. It's a real son of a bitch."²⁹ He met Hal Smith for lunch on Christopher Street, where Smith urged him to bring *The Sound and the Fury*, to Harcourt Brace. The editors rejected it on February 15, 1929. Perhaps they found it inscrutable or unmarketable. Smith would not give up on Faulkner, however. When he left that firm for Jonathan Cape, he brought Faulkner's novel with him. Three days after Harcourt Brace had turned down the narrative, Jonathan Cape agreed to publish Faulkner's fiction—one of the most important novels of the twentieth century.

The Jonathan Cape contract for *The Sound and the Fury* indicated that Faulkner would receive a \$200 advance and 10 percent of royalties on the first 5,000 copies. This would increase to 15 percent once sales reached that mark. This was not a mass-market publisher, but *The Sound and the Fury* would eventually sell well beyond the firm's expectations. Reviewed with some acclaim, the novel's sales fell off with the Depression that followed the October 29 Stock Market Crash. There were 1,789 copies printed. These sold gradually and several copies remained a year and a half later. Nevertheless, subsequent publication and critical attention during the Faulkner revival in later decades would make the novel one of the author's most lasting and important works.

Faulkner recognized that the first section of his story—the Benjy section—was hard to follow. Wasson suggested page breaks, but Faulkner disagreed; he wanted the story to flow without interruption. He preferred the use of italics and shift in typography. In a Village speak-easy, Faulkner suggested to Wasson the use of different color inks to indicate time sequences in the Benjy section.³⁰ For publishing in 1928–1929, such a procedure would have been expensive and difficult. In 1932, Bennett Cerf of Random House considered the color scheme when he brought out a limited edition of the novel on an imprint, Grabhorn Press; however, only recently has a limited Folio edition (London, 2012) been produced, featuring those different colors and a bookmark card that indicates the time sequence. A two-volume set in a sturdy slipcover, the novel is bound in red alongside a gray-covered glossary and commentary by Stephen M. Ross and Noel Polk. The

editors' *Reading Faulkner: The Sound and the Fury* was published in 1996, to assist readers of the novel.

Writing of the novel appears to have been both exhilarating and taxing for Faulkner. His friend Jim Devine recalled that he and Leon Scales went to visit Faulkner in October 1928 and peered in on him sprawled out on the floor, surrounded by empty liquor bottles. They took him uptown to 111th Street, near Columbia University, where Scales attended classes and Devine sometimes sat in on the lectures of philosopher John Dewey. Faulkner soon moved in to a fourth-floor apartment at MacDougal and 6th with artist Owen Crump, who had come from Shreveport to study with the Art Students' League in New York. He wrote in notebooks he bought at Woolworth's, tucking them into a valise, and the two shared gin and dinners in the Italian neighborhood near their apartment. Their favorite spot was the Black Rabbit, a front for liquor bootleggers. When it wasn't acting as an illegal distribution center, its cooks made some great ravioli and spaghetti. When Faulkner returned to the New York area in 1931, he and Devine would hang out in Hoboken, New Jersey, where bars and eating establishments still line Washington Avenue.

* * *

The Sound and the Fury contains little plot. The story is centered on four children and their pitiable broken family. Faulkner sets forth a central image of a little girl climbing out on a tree limb to witness her grandmother Damuddy's funeral; the funeral-goers can see the seat of her pants as they look up at her. Caddy is moving away from her brothers—out on a limb toward the complications of her own life—and she is recalled through the needs of her brothers and their inner psychological conflicts; however, in a move that might prompt a casual reader to scrap the novel, Faulkner tosses linear progression. But for a patient reader, one willing to read recursively, an extraordinary work of fiction awaits. Faulkner's novel gains its vitality from rhetorical innovation, startling shifts, and juxtapositions. The patience of readers is challenged by this technical virtuosity. One looks for markers, indications of when things are occurring in time.

To the extent that Faulkner's contemporary readers could follow Benjy's ramblings, his effusive sentiments led them to sympathy with

his dependent, voiceless, repetitive life. They were then further disrupted as Faulkner portrays a tragic world in Quentin's memories and his peculiar idealism and sense of chivalry. Quentin's jumbled thoughts reveal a world of failure in his father and himself. He circles through self-focused obsessing about Caddy's promiscuity and expresses grief in aesthetic musing, pushing away pain and insight. Jason follows with his claim to negative attention with selfish schemes. Dilsey's section, in omniscient point of view, comes as quite a relief for most readers.

The Sound and the Fury, Sundquist observes, may be read as an allegory of the South, a reflection on time, a probing of the Oedipal complex, or an ironic symbolism of Christ's agony.³¹ It is a story of brokenness, a family splintered, scattered into separate consciousnesses, as is the very form of the novel. One might say that the novel is drawn and quartered, a rack of punishment, brutally pulling in four different directions. It begins in the mind of an idiot—Benjy, a retarded individual who has no sense of time and to whom all moments are present. For the lost Caddy, his sister, he is ever seeking, as is his psychotic, introspective brother Quentin and his mean, vicious, self-serving brother Jason, who acts out his loss and psychological wounds and steals Caddy's daughter's money. The novel, presented through the first-person views of these three characters, concludes on Easter Sunday in the perspective of Dilsey, the black housekeeper who patiently endures, keeping the Compsons' fractured world together as best she can. Dilsey is not only a source of strength amid the family's alienation. Her section, presented in third-person point of view, can help readers overcome the alienation of a challenging text.

These separate narrations of experience make up a novel that is quite different from Faulkner's earlier works. The roots of *The Sound and the Fury* lie in two short stories: "That Evening Sun Go Down" and "A Justice." In a third tale, called "Twilight," the story of the Compson children begins to take shape. Howe recognizes that scenes in which black and white children play together are the only happy ones in *The Sound and the Fury*.³² Dilsey serves as a moral critic, he contends. She is a window to a historical world that is disappearing.³³ In sharp contrast with Quentin's narcissism or Jason's self-centeredness, Dilsey respects everyone around her. She is a home-center in contrast with the homelessness experienced by the Compson children as adults or the homelessness of Faulkner's later character, Joe Christmas, in *Light in August*.

Dilsey is a coming home for a novel that veers off in directions that some readers have found obscure. It is Dilsey who brings Benjy to the Negro church and affirms that “the good Lord don’t care” whether he is smart.

The South, observes Howe, is in Faulkner a “muted shadow, a point of reference.”³⁴ In *The Sound and the Fury*, the broader suggestion of a doomed South lies latent in this story of a doomed family. Like the Compson family, it is broken and divided. With the loss of Caddy has come the loss of childhood innocence, the loss of the virgin land, the myth of an idyllic time. Following Quentin’s emphasis on honor and purity, his sister’s lost virginity represents what Wilbur Cash has seen as the South’s “cult of womanhood.”³⁵ From the standpoint of cultural history, the lost time of an antebellum world has vanished into the less hospitable terrain of post–Civil War rapacity. Quentin’s stream of consciousness narrative ticks away in questions about time. “I was in time again,” he writes as his grandfather’s watch ticks on relentlessly. He insists on virginal purity for Caddy and seems trapped within the fate of his fathers, damaged by an alcoholic father without hope in the world, weakened by a weak, self-focused mother, and cursed by heredity and heritage. With suicide Quentin attempts to free himself from time.

SANCTUARY, AS I LAY DYING, LIGHT IN AUGUST

In the 1930s, Faulkner wrote a string of powerful novels set in the South, in the same “postage stamp” locale, as he called it: *Sanctuary*, *As I Lay Dying*, *Light in August*, and *Absalom, Absalom!* They underscore the South’s troubled history, turbulent family histories, and the persistent issue of race. His work would gather strength as the fictional cultural history of a region, mapping ambivalent feelings. These were novels of social and historical significance that Robert Penn Warren recognizes as stories of southern lives expressing what had been “lying speechless in their experience.”³⁶ The intense critical attention that would follow in later years largely explored the formalistic aspects of Faulkner’s fictional structures and innovations.

In *The Sound and the Fury*, Faulkner contests and dissolves the linear structure of family and history, but Faulkner’s theme becomes more historically rooted and apparent in later works, probing and push-

ing the credibility of legends of Confederate times that remained in the air of his own. *Light in August* casts into relief the shadow of the “Negro” and shows the breaking forth of the unconscious repression of the secrets of miscegenation of white masters and black slaves. We see a “black” character, Joe Christmas, who is also “white.”

A certain doom follows Joe, a man whose very identity is in question because of his origins. He is mulatto, white and yet black, and he is caught in the opposition of black and white. As Faulkner wrote, this character emerged in a novel that initially focused on a country girl, Lena, and a troubled minister, Gail Hightower. Race, as Brodhead points out, became a “structure of consciousness” rather than a given: It was a construction, a label given to Joe within a world of racial tension.³⁷ He has been cast as a “reminder of the ancestral phobia,” notes Howe.³⁸ Indeed, Joe has no sense of community, as Cleanth Brooks points out.³⁹ He is pursued by a mob that would lynch him. Joanna Burden is ambivalent about Joe’s blackness. She needs to escape the genetic determinism of the Burden family history. Perhaps miscegenation might also suggest a world beyond black and white: something that may be a hope for some and a threat for others.

Meanwhile, Reverend Gail Hightower is a “disillusioned man,” caught in a cold Protestantism that focuses on a “God of justice rather than of mercy.”⁴⁰ Lena can redeem him as a “female principle,” a woman who carries an unborn child: the promise of a possible future world that can bring these people back to community. Brooks notes that evil for Faulkner stemmed from a “violation of nature.”⁴¹ Faulkner’s characters have to face a world that has become unnatural; however, the instinctual is not necessarily good either. One must find courage, face evil, and make moral choices and efforts to “achieve goodness.”⁴²

As *I Lay Dying*, which emerged from *Father Abraham*, was finished on October 25, during the time when Wall Street panic broke out. The novel was written to the hum of a powerhouse machine. Faulkner wrote during the night shift at a place where coal was shoveled out into wheelbarrows and fed into a boiler. The title of his novel came from the words of Agamemnon, which are spoken to Odysseus in the Underworld in Book Eleven of *The Odyssey*: “She even lacked the heart to seal my eyes with her hand.”⁴³ Fifteen different points of view make up the novel. The new novel was about the Bundrens, again a troubled family in the Deep South.

Faulkner knew that his novels were difficult. He also knew that his experience in writing *The Sound and the Fury* had been extraordinary and the writing of *As I Lay Dying* had been less so. He began another novel—the one he would call *Sanctuary*. For it he would develop the story he had heard in a Memphis nightclub years before—and a harrowing story it was. Gangsters were clearly part of the 1920s. Chicago and nearby Cicero, Illinois, had witnessed the bloody rampages of Al Capone and rival gangs. Memphis was only slightly less notorious. With its Tenderloin district nightspots and backstreets, the city had been named the “Murder Capital of the U.S.A.”⁴⁴ The story of Horace Benbow, a failed lawyer fighting the evil Popeye, a gangster, and Temple Drake, the sympathetic heroine, would be a thriller that was sure to be shocking.

Sanctuary was read at Cape and Smith. The readers were appalled.⁴⁵ Faulkner, however, sensed that the novel would be a sensation. His dark imagination was spinning new stories. In late 1929, likely seated at a fragile writing table, he wrote the strange and disturbing story of Emily Grierson in “A Rose for Emily.” From the blue ink on legal pad sheets came the story of a deeply troubled woman who had hidden away in her rooms, unwilling to yield to change or society, holding on to the corpse of her father and then sleeping beside the skeletal remains of her beau, Homer Barron. Often anthologized, it is for some college students their first look at the probing stories of William Faulkner.

FICTION, ART, AND FILM

Faulkner’s prose has been described as lyrical, a verbal art of incantation. From the dialogue of *Soldiers’ Pay* to the experimentation of *The Sound and the Fury*, he required his readers to listen and then work at reading his fiction. A reader of Faulkner is compelled toward close reading, or even recursive reading—that is, reading twice. It is a common experience for a reader who is first picking up a Faulkner novel to struggle a bit with the story. This is especially true when time, in one of Faulkner’s stories, is not linear or when a character’s stream of consciousness moves in unexpected ways. Thus, Faulkner’s novels were never popular fare. It took years for the first printing of *The Sound and*

the Fury to sell out. It was only when Faulkner wrote the sensational and violent story *Sanctuary* that anything like a popular audience responded to his work. Yet, Faulkner is unquestionably one of the most important American writers of the twentieth century.

Faulkner was also a fairly private man. Unlike Hemingway and Fitzgerald, he appears to have had little contact with other writers during his brief time in Paris. Still, with his verbal and narrative techniques, he was very much part of modernism as it developed during that time. He never met Hemingway, Pound, Eliot, or Stein. His contact with Anderson was in New Orleans. He spent some time with his artist friends in New York. Most of Faulkner's time was spent in Mississippi, except for his stint as a screenwriter in Hollywood in the 1930s. There was also a private quality to his work and craft. He did not talk about what he read. His storytelling was fundamentally in an oral tradition. In him we see modernism's thrust toward the well-made story, one emerging from what Hugh Kenner relates stemmed from "tireless revisions" and requires the "skilled reader."⁴⁶

Faulkner drew upon many sources for his unique experimentation. In 1924, he got a copy of the fourth printing of *Ulysses* from his friend Phil Stone. It has been suggested that he made use of Joyce's techniques.⁴⁷ Faulkner, nonetheless, had his own unique sensibility, and his movement toward stream of consciousness writing and experimentation with fictional form extended beyond Joyce's innovations. One might say that modernist creativity was in the air of the times. Behind Faulkner's attention to a locale was Sherwood Anderson's *Winesberg, Ohio*, as much as Leopold Bloom's day in Dublin in Joyce's *Ulysses*.

Faulkner's keen eye for imagery was partly developed through his sketching, drawing, and painting. He drew cartoons, line drawings, and ink illustrations. He painted less as he became a novelist, but his attention to French Postimpressionism and modernism is evident in his fiction. For his stories, he drew on his sense of art. Paul Cezanne's art suggested to him the direct use of color and pigments and strong brush strokes. The work of visual artists may have led Faulkner toward what one critic has referred to as his "spiral form."⁴⁸ Observing the loneliness of Joe Christmas in *Light in August*, Ilse Dusoier Lind compares his experience to a spiritual condition of isolation in de Chirico's empty spaces and barren buildings on canvas.⁴⁹ The racial themes of *Light in August* are underscored through the play of white and black in the text.

There is Joe's white shirt and black pants. Joe has been described as a crucified Christ-figure who suffers at the hands of others. Lena, in her blue dress, will give birth to a son—a new hope. Gail Hightower, a minister, faces a spiritual crisis. Faulkner may be said to have, in a sense, painted them, as well as described them.⁵⁰

Faulkner's work in Hollywood film lay ahead in the later 1930s and 1940s. Many of his screenplays and treatments were for director Howard Hawks's films. Hawks had read Faulkner's *Soldiers' Pay* and mentioned him to his friends, including writer Ben Hecht. *Sanctuary* (1931) led to a MGM contract, although Hawks passed on this, expecting censorship. Paramount Pictures then produced *The Story of Temple Drake* (1933). Faulkner began writing screenplay treatments, none of which were produced. In 1932, his work on *Turn Around* showed Faulkner apparently agreeable to making the changes that Hawks suggested. Hawks liked linear structure, finding that it was easier for audiences to grasp than the time shifts in Faulkner's fiction. Faulkner liked montage. Hollywood films, while they have the stamp of a director's vision, are collaborative works. None of Faulkner's scripts have been used in their original form and in their entirety to produce a film. His work was usually rewritten or reworked. Among his most memorable scripts are those for *The Big Sleep* and Hemingway's *To Have and Have Not*. Faulkner participated in writing *Drums along the Mohawk*, *Gunga Din*, *Mildred Pierce*, *Submarine Patrol*, *Escape in the Desert*, *Land of the Pharaoh*, *Adventures of Don Juan* with Errol Flynn, *Today We Live*, and *The Road to Glory*. Several scripts were never produced. These include *Dreadful Hollow*, a vampire thriller; *War Birds*; *Country Lawyer*; *Stallion Road*; and his own *Flags in the Dust* and *The Unvanquished*.

To read Faulkner is to think with him about the racial problems that troubled him and have troubled the United States. His setting is the rural South, a land of ancestry and memory. Yet, one might also think of the Gulf Coast wracked by Hurricane Katrina and the lives of displaced people. Most of Faulkner's stories do not take us to New Orleans, but the Mississippi Delta and all that surrounds it is of a piece. Sometimes in Faulkner's stories we hear of Memphis—in "The Vendee," "The Unvanquished," or "Two Soldiers," in which a rural boy is in search of his big brother, who has enlisted in the army. Faulkner's attention is oftentimes on characters in Jefferson, in rural settings like those that

appear in “Barn Burning,” “The Tall Men,” “Dry September,” or “Delta Autumn.” Faulkner is a storyteller who gives us characters’ voices and invites us into the places where his characters live, places where many of us have never been.

But thinking of Faulkner, one might also imagine an era of jazz bands, bright sounds from New Orleans rooftops, and the music of the city’s gaiety slipping into a history long ago. Back then, one might have seen a funeral parade rounding the corner: men with instruments in their hands and teary eyes betraying the celebration. In 1920, one might have spotted Louis Armstrong leaning out from a terrace or heard Lil Harden humming a tune they had been practicing. Or we might find ourselves in the French Quarter during the peak of summer at Jackson Square, where Faulkner is sitting on a bench with Sherwood Anderson, talking to him across from the cathedral in the shade of trees. By the black iron fence one might see artists painting; there is a man eating crawfish gumbo, and the air is sweet with the scent of fresh beignets and the smoke from the pipe Faulkner is holding in his fingers. He then walks slowly home, toward Pirates Alley, sunstruck, with the outlines of a story coming to his mind.

NOTES

PREFACE

1. Bob Batchelor, *Gatsby: The Cultural History of the Great American Novel* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2014), 93.
2. D. H. Lawrence, *Studies in Classic American Literature: The Cambridge Edition of the Works of D. H. Lawrence*. Vol. 2. Ed. Ezra Greenspan, Lindeth Vasey, and John Worthen (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 1–63.
3. Robert Penn Warren, “Why Do We Read Fiction?” *Saturday Evening Post*, July 1986, p. 62.
4. Louis Kantor, “Why Novels?” *New York Tribune*, April 22, 1922, p. 11.
5. D. H. Lawrence, “Why the Novel Matters” *Selected Criticism*, 1956. Available online at http://individual.utoronto.ca/amlit/why_the_novel_matters.htm (accessed December 3, 2014).
6. Gordon Hunter, quoted in Elizabeth Long, *Book Clubs: Women and the Uses of Reading in Everyday Life* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 25–26.
7. Long, *Book Clubs*, 70.
8. Tim Parks, “Do We Need Stories?” *New York Review of Books Blog*, March 26, 2013, 1–2.
9. Michael J. Sandel, *Democracy’s Discontent* (1986; reprint, Cambridge, UK: Belknap, Harvard University Press, 1998).
10. Susan Shillinglaw, *On Reading The Grapes of Wrath* (New York: Penguin, 2014), 33–34.

INTRODUCTION

1. Frederick Lewis Allen, *Only Yesterday* (New York: Harper's, 1931), 81.
2. Quoted in Allen, *Only Yesterday*, 82.
3. Quoted in Allen, *Only Yesterday*, 207.
4. Malcolm Bradbury, quoted in C. W. E. Bigsby, *Modern American Drama, 1945–2000* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 208. See Malcolm Bradbury and David Palmer, eds., *The American Novel in the 1920s* (London: Arnold, 1971).
5. Allen, *Only Yesterday*, 94.
6. Allen, *Only Yesterday*, 82, 141.
7. George W. Gray, quoted in Allen, *Only Yesterday*, 68.
8. Quoted in Allen, *Only Yesterday*, 68.
9. Allen, *Only Yesterday*, 20.
10. Allen, *Only Yesterday*, 143.
11. Ann Douglas, *Terrible Honesty: Mongrel Manhattan in the 1920s* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1995), 64.
12. Allen, *Only Yesterday*, 144.
13. Allen, *Only Yesterday*, 148.
14. Douglas, *Terrible Honesty*, 55.
15. Douglas, *Terrible Honesty*, 55.
16. Allen, *Only Yesterday*, 131–32.
17. Allen, *Only Yesterday*, 157.
18. Allen, *Only Yesterday*, 191.
19. Allen, *Only Yesterday*, 206.
20. Allen, *Only Yesterday*, 170.
21. *New York Times*, October 19, 1924.
22. Allen, *Only Yesterday*, 151.
23. Allen, *Only Yesterday*, 198.
24. Bob Batchelor, *Gatsby: The Cultural History of the Great American Novel* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2014), 40.
25. Malcolm Cowley, *Exile's Return: A Literary Odyssey of the 1920s* (1934; reprint, New York: Viking, 1951), 23.
26. Cowley, *Exile's Return*, 3.
27. Cowley, *Exile's Return*, 4.
28. Cowley, *Exile's Return*, 6.
29. Quoted in Cowley, *Exile's Return*, 5.
30. Cowley, *Exile's Return*, 18.
31. Cowley, *Exile's Return*, 25.
32. Cowley, *Exile's Return*, 47.
33. Cowley, *Exile's Return*, 201.

34. Cowley, *Exile's Return*, 58.
35. Cowley, *Exile's Return*, 60.
36. Cowley, *Exile's Return*, 42.
37. Cowley, *Exile's Return*, 175.
38. Cowley, *Exile's Return*, 202.
39. Cowley, *Exile's Return*, 225.
40. Edmund Wilson, *The Shores of Light: A Literary Chronicle of the Twenties and Thirties* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Young, 1952), 400.
41. Wilson, *The Shores of Light*, 139, 147.
42. Wilson, *The Shores of Light*, 405.
43. Wilson, *The Shores of Light*, 86.
44. Wilson, *The Shores of Light*, 82.
45. Wilson, *The Shores of Light*, 83.
46. Wilson, *The Shores of Light*, 41.
47. Wilson, *The Shores of Light*, 193.
48. Wilson writes, "As for the dramatists, there is still only O'Neill, who, for all his efforts to break away from naturalism, remains a typical naturalistic dramatist of something under the first rank." *The Shores of Light*, 195.
49. Wilson, *The Shores of Light*, 90.
50. Wilson, *The Shores of Light*, 91.
51. Wilson, *The Shores of Light*, 48–50.
52. Wilson, *The Dial*, October 1924, quoted in *The Shores of Light*, 105.
53. Wilson, *The Shores of Light*, 103.
54. Wilson, *The Shores of Light*, 191–92.
55. Wilson, *The Shores of Light*, 193.
56. Wilson, *The Shores of Light*, 193.
57. Wilson, *The Shores of Light*, 193.
58. Wilson, *The Shores of Light*, 194.
59. Wilson, *The Shores of Light*, 195.
60. Joseph Wood Krutch, quoted in Wilson, *The Shores of Light*, 278.
61. Wilson, *The Shores of Light*, 279.
62. Wilson, *The Shores of Light*, 280.
63. Wilson, *The Shores of Light*, 281.
64. Wilson, *The Shores of Light*, 282.
65. Wilson, *The Shores of Light*, 353.
66. Wilson, *The Shores of Light*, 353.
67. Wilson, *The Shores of Light*, 354.
68. Wilson, *The Shores of Light*, 351.
69. Wilson, *The Shores of Light*, 364.
70. Wilson, *The Shores of Light*, 364.

71. Travis Bogards, "The Comedy of Thornton Wilder," Introduction to *Three Plays by Thornton Wilder* (New York: Harper, 1963), 61.
72. Wilson, *The Shores of Light*, 321.
73. Wilson, *The Shores of Light*, 363.
74. Wilson, *The Shores of Light*, 408.
75. Wilson, *The Shores of Light*, 408.
76. Wilson, *The Shores of Light*, 438.
77. Wilson, *The Shores of Light*, 477.
78. Wilson, *The Shores of Light*, 480.
79. Wilson, *The Shores of Light*, 477.

I. BEYOND THE WASTELAND

1. Ann Douglas, *Terrible Honesty: Mongrel Manhattan in the 1920s* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1995), 208.
2. Jonathan Rose, *The Edwardian Temperament, 1895–1919* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1986).
3. T. Austin Graham, *The Great American Songbook* (Oxford, UK, and New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 59.
4. Frank Kermode has observed that the "O" and "Shakespearean" locates this music within one's mind, creating a musical effect. Perhaps this syncopated rhythm is also a form of scat-singing or piano line, as suggested by Graham, or a way of covering for forgotten lyrics. See Graham, *The Great American Songbook*, 215.
5. David Chinitz, *T. S. Eliot and the Cultural Divide* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003); Douglas, *Terrible Honesty*, 112–13; Graham, *The Great American Songbook*, 214–18.
6. Graham, *The Great American Songbook*, 65.
7. Graham, *The Great American Songbook*, 69.
8. Quoted in Graham, *The Great American Songbook*, 159–60.
9. Douglas, *Terrible Honesty*, 216.
10. Quoted in T. E. Hulme, "Crites, a Commentary," *Criterion* 2 (April 1924): 23.
11. Hulme, "Crites, a Commentary," 229.
12. Hulme, "Crites, a Commentary," 62–63.
13. Hulme, "Crites, a Commentary," 63.
14. John Dos Passos, *The Fourteenth Chronicle: Letters and Diaries of John Dos Passos*, ed. Townsend Ludington (New York: Gambit, 1973), 69.
15. Fussell writes that this was "not with some Hegelian hope of synthesis involving the dissolution of both extremes (that would suggest a negotiated

peace, which was anathema) but with a sense that one of the poles embodies so wicked a deficiency or flaw or perversion that its total submission is called for.” Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (Oxford, UK, and New York: Oxford University Press, 1975), 127.

16. Gertrude Stein, “Composition as Explanation” (London: Hogarth Press, 1926).

17. Douglas, *Terrible Honesty*, 176.

18. Douglas, *Terrible Honesty*, 179–216.

19. John Dos Passos, *Three Soldiers* (1921; reprint, New York: Library of America, 2003), 10.

20. John Dos Passos, *One Man’s Initiation* (1917; reprint, Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1969), 2.

21. Dos Passos, *One Man’s Initiation*, 20.

22. Edgar Jones, “Shell Shock,” *American Psychological Association* 46, no. 12 (June 2012): 18.

23. Harry Crosby, *War Letters*, November 14, 1917 (Paris: Black Sun Press, 1932).

24. Crosby, *War Letters*, August 16, 1917.

25. Crosby, *War Letters*, November 23, 1917. Letter to his sister.

26. Harry Crosby, *Shadows of the Sun* (Paris: Black Sun Press, 1925), 1.

27. Lisa Nanney, *John Dos Passos Revisited* (New York: Twayne, 1998), 127.

28. Dos Passos, *Three Soldiers*, 87.

29. Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory*, 79.

30. Gertrude Stein, “Memories of Picasso,” *Writings, 1932–1946*. Vol. 2 (New York: Library of America, 1998).

31. Frederick J. Hoffmann, *The Twenties: American Writing in the Postwar Decade* (New York: Viking, 1955), 48.

32. Hoffmann, *The Twenties*, 49.

33. Hoffmann, *The Twenties*, 50.

34. Edmund Wilson, *Shores of Light: A Literary Chronicle of the Twenties and Thirties* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Young, 1952), 118.

35. Gene Ruoff, quoted in *William Faulkner: New Perspectives*, ed. Richard Brodhead (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1983), 239; “All the Dead Pilots,” *The Collected Short Stories of William Faulkner* (New York: Random House/Vintage, 2012).

36. William Faulkner, *Soldiers’ Pay* (New York: Library of America, 1990), 25.

2. ERNEST HEMINGWAY AND F. SCOTT FITZGERALD

1. Malcolm Cowley, *Exile's Return: A Literary Odyssey of the 1920s* (1934; reprint, New York: Viking, 1951), 6; F. Scott Fitzgerald, "The Scandal Detectives," *The Collected Short Stories of F. Scott Fitzgerald*, ed. Matthew Bruccoli (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1989).

2. Sherwood Anderson, *Sherwood Anderson's Notebook* (New York: Live-right, 1926).

3. Edmund Wilson, *The Shores of Light: A Literary Chronicle of the Twenties and Thirties* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Young, 1952), 468.

4. Gertrude Stein, quoted in Wilson, *The Shores of Light*, 468.

5. Wilson, *The Shores of Light*, 468.

6. Ernest Hemingway, *A Moveable Feast* (1954; reprint, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1963), 13.

7. Ernest Hemingway, *The Sun Also Rises* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1926), 74; Frederick J. Hoffmann, *The Twenties: American Writing in the Postwar Decade* (New York: Viking, 1955), 81.

8. Hoffmann, *The Twenties*, 81.

9. Wilson, *The Shores of Light*, 281.

10. Alfred R. McIntyre, "Little Brown and Company," in *Publishers and Publishing*, ed. Gerald Gross (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1961), 113. Alfred McIntyre of Little Brown and Company saw a gain in sales each year from 1927 to 1929. He points out that the book clubs had "given a tremendous amount of publicity" and "directed public attention to a few titles" (114).

11. Malcolm Cowley, *The Portable Hemingway* (New York: Viking, 1944), vii.

12. Malcolm Cowley, *Exile's Return: A Literary Odyssey of the 1920s* (1934; reprint, New York: Viking, 1951), 50.

13. See Carlos Baker, *Hemingway: A Life Story* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1969); Jeffrey Meyers, *Hemingway: A Biography* (New York: HarperCollins, 1985).

14. The original letter is in the Scribner's archives in the Firestone Library, Princeton University.

15. F. Scott Fitzgerald, *This Side of Paradise* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1920), 35.

16. T. Austin Graham, *The Great American Songbook* (Oxford, UK, and New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 84. Graham compares the novel with musical theater of the 1920s, which is viewed as discontinuous. "Broadway's relative lack of concern with causality, psychological motivation, plot structure, and dramatic unity all find analogues in the abstract associativeness

of *This Side of Paradise*" (87). Musical theater matters in *This Side of Paradise* (89).

17. Fitzgerald, *This Side of Paradise*, 82.

18. Graham, *The Great American Songbook*, 25. We may ask what social role music plays in the novel. Yet, it is difficult to know what Fitzgerald's contemporary audience "heard" and responded to when they read his fiction. For this, we would have to find some comment from their letters, journals, or autobiographies that indicates their reading of Fitzgerald's story (82). Why does a story, play, or song mean one thing to one person and something different to someone else? (90). "Kiss Me Again" illustrates this. As the song is heard from another room, Amory interprets the lyrics in one way and Rosalind interprets them in another. See *This Side of Paradise*, 173, and Graham's discussion in *The Great American Songbook*, 90.

19. Graham, *The Great American Songbook*, 85.

20. Fitzgerald, *This Side of Paradise*, 24.

21. F. Scott Fitzgerald, *F. Scott Fitzgerald: A Life in Letters*, ed. Matthew Bruccoli and Judith S. Baughman (New York: Touchstone, 1995), 61.

22. Matthew Bruccoli, *Some Sort of Epic Grandeur: The Life of F. Scott Fitzgerald* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1981), 182–83.

23. Hoffmann, *The Twenties*, 106.

24. Kirk Curnutt, *Cambridge Companion to F. Scott Fitzgerald* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 95.

25. Curnutt, *Cambridge Companion to F. Scott Fitzgerald*, 112.

26. Curnutt, *Cambridge Companion to F. Scott Fitzgerald*, 29.

27. Wilson, *The Shores of Light*, 33.

28. Thomas Woodward, *In His Own Time* (Minneapolis, MN: Privately printed), 245–54. Woodward was a reporter for a St. Paul, Minnesota, daily newspaper.

29. Quoted in Curnutt, *Cambridge Companion to F. Scott Fitzgerald*, 115.

30. Curnutt, *Cambridge Companion to F. Scott Fitzgerald*, 115–16.

31. H. L. Mencken, "Review of *Flappers and Philosophers*," *Smart Set*, 1920.

32. Bruccoli, *Some Sort of Epic Grandeur*, 168.

33. F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Beautiful and Damned* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1922), 79.

34. F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1925), 34.

35. Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, 85.

36. Fitzgerald, *F. Scott Fitzgerald: A Life in Letters*, 65.

37. Fitzgerald, *F. Scott Fitzgerald: A Life in Letters*, 75, 78.

38. Fitzgerald, *F. Scott Fitzgerald: A Life in Letters*, 78.

39. Fitzgerald, *F. Scott Fitzgerald: A Life in Letters*, 82.
40. Fitzgerald, *F. Scott Fitzgerald: A Life in Letters*, 86.
41. Ernest Hemingway, *A Moveable Feast* (1954; reprint, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1963), 90.
42. Fitzgerald, *F. Scott Fitzgerald: A Life in Letters*, 109–10.
43. Fitzgerald, *F. Scott Fitzgerald: A Life in Letters*, 100.
44. Fitzgerald, *F. Scott Fitzgerald: A Life in Letters*, 102. Fitzgerald was clearly familiar with the work of his contemporaries, for instance, Willa Cather, Sinclair Lewis, and Gertrude Stein. He admired the lesser-known Hemingway as the model of a fine writer. In a letter to Perkins, Fitzgerald recognizes that Hemingway's *Torrents of Spring* was a parody of Sherwood Anderson. He comments that people were "let down" by Anderson's recent work (133). He calls John Dos Passos "astonishingly good," yet, in a letter of December 30, 1925, he comments that he had "lost faith" in his work (134).
45. Fitzgerald, *F. Scott Fitzgerald: A Life in Letters*, 129. Fitzgerald's insight that his female readers of *The Great Gatsby* "haven't cared for it" because he provided no strong female characters was echoed by one of my female students, who insisted that she did not really like the novel because she believed that the women in Fitzgerald's story were too passive.
46. Hazel McCormack, Letters to F. Scott Fitzgerald, September 1924. Firestone Library, Princeton University.
47. Hazel McCormack, Letters to F. Scott Fitzgerald, May 15, 1925. Firestone Library, Princeton University.
48. Fitzgerald, *F. Scott Fitzgerald: A Life in Letters*, 124.
49. Fitzgerald, *F. Scott Fitzgerald: A Life in Letters*, 128.
50. Jeffrey Meyers, *Hemingway: A Biography* (New York: HarperCollins, 1985), 159.
51. William Rose Benet, *F. Scott Fitzgerald: The Critical Heritage* (New York: Routledge, 1925), 220.
52. Quoted in Curnutt, *Cambridge Companion to F. Scott Fitzgerald*, 116; Benet, *F. Scott Fitzgerald: The Critical Heritage*, 195.
53. Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*, 46; F. Scott Fitzgerald, *Tender Is the Night*, ed. Matthew Bruccoli (1934; reprint, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 76–77.
54. Fitzgerald, *F. Scott Fitzgerald: A Life in Letters*.
55. Curnutt, *Cambridge Companion to F. Scott Fitzgerald*, 35.
56. William Rose Benet, "Review of *All the Sad Young Men*," *Saturday Review*, 1926; Benet, *F. Scott Fitzgerald: The Critical Heritage*, 220.
57. Fitzgerald, *F. Scott Fitzgerald: A Life in Letters*, 169.
58. F. Scott Fitzgerald, "Echoes of the Jazz Age," *New Statesman*, 1931. All quotations that follow are from this essay.

59. Frederick Lewis Allen, *Only Yesterday* (New York: Harper's, 1931), 2–3.
60. Fitzgerald, *This Side of Paradise*.
61. Allen, *Only Yesterday*, 1.
62. See Allen, *Only Yesterday*, 1–25.
63. Mencken, "Review of *Flappers and Philosophers*." See Benet, *F. Scott Fitzgerald: The Critical Heritage*.
64. The Cornell University student's quip appeared in the university's newspaper.
65. This and the following quotations appear in Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*.
66. Walter Lippmann, quoted in Allen, *Only Yesterday*, 20.
67. F. Scott Fitzgerald, "Dice, Brassknuckles, and Guitar," *The Collected Short Stories of F. Scott Fitzgerald*, ed. Matthew Bruccoli (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1989).
68. F. Scott Fitzgerald, "The Lost Decade," *The Collected Short Stories of F. Scott Fitzgerald*, ed. Matthew Bruccoli (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1989), 749.
69. F. Scott Fitzgerald, "The Lost Decade," 749.
70. Lionel Trilling, *The Liberal Imagination: Essays on Literature and Society* (New York: Viking, 1950).
71. Curnutt, *Cambridge Companion to F. Scott Fitzgerald*, 118–19; Benet, *F. Scott Fitzgerald: The Critical Heritage*, 368–69, 375–76.
72. Curnutt, *Cambridge Companion to F. Scott Fitzgerald*, 121.

3. WILLIAM FAULKNER

1. Richard H. Brodhead, ed., "Introduction," *William Faulkner: New Perspectives* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1983), 3.
2. Eric J. Sundquist, *To Wake the Nations: Race in the Making of American Literature* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), 8.
3. Sundquist, *To Wake the Nations*, 8–10.
4. Irving Howe, "The Culture of Modernism," *Commentary* (November 1967): 61.
5. Joseph Blotner, *William Faulkner: A Biography* (New York: Random House, 1974), 251.
6. Blotner, *William Faulkner: A Biography*, 396.
7. Blotner, *William Faulkner: A Biography*, 401.
8. Blotner, *William Faulkner: A Biography*, 392.
9. Blotner, *William Faulkner: A Biography*, 395.

10. Blotner, *William Faulkner: A Biography*, 412.
11. Blotner, *William Faulkner: A Biography*, 413.
12. Blotner, *William Faulkner: A Biography*, 415.
13. Blotner, *William Faulkner: A Biography*, 500.
14. Blotner, *William Faulkner: A Biography*, 501.
15. Blotner, *William Faulkner: A Biography*, 505–6.
16. Blotner, *William Faulkner: A Biography*, 325.
17. Blotner, *William Faulkner: A Biography*, 532.
18. Blotner, *William Faulkner: A Biography*, 459.
19. Blotner, *William Faulkner: A Biography*, 460.
20. Blotner, *William Faulkner: A Biography*, 471.
21. Blotner, *William Faulkner: A Biography*, 490.
22. Blotner, *William Faulkner: A Biography*, 523.
23. Blotner, *William Faulkner: A Biography*, 545.
24. Blotner, *William Faulkner: A Biography*, 548. Photographs of the devastation from the flood are available for viewing online at the Mississippi Archives site.
25. Horace Liveright, quoted in Blotner, *William Faulkner: A Biography*, 560.
26. Sundquist, *To Wake the Nations*, 13.
27. David Minter, in Brodhead, *William Faulkner: New Perspectives*, 121. See also Minter's biography, *William Faulkner: His Life and Work* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997).
28. Blotner, *William Faulkner: A Biography*, 584.
29. Quoted in Blotner, *William Faulkner: A Biography*, 225. There is often a difference between the relative importance and longevity of a book and popular sales. The first printing of *The Sound and the Fury* was 1,789. The publisher expected a small, "serious" readership. The sales of *Sanctuary*, which was something of a violent "potboiler," helped the sales of *The Sound and the Fury*; however, for about fifteen years the sales of that classic novel totaled only about 3,000 copies.
30. Blotner, *William Faulkner: A Biography*, 626.
31. Sundquist, *To Wake the Nations*, 9.
32. Howe, "The Culture of Modernism," 48.
33. Howe, "The Culture of Modernism," 53–54.
34. Howe, "The Culture of Modernism," 42.
35. Blotner, *William Faulkner: A Biography*, 339.
36. Robert Penn Warren, in Brodhead, *William Faulkner: New Perspectives*, 20.
37. Brodhead, *William Faulkner: New Perspectives*, 8.
38. Howe, "The Culture of Modernism," 57.

39. Quoted in Brodhead, *William Faulkner: New Perspectives*, 41.
40. Cleanth Brooks, quoted in Brodhead, *William Faulkner: New Perspectives*, 40–41.
41. Quoted in Brodhead, *William Faulkner: New Perspectives*, 35.
42. Brooks, quoted in Brodhead, *William Faulkner: New Perspectives*, 35.
43. Quoted from Robert Fagles's translation of *The Odyssey* (New York: Penguin, 1996), 188.
44. Blotner, *William Faulkner: A Biography*, 607. Blotner notes that there was a New Orleans–St. Louis mob connected with Al Capone (608).
45. Blotner lists the readers as Louise Bonino, Evelyn Harter, Leonore Marshall, and Hal Smith. *William Faulkner: New Perspectives*, 618.
46. Hugh Kenner, *The Pound Era* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), 186.
47. Kenner, *The Pound Era*, 22.
48. Ilse Duso Lind, quoted in Daniel J. Singal, *William Faulkner: The Making of a Modernist* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 141–42.
49. Lind, quoted in Singal, *William Faulkner: The Making of a Modernist*, 141–42.
50. R. G. Collins, "Light in August: Faulkner's Stained Glass Tryptich," *Mosaic* (Fall 1973): 97–153.

4. MODERNISM AND POPULAR CULTURE IN THE AGE OF EZRA POUND AND JAMES JOYCE

1. Louis Menand, *Discovering Modernism: T. S. Eliot and His Context* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1987), 116–17.
2. Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984).
3. Irving Howe, "The Culture of Modernism," *Commentary* (November 1967): 65.
4. Q. D. Leavis, *Fiction and the Reading Public* (London: Chatto, 1932), 47.
5. Quoted in T. Austin Graham, *The Great American Songbook* (Oxford, UK, and New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 27.
6. Theodor Adorno, "On Popular Music," *Studies in Philosophy and Social Sciences* 9, no. 1 (1941): 17–48.
7. T. S. Eliot, *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism: Studies in the Relation of Criticism to Poetry in England* (1933; reprint, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 152–54.

THE CAMBRIDGE
COMPANION TO
THE HARLEM
RENAISSANCE

EDITED BY
GEORGE HUTCHINSON
Indiana University



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore, São Paulo

Cambridge University Press
The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 8RU, UK

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521673686

© Cambridge University Press 2007

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception
and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements,
no reproduction of any part may take place without
the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2007

Printed in the United Kingdom at the University Press, Cambridge

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication data

The Cambridge companion to the Harlem Renaissance / edited by George Hutchinson.
p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references (p. 254) and index.

ISBN-13: 978-0-521-85699-7 (hardback)

ISBN-10: 0-521-85699-X (hardback)

ISBN-13: 978-0-521-67368-6 (pbk)

ISBN-10: 0-521-67368-2 (pbk)

1. American literature – African American authors – History and criticism. 2. American literature – 20th century – History and criticism. 3. Harlem (New York, N.Y.) – Intellectual life – 20th century. 4. Modernism (Literature) – United States. 5. African Americans in literature. 6. African American aesthetics. 7. Harlem Renaissance. I. Hutchinson, George, 1953 – II. Title: Companion to the Harlem Renaissance.

PS I53.N5C345 2007
810.9'896073-dc22 2006039244

ISBN 978-0-521-85699-7 hardback
ISBN 978-0-521-67368-6 paperback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or
accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to
in this publication, and does not guarantee that any content on such
websites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

CONTENTS

<i>Notes on contributors</i>	<i>page</i> vii
<i>Chronology</i>	xi
MICHAEL A. CHANEY	
Introduction	I
GEORGE HUTCHINSON	
PART I FOUNDATIONS OF THE HARLEM RENAISSANCE	I I
I The New Negro as citizen	I3
JEFFREY C. STEWART	
2 The Renaissance and the Vogue	28
EMILY BERNARD	
3 International contexts of the Negro Renaissance	4I
MICHAEL A. CHANEY	
PART II MAJOR AUTHORS AND TEXTS	55
4 Negro drama and the Harlem Renaissance	57
DAVID KRASNER	
5 Jean Toomer and the avant-garde	7I
MARK WHALAN	
6 "To tell the truth about us": the fictions and non-fictions of Jessie Fauset and Walter White	82
CHERYL A. WALL	

CONTENTS

7	African American folk roots and Harlem Renaissance poetry MARK A. SANDERS	96
8	Lyric stars: Countee Cullen and Langston Hughes JAMES SMETHURST	112
9	“Perhaps Buddha is a woman”: women’s poetry in the Harlem Renaissance MARGO NATALIE CRAWFORD	126
10	Transgressive sexuality and the literature of the Harlem Renaissance A. B. CHRISTA SCHWARZ	141
11	Sexual desire, modernity, and modernism in the fiction of Nella Larsen and Rudolph Fisher CHARLES SCRUGGS	155
12	Banjo meets the Dark Princess: Claude McKay, W. E. B. Du Bois, and the transnational novel of the Harlem Renaissance WILLIAM J. MAXWELL	170
13	The Caribbean voices of Claude McKay and Eric Walrond CARL PEDERSEN	184
14	George Schuyler and Wallace Thurman: two satirists of the Harlem Renaissance J. MARTIN FAVOR	198
15	Zora Neale Hurston, folk performance, and the “Margarine Negro” CARLA KAPLAN	213
	PART III THE POST-RENAISSANCE	237
16	“The Aftermath”: the reputation of the Harlem Renaissance twenty years later LAWRENCE JACKSON	239
	<i>Guide to further reading</i>	254
	<i>Index</i>	265

MICHAEL A. CHANEY

CHRONOLOGY

A chronology of Harlem Renaissance artists and writers

William Edward Burghardt Du Bois (1868–1963)
James Weldon Johnson (1871–1938)
Alice Dunbar-Nelson (1875–1935)
Angelina W. Grimké (1880–1958)
Carl Van Vechten (1880–1964)
Jessie Redmon Fauset (1882–1961)
Anne Spencer (1882–1975)
Alain LeRoy Locke (1886–1954)
Marcus Garvey (1887–1940)
Zora Neale Hurston (1891–1960)
Nella Larsen (1891–1964)
Claude McKay (1891–1948)
Walter White (1893–1955)
Jean Toomer (1894–1967)
George Samuel Schuyler (1895–1977)
Marion Vera Cuthbert (1896–1989)
Florence Mills (1896–1927)
Rudolph Fisher (1897–1934)
Marita Bonner (1898–1971)
Aaron Douglas (1898–1979)
Paul Robeson (1898–1976)
Eric Walrond (1898–1966)
Sterling Allen Brown (1901–89)
Gwendolyn B. Bennett (1902–81)
Arna Bontemps (1902–73)
Langston Hughes (1902–67)
Wallace Thurman (1902–34)
Countee Cullen (1903–46)
Josephine Baker (1906–75)
Richard Bruce Nugent (1906–87)
Dorothy West (1907–98)

A chronology of significant events and publications
of the Harlem Renaissance

1919

- 369th Regiment, or the “Harlem Hellfighters,” marches up Fifth Avenue to Harlem, February.
- W. E. B. Du Bois’ First Pan-African Congress meets in Paris, February.
- Marcus Garvey founds the Black Star Shipping Line, June.
- Race riots erupt in various cities, including Charleston, Knoxville, Washington, DC, Chicago, and Omaha, June to September.
- Commission on Interracial Cooperation (CIC) founded, September.
- Oscar Micheaux releases his first film, *The Homesteader*, in Chicago.
- Publication of Benjamin Brawley’s *The Negro in Literature and Art in the United States*.

1920

- The Negro National League, the first of baseball’s “Negro leagues,” is established, January.
- 18th Amendment (Prohibition) takes effect, January.
- Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) convention held at Madison Square Garden, August.
- 19th Amendment (Women’s Suffrage) passed.
- Actor Charles Gilpin stars in O’Neill’s *The Emperor Jones*, opening at the Provincetown Playhouse, November.
- James Weldon Johnson becomes executive secretary of the NAACP and its first black officer, December.
- Publication of W. E. B. Du Bois’ *Darkwater* and Claude McKay’s *Spring in New Hampshire*.

1921

- Black Swan Phonograph Corporation founded by Harry Pace, March.
- *Shuffle Along*, the first musical written and performed by African Americans Eubie Blake and Noble Sissle, opens on Broadway at the David Belasco Theater, May.
- African American artists, including Henry Tanner and Meta Vaux Warrick Fuller, exhibit work at the 135th Street Branch of the New York Public Library.
- Race riots in Tulsa, June.

CHRONOLOGY

- Second Pan-African Congress meets in London, Brussels, and Paris, August and September.
- Marcus Garvey founds African Orthodox Church, September.
- Publication of Benjamin Brawley's *Social History of the American Negro*, Blaise Cendrars' *Anthologie nègre*, and René Maran, *Batouala*.

1922

- Bessie Coleman becomes the first African American woman to stage a public flight, September.
- House of Representatives, led by L. C. Dyer of Missouri, approves first Anti-Lynching bill, but it is defeated by Southern Senators who filibuster for twenty-one days, December.
- Meta Warrick Fuller exhibits her sculpture "Ethiopia Awakening" in New York.
- Publication of *The Book of American Negro Poetry* edited by James Weldon Johnson, Claude McKay's *Harlem Shadows* and Georgia Douglas Johnson's *Bronze: A Book of Verse*.

1923

- Third Pan-African Congress meets in London and Lisbon, January.
- National Urban League publishes *Opportunity: A Journal of Negro Life* with Charles S. Johnson as editor, January.
- National Ethiopian Art Players stage Willis Richardson's *The Chip Woman's Fortune*, the first serious play by a black writer on Broadway, May.
- Claude McKay delivers his "Report on the Negro Question" before the Fourth Congress of the Third International in Moscow, June.
- Marcus Garvey is sentenced to five years in prison for mail fraud, June.
- The Cotton Club opens, September.
- Publication of Marcus Garvey's two-volume *Philosophy and Opinion of Marcus Garvey* and Jean Toomer's *Cane*.

1924

- *Opportunity* magazine's Civic Club Dinner, March. Touted by literary historians as the inaugural event of the New Negro movement, the dinner symbolizes a merger of white publishers and black writers.
- Actor Paul Robeson appears in O'Neill's *All God's Chillun Got Wings*, May.
- "Dixie to Broadway," an all-black musical revue, premieres at the Broadhurst Theater in New York City, October.

CHRONOLOGY

- First prize in the Witter Bynner Poetry Competition goes to Countee Cullen.
- Publication of Jessie Fauset's *There Is Confusion*, Walter White's *The Fire in the Flint*, W. E. B. Du Bois' *The Gift of Black Folk*, and Marcus Garvey's *Aims and Objects for a Solution of the Negro Problem Outlined*.

1925

- Marcus Garvey is convicted of mail fraud and jailed in the Atlanta Penitentiary, February.
- Publication of Alain Locke and Charles Johnson's special issue of *Survey Graphic*, "Harlem: Mecca of the New Negro," featuring black writers, March.
- A. Philip Randolph organizes the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, May.
- Negro Literary and Historical Society opens at 135th Street Branch of the New York Public Library, May 7. The same day, W. E. B. Du Bois, Carl Van Vechten, James Weldon Johnson, Walter White, Ridgely Torrence, and Arthur Spingarn meet to discuss formation of the Krigwa Players, to be based at the library.
- The first literary awards sponsored by *Opportunity* go to Langston Hughes, Countee Cullen, and Zora Neale Hurston, May.
- Josephine Baker debuts on the Parisian stage in *La Revue Nègre*, July.
- At the first *Crisis* awards ceremony held at the Renaissance Casino (a mecca of upscale African American nightlife), Countee Cullen wins first prize, November.
- Zora Neale Hurston enters Barnard College.
- American Negro Labor Congress meets in Chicago, October.
- First full-length Broadway play by an African American, Garland Anderson's *Appearances*, opens at the Frolic Theatre on Broadway, October.
- Paul Robeson makes his feature film debut in Oscar Micheaux's *Body and Soul*, November.
- Wallace Thurman moves from Los Angeles to New York.
- Publication of Countee Cullen's *Color*, DuBose Heyward's *Porgy*, Alain Locke's *The New Negro*, and *The Book of American Negro Spirituals* edited by James Weldon Johnson and J. Rosamond Johnson.

1926

- Countee Cullen accepts position as Assistant Editor of *Opportunity* and writes a regular column entitled "The Dark Tower."

CHRONOLOGY

- First celebration of Negro History Week, February.
- Savoy Ballroom, where many of the period's jazz dance crazes originate, opens in Harlem, March.
- Carnegie Corporation purchases Arthur Schomburg's collection for the New York Public Library, October.
- Harmon Foundation sponsors its first annual African American art exhibition at the New York Public Library, awarding works by Palmer Hayden and Hale Woodruff.
- *Crisis* awards go to Arna Bontemps' poem "Nocturne at Bethesda," Countee Cullen's poem "Thoughts in a Zoo," Aaron Douglas's painting "African Chief," and a portrait by Hale Woodruff.
- Publication of Wallace Thurman's *Fire!!*, Langston Hughes' *The Weary Blues*, Carl Van Vechten's *Nigger Heaven*, Eric Walrond's *Tropic Death*, W. C. Handy's *Blues: An Anthology*, and Walter White's *Flight*.

1927

- Manager Abe Saperstein forms the Harlem Globetrotters basketball team, January.
- Paul Green's drama *In Abraham's Bosom*, which had an all-black cast, wins the Pulitzer Prize, May.
- Fourth Pan-African Congress held in New York.
- Ethel Waters first appears on Broadway in the all-black revue *Africana*, July.
- Dorothy and DuBose Heyward's play *Porgy* opens on Broadway, September.
- By order of President Calvin Coolidge, Marcus Garvey's sentence is commuted and he is deported to Jamaica, December.
- Duke Ellington begins playing at the Cotton Club, December.
- A'Lelia Walker, renowned as hostess and "joy goddess" of the Renaissance, designs a tearoom salon called "The Dark Tower" after Cullen's column in *Opportunity*, which opens officially in early 1928.
- Publication of Miguel Covarrubias' *Negro Drawings*, Countee Cullen's *Ballad of the Brown Girl*, *Copper Sun*, and *Caroling Dusk*, Arthur Fauset's *For Freedom: A Biographical Story of the American Negro*, Langston Hughes' *Fine Clothes to the Jew*, James Weldon Johnson's *God's Trombones: Seven Negro Sermons in Verse* and *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* (reprint of the 1912 edition), and *Plays of Negro Life*, edited by Alain Locke and Montgomery T. Gregory.

CHRONOLOGY

1928

- Archibald Motley exhibits paintings at the New Galleries in New York and becomes the first artist of any race to appear on the cover of the *New York Times*, February.
- On April 9, Countee Cullen marries Nina Yolande, daughter of W. E. B. Du Bois, in what is described as one of the most lavish weddings in New York history; they divorce in 1930.
- Wallace Thurman edits *Harlem: A Forum of Negro Life*, a short-lived, literary magazine like *Fire!!*, with illustrations by Aaron Douglas and Richard Bruce Nugent, November.
- Publication of W. E. B. Du Bois' *The Dark Princess*, Rudolph Fisher's *The Walls of Jericho*, Nella Larsen's *Quicksand*, and Claude McKay's *Home to Harlem*.

1929

- The Negro Experimental Theatre formed at 135th Street branch library, February, directed by Regina M. Anderson and Dorothy Peterson.
- Wallace Thurman's play *Harlem*, written with William Rapp, opens at the Apollo Theater on Broadway, February.
- "Paintings and Sculptures by American Negro Artists," an exhibition sponsored by the Harmon Foundation, is held at the National Gallery in Washington, DC, May.
- Negro Art Theatre founded, June.
- National Colored Players founded, September.
- Stock Exchange crashes on Black Thursday, October 29.
- Publication of Countee Cullen's *The Black Christ and Other Poems*, Jessie Fauset's *Plum Bun*, Claude McKay's *Banjo*, Nella Larsen's *Passing*, Wallace Thurman's *The Blacker the Berry*, and Walter White's *Rope and Faggot: The Biography of Judge Lynch*.

1930

- *The Green Pastures*, a musical with an all-black cast, opens on Broadway, February.
- NAACP successfully contests President Hoover's nomination of renowned racist John J. Parker to the Supreme Court, March.
- Sufi Abdul Hamid founds the Universal Holy Temple of Tranquillity in Harlem.
- Black Muslim founder Wallace Fard Muhammad opens the Islam Temple in Detroit, July.

CHRONOLOGY

- Agatha Scott, wife of Brigadier General Benjamin O. Davis, Jr., founds the Northeasterners, Inc., an elite black women's social club.
- Colored Merchants' Association (founded in Alabama, 1928) spreads to Harlem.
- *La Revue du Monde Noir* founded in Paris.
- Publication of Randolph Edmonds' *Shades and Shadows*, Charles S. Johnson's *The Negro in American Civilization: A Study of Negro Life and Race Relations*, James Weldon Johnson's *Black Manhattan*, and Langston Hughes' *Not Without Laughter*.

1931

- The Scottsboro trial runs from April through July.
- Publication of Arna Bontemps' *God Sends Sunday*, Jessie Fauset's *The Chinaberry Tree*, Langston Hughes' *Dear Lovely Death*, *The Negro Mother*, and *Scottsboro Limited*, Vernon Loggins' *The Negro Author: His Development in America to 1900*, George S. Schuyler's *Black No More*, and Jean Toomer's *Essentials*.

1932

- Twenty young black intellectuals, including Dorothy West, Langston Hughes, and group leader Louise Thompson, sail to Russia to make the film *Black and White*, June.
- Sculptor Augusta Savage opens her first Savage School of Arts and Crafts in Harlem.
- Blacks begin to desert the Republican Party in large numbers.
- Publication of Sterling Brown's *Southern Road*, Countee Cullen's *One Way to Heaven*, Rudolph Fisher's *The Conjure Man Dies*, Langston Hughes' *The Dream Keeper*, Claude McKay's *Gingertown*, George Schuyler's *Slaves Today*, and Wallace Thurman's *Infants of the Spring*.

1933

- Dudley Murphy releases the film *The Emperor Jones* starring Paul Robeson.
- NAACP launches a campaign against segregation with a suit against University of North Carolina School of Pharmacy, March.
- Future Congressman Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. leads a demonstration for better health care in Harlem, April.
- Publication of Jessie Fauset's *Comedy, American Style*, James Weldon Johnson's *Along This Way*, and Claude McKay's *Banana Bottom*.

1934

- W. E. B. Du Bois resigns from *The Crisis* and NAACP after disagreements with NAACP secretary Walter White and a marked shift toward separatism in Du Bois' editorials, January.
- *Challenge* magazine founded by Dorothy West and friends.
- No longer presenting burlesque shows, the Apollo Theater showcases African American musicians and accepts African American patrons for the first time, January.
- Led by Howard Law School Dean Charles Houston, the NAACP and the American Fund for Public Service campaign against segregation and discrimination, October.
- Oscar Micheaux releases the film *Harlem after Midnight*.
- Sponsored by the PWA, Aaron Douglas paints four murals for the New York Public Library entitled *Aspects of Negro Life*, completed by November.
- Rudolph Fisher and Wallace Thurman die, December.
- Publication of Arna Bontemps' *You Can't Pet a Possum*, Randolph Edmonds' *Six Plays for the Negro Theatre*, Langston Hughes' *The Ways of White Folks*, Zora Neale Hurston's *Jonah's Gourd Vine*, James Weldon Johnson's *Negro Americans: What Now?*, George Lee's *Beale Street: Where the Blues Began*, and *Negro: An Anthology*, edited by Nancy Cunard.

1935

- The Harlem Race Riot erupts over discriminatory employment policies of white-owned businesses, March.
- The Museum of Modern Art opens the landmark exhibition *African Negro Art*, March.
- *Porgy and Bess*, the opera with an all-black cast, opens on Broadway, October.
- Langston Hughes' *Mulatto* becomes the first full-length play by a black writer to open on Broadway, October.
- Fifty per cent of Harlem's families are reportedly unemployed.
- Carl Van Vechten holds his first exhibition of photographs in *The Leica Exhibition* at Bergdorf Goodman in New York.
- Publication of Countee Cullen's *The Medea and Other Poems*, Zora Neale Hurston's *Mules and Men*, George Wylie Henderson's *Ollie Miss*, and Willis Richardson and May Sullivan's *Negro History in Thirteen Plays*.

CHRONOLOGY

1936

- Oscar Micheaux releases his film *Temptation*.
- Aaron Douglas paints murals for the Hall of Negro Life at the Texas Centennial Exposition in Dallas, formal dedication in June.
- Jesse Owens wins four gold medals at the Olympics in Berlin, August.
- Paul Robeson and Hattie McDaniel appear in James Whale's film musical *Show Boat*.
- Publication of Arna Bontemps' *Black Thunder*.

1937

- Paul Robeson stars in the film *King Solomon's Mines*.
- Joe Louis defeats James J. Braddock to become heavyweight boxing champion of the world, June.
- Publication of Claude McKay's *Long Way from Home*, Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, and Sterling A. Brown's *The Negro in American Fiction*.
- *Challenge* magazine revived as *New Challenge*, carrying Richard Wright's "Blueprint for Negro Writing."

1938

- Richmond Barthé completes his *Dance* reliefs for the Harlem River Housing Project in New York.
- Jacob Lawrence holds his first solo exhibition at the Harlem YMCA and completes his *Toussaint l'Ouverture* series, February.
- Langston Hughes' play "Don't You Want to be Free?" marks the opening of the Harlem Suitcase Theatre, April.
- James Weldon Johnson dies in an automobile accident.
- Publication of Zora Neale Hurston's *Tell My Horse*, an anthropological study of Jamaican and Haitian culture, and of Richard Wright's *Uncle Tom's Children*.

1939

- New York World's Fair features Augusta Savage's sculpture "The Harp," April.
- Publication of Zora Neale Hurston's *Moses: Man of the Mountain*.

CHRONOLOGY

1940

- Benjamin O. Davis, Sr., becomes the first black general in the United States Army, October.
- Publication of Langston Hughes' *The Big Sea*, Claude McKay's *Harlem: Negro Metropolis*, and Alain Locke's *The Negro in Art*.

(Information for the above chronology has been compiled from a number of sources, particularly Kellner's *Harlem Renaissance: A Historical Dictionary for the Era* and Watson's *The Harlem Renaissance*.)

GEORGE HUTCHINSON

Introduction

The Harlem Renaissance – what a complex and conflicted aura the term evokes! People can scarcely agree on what it means. A vogue. A blossoming. A failure. A foundation. A few stars. A movement of black self-assertion against white supremacy, connected with anticolonial movements worldwide, or a local phenomenon gradually co-opted and destroyed by white voyeurs, cultural colonialists taking advantage of black naifs, opportunists, or weak-kneed bourgeois artists. A post hoc invention of cultural historians, now abundantly exploited by publishers, New York tour guides, and even, of late, real estate investors.

What is commonly called the Harlem Renaissance today was known as the Negro Renaissance in its own time. “Negro”: a word of pride, of strong vowels and a capital N. The thick diagonal strode forward and put its foot down. “Negro” no longer signifies to most people what it did in the early to mid-twentieth century. A Spanish derivative, it did not exactly mean “Black” in American English – it was *sui generis*, a word only used to indicate persons of the slightest (non-“white”) sub-Saharan African descent, regardless of color, but it seized on the essential meaning of the metaphor of the one mighty “drop [of blood]” that made one “black.” Racial segregation was racing toward its apogee. Race was the word of the hour. Race suicide. Race purity. Race man. Race woman. The Passing of the Great Race. “Arise, O Mighty Race!” Enter the New Negro.

The Harlem Renaissance in literature was never a cohesive movement. It was, rather, a product of overlapping social and intellectual circles, parallel developments, intersecting groups, and competing visions – yet all loosely bound together by a desire for racial self-assertion and self-definition in the face of white supremacy. The interplay between intense conflict and a sense of being part of a collective project identified by race energized the movement and helps account for our enduring fascination with it.

Scholarship on the movement has itself been conflicted, contradictory, and passionate, for the issues with which the “renaissance” authors struggled

have remained. The field of Harlem Renaissance studies is all competing interpretations, from its inception to the present. What role should or did Marxism play in black political and intellectual culture? How important is the fact that many of the important writers were gay or bisexual? What are the political obligations of the black artist, and do they carry formal, thematic, or technical implications for the practice of art? How should or does or did African American culture articulate with American culture more generally? What should be made of the extensive involvement of black with white authors and patrons of the time, given the imbalances of power between them and the whites' inherited prejudices or blindnesses? How might one reconcile the "mixed" nature of African American (or Anglo-African, or Afro-Caribbean) cultural expression with the claims of racial solidarity and autonomy? What does it mean to be "Negro"? What is race? Harlem Renaissance writers, like many people today, disagreed with each other over the answers to these questions. A "companion" to the Harlem Renaissance must allow dissonance, overlap, and multiplicity to inform its very structure.

Some of the confusion and disagreement about what has come to be known as the "Harlem Renaissance" derives from a conflation of several overlapping phenomena. The term "Negro Renaissance" arose in the early to mid-1920s to signify a general cultural awakening and moment of recognition – both self-recognition (for it was a very self-conscious phenomenon) and recognition from "without." The Negro Renaissance, at this time, signified primarily a blossoming of literary arts.

Associated with the renaissance was a New Negro movement, which is more amorphous and difficult to define. It was not specifically identified with literature and the arts. The authors of the Harlem Renaissance were considered "New Negroes," but they were not the first or the only "New Negroes." The term "New Negro" in something like its twentieth-century meaning went back to the 1890s at least. (Indeed, it can be traced to the late eighteenth century.) Booker T. Washington was a "New Negro" in those years, author of *A New Negro for a New Century* (1900), and his followers thought of New Negroes as those who were building up all-black institutions without questioning the dominant western notions of "progress" and capitalist economics. By the 1920s, Booker T. Washington (who had died in 1915) seemed like an "Old Negro" to many because of his accommodation to white power. In the early twentieth century, and particularly in the immediate aftermath of World War I, the term New Negro tended to signify militant self-defense against white supremacy, intellectual aspiration, and quite often political radicalism. After 1925 and the publication of Alain Locke's anthology *The New Negro*, the term often carried less overt "political" reference,

and signified more a cultural affirmation of Negro identity expressed in poetry, fiction, drama, and the fine arts. In the course of the 1930s, this “culturalist” emphasis was often criticized, but, as Jeffrey Stewart argues in the first chapter of this book, the New Negro movement could be said to have extended to the late 1940s and beyond, setting the groundwork for the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s.

The notion of a “New Negro” suggested the need to disengage from and overcome an “Old Negro” stereotype; yet the renaissance included a reevaluation of and pride in black history and heritage. Negro History Week – later Black History Month – was born during the renaissance. Arthur Schomburg assembled his important collection of manuscripts and books concerning black culture worldwide and sold it to the New York Public Library (NYPL) during the peak of the renaissance. Even before acquiring Schomburg’s collection, the 135th Street branch of the NYPL (a major incubator and forum for the renaissance) had already started a “Negro” department, and a Society for the Study of Negro History and Literature had been founded there by the likes of James Weldon Johnson, Schomburg, and W. E. B. Du Bois. Carter G. Woodson had earlier founded a similar organization in Washington, DC.

Alongside and often intertwined with the Negro renaissance was the phenomenon of Harlem, and the Harlem “Vogue” that Langston Hughes indelibly scripted into the historical imagination of later generations by way of his first autobiography, *The Big Sea* (1940). But Hughes did not collapse what he termed the “Black Renaissance” into the Harlem, or Negro, Vogue. There was a Harlem Vogue, and more broadly a Negro Vogue of international dimensions, but there was also a “Black Renaissance.” The “Vogue” referred to the interest some whites took in black arts and culture, popular music, Broadway shows featuring black performers, and the nightlife entertainment during Prohibition, when Harlem became a popular nightlife destination. The end of this vogue (which had a Parisian analogue centered in Montmartre) coincided less with Black Monday in 1929 than with the end of Prohibition in 1933. For different reasons, the timing was approximately the same in Paris.

A critique of the “Vogue” was an essential aspect of the renaissance itself (as several chapters in this volume reveal) and infused much of its literature as well as popular performance. Similarly, left-wing radicalism was not a “post-renaissance” phenomenon but a significant aspect of the movement, which was always energized by the contestation between different schools of thought, different disciplinary perspectives, and different social circles. This fact is epitomized in the oft-forgotten subtitle of Alain Locke’s famous anthology *The New Negro: An Interpretation* (1925). Locke overtly

attempted to steer African American intellectual and artistic work in a certain direction – toward a cultural self-reconstruction and a New Negro aesthetic building on what he called “folk values.” (It was a shift of emphasis not atypical of intellectual culture in the twenties generally.) But plenty of people refused to go along. Points of view waxed and waned in influence, but there was no single “New Negro” cultural politics.

The renaissance also overlapped with or was part of a much broader, international Negro movement expressed in Pan-African congresses, Marcus Garvey’s United Negro Improvement Association, and black intellectual communities outside the United States.¹ Other anticolonial and cultural nationalist movements were also occurring at the time, of which black intellectuals were very aware – in Ireland especially, in India, in South America, in Mexico, in China. Seen from an international perspective the Harlem Renaissance was part of a global phenomenon in which cultural nationalisms (sometimes crossing the boundaries of nation-states) were mobilized against imperialisms economic, political, and cultural. Marxism also provided an intellectual matrix of international dimensions in which not a few “New Negroes” participated.²

Attention to the international dimensions of black intellectual culture between the World Wars has sometimes put in question the emphasis on Harlem and on American cultural politics in scholarship on the movement, which for many years ignored its international aspects. But these are and were overlapping (and sometimes competing) phenomena. Langston Hughes was a black internationalist, but much of his work was explicitly concerned with the struggle for black citizenship in the United States, as well as with articulating the meaning and power of black cultural expression in the context of “Americanism.” He placed this struggle within an international frame (variously so in the course of his long career), but one viewed from an American point of view. Discovering in Africa that people there “would not believe that [he] was a Negro,” Hughes did not assimilate the African notions of racial identity; instead he would continue to understand Africa through a black internationalist lens that was definitively “American.”³

Indeed, alongside the diasporic aspect of the renaissance was an investment in some versions of American cultural nationalism through which the “Americanness” of African American culture seemed a central and potentially powerful resource. In the NAACP’s *Crisis* magazine, for example, W. E. B. Du Bois and literary editor Jessie Fauset assailed the hypocrisy of white America while claiming, in the words of one of Fauset’s fictional heroines, “There is nothing more supremely American than the colored American, nothing more made-in-America, so to speak.” African Americans, the New Negroes often asserted, had given the United States its

most distinctive cultural forms and were the truest believers in its democratic dreams. Links between American cultural nationalism and African American modernism were crucial features of the movement across other intellectual divides.

In the 1920s and 1930s, New York was the chief point of entry and exit for black culture between the United States and other parts of the world. The vast majority of publishers who took an interest in black writing were based in New York, and they were helping transform the face of modern and American literatures. The Garvey movement was headquartered in Harlem, not Lagos or Dakar or Paris, not in Kingston or Marseilles. Could one have seen, anywhere else in the world, the kind of spectacles Garvey was able to stage in Harlem? And would the words and images have gotten out to other places?

France was also a vibrant crossroads of black culture and intellect. Claude McKay's *Banjo*, set in Marseilles, gives one of the best accounts of the black diasporic cross-referencing that went on in France, and the novel deeply impressed Francophone black intellectuals associated with *négritude*. Yet at the heart of that novel is an argument (by the Haitian stand-in for McKay himself) that working-class Negroes in the United States (but not exclusively American Negroes) are the most powerful and avant-garde of all black groups because they inhabit the most vital, rough-and-tumble, powerful capitalist and quasi-democratic nation in the world, while American-style racism helps bind them into a cohesive, racially conscious group. The transnational romance of race, for McKay, centers in the United States, and its most important material as well as intellectual and even cultural resources emanate from there, ineluctably shaped by the race-producing disciplines of America's one-drop rule.

Our very notion of who counts as a "Negro" in the world in the 1920s and 1930s privileges the racial discourse of the United States. Just as Africans did not take Langston Hughes to be a Negro when he visited there as a young sailor, neither did Mexicans when, before starting college, he stayed with his "*muy Americano*" (very American, in the Mexicans' view) father near Mexico City. His later friend and collaborator Nicolás Guillén in Cuba was proud to think of himself and Cuban culture as "mulatto." Had Nella Larsen been raised in the Danish West Indies, her father's birthplace, she would not have been a Negro. The mulatto elite of Claude McKay's Jamaica did not consider themselves "black," but he came to embrace the meaning of Negro as the United States institutionalized it. Even when we speak of "transnational" aspects of the Negro renaissance, we are speaking of something profoundly shaped by American racial culture and American power.

In the United States itself, the phenomenon had roots, and routes, outside New York City. Harlem, however, provided the movement with its symbolic capital and its institutional center of gravity, despite (and because of) the fact that very few of the “New Negro” writers were actually from Harlem. There one found a complex and culturally productive concentration of peoples of African descent: recent migrants from the rural South, immigrants from the Caribbean and Latin America (and even from Africa), native New Yorkers, and a burgeoning black professional class hailing from all sections of the United States. Moreover, black Harlem was a new community that seethed with energy, ensconced in the great communications as well as financial capital of the Western Hemisphere. The vast majority of important magazines and publishing houses for black writers were headquartered in New York.

Harlem was a kind of switchyard of black cultural “renaissancism” (to borrow a term from Houston Baker, Jr.).⁴ If few of the artists and writers came from Harlem (or even New York), many of them first met each other there. At the height of the renaissance, many of the New York participants lived in other areas of the city. Even James P. Johnson, the “King of Harlem stride piano,” lived in Queens. It is precisely the liminal, or betwixt-and-between, aspects of Harlem in the interwar period, combined with its concentrated “blackness,” that made it so important to the renaissance. Harlem was too diverse, had too many new migrants and immigrants, too much intellectual dissensus, for any one group to establish cultural dominance. The 135th Street Branch of the New York Public Library became a major site for all sorts of intellectual and artistic cross-fertilization, in part because no one group could claim it as their own. That point holds more generally for Harlem in the 1920s and 1930s.

While scholars have debated the beginning and ending dates of the movement or its “phases,” a general consensus remains that it took form after World War I and continued well into the 1930s. World War I was a serious blow to the prestige of “white” civilization and its discourse of rationality and progress. Black soldiers, experiencing relative freedom in Europe and battling to make the world “safe for democracy” returned to Jim Crow America ready to fight for their rights, buoyed by a growing black nationalist consciousness among the migrating masses. The Soviet Union, born of the Russian Revolution in the midst of the Great War, represented to many writers a more truly egalitarian social and political model than the capitalism of the western so-called “democracies,” and it seemed more committed to ending racism.

The Great War also contributed to the Great Migration of blacks in the southern United States to northern cities and new opportunities for work and

education. The American publishing industry exploded after World War I, and new firms (often founded by Jews) turned to new kinds of literature, including literature by African Americans. The Blues and Jazz took off as popular musical forms in the wake of the war and, aided by the new recording industry, appealed across lines of class, race, region, and nation. Conventions of gender and sexuality came under intense pressure. Prohibition provided the context for an enormous increase in illicit social activity, and the age of the nightclub bloomed. New black periodicals provided support and exposure for young authors, while the more liberal and radical “white” periodicals became interested in black talent as never before. Organizations like the NAACP and the National Urban League took advantage of the interest in black culture, featured literature and art in their “house” magazines, and staged literary banquets and great glittering balls with impressive floor shows for integrated crowds.

The Great Depression clamped down on the optimism of the late 1920s. The balls of the NAACP began losing money about 1931 and finally stopped. The nightclubs of Harlem were devastated by the end of Prohibition in 1933. David Levering Lewis has persuasively used the Harlem Riot of 1935 to mark the end of the movement from a social historian’s perspective. From a literary point of view, Richard Wright’s “Blueprint for Negro Writing” of 1937 and the publication of his novellas in *Uncle Tom’s Children* (1938) seem to mark an emphatic turning point, while Zora Neale Hurston’s *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937) – a novel Wright attacked – is generally considered one of the crowning achievements of the Harlem Renaissance. James Weldon Johnson, a key precursor, participant, and historian of the movement died in 1938, and soon thereafter Carl Van Vechten began accumulating manuscripts from “renaissance” participants for the James Weldon Johnson Memorial Collection housed at Yale, the most important archive of the movement. We therefore take the period 1918 to 1937 to reasonably encompass the Harlem Renaissance, while recognizing that periodization is always artificial and approximate.

By the early to mid-1930s, several writers were identifying the renaissance with tendencies they wished to put behind them. Thus began an attempt to identify the movement with a particular ideology or set of naive assumptions, a “school” of thought or a particular class bias. As Lawrence Jackson points out in this volume, the Negro Renaissance, increasingly identified specifically with Harlem and the “Negro Vogue” of the 1920s, became the “whipping boy” of later generations seeking to establish their own authority over what black literature could or should be and do. Yet their own visions, literary assumptions, affiliations, and techniques were rarely as distinct from various strains of the renaissance as they liked to believe.

One of the most tenacious myths about the Harlem Renaissance has been that interest in black literature and arts died in 1929 or 1930 because of the stock market crash. By almost any measure, as a literary and more broadly artistic phenomenon, one can find more happening in the arts and letters in the 1930s than in the 1920s. Considerably more black fiction was published in the 1930s than in the 1920s, by a broader range of publishers and magazines, despite a shrinkage in fiction publication overall. More Guggenheim Fellowships went to African Americans in the 1930s than in the 1920s. The Harmon Foundation became more active in supporting black arts in the 1930s than in the 1920s. Support provided by the Federal Writers Project, Federal Theater Project, and Federal Arts Project put to shame the piecemeal patronage of the late 1920s. Visual artists returning to Harlem in the 1930s opened up schools and workshops with a concentration of talent, experience, and youthful ambition far beyond anything known earlier, to the benefit of people like Romare Bearden, Jacob Lawrence, and Norman Lewis. Ethel Waters was one of the greatest stars on Broadway, and James Weldon Johnson was hired to teach creative writing at New York University. If the *Vogue* had ended, black “renaissancism” had endured.

Behind the negative use of the renaissance was a sense of the movement’s “failure” aesthetically – it had, many felt, produced no weighty masterpieces – connected with disappointment that it had not done more to advance the black freedom movement. Certainly some renaissance participants had expected greater social efficacy for the movement than it was able to produce. Others never expected the arts to be able to transform the position of the mass of black people except through a long-term cumulative effect connected with other forms of endeavor. Literature had its place in the broad front of Negro advance, however. Speaking to an interviewer in 1929, at the very height of the *Vogue*, Nella Larsen stated, “Even if the fad for our writings passes presently, as it is bound to do I suppose, we will in the meantime have laid the foundation for our permanent contribution to American culture.”⁵ That judgment is now indisputable. But, of course, making a contribution to a culture is not the same as radically transforming an entrenched social structure.

Beginning in the 1980s, understandings and evaluations of the Harlem Renaissance began to shift. Black feminist interventions brought critical attention to the narrowing effects of prior criticism that tended to demote or screen out the contributions of black women to African American culture and their challenges to white women’s feminism. Critics began questioning the assumptions behind narratives of the movement’s “failure” and developed new methods of reading its authors’ engagements with modernism and modernity. Reconsiderations of the meaning of “Modernism” – previously defined as a movement in which black writers played no part – coincided

with a questioning of the segregation of “black” from “white” literature and growing dissatisfaction with prescriptive approaches to black writing that used racial “authenticity” as a standard of judgment. Post-structuralist theory also tended to undermine faith in notions of “authentic blackness” and brought increasing attention to the performative dimensions of “race” as well as its historical contingency. Postcolonial theory stressed the “hybridity” of expressions of formerly colonized peoples. Near the turn of the twenty-first century, growing interest in globalization and transnationalism helped inspire interest in those aspects of the renaissance that exceeded the ideological and geographical boundaries of the nation-state. New methods and theories of African American literature inevitably developed in relation to (while often challenging or transforming) such broad intellectual movements as second-wave feminism, post-structuralism, and psychoanalytic criticism. And in the rise of Queer Theory, as well as recuperation of the history of sexuality, the Harlem Renaissance became a site of intense critical interest.

As a result of these major shifts in the realm of literary scholarship the “canon” of the Harlem Renaissance has been under continuous contention and reconstruction since the late 1970s. Just as the movement’s positioning at the intersection of wide-ranging and crucial historical developments has come to seem inarguable, today its literary achievement appears considerably more substantial than it did when Nathan Huggins published his path-breaking study, *Harlem Renaissance* (1971).

The middle section of this book provides an investigation of that canon as it appears to us today in relationship to the varied concerns and forms explored by the New Negro authors of the 1920s and 1930s. While we have tried to cover a broad range, we could hardly be comprehensive. While seeking clarity of analysis and expression, this book tries not to reduce key issues – the meaning of race, the relationship between race and writing, chronology, relations between white and black, sexuality, internationalism and nationalism – to a misleading consensus. We have attempted to put authors in conversation with each other in often new ways that both make sense historically and draw attention to major developments in form, theme, and technique, and that highlight key nodes of the network in which the literature emerged even as “Negro literature” developed into a semi-autonomous field. In keeping with the format of the Cambridge Companion series, this book (except in the Chronology) largely restricts its attention to the literary realm, but we encourage our readers to think beyond such boundaries, as the literary interacted profoundly with, and was shaped in relation to, other forms of expression that were also integral to the broader movement. Within our limitations, we have tried to present the best of current wisdom but also to offer a highly readable provocation to new formulations, new readings, and archival exploration.

NOTES

1. Brent Hayes Edwards, *The Practice of Diaspora: Literature, Translation, and the Rise of Black Internationalism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003).
2. See especially William J. Maxwell, *New Negro, Old Left: African American Writing and Communism between the Wars* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999); and Barbara Foley, *Spectres of 1919: Class and Nation in the Making of the New Negro* (Urbana-Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2003).
3. Langston Hughes, *The Big Sea* (1940; New York: Hill and Wang, 1993), p. 11.
4. See Houston A. Baker, Jr., *Modernism and the Harlem Renaissance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987).
5. Marion L. Starkey, "Negro Writers Come Into Their Own," unpublished manuscript, in Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., Collection, Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, University of Texas.

I

JEFFREY C. STEWART

The New Negro as citizen

In an America that prided itself on its exceptionalism, it was the Negro who was the most important exception to American citizenship. Unlike other Americans, with the exception of the Native Americans, African Americans had to wait until the passage of the Fourteenth Amendment in 1867, two hundred years after first arriving in North America, to become citizens, and wait another hundred years before they could exercise the rights of citizens everywhere in the nation. Because America has prided itself on its self-proclaimed pluralism, its justly lauded achievement of blending together so many diverse peoples into a common culture, some questions remained. What about the Negro? How could the Negro enter into an American notion of citizenship that was predicated on immigrants becoming “white” by defining themselves as “not black?” How could black people become citizens if black exclusion was the very ground of citizenship for others? Frederick Douglass perhaps put it best. Douglass asserted that Lincoln was a great man and the father of the new white nation that came into being with the Civil War. But the Negro was only Lincoln’s stepchild, a fatherless child who had to find his or her own way into a citizenship alone. What was simply a passing anomaly to the rest of Americans marching to the drumbeat of celebratory democracy became, for the black citizen, what Henry James called a complex fate – for to forge a Negro into an American citizen would require that both America and the Negro be changed.¹

By invoking James’ metaphor, I intend to pursue here something more than the usual rehearsal of the American Negro’s political citizenship woes. Those woes are real, of course. While the Constitution did not limit natural-born citizenship to whites, acts passed by Congress that followed, such as the Naturalization Act of 1793, suggested, as Judge Taney put it memorably in the Dred Scott decision of 1857, the Negro “had no rights that the white man was bound to respect.” But blacks had exercised such rights to reward and punish their political friends and enemies during a series of elections in the early nineteenth century, as Negroes with property voted in such states as

Pennsylvania. Then, in the 1830s, during what is misnamed Jacksonian Democracy, the zero sum game of American citizenship began with poor whites obtaining the right to vote at the expense of all blacks losing their right to the franchise. Even after the Fourteenth Amendment's guarantee of citizenship rights to all regardless of race, women suffrage advocates would promise that black women would not receive the right to vote if white women got it. But such exclusion of black men and women from full citizenship rights was never complete, and being decentered politically had its advantages – it forced the Negro to invent new strategies, forge new identities, start over again with a new pitch, to pivot around American political structures to nevertheless affect the nation politically. In part through the adoption of a new name, the New Negro, black people at the beginning of the twentieth century announced a new political subject who had detoured around American electoral politics.²

Booker T. Washington in *A New Negro for a New Century* was the first modern black political philosopher to read the lessons of the industrial revolution of late nineteenth-century America and conclude that the problem of the black citizen was not a matter of democracy, but a question of power. If the black community possessed a thriving economy, with millions employed, and black Robber Barons dominating its polity, would the New Negro, Washington asks, really need integration? At Tuskegee Institute, which he founded and managed, Washington taught black students techniques of self-reinvention designed to turn black workers into twentieth-century capitalists. Through photographic self-portraits and portraits of Edwardian-looking students, Washington fashioned an image of the black business-minded man and woman who transcended plantation stereotypes. Here the essence of the New Negro mentality was displayed – the capacity to begin again and anew despite past tragedies. But Ida B. Wells critiqued Washington's re/construction of the New Negro as self-destructive on evidence that black businessmen and women in the South were being lynched precisely because they competed with white petit bourgeois interests. Even more important, the black masses ignored Washington's advice to "cast down your bucket" in the Jim Crow South and remain late capitalism's peasants by coming north and taking industrial jobs opened up by World War I. Black Nationalists eschewed Washington's accommodationist rhetoric to hail a different New Negro – the race conscious black masses who joined Marcus Garvey's anti-white Universal Negro Improvement Association. Black socialists saw another New Negro of black proletarianism, in the willingness of urban blacks to fight back against pogrom-like white riots in northern cities during 1919. The New Negro in the early twentieth century was an Exquisite Corpse, a work of art constantly added to

by intellectuals who ignored or critiqued preceding portraits of the New Negro to create a composite image that was confusing if not confused.³

It helps to clarify the New Negro as an early twentieth-century trope of black radicalism if we focus on the Great Migration of the World War I years and its relationship to citizenship in the United States. For a key “right” of federal citizenship in the United States of America under the Constitution is the right to migrate from one state to another. But this was one of the first rights to be curtailed for free Negroes in the nineteenth century. The initial conflict that led to the Civil War – Missouri’s barring of Negroes from the state while applying for admission to the Union – set a pattern of state exclusion of black citizens that continued after the war in white citizens excluding Negroes from cities and towns in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Citizenship, therefore, for the Negro has never been a given, but rather an unprotected right to be seized again and again. One citizenship outcome of the New Negro of the World War I years was that, by migrating north, blacks entered urban and industrial voting districts that would determine the nation’s future. It is this “migrating peasant,” as Alain Locke, the Harvard-educated author of the Harlem issue of *Survey Graphic* put it in 1925, who demands citizenship rights rather than waiting, like the Old Negro, to have them bestowed. And unlike other commentators, Locke minimized the sociological explanations of this migration, and emphasized its philosophical idealism, painting the black migrants as a visionary people who imagined that day when they would shape the American polity as agents of change. Here, then, is one of the crucial psychological elements of the post-World War I New Negro – a directness, forthrightness, and confrontational uprightness of men and women willing to demand rights, grab them by the throat if necessary, that Locke labeled the spirit of “self-determination” of the New Negro. While the fighting back character of recent migrants in 1919 is exemplary of this New Negro consciousness, it is really the migration prior to that “If We Must Die” attitude that is fundamentally revolutionary.⁴

Locke added his distinctive signature to the portrait of the New Negro by linking the younger generation of black writers to the Great Migration of hundreds of thousands of blacks leaving the South and coming to the North during World War I. For Locke, there were two New Negroes – the poor black masses changing the geography of American citizenship, and the young black writers reflecting that energy in literature. What brought the educated writers and the uneducated migrant together was their sequestration in segregated crucibles like Harlem, where the sense that they were all in the same place for the same reason – race – lowered the inherent class conflict in the Negro community. “A railroad ticket and a suitcase, like a Baghdad carpet, transport the Negro peasant from the cotton-field and farm to the

heart of the most complex urban civilization Meanwhile the Negro poet, student, artist, thinker, by the very move that normally would take him off at a tangent from the masses, finds himself in their midst, in a situation concentrating the racial side of his experience and heightening his race-consciousness." By linking middle-class black writers to the agency of the black working class, Locke defined the New Negro as a metaphor that structured a set of oppositions and allowed a mixture if not a synthesis of divergent perspectives as well as personalities. "In a real sense it is the rank and file who are leading, and the leaders who are following. A transformed and transforming psychology permeates the masses."⁵ The black artist was important, therefore, not as an isolated member of the "Lost Generation" of Gertrude Stein and F. Scott Fitzgerald, but as a cultural translator, who absorbed the social reality of black life in segregated America, and turned it into a unique American art. Turning years of elite American cultural ideology and assimilationist sociology on its head, Locke announced that race was the creative space in American culture.

Of course, race is *not* supposed to be a creative space if one consults most narratives of American culture. For the dominant metaphor of America was that of the "melting pot," a concept that has persisted in American thought far beyond its birth in early twentieth-century America. From that perspective, the trajectory of success laid out for the black educated was along a path of absorption into the mainstream, and barring that, as was the reality under Jim Crow segregation, lobbying against exclusion and for inclusion from the position of the outsider. This approach was also a part of the 1920s New Negro literature, epitomized in Claude McKay's poems "Mulatto" and "White House," poetry that protested against racism and the exclusion of blacks from the family and the "House" of America. Locke has been criticized for excluding "Mulatto" from the Harlem issue of the *Survey Graphic* and changing the title of "White House" to "White Houses" in an attempt to excise the protest element out of the New Negro and to "aestheticize" the "movement." But Locke rejected what he believed was McKay's excessive infatuation with protest in part because it suggested that the Negro could only be whole by being allowed in to a form of Americanism that the Negro knew already was corrupt. Locke sought a deeper politics than demanding redress from withholding whites. What was revolutionary about the politics of the migrating black masses was that they had stopped trying to force their way into a South that did not want them. Instead, they had gone within themselves, and found within the black experience a folk culture, a sense of self-respect, and an independent vision of what they should do. Rather than essentialist and based on the biology of the Negro, such a consciousness emerged from a distinctive culture, formed out of the

particular historically bounded experience of a people, whose emergence as subjects in twentieth-century America was tied to an ability to thrive on one's own in American culture. Moreover, black migrants from the South, other parts of New York, other parts of the world, had founded in Harlem a northern urban community that nurtured a new modernist culture, folk and individualistic, naive and sophisticated, that other Americans, especially educated whites, wanted to assimilate, copy, and market as the New American Culture of the twentieth century.⁶

Because political citizenship had failed African Americans, Locke and other New Negro intellectuals invented a cultural citizenship that promised a new kind of American identity defined by culture instead of politics. Locke followed in the footsteps of Ralph Waldo Emerson, who, in "The American Scholar," rejected the Founding Fathers and their political notion of American identity as originating in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. For Emerson, America needed a cultural declaration of independence to fulfill its destiny; for the scholar, the artist, the poet, who rejected Europe and looked into him/herself and the common people of America, could find not only America's soul, but also the beginnings of a new more inclusive notion of what was American. Locke captured some of the idealism of nineteenth-century visionaries in his notion that the migrants, as well as the black artists of the 1920s, were motivated primarily by idealism; that the soul of the African American was in the "folk culture" of the common people; and that in rejecting aggressive assimilation of Anglo-American culture, the African American artist, like Emerson's "Poet," could imagine a higher sense of nationality for both whites and blacks in twentieth-century America. While Locke is often described as an aesthete, in part because he was a lover of art of all kinds, and gay black intellectual, the truth is that his ambitions for the New Negro movement were broader and larger, more akin to the aspirations of early nineteenth-century Boston to create an urban world committed to the production of great Americans, not simply great politicians.⁷

New Negro cultural citizenship was always, however, a dialectical engagement with whiteness and blackness in the formation of an alternative cultural ideal to the reigning nineteenth-century Anglo-American notion that all who were citizens had to worship England as their cultural forebear. Negro cultural citizenship had roots in another nineteenth-century argument, that of Anglo-African gentility, the pre-Jacksonian era concept epitomized by James Forten and Frederick Douglass, that to become a citizen the Negro had to imbibe the attributes of education, property ownership, personal refinement, and taste. But that gentility was itself overthrown by another cultural demand of the Jackson Presidency, the demand that the citizen must

be white, an ideology even Irish, Italian, and Jewish immigrants had to embrace in order to become American citizens. New Negro writers in the 1920s rejected that demand by incorporating the folk culture of the black and funky masses newly arrived from the South in their black modernism. The unassimilated proletarian became the authentic, the uncompromised man and woman in Jean Toomer's *Cane*, Langston Hughes' *The Weary Blues* and *Fine Clothes for the Jew*, Rudolph Fisher's *City of Refuge*, and Claude McKay's *Home to Harlem*. In *Home to Harlem*, for example, Ray, the educated black intellectual, sees Jake, the working-class deserter, as the more authentic person who carries within him a technology of survival that Ray needs to give meaning to his life. But while foregrounding the black poor as American culture bearers, these works of fiction and poetry also announced a new kind of educated American subject, someone who had mastered both the culture of the masses and the culture of international modernism. The New Negro was, in reality, an on-going complex transaction between a black sense of self and a sense of self as urban, industrialized, and also white – a balancing act of constantly referring backwards and forwards, from lessons and loyalties of the past to creative immersions in an unruly present, all of which shaped not only the New Negro, but the urban space that emerged in the twentieth century North. As a result, a profoundly dialectical cultural citizenship emerged in black urban modernism whereby the American soul would be tested and melded anew with the cultures and the dangers that lurked therein – in a Harlem more advanced and modern than any other chocolate city of the Black Atlantic.⁸

New Negroes were never simply racial identities, but new, more complex personalities, black individuals, sparkling in their multifarious talents, inclinations, and aspirations, modern black people who appeared even more so when they traveled to other, less sophisticated, more provincial black towns. The New Negroes were far more complex personalities than even educated nineteenth-century Negroes they replaced as the intellectual leaders of the race. They were comfortable discussing European and white American thinkers, fluent in several languages, multitalented as writers, social scientists, dramatists, and, above all, provocative, outstanding conversationalists. More sophisticated than their racial forefathers when discussing race, being influenced by the new anthropological theories of Franz Boas, these New Negroes were also peers of the whites who sought to influence them. Alain Locke, a philosopher, aesthete, and journalist penned several articles on the anthropological theory of race and influenced Boas's prodigy, Melville Herskovits, to revamp his entire theory of African survivals in the United States, which resulted in his groundbreaking work, *The Myth of the Negro Past*. Langston Hughes altered Carl Van Vechten's understanding of

the spirituals, while at the same time being the most successful writer – poet, playwright, short story writer, lyricist, and novelist – of the group. One can hardly imagine a more interesting person to talk to at a party than Zora Neale Hurston, whose humor, brilliance, and recall made her the finest folklorist of the 1920s. Rudolph Fisher worked as a doctor by day, but wrote short stories at night, except when he could be found at Harlem parties trading witticisms with Alain Locke. Here was an outstanding group of intellectuals as well as artists, men and women as comfortable in the white intellectual world as the black, yet grounded by a commitment to try and find in the black experience a new voice of America. A new kind of enlightened American citizen had emerged – the race cosmopolitan, who was able to discuss the national literary and intellectual heritage in black and white, exhibit a worldliness and breadth of influences less evident in black nationalisms of the 1960s, yet remain committed to the race and the transformation of America through the culture of the black community.⁹

Despite the legitimate criticisms of the New Negro as largely a male and heterosexist cultural icon, it should be remembered that many talented women, gay, and lesbian intellectuals and artists found themselves in the New Negro movement. Richard Bruce Nugent was as flamboyant a gay man as one can imagine in the Harlem of the 1920s and seemed not to suffer greatly because of it. Many women writers were blocked or simply not promoted by the male oligarchy of the New Negro; but others spoke of how thrilled they were to get to New York, such as Louise Thompson, who found she could be free, associate with brilliant men and women of the race, have intellectual discussions with interested whites at mixed race parties, and grow into a radical woman intellectual in the 1930s. Georgia Douglas Johnson, Gwendolyn Bennett, and Anne Spencer crafted a new poetry of love, intimacy, and maternal sacrifice that knitted together sentiments and metaphors from American women's poetry and the black experience. Even though most of these innovators would go unrecognized until rediscovered at the end of the century, the volumes of unpublished writings posthumously discovered testify to the fact that being ignored by the white mainstream press did not stop them from writing from the heart. To be New Negro meant to live in the present with the echoes of past crimes and silenced communities echoing in one's head, regardless of what the rest of the nation thought of it. And it meant dreaming in the 1920s of a new kind of citizenship, of at-homeness, grounded in a capacious black urban community that was far more advanced in its foregrounding of feminist and homosexual identities than the rest of the nation. It meant the courage to resist not only 100 percent Americanism, but also gender bias and homophobia within a black community in transition.¹⁰

The creativity of this New Negro in its second phase – the 1920s – reflected a pivotal, transitional moment in American history when the old rural agricultural world was disappearing and a new, alien, yet still communal, northern, industrial world was taking its place. In that process, black identities, like white ones, were freed from the old constraints on individualism and group consciousness that the old “medieval America,” as Locke put it, had imposed on southern Americans, black and white. That transition brought a great deal of nostalgia, but also a greater idealism that anything was possible for the culturally self-conscious black personality.

But in the 1930s a new half generation of young people emerged who rejected the cultural citizenship argument of Alain Locke. They argued for a New Negro activism in the face of widespread employment discrimination and segregation in commercial establishments in Washington, DC. Claiming that the earlier artistic approach to gaining citizenship rights had failed, John P. Davis and other young black intellectuals adopted a Direct Action approach to the persistent segregation and discrimination in employment in the nation’s capital. Although privately encouraged by Locke and others at Howard University, these young black intellectuals redefined the New Negro as an activist, willing to picket, boycott, and even be arrested to compel A and P Grocery Stores, the ironically titled Peoples Drug Stores, and other businesses operating in the black community to hire black workers as clerks or managers. By the late 1930s, the New Negro Alliance had scored a series of stunning victories against establishments fighting for their economic survival in the Great Depression. Unlike earlier, Booker T. Washington-like petty bourgeois black nationalist campaigns to patronize black-owned businesses, the “Don’t Buy Where You Can’t Work” campaign of the New Negro Alliance recognized the profound economic reality of black life in the urban North (and even Upper South) ghetto – that black communities were served principally by white corporations and businesses dependent on black consumers to survive in the Fordist stage of American industrial capitalism.¹¹

Indeed, elements of the earlier New Negro movements resurfaced in the ideology of the New Negro Alliance. For it had been Henry Ford and other industrial capitalists who had opened their factories to black workers in the 1910s and set in motion the process by which hundreds of thousands of southern blacks would migrate into the North during the Great Migration. Beyond breaking the color bar in automobile industry employment, Ford had also recognized that every worker was a consumer, and by giving workers a living wage he increased the pool of potential consumers of his cars. The recognition that consumption, rather than production, drove the American economy in the twentieth century structured economic policy in the New Deal, and perhaps explains, in part, why the Supreme Court in 1938 ruled in

favor of the New Negro Alliance's case demanding the right of consumers to protest hiring practices of businesses under the Norris-La Guardia Anti-Injunction Act, a law originally passed by Congress to protect the right to strike of workers. But what made this Alliance *New Negro* was its recognition that the consumer economy was *racialized* and that the shift to a Fordist, consumer-based economy empowered those segregated consumer markets to pressure local and national businesses for concessions around workers' rights, especially the potential worker's right to be employed. The New Negro Alliance defined a new interest in American politics in the twentieth century – that the historically segregated citizen was entitled to rights in a racialized democracy. Otherwise, that citizen could disrupt the economic peace the New Deal sought to craft between the capitalist and the worker in the Great Depression. The New Negro Alliance embodied the Lockean sense of cultural citizenship, since Davis' political strategy reflected the 1920s' demand for public *representation* – in art or politics. But in the heady success of its late 1930s victories, the New Negro Alliance, like earlier new beginnings in black history, gained energy from repudiating its antecedents.¹²

Perhaps Paul Robeson in the 1930s best embodied the two sides of the New Negro as cultural citizen and political rebel. Robeson was the 1920s New Negro artist in his singing of the spirituals and secular black folk music, his performance of black self-conscious roles in the drama of Eugene O'Neill, and his identification with Africa in his films and friendships with African leaders such as Nkrumah and Azikiwe. He was the race cosmopolitan, who, though proud of his race and cultural history, was not restricted in the range of his tastes, friendships, and influences. But Robeson became most effective as a New Negro ambassador to the world in the 1930s by using his cultural efficacy to open up a unique space in global politics. Robeson's gifts as a singer and an actor took him to Europe, where, as an expatriate in the 1930s, he transformed himself from being simply a New Negro artist to being an international New Negro political rebel. After starring in a London production of Shakespeare's *Othello*, Robeson read voraciously in the literature of socialism, became an outspoken critic of racism and international fascism, and issued his famous declaration – "the artist must elect to fight for freedom or for slavery. I have made my choice. I had no alternative." In concerts in European capitals, Robeson began to include the songs of native peoples in his program of spirituals, thereby knitting together the strivings for self-determination of blacks and Europeans. By doing so he avoided the trap of falling into the American alternative to racialized subjectivity – the assimilationist narrative, by which individuals and groups sacrifice their cultural and historical particularity for inclusion into white bread universality. Instead, Robeson crafted a position that the universality of the spirituals,

for example, resided in their particularity to the black American struggle for freedom, an aspiration that linked them to other peoples fighting to gain their voice and sense of agency in the 1930s. Robeson began to speak to and about the aboriginal peoples whose culture and freedom were suppressed in nationalist identities, such as the fate of aboriginal peoples in the nationalist praxis of the Australian. He also included songs of workers, unions, and anticolonialist freedom fighters, broadening the New Negro from a black nationalist to a class and anticolonialist consciousness only hinted at in Locke's *The New Negro*. Interestingly, it was only while abroad that Robeson was able to transform himself from the New Negro as racialized subject to the New Negro as a global citizen.¹³

Back in the United States in the 1940s, Robeson was an even more active American citizen than before his sojourn in Europe. But a sea change in the New Negro was also occurring even as he became a very public cheerleader for the US–Soviet alliance in World War II. With the death of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Harry Truman took over the White House and crafted a post-World War II foreign policy that led the nation into the Cold War. Robeson was appalled, because during his sojourns in the Soviet Union he had witnessed a progressive policy toward minorities, and formed a close bond with the Russian people. Robeson became an enemy of the Truman administration, and led the Presidential campaign of Henry Wallace, the Progressive Party candidate, to win the Presidency, and if not that, to spoil Truman's chance for reelection. That reelection seemed a long shot, because Truman was a weakened President by 1948, not only because of opposition to the Cold War, but because he had issued a number of executive orders and proposed a number of bills that positioned him as the most “progressive” President on Civil Rights so far in the nation's history. Why?¹⁴

A Second Great Migration out of the South and into such northern states as Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Illinois, but also into California, where the aircraft and shipbuilding industries employed thousands of blacks, had occurred during World War II mobilization. This second wave of migrants added to those who had come during World War I and had continued to come during the interwar period. Now, in some northern cities especially, the forming black ghettos constituted sizeable and pivotal voting majorities. In addition, many more African Americans than in World War I were drawn into the armed forces during World War II, experiencing first hand the cruelties of segregated American military service, both within the Army and Navy, but also in the southern towns where training camps were often located. The World War II experience of mobilization, interstate migration, and government-sanctioned discrimination produced a second-generation New Negro consciousness, heightened even more by the well-publicized

postwar violence toward returning black servicemen in the South. Unlike the earlier New Negro of the 1910s and 1920s that avoided a frontal assault on segregation and built race pride and racial institutions within its structure, this post-World War II New Negro citizen demanded America dismantle institutional segregation as the first step to Negro freedom in the United States. When Truman saw the southern wing of the Democratic Party bolt and form a separate party to run candidates against him because of the modest Rooseveltian Civil Rights initiatives that he sought to extend into postwar America, he decided his Presidency was lost unless he secured the support of these New Negro citizens in the northern and western states. Accordingly, he issued Executive Order 9981 to begin desegregating the Armed Forces, extended the life of a Presidential Committee on Civil Rights, and pressured Congress to pass an anti-lynching law, among other things. A sea change had certainly occurred. For in the 1920s the NAACP had been an isolated voluntary organization proposing anti-lynching legislation; but now, in 1948, it was the President himself who was pressuring Congress to pass the anti-lynching bill.¹⁵

The Great Migrations of millions of blacks out of the non-voting South and into the political efficacy of life in the North and West over the first half of the twentieth century had brought a revolution to American politics and American citizenship. For this voting block threw its support to Truman in the 1948 election, one of the closest in American history, and made the difference in allowing Truman to remain in the White House. While some blacks voted for Wallace, the black masses knew that he had little chance of winning the White House, and to vote for him would be at best a symbolic vote against the Cold War. But a vote for Truman would be a vote against the South and for desegregation, which Truman had stimulated in his executive order and his progressive position on Civil Rights with Congress. A race-based political consciousness among the black masses had made the practical political choice to use the franchise to change the racial dynamic politically in America rather than advance the global partnership with the Soviet Union that Robeson advocated from above. As Locke had said several decades earlier, “in a real sense it is the rank and file who are leading, and the leaders who are following.” In the post-World War II political world, an even newer “transformed and transforming psychology permeates the masses.” It is perhaps heartening to realize that that psychology had produced a Copernican revolution in the Democratic Party in 1948, creating a new party that revolved around the Negro citizen and not simply the southern white man.¹⁶

Of course, the influence of Robeson and other first-generation New Negro intellectuals had been critical to the emergence of this new consciousness.

Robeson's stinging critique of Truman's earlier reluctance to make Civil Rights a domestic priority, combined with the political reality of the black masses voting in the 1948 election, forced Truman to embrace a more aggressive posture on the issue of desegregation if he wanted national support of blacks for the Cold War. And Robeson had taken the lead in pressuring, among other things, the Baseball Association to integrate black players into the national pastime. Robeson was more able than other first-generation New Negroes to play a role in the post-World War II New Negro world because of having remade his political consciousness while living abroad. But while he had been abroad important changes had occurred in the composition of the New Negro consciousness in the United States, especially among the young men who had served in the military or reached maturity in the urban North and the urban South during that war. They had adopted the earlier New Negro innovation that power was dispersed in America not to individuals but to groups in the service of a new idea – that dismantling segregation was the first and most important item on the New Negro agenda.¹⁷

But at the same time, something crucial was lost: the message of cultural citizenship, a sense that even if one dismantled the apparatus of *de jure* segregation, for example in the army, and left the rest of the system intact, that did not fundamentally eradicate the ideology of white supremacy or alter the larger system of economic manipulation that fueled it. One may have cut off the legs of segregation in the law; but in doing so, only set the stage for the reproduction of segregation as a *de facto* practice later, as has occurred in the post-Civil Rights era. In marching into the light of political citizenship, the New Negro of the third phase – who wished to become a citizen like the rest of Americans – became just that and no more: a political entity with perhaps a bit less efficacy than the white citizen in America. In a sense, the black became a citizen like all of the Americans who had been on the inside. But in doing so, s/he lost the advantage of being an outsider who could invoke a critique of the entire system of political representation that had been co-opted by corporations and economic elites. In an irony, the New Negro had become the American, for the American was also, whether white or Latino or Italian, increasingly a powerless entity in American politics.

Perhaps skepticism about the long-term healing effects of desegregation helps explain why another New Negro spokesperson, Zora Neale Hurston, lashed out so vociferously when the *Brown vs. Board of Education* decision was handed down by the Supreme Court in 1954. While her remarks have been generally understood as reactionary, there is another sense in which her criticism of the *Brown* decision can be understood. She argued that the decision was a slight on the kind of life and education and experiences

black people had developed under segregation, by portraying that life as pathological because of the existence of segregation. For her, the Negro had been a cultural citizen before desegregation and would remain so afterwards. Of course, her remarks were also defensive, since she also understood that desegregation had the potential to dismantle the cultural formation called the New Negro and the autonomous black folk she had spent her life documenting. But what she feared and others later witnessed was the demise of the social base of the New Negro – which had been formed by accepting the possible permanence of segregation and creating subversive structures within its crevices. Now, with its dismantling, the New Negro concept, indeed the very use of the term Negro, lapsed, to be replaced in the middle 1960s by a new identity, of Blackness, formed in response to the reality of the persistence of white supremacy and white power even after the demise of de jure segregation. In a sense, both Hurston and Robeson, race cosmopolitans from different ideological perspectives, saw the necessity for an independent cultural citizenship grounded in the Negro, or now black, community that transcended even the post-World War II successes of expanded Negro political citizenship.¹⁸

Interestingly, after the major victories of the Civil Rights Movement of the mid-1960s, another intellectual and cultural rebellion surfaced, sometimes called the Black Power Movement, other times the Black Arts Movement, which looked back to the Harlem Renaissance for inspiration to reinvigorate a New Negro in the 1960s. While the Black Arts Movement tended to cleave off the interracial cosmopolitanism of the earlier movement, the later movement rediscovered and republished such canonical New Negro texts as Alain Locke's *The New Negro: An Interpretation*, the book version of the Harlem issue of *Survey Graphic*, in the 1960s.¹⁹ That interest reflected, I want to argue, a desire to reconstruct American identity through the pluralistic cultural notion of citizenship explored in 1920s Harlem. The latter half of the twentieth century witnessed successive waves of other marginalized citizens – women, Native Americans, Chicanos/as, gays and lesbians – who, unwittingly or not, followed the path pioneered by the New Negro. For that earlier movement was a nursery for self-conscious minorities longing for the more spiritually capacious notion of citizenship America promised but seldom delivered.

NOTES

1. See Jeffrey C. Stewart, *1001 Things Everyone Should Know about African American History* (New York: Doubleday, 1998), pp. 110–72 for information on the Fourteenth Amendment and the struggle for citizenship. Frederick

- Douglass, "Oration by Frederick Douglass Delivered on the Occasion of the Unveiling of the Freedmen's Monument in Memory of Abraham Lincoln," The Frederick Douglass Papers at the Library of Congress, Washington, DC. I would like to thank Faith Davis Ruffins, Curmie Price, and Prudence Cumberbatch for comments on earlier drafts of this chapter.
2. For text of opinion of the Supreme Court in the Dred Scott Case (1857) written by Chief Justice Taney, see <http://www.let.rug.nl/usa/D/1851-1875/dredscott/dred3.htm>. For information on Jacksonian "democracy" and black citizenship, see Emma Jones Lapsansky, "Since They Got Those Separate Churches: Afro-Americans and Racism in Jacksonian Philadelphia," *American Quarterly* 32 (Spring 1980), 54–78.
 3. Booker T. Washington et al., *A New Negro for a New Century: An Accurate and Up-to-Date Record of the Upward Struggles of the Negro Race* (Chicago: American Publishing House [1900]). Ida B. Wells Barnett, *On Lynchings: Southern Horrors, A Red Record, Mob Rule in New Orleans* (New York: Arno Press, 1969). Henry Louis Gates, Jr., "The Trope of the New Negro and the Reconstruction of the Image of the Black," *Representations* 24 (1988), 135–49. See Deborah Willis, "Towards a New Identity: Reading the Photographs of the New Negro," PhD dissertation, George Mason University, 2003, for analysis of photographs of Washington and Tuskegee students. See William J. Maxwell, *New Negro, Old Left* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999) for trenchant discussion of black radicalism in the 1920s. For information on the exquisite corpse in surrealist art, see Andrei Codrescu, ed., *The Stiffest of the Corpse: An Exquisite Corpse Reader* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1989).
 4. Alain Locke, "Harlem," *Survey Graphic*, 1 March 1925, p. 630.
 5. Ibid. Also, "Youth Speaks," *Survey Graphic*, 1 March 1925, pp. 659–60.
 6. William J. Maxwell, ed., *Complete Poems of Claude McKay* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004). See also Winston James, *A Fierce Hatred of Injustice: Claude McKay's Jamaican Poetry of Rebellion* (London: Verso, 2001).
 7. Ralph Waldo Emerson, *The Essential Writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson* (New York: Modern Library, 2000). David S. Reynolds, *Beneath the American Renaissance* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989). Henry Mayer, *All On Fire: William Lloyd Garrison and the Abolition of Slavery* (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 2000).
 8. Claude McKay, *Home to Harlem* (1928; Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1987).
 9. Walter Jackson, "Melville Herskovits and the Search for Afro-American Culture," *History of Anthropology* 4 (1986), 73–103. Arnold Rampersad, *The Life of Langston Hughes*, vol. 1: 1902–1941: I, *Too, Sing America*, 2nd edn (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 111. For more on the personalities of the Harlem Renaissance writers, see David Levering Lewis, *When Harlem Was in Vogue* (New York: Penguin, 1997).
 10. For criticism of the gender bias and misogamy of the Harlem Renaissance, see Gloria T. Hull, *Color, Sex and Poetry: Three Women Writers of the Harlem Renaissance* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), Thadious M. Davis, *Nella Larsen, Novelist of the Harlem Renaissance* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1996), and Cheryl Wall, *Women of the Harlem Renaissance* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995). On gay writers of the Harlem

The New Negro as citizen

- Renaissance, see A. B. Christa Schwartz, *Gay Voices of the Harlem Renaissance* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003) and Bruce Nugent and Thomas Wirth, *Gay Rebel of the Harlem Renaissance* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002). Author's interview with Louise Patterson, 8 September 1990.
11. Michelle F. Pacifico, "Don't Buy Where You Can't Work: the New Negro Alliance of Washington," *Washington History* 6 (Spring/Summer 1994), 66-88.
 12. Ibid. For information on the Supreme Court decision *New Negro Alliance v. Sanitary Grocery Co.*, 303 U.S. 552 (1938), see <http://www.justia.us/us/303/552/case.html>.
 13. Quote from Paul Robeson, *Here I Stand* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1998), p. 52. See Jeffrey C. Stewart, ed., *Paul Robeson: Artist and Citizen* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1998), pp. 135-63, 253-300.
 14. Ibid. pp. xxix-xxx, 179-233.
 15. See Mary L. Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002).
 16. Ibid.
 17. Stewart, *Paul Robeson*, pp. 54, 205.
 18. On Hurston's criticism of the Brown decision, see Zora Neale Hurston, "Court Order Can't Make Races Mix," *Orlando Sentinel*, 11 August 1955. See also Valerie Boyd, *Wrapped in Rainbows: The Life of Zora Neale Hurston* (New York: Scribner, 2003), pp. 423-5.
 19. *The New Negro: An Interpretation* (New York: Arno Press, 1968).

2

EMILY BERNARD

The Renaissance and the Vogue

“It was the period when the Negro was in vogue.”¹ These words introduce readers of *The Big Sea*, a 1940 autobiography by Langston Hughes, to the era known today as the Harlem Renaissance, which commenced in 1924, and was the first significant literary and cultural movement in African American history. This sentence by Hughes captures what was at once transcendent and dispiriting about the era. The Harlem Renaissance was a moment when blackness was celebrated; but to be in vogue is to be in fashion, and fashions always die. As an era concerned with the vitalization as well as with the demise of African American identity, the Harlem Renaissance was an era best characterized by its contradictions: every point of celebration was also a source of contention. This chapter begins with a discussion of the contradictions at the root of the ideological issues that occasioned what was both glorious and grim about Harlem in the 1920s. But before we can get to the achievements of the Harlem Renaissance, we must confront the problems inherent in the term “Harlem Renaissance” itself.

Was the Harlem Renaissance an actual renaissance? Scholarship on this period supports competing points of view. *Webster’s New World Dictionary* defines a “renaissance” as a “rebirth” or “revival.” Some historians and critics believe that what took place during the Harlem Renaissance years was not a rebirth, as such, but only another stage in the evolution of African and African American art that had begun with the inception of African presence in America. While it is true that African and African American art forms never died – new ones were created and evolved even during slavery – a particular black American identity was born after Emancipation, and that was the “New Negro.” The Harlem Renaissance is also known as the New Negro Movement.

The term “New Negro” was not invented during the Harlem Renaissance, but had, in fact, been circulating in American public discourse since the 1700s. The New Negro was more than a persona; he was an idea, an ideological construction. The New Negro was invented, in part, by blacks

attempting to correct the negative stereotypes about them that were already in play by the time they arrived in the New World. As Henry Louis Gates explains in his essay “The Trope of a New Negro and the Reconstruction of the Image of the Black,” “Almost as soon as blacks could write, it seems, they set out to redefine – against already received racist stereotypes – who and what a black person was, and how unlike the racist stereotype the black original indeed actually could be.”² Black people created the “New Negro” as an attempt to convert popular stereotypes about blacks from those based upon absence (of morality, intelligence, and other basic features of humanity) to presence. A preoccupation with this term, and the hope of liberation it represented, became a near-obsession for Harlem Renaissance intellectuals. In fact, Gates suggests that the Harlem Renaissance was finally not much more than a vehicle created to contain the “culturally willed myth of the New Negro” (132).

What is a “New Negro,” exactly? An accurate definition of the New Negro is impossible without an appreciation of its counterpart, the Old Negro. The philosopher and Harlem Renaissance power broker Alain Locke describes the Old Negro in “The New Negro,” an introduction to his anthology, *The New Negro*, the definitive anthology of the Harlem Renaissance. “The Old Negro, we must remember,” Locke writes, “was a creature of moral debate and historical controversy. His had been a stock figure perpetuated as an historical fiction partly in innocent sentimentalism, partly in deliberate reactionism.”³ If you have seen D.W. Griffith’s *Birth of a Nation*, you have seen the Old Negro. Picture the antics of the nameless black extras that populate that 1915 film, and you will comprehend immediately the kinds of associations that the phrase “Old Negro” conjured for black Americans of the early twentieth century; conversely, these same images also suggest the kind of corrective ideological labor that the “New Negro” was meant to perform.

It is important to note that Locke’s essay “The New Negro” begins with, and in some sense relies upon, a discussion of the Old Negro. In many ways, the term “New Negro” does not even make sense without its counterpart, “Old Negro.” Ultimately, in fact, the terms are hardly in opposition at all. Instead, they are in dialectical harmony and fundamentally necessary to each other. It is not implausible to say that a definition of one term is only really possible in light of the other. In other words, the New Negro is finally everything the Old Negro is not, and vice versa.

“Negro life is not only establishing new contacts and founding new centers, it is finding a new soul,” Alain Locke proclaimed in the opening pages of *The New Negro* (xxvii). The world of African American arts of the 1920s was intoxicated with the idea that it had invented itself, not only in

terms of its creative ambitions, but also as a locus of a new black identity, namely the New Negro. Black intellectuals of the Harlem Renaissance invested in the ideology of the New Negro all of their ambitions to liberate black people – psychologically, socially, and even politically – from the denigration of the slave past.

In “Racial Doubt and Racial Shame in the Harlem Renaissance,”⁴ African American Studies scholar Arnold Rampersad writes: “a modern renaissance (English, Irish, American, what-have-you) seems to me to depend in a fundamental way on the presence of strong feelings of inferiority, cultural and otherwise, at the very moment – paradoxically – of the repudiation or transcendence of those feelings of inferiority in the name of progress, emancipation, and independence” (32). The paradox that Rampersad speaks of is embedded in the term “New Negro” itself. The inextricability of the terms “Old Negro” and “New Negro” presented a problem for black intellectuals of the 1920s intent upon severing the relationship between the two types, embracing the latter while turning the collective racial back on the former, thereby obliterating forever the ugly history of shame and servility that the Old Negro represented. But the progress promised by the New Negro Movement, or Harlem Renaissance, could be evident only in relation to the agonizing history that the term “New Negro” was meant to obscure. Continuous comparisons between Old Negro and New Negro were necessary to maintain distinctions between the two types. That meant that the figure of the Old Negro had to be kept alive and in the center of discussions about racial progress. So, it was finally impossible for Harlem Renaissance intellectuals to leave the Old Negro behind. They needed him; he reminded them of exactly what they were shedding as well as what precisely they were trying to become. The necessity of keeping close at hand the very image they were trying so desperately to cast off created an intellectual anxiety among Harlem Renaissance intellectuals, an anxiety that served as the primary fuel of the New Negro Movement.

The acute self-consciousness of the New Negro Movement had led scholars to question its legitimacy. But even if the Harlem Renaissance was a “culturally willed myth,” as Gates has argued, or “a forced phenomenon,” as David Levering Lewis asserts, its importance in African American cultural history is undeniable.⁵ Even the term “New Negro,” with its contradictory assertions of inferiority and triumph, represents accurately the tug of war that lay at the root of black consciousness throughout this period. The Harlem Renaissance was the first cohesive cultural movement in African American history. Never before had African Americans had an opportunity to take on the project of national identity with such intensity. The Harlem Renaissance, then, became almost literally a way for African Americans to

write themselves into the narrative of American identity. The debates that took place during this period about how best to represent the significance of African American achievement on the national stage are debates that continue to resonate in African American intellectual circles to this day.

Ideological complexities aside, the Harlem Renaissance was also spectacular as a material phenomenon. Harlem itself was a bustle of activity; inside cabarets, buffet flats, speakeasies, and ballrooms, each dancer, singer, and musician seemed more ingenious than the one who came before her. In “Spectacles in Color,” a chapter in *The Big Sea*, Hughes captures the particular social alchemy of Harlem during the 1920s in his descriptions of a Harlem drag ball, lodge parties, funerals, weddings, and the enterprising ways of Reverend Dr. Becton, a popular Harlem preacher (273–8). “Harlem likes spectacles of one kind or another – but then so does all the world,” Hughes writes (274). For a time, the world came to see the spectacle that was Harlem, which was, for a time, like no other spectacle anywhere.

The cultural activity that has come to characterize the Harlem Renaissance was by no means limited to Harlem, whose geography, in spatial terms, consists of only two square miles at the northern tip of Manhattan. African American art, music, literature, and politics also thrived during the New Negro Movement in cities like Chicago, Detroit, Philadelphia, and Washington, DC, where more than quarter of a million blacks settled after fleeing southern poverty and racial violence during the Great Migration. Importantly, there was meaningful creative interplay between African American, Caribbean, and African writers during the Harlem Renaissance years. African American artists were concerned with what was being produced in other parts of the Diaspora as much as they were with the artistic flowering within their own borders. Most recently, a 2003 study by Brent Edwards, *The Practice of Diaspora: Literature, Translation, and the Rise of Black Internationalism*, makes evident the crucial feature of black internationalism that was actually embedded within the framework of the Harlem Renaissance itself.⁶

Still, despite its inherent limitations, Harlem, New York, was unique as a city that spoke to black hopes and dreams. “I was in love with Harlem long before I got there,” Langston Hughes wrote in a 1963 retrospective essay, “My Early Days in Harlem.”⁷ During the Harlem Renaissance years, Hughes spent more time away from Harlem than in it. In his autobiography, *The Big Sea*, and his correspondence to friends like Arna Bontemps, Carl Van Vechten, and others, Hughes keeps a faithful catalog of the numerous journeys he took within and without the borders of the United States during the years Harlem was in vogue. And yet when he writes of Harlem itself, he describes the singular romantic spell the neighborhood cast over him. As a

teenager in Mexico with his father, Hughes “had an overwhelming desire to see Harlem,” he wrote in *The Big Sea*. “More than Paris, or the Shakespeare country, or Berlin, or the Alps, I wanted to see Harlem, the greatest Negro city in the world” (62). He describes his first subway trip to Harlem: “I went up the steps and out into the bright September sunlight. Harlem! I stood there, dropped my bags, took a deep breath and felt happy again” (81).

Hughes was not alone. “I’d rather be a lamppost in Harlem than Governor of Georgia,” went a popular saying of the day. No city in the North captured the imagination of the black migrant more fiercely than Harlem, which was first a Dutch settlement before it became German, then Irish, then Jewish, then black, after a considerable real estate war and subsequent white flight out of Harlem neighborhoods. The neighborhoods that comprised Harlem, known as the “black mecca,” were not only famously elegant, they became home to some of the most diverse black populations in the country. Laborers fresh from the South rubbed elbows with African Americans who had know wealth, independence, and social prestige for generations. Immigrants from the West Indies and Africa encountered black people with entirely different sensibilities and customs. Some of these subcultures blended harmoniously while others did so grudgingly, but all of this mixing provided excellent fodder for African American artists determined to translate the cultural upheaval they saw around them into their art. In 1928, Harlem alone claimed 200,000 black residents.

Black migrants mingled with African American natives of New York across culture and class lines, both outdoors – along the elegant avenues and broad sidewalks that characterized Harlem – and indoors – inside cabarets, buffet flats, speakeasies and ballrooms that dominated nightlife in the city. The Harlem Renaissance flourished alongside the Jazz Age, an era that recalls the institutions that made it famous, nightclubs like the Cotton Club, Connie’s Inn, and Small’s Paradise. It was nightlife that brought Langston Hughes to Harlem. There were plenty of practical reasons for Hughes, as an aspiring young writer, to set his sights on Harlem in the 1920s. Most prominently, New York had recently supplanted Boston as the center of American publishing. But the spectacle of Harlem nightlife was what enchanted Hughes and got him to Manhattan. “To see *Shuffle Along* was the main reason I wanted to go to Columbia,” Hughes confesses in *The Big Sea* about his college choice. Hughes lasted at Columbia only a year, but he would have a relationship to Harlem and its culture for the rest of his life. In the portion of *The Big Sea* devoted to the Harlem Renaissance, Hughes credits shows like *Shuffle Along* (1921) and *Runnin’ Wild* (1923), and the Charleston, with launching the Harlem Renaissance: “But certainly it was the musical revue, *Shuffle Along*, that gave a scintillating send-off to

that Negro vogue in Manhattan, which reached its peak just before the crash of 1929, the crash that sent Negroes, white folks, and all rolling down the hill toward the Works Progress Administration” (223). Hughes saw other shows that year, he writes, “but I remember *Shuffle Along* best of all. It gave just the proper push – a pre-Charleston kick – to that Negro vogue of the 20’s, that spread to books, African sculpture, music, and dancing” (224).

Shows like *Shuffle Along* lent dimension to the vogue of the Negro, bringing white people to Harlem “in droves,” Hughes recalls. White interest in Harlem created the central paradox of the New Negro Movement. White financial support was essential to the success of the Harlem Renaissance, but it also forced restraints on black creative expression. In the case of Harlem nightlife, for instance, while white interest meant increased revenue in Harlem neighborhoods, it also meant that black patrons had to sit in segregated, “Jim Crow,” sections in order to accommodate its downtown clientele, who came to Harlem to look at black people but not experience them as equals. Hughes describes the phenomenon in *The Big Sea*: “So Harlem Negroes did not like the Cotton Club and never appreciated its Jim Crow policy in the very heart of their dark community. Nor did ordinary Negroes like the growing influx of whites toward Harlem after sundown, flooding the little cabarets and bars where formerly only colored people laughed and sang, and where now the strangers were given the best ringside tables to sit and stare at the Negro customers – like amusing animals in a zoo” (224–5). There was a substantial and meaningful disharmony between white and black experiences in Harlem. Hughes explains it well: “So thousands of whites came to Harlem night after night, thinking the Negroes loved to have them there, and firmly believing that all Harlemites left their homes at sundown to sing and dance in cabarets, because most of the whites saw nothing but the cabarets, not the houses” (225). The thrill of Harlem nightlife brought to the fore the intractable nature of American racism that made real black progress – the kind hoped for in *The New Negro* – impossible.

“Rent parties,” thrown ostensibly to raise rent money for the host, became important avenues for African Americans to congregate privately, away from the curious gazes of white people. However successful these parties were at giving blacks in Harlem sanctuary from inquiring white eyes, they could not resolve the larger conundrum of white influence on the Harlem Renaissance, a conundrum to which this chapter will return.

If at night New York and Harlem roared, then during the day it thrived, too, as home to the most important social and political institutions of the Harlem Renaissance period: the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the National Urban League, and the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA). Each of these institutions had

distinct personalities embodied by the individuals most closely associated with them as well as by the magazines and newspapers they produced. The NAACP had its most visible spokesperson in the scholar, activist, and novelist W. E. B. Du Bois, who edited *The Crisis*, the house organ of the NAACP. The National Urban League had educator and writer Charles S. Johnson, who edited its magazine, *Opportunity*. The UNIA was founded and led by Marcus Garvey, who also edited the organization's weekly newspaper, *Negro World*. These organizations and magazines were among several that were crucial during the Harlem Renaissance because of their dedication to social and political progress for black people. In addition, *The Crisis* and *Opportunity* in particular were critical because of their commitment to the identification and development of African American literature and art. For most African American writers, getting a book published may have been the ultimate goal, but newspapers and magazines reached the broadest audiences, and, because of this, constituted significant vehicles for cultural expression during the Harlem Renaissance.

The question of which years mark the Harlem Renaissance generates as much debate as many other aspects of the cultural movement, but this chapter identifies 1924 as the initial year of the Harlem Renaissance period because of a party given in March of this year by *Opportunity* editor Charles S. Johnson. Johnson originally intended to throw this party as a way of honoring Jessie Fauset, literary editor of *The Crisis*, on the publication of her first novel, *There Is Confusion* (1924). In the end, 110 members of the New York literati, black and white, attended the dinner, which was held at the Civic Club, the only elite club in Manhattan that welcomed both black people and white women. Black and white editors, writers, and publishers addressed the crowd and referred to their common belief that a new era had begun for black creativity.

After the dinner, Paul Kellogg, editor of the sociological periodical *Survey Graphic*, suggested to Charles S. Johnson that his magazine devote an entire issue to African American culture, and that Johnson serve as editor of the volume. Johnson enlisted the philosopher Alain Locke to help him assemble the issue. In March 1925, a special edition of *Survey Graphic*, entitled "Harlem: Mecca of the New Negro," was released. It was the most widely read issue in the magazine's history, selling 42,000 copies – more than twice its regular circulation. Months later, Alain Locke expanded this special edition into an arts anthology, *The New Negro* (1925), widely recognized as the first manifesto produced by the Harlem Renaissance. *The New Negro*, which featured portrait drawings as well as essays, poetry, and fiction, includes the work of most of the key figures of this movement.

Inspired by the success of his 1924 dinner, Charles S. Johnson decided that *Opportunity* would host a literary contest; prizes would be awarded in

Van Vechten called *Nigger Heaven* his most serious novel, and it was the only novel he would publish about African American life and culture. When the book came out, he was already the author of four novels that had, collectively, made him a bestseller and a celebrity. In addition, he had published numerous articles in popular, mainstream publications, like *Vanity Fair*, extolling the virtues of spirituals and the blues, arguing for their recognition as authentic American art forms. Still, Van Vechten had concerns about how African Americans, not his primary readership heretofore, would react to his representation of Harlem life. In order to address these concerns, he anonymously composed a questionnaire for *The Crisis*, "The Negro in Art: How Shall He Be Portrayed?" in 1926. Answers to this questionnaire were solicited from a racially diverse group of literary figures from all corners of the American literary world, and then published in *The Crisis* over a period of several months. Six months later, *Nigger Heaven* was published.

Du Bois hated *Nigger Heaven*, and published a scathing review of it in *The Crisis*, advising readers to "drop the book gently into the grate." Hughes defended the book in newspapers articles and even in his 1940 autobiography, *The Big Sea*. The opposing viewpoints held by these two were matched by reviews by others that were equally extreme. Both loved and hated, *Nigger Heaven* went through nine printings in its first four months, selling more copies than any other Harlem Renaissance novel.

In 1926, Carl Van Vechten and his novel *Nigger Heaven* had become handy symbolic means for some black writers to announce their desire to break away from literary conventions that had, according to these writers, traditionally constrained the black writer. A 1926 journal *Fire!!* became the clearest articulation of the aesthetic goals of this younger generation, which included Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston, Richard Bruce Nugent, and Wallace Thurman. In *Fire!!*, conceived and edited by Wallace Thurman, these writers and their peers wrote about sex and Carl Van Vechten, among other topics, as a way of critiquing censorship and racial parochialism in literature. As much as the editors of *Fire!!* dreamt that their magazine would operate free of white support, such a goal proved unrealistic. An actual fire put an end to the journal, which lasted for only one issue.

The threat that Van Vechten seemed to pose to black culture was bigger than his novel. Van Vechten was unambivalent and unapologetic about his own feelings about the "vogue" of the Negro: he was all for it. He felt black people should be for it, too. He described his beliefs in his own response to *The Crisis* questionnaire he had anonymously composed: "The squalor of Negro life, the vice of Negro life, offer a wealth of novel, exotic, picturesque material to the artist," he wrote. "Are Negro writers going to write about

this exotic material while it is still fresh,” he questioned, “or will they continue to make a free gift of it to white authors who will exploit it until not a drop of vitality remains?” Six months after he published these statements in *The Crisis*, *Nigger Heaven* was released.

Like W. E. B. Du Bois, many black readers felt betrayed by *Nigger Heaven*. “Anyone who would call a book *Nigger Heaven* would call a Negro a Nigger,” a *New York News* reviewer put it succinctly. Van Vechten would always claim the title was meant to be ironic. He explained that “nigger heaven” was a common term used in Harlem to refer to the balcony section in segregated theaters usually reserved for black patrons. He insisted that he had employed it as a metaphor to comment more generally upon the cruelties and absurdities of segregation and racism. But Van Vechten also believed that his status as an “honorary Negro” somehow absolved him of racism; or at least, it lent him an authority to use “nigger,” a term sometimes used privately between blacks but traditionally forbidden whites. Finally, a combination of naiveté and arrogance led him to believe he was unique, a white man who had transcended his whiteness.

The book had its black defenders, however. Among them was Langston Hughes. “No book could possibly be as bad as *Nigger Heaven* has been painted,” Hughes wrote in the *Pittsburgh Courier* in 1927; in his review, he sidestepped the question of whether the novel had literary merit. Even when he returned to the controversy nearly fifteen years later in *The Big Sea*, he never claimed that the book should be appreciated as an exceptional work of literature. Instead he sympathized with those who felt alienated by the racial epithet that was the title, but insisted that readers put the issue in perspective. “The critics of the left, like the Negroes of the right, proceeded to light on Mr. Van Vechten, and he was accused of ruining, distorting, polluting, and corrupting every Negro writer from then on,” Hughes recounted.

Of all his black associates, Van Vechten was most often accused of corrupting Langston Hughes, particularly when *Fine Clothes to the Jew*, Hughes’ second book of poetry, was published in 1927. *Fine Clothes* drew as much fire for its title and sensual content as did *Nigger Heaven*. Critics who associated *Fine Clothes* with Van Vechten’s influence on Hughes either did not know or did not care that Hughes had composed most of the poems before he met Van Vechten. When Hughes defended Van Vechten, then, he was essentially defending his own artistic decisions.

Hughes was also motivated to defend *Nigger Heaven* because he shared a similar aesthetic sensibility with its author. In his 1926 essay, “The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain,” Hughes proclaimed: “Let the blare of Negro jazz bands and the bellowing voice of Bessie Smith singing Blues penetrate the closed ears of the colored near-intellectual until they listen

and perhaps understand.” Hughes found the social anxieties of the “smug Negro middle class,” as he called them, boring. He was inspired by the way the black majority lived: “These common people are not afraid of spirituals, as for a long time their more intellectual brethren were, and jazz is their child.”

Langston Hughes loved the “low-down folks,” which is how he referred to the black working class. His passion was matched in intensity by that of Carl Van Vechten. When in the March 1926 issue of *The Crisis*, Van Vechten champions “the squalor of Negro life, the vice of Negro life,” he sounds unmistakably like Langston Hughes when he celebrates “the so-called common element” who are fond of “their nip of gin on Saturday nights” in “The Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain.” Both Hughes and Van Vechten defended the black artist’s right to paint the world and its citizens as he saw them, but Van Vechten’s position contained a decidedly pragmatic element, as is evident in this excerpt from “Moanin’ Wid a Sword in Mah Han,” a 1926 essay by Van Vechten about Negro spirituals:

It is a foregone conclusion that with the craving to hear these songs that is known to exist on the part of the public, it will not be long before white singers have taken them over and made them enough their own so that the public will be surfeited sooner or later with opportunities to enjoy them, and – when the Negro tardily offers to sing them in public – it will perhaps be too late to stir the interest which now lies latent in the breast of every music lover.⁸

In other words, African Americans should heed the call of the market – and fast. Van Vechten’s argument is premised upon the inevitability of white fascination with the fiction of black primitivism. If the white gaze is here to stay, then black people should manipulate it in their own interests. We may bristle at Van Vechten’s brutal cynicism and essentialist language, but the outcome he describes above is a veritable cliché in the annals of African American culture. White spectatorship – and appropriation – is, finally, a central facet of African American cultural history.

The urgency in Van Vechten’s language foreshadows, unhappily, the outcome of the Harlem Renaissance. A black movement that was necessarily dependent on white support, the New Negro Movement was diminished by the Wall Street Crash of 1929, and then effectively terminated by the Great Depression. Just as dramatically as the Negro found himself in vogue in 1924, he found himself out of fashion a few years later. Economic realities notwithstanding, “How could a large and enthusiastic number of people be crazy about Negroes forever?” Hughes asks rhetorically in *The Big Sea* (228). But even though vogues die, they are reborn, and with that rebirth are often transformed into something greater. Black communities were devastated by

the Crash, and yet African American art thrived and evolved to negotiate the realities of new economic, social, and political conditions, including new forms of white institutional support. Some scholars continue to isolate the Harlem Renaissance as having been uniquely tied to white influence for its existence. But the inextricability of white investment in black culture has been a constant feature of African American life. If the New Negro Movement is unique, it is so because it remains unmatched as the most serious collective attempt on the part of black writers and artists to grapple with the complexity of African American identity in the modern world.

NOTES

1. Langston Hughes, *The Big Sea* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1940), p. 228.
2. Henry Louis Gates Jr., "The Trope of a New Negro and the Reconstruction of the Image of the Black," *Representations* 24 (Fall 1988), 131.
3. Alain Locke, ed., *The New Negro* (New York: Touchstone, 1997), p. 5.
4. Arnold Rampersad, "Racial Doubt and Racial Shame in the Harlem Renaissance," in Genevieve Fabre and Michel Feith, eds., *Temples for Tomorrow: Looking Back at the Harlem Renaissance* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001).
5. David Levering Lewis, *When Harlem Was in Vogue* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989).
6. Brent Hayes Edwards, *The Practice of Diaspora: Literature, Translation, and the Rise of Black Internationalism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003).
7. Langston Hughes, "My Early Days in Harlem," *Freedomways* 3 (1963), 312-14.
8. Carl Van Vechten, "Moanin' Wid a Sword in Mah Han'," *Vanity Fair* 1926. Reprinted in Bruce Kellner, ed., "*Keep A-Inchin' Along*": *Selected Writings of Carl Van Vechten about Black Art and Letters* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1979), p. 55.

3

MICHAEL A. CHANEY

International contexts of the Negro Renaissance

The exceptional character of the Harlem Renaissance as a watershed of self-directed “Negro” arts and letters and the popular view of its centralization in Harlem have led to an unfortunate occlusion of its international dimensions. The “New Negro Movement” bloomed within a global network of epiphenomenal cultural nationalisms and folk revivals. In the first two decades of the twentieth century, pulses of decolonization rippled throughout Asia, the Caribbean, and Ireland, catalyzed by China’s 1901 Boxer Rebellion, the Russian Revolution of 1917, and postwar efforts to accommodate European ethnic minorities in their struggles for self-determination. Much of the scholarship surrounding the Harlem Renaissance, however, has approached it at the expense of the global as a phenomenon of primarily national significance despite the persistent emphasis on internationalism in the works and life experiences of the movement’s leading figures. Even when this emphasis is noted, as with the much-studied Negro vogues of Paris and Berlin, the international scope of the movement’s influence and impact has been conceptualized according to an American context rooted in slavery, reconstruction, migration, and segregation. Nevertheless, a few scholars, such as Robert Stepto, Michel Fabre, and Melvin Dixon, have outlined the global contours of the Harlem Renaissance currently being reexamined and theorized anew by Brent Hayes Edwards, George Hutchinson, and others, so that the transnational shape of the movement and the disparate worldviews of its writers may come more fully into view.

Before twentieth-century Atlantic crossings, the international mobility of African American creativity and thought depended upon crossings of the Mason-Dixon Line. Indeed, the peculiar institution of slavery and the vicissitudes of its relation to transatlantic abolitionism thrust many African Americans into an international spotlight, touring Europe with lectures and speeches in recruit of antislavery support. From European vantage points, prominent ex-fugitives such as William Wells Brown, Frederick Douglass, Henry “Box” Brown, Sarah Parker Remond, and William Craft

wrote letters and editorials displaying comparative insights into American racism that would echo later in the works of black expatriates from W. E. B. Du Bois, who pursued two years of graduate study in Germany, to James Weldon Johnson, who wrote *Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* (1912) during a three-year stint as United States consul in Puerto Cabello, Venezuela; and from Langston Hughes, who taught English in Mexico before traveling widely, to subsequent writers like Richard Wright and James Baldwin, who both sought refuge in France from the oppressions of Jim Crow segregation. Just as European travel enlarged the race consciousness of black writers, the presence of African American abolitionists in England had a profound effect on the emerging nationalism of English citizens, consolidating Victorian notions of class and difference.¹ By the end of the nineteenth century, only a few black antislavery exponents held official diplomatic posts serving Latin American and African countries, but innumerable other African American sailors, musicians, soldiers, and missionaries spanned the globe, sustaining the unofficial circuits of transatlantic exchange and cultural syncretism that Paul Gilroy convincingly discovers operating throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

On a grander scale, the First World War ushered in an upsurge of nationalist propaganda that was on the surface congruent with the broadest aims of the Harlem movement. But rallying cries for the enfranchisement of hitherto oppressed European ethnic groups resonated ironically for many African Americans, whose exclusion from the domestic agenda of cultural pluralism reinforced postwar disillusion among leading black intellectuals. And yet, as George Hutchinson has argued, crucial links still existed between optimists of America's unique postwar position to make good on a dream of integration, including figures like Waldo Frank and Jean Toomer.²

The war thus became a stage both real and imagined on which black artists and activists dramatized possibilities for a purgative union of entrenched social conflicts, not just between blacks and whites as with Du Bois' eventual capitulation to support the war effort despite the prejudicial treatment of African American soldiers, but also between blacks divided by class. The war interlude of Jessie Fauset's *There Is Confusion* (1924) sets the intraracial reconciliation of the educated Philip and the working-class Maggie in Europe, as though the barrier that separates bourgeois and folk is made porous by the backdrop of international crisis. The liberatory promise of an imagined Europe to unravel America's stultifying racial proscriptions of identity became a trope in Fauset's later novels as well: the ending of *Plum Bun* (1929) takes place in Paris while the last third of *Comedy: American Style* (1933) is set in the south of France. As Cheryl Wall and Brent Edwards have shown, Fauset's Du Bois-inspired anti-imperialism and devotion to

Allied rhetoric of self-determination were crystallized in experiences abroad. Living in France during the summer of 1914 upon the outbreak of war and attending the second Pan-African Conference with Du Bois in Paris in 1921 forged in her a sophisticated historical sensitivity to international crises and social justice that she articulated, for some readers, more cogently in her essays than in her novels. Although once roundly criticized for endorsing bourgeois elitism, Fauset's novels have been reassessed in light of their often subtle critique of gendered double standards, subtleties no doubt finely tuned by her experiences overseas. Like Larsen's *Quicksand* (1928), Fauset's *Comedy: American Style* rejects the easy myth of expatriate escapism found in Johnson's *Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man*. In stranding her heroine alone in France with a miserly racist for a husband, Fauset emphasized how "sexism, European exoticism, [and] class barriers" reveal the masculine bias in fantasies of European escape that ignore such antagonisms.³

Although African American writers held diverse views of the war and subsequent efforts to maintain international as well as interethnic accord in the League of Nations, Fauset's investments in European locales make clear how deeply intertwined the war and what it variously symbolized became for artists of this period. International campaigns to uphold the sovereignty of dispossessed and displaced peoples became a legacy of the peace process, influencing the Harlem Renaissance as well as other global outpourings of cultural nationalism.⁴ As with nineteenth-century abolitionism, the war drove American blacks onto European stages, this time as cultural diplomats performing jazz music for international audiences and to enormous acclaim. The vogues surrounding jazz performances in Paris and elsewhere returned home to Harlem with the famous "Hell Fighters," who offered celebrated concerts of the same music in Harlem which had won them so much applause overseas. But even as home-grown African American culture circulated through Europe, Harlem movement visionaries were equally inspired by popular European forms of folk art.

A precursor of the Harlem Renaissance typically cited as an influence by researchers of the period is the Irish Renaissance. Driven by such late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century figures as J. M. Synge, W. B. Yeats, Sean O'Casey, and Lady Gregory, the Irish Renaissance's revival of Celtic folklore and language played cultural partner to a politics of Irish independence and became known to Americans after a successful tour by the Abbey Theatre in 1911. Similarities enabling affiliation between the Irish and African Americans included a history of oppression and colonization, the degradation of ancestral language and religion, and a marginal position as creators of national cultures despite being longstanding stereotypes within them.

Moreover, luminaries of the Harlem Renaissance invoked the Irish Renaissance directly as a model for an efflorescence of art that would aid programs for racial justice and spread knowledge of African American culture. Playwright Willis Richardson exhorted African American artists to emulate the Irish theater movement as “an excellent model” in a 1919 *Crisis* essay.⁵ Poetry too was championed by James Weldon Johnson as a productive forum from which the Negro poet could reclaim the dignity of vernacular language. In the 1922 preface to his anthology *The Book of American Negro Poetry*, Johnson urged “the colored poet” to do “something like what Synge did for the Irish; he needs to find a form that will express the racial spirit by symbols from within rather than by symbols from without.”⁶ Likewise, Alain Locke in his 1925 introduction to the *New Negro* anthology compared Harlem to other “nascent centers of folk-expression and self-determination” and noted that it “has the same rôle to play for the New Negro as Dublin had for the New Ireland or Prague for the New Czechoslovakia.”⁷ Influenced by cultural revolutions in Russia, Hungary, and Italy, the Harlem and Irish Renaissances both emphasized the ambassadorial task of the arts in facilitating self-governance and liberation from colonial power.

But African American interest in the Irish Renaissance was not limited to paradigms for politicized art. A stronger political connection was drawn between the fight for Irish sovereignty and that of African Americans in Marcus Garvey’s 1920 speech to his Universal Negro Improvement Association. Before thousands assembled in Madison Square Garden, Garvey read aloud a telegram he was sending to the president of the newly instated Irish Parliament: “We believe Ireland should be free even as Africa shall be free for the Negroes of the world.”⁸ In “Keep[ing] up the fight for a free Ireland,” Garvey was expressing a belief in the interrelation and mutual dependency of international movements for ethnic self-determination based on a shared relationship to domination and social minoritization rather than a narrower concept of racial affiliation.

In addition to the Irish model of insurgent aesthetics, the evolving political climate of the Caribbean had an enormous impact on the Harlem movement, since so many of the immigrants who doubled America’s population of foreign-born blacks between 1900 and 1910, like Claude McKay and Marcus Garvey, hailed from there. Other distinguished Afro-Caribbeans associated with the Harlem Renaissance included writers such as Nella Larsen (though identified more with her maternal Danishness than with her paternal West Indian heritage), Eric Walrond (Guyana/Barbados), W. A. Domingo (Jamaica), and Cyril Briggs (Nevis); as well as political leaders Richard Moore (Barbados) and Hubert Harrison (St. Croix), minister

Ethelred Brown (Jamaica), bibliophile Arthur Schomburg (Puerto Rico/St. Thomas), and photographer Austin Hansen (St. Thomas). The conflicting histories, dialects, and sensibilities of class, gender, and race that these figures brought with them to the black metropolis were unified by shared experiences of colonial struggle against American expansion and contributed to the movement's growing but in no way univocal expression of black internationalism.

By the 1920s the United States had established itself through military and economic measures as an imperial authority in the Caribbean. At the turn of the century, the USA had imposed severe limitations upon the sovereignty of Cuba and Panama as wars over Cuban independence and the Panama Canal culminated in sanctions privileging American political and financial control. As a result of various treaties as well as the Platt Amendment (1903), which would become a political paradigm for American dominance in the Caribbean and Latin America, political enfranchisement within the weaker nations was restricted to whites as opposed to majorities of African descent. This racial elitism was enforced by constant threat of American military action and sustained by the establishment of American constabularies. Continuing policies of military intervention instated by Teddy Roosevelt, the avowed anti-imperialist Woodrow Wilson occupied Haiti and the Dominican Republic in 1915 and 1916. Although opposition to the relatively small numbers involved in US troop activity remained limited throughout the Caribbean and Central America (particularly when compared to the 65,000 troops sent to stifle guerrilla uprisings in the Philippines between 1899 and 1902), significant uprisings occurred in Nicaragua in 1912 and in Haiti in 1919 and 1920. According to US reports, more than 3000 Haitians died in anti-American insurrections in Haiti during these years.⁹ A chief cause of the Haiti rebellions was the reinstatement by American gendarmerie of the *corvée* system in road building, a formerly abolished method of forced labor whose reestablishment brought with it renewed social divisions based on racial classifications. Resuscitating forms of racial hierarchy rooted in the slave trade ensured that even though strict military control over these regions diminished in the ensuing years, which saw growing domestic opposition to American involvement in Caribbean and Latin American countries, the impact of a cultural and economic occupation would linger in ways not lost on Langston Hughes during his visits to the region in the 1920s and 30s.

Championing Caribbean decolonization, Hughes introduced the Cuban and Haitian writers he had met during his travels there to American audiences through seminal translations. With Mercer Cook he translated *Masters of the Dew* (1947), a novel by Jacques Romain of Haiti, and with Ben Frederic Carruthers he translated the poetry of Nicolás Guillén, who had

earlier translated Hughes' "I, Too, Sing America" into Spanish and whom Hughes in turn had inspired to incorporate the Afro-Cuban rhythms of the *son* into his first collection, *Motivos de Son* (1930), as Hughes had done with the blues in his own poetry. But excursions to the Caribbean were not only occasions for the replenishment of Hughes' anti-imperialism. He often went with a desire for physical and spiritual replenishment, finding a salubrious "temporary erasure of identity" in tropical environments peopled by those who shared his skin tone as well as his outrage for Yankee exploitation.¹⁰ Indeed, in a land that Hughes associated with the heroics of L'Ouverture, he found that the "Haitian people live today under a sort of military dictatorship backed by American guns."¹¹ Sensitive, perceptive, and critically reflective of his own national and racial identity, Hughes developed insights into the complexity of racial subjection during his international ventures. "It was in Haiti," he noted, "that I first realized how class lines may cut across color lines within a race, and how dark people of the same nationality may scorn those below them."¹²

In the USA the influx of what is now considered the "first wave" of "Caribbeaners" reached an apex in the mid-1920s, coinciding with the height of renaissance activity and affecting the social milieu of black Harlem dramatically. Presenting vast differences in national affiliation, religious customs, dialect, education, and ideologies of class from one another and African Americans, Caribbeans exposed the absurdity of US systems of racialization which blindly homogenized blacks in static opposition to whites and forced a sometimes ominous recognition of the obstacles facing black coalitions of culture and politics for even the most utopian leaders of the Renaissance.

To address some of these obstacles of miscommunication or – as Brent Hayes Edwards insightfully theorizes them – problems of "translation," a special issue of *Opportunity* in November of 1926 sought to ease tensions between native and immigrant black communities by providing a "wider and deeper acquaintance . . . with the large group of Negroes who have come to these shores" in the hopes of achieving editor Charles Johnson's vision of an "essential friendship" between the two groups.¹³ For Johnson, the select assemblage of Caribbean newcomers to American metropolises could offer the New Negro "an invaluable stimulation" in cultivating new perspectives on "North American race situations." Thwarting this stimulation, however, were reciprocal hostilities between and among these groups, diagnosed by Johnson as "snobbishness and jealousies, resentment and group selfishness," which he intended the issue's contributors to dispel. To that end, an indirect contribution appeared in the form of Waldo Frank's review of *Opportunity* business manager Eric Walrond's *Tropic Death* (1926), a collection of short

stories recounting the migratory experiences of Caribbean laborers and their novel encounters with racist forms of US labor discrimination administered in the Panama Canal zone. Walrond's protagonists suffer as a result of their clashes with systems of demotion based entirely on a stark colorism so alien to their native conceptualizations of a worker identity that is contingent upon class, regional affiliation, and skill level.

Three poems by Claude McKay supplemented the special edition's creative reflection on the immigrant experience of dislocation. His "Desolate," "My House," and "America in Retrospect" may be read alongside the rest of the issue as lyrical comments on the contradictions inherent to the Caribbean condition in the USA. The speaker of "My House" bewails feeling "peculiar in an alien atmosphere" and knowing "the dark delight of being strange" (6) though surrounded by others who "wear a kindred hue" (3). Even so, the introspective "penalty of difference in the crowd" (7) characterizing McKay's migrant consciousness also comes with an advantage: a romantic independence that engenders – as in "America in Retrospect" – the "freedom and peace" (12) that permits creative expression. The same America that McKay accuses of making him "a stoic introvert" (8), therefore, also facilitates his role as a poet. The trade-off between empowerment and self-imprisoning insularity available to *Opportunity* readers of these two poems – readers who may have been encouraged to find in them poetic coordinates for the Caribbean and America – is rendered problematic by the consistently dour mood of "Desolate." Here the phantasmal tropical scenes mourned as "forever gone" continue to haunt the speaker, predicating life in the new country on a thoroughly homeless condition.

The presence of so many Caribbean migrants in New York also helped to radicalize Renaissance politics as Caribbean-born organizers drew upon a "long and distinguished tradition of resistance" to promulgate socialism to the Harlem masses.¹⁴ In an essay reprinted in *The New Negro* from a special issue of *Survey Graphic*, the Jamaica-born Wilfred Adolphus Domingo struck a nearly vainglorious tone when describing the particular "Gift" of radicalism given by Caribbean immigrants to African Americans: "without them [Caribbean immigrants] the genuinely radical movement among New York Negroes would be unworthy of attention."¹⁵ Though Domingo would go on to briefly edit Garvey's newspaper, *The Negro World*, his ethnic partisanship and commitment to the particularity of his Caribbean identity would later lead him to found the Jamaican Progressive League in New York City in 1936. Similarly, Cyril V. Briggs, who was born in Nevis, established the African Blood Brotherhood for African Liberation and Redemption in 1919, an international organization of revolutionary socialism, one year after launching *The Crusader*, a journal that aimed to cultivate in African

Americans a tactical awareness of their position within a global racial dynamic that would ideally culminate in nation-building collaboration with West Indian republics.

Aside from their contributions as journalists and founders of radical newspapers, Caribbean activists fomented an atmosphere of grassroots militancy in Harlem, bringing current events and cutting-edge intellectualism to street corner speeches, or the “stepladder forum” – so called because of the use of these perches to improvise unofficial symposia whenever and wherever speakers could summon an audience. In one contemporary description of such a talk by famed speaker Hubert Harrison, the *New York News* of August 28, 1926 marveled at the rhetorical finesse with which Harrison outlined similarities between Darwinian evolution and the Marxist theory of the “development from capitalism to a state of communism.”¹⁶

Yet even if they used similar tactics to get their messages across, Caribbean activists did not always have the same message. They agreed, for the most part, on federal action against lynching, improvements of working conditions for black laborers, and increased education, particularly with respect to the effects of Diaspora, colonialism, and racism. At the same time, fractious argument erupted over such questions as whether political platforms should privilege race or ideology, if they should endorse trade unions, and to what extent individuals inadequately protected by government should defend themselves against racist attacks.¹⁷

That Caribbean leadership coincided with the influx of communism in Harlem was not overlooked by those critics wary of the ideological conflict Marxism posed to the Harlem community’s fidelity to religious traditions or to the vision of racial nationalism espoused by many in the movement. Nevertheless, aftershocks of the Russian Revolution reverberated throughout African America, stirring many renowned members of the movement to become party members as well. Richard Wright, Claude McKay, Countee Cullen, and Langston Hughes supported the Communist Party, the latter even toured Moscow, as did McKay, Dorothy West, and Paul Robeson, while countless others took part in party-sponsored lectures and discussion circles.

According to Mark Naison accusations of “manipulation, disillusionment, and betrayal” typify scholarly interpretations of the relationship between Soviet leaders and black American communists.¹⁸ Yet William J. Maxwell cogently exposes the injudiciousness of earlier critics, such as Harold Cruse and David Levering Lewis, who treat Bolshevism as the alien influence that heralded the demise of the rebirth along with the Depression.¹⁹ Instead of being “intellectually sidetracked” and implicitly controlled by communist influences, as Cruse maintains, Maxwell unearths the mutual influence of the

Comintern and Harlem radicalism.²⁰ McKay's "Report on the Negro Question," for example, was delivered to the Fourth Congress of the Comintern and thereafter commissioned by the Soviet State Publishing House to be expanded into the book that would become *The Negroes in America* (1923). Rejecting long-held critical assumptions regarding the impotence of blacks in American communism, Maxwell notes that despite McKay's thrilling reception in Moscow as an exotic, he was also able through his report to transfigure official Soviet policy, resulting in the Black Belt Nation thesis on the crucial role of African American workers in securing communist footholds in the USA.²¹ Of course, by 1940 widespread apostasy to communism on the part of once zealous black writers like McKay would be associated, however erroneously, with the decline of the Harlem Renaissance.

Still, at the height of the renaissance new socialist philosophies spread through Harlem via the same conduits that disseminated the cultural products of a self-consciously "New Negro" – radical newspapers. The primary organ of black communism was *The Crusader*, founded in 1918 by Cyril Briggs. Propelled by the general atmosphere of radicalism following World War I, *The Crusader* sought to educate the masses on African history and culture, and combined the goals of literary enrichment familiar to other journals of the time with an unmitigated militancy inspired by Soviet Russia. One article from 1921 enjoined "thoughtful Negroes" to observe that only Soviet Russia exercised that vaunted "principle of 'self-determination' in its dealings with weaker peoples . . . regardless of the color of the people with whom she is dealing."²² As part of *The Crusader's* campaign to internationalize Harlemites, fierce disagreements launched in editorials and emblazoned in its aims defined its brand of Bolshevism against the more socialist *Messenger*. And in relationship to other radical papers, Briggs departed from Garveyism, even while sharing *The Negro World's* global vision, in advocating proletarian militancy of both black and white workers over and above Garvey's more restrictive racial concerns.

Notwithstanding the masculinist rhetoric of Brigg's radicalism, communism also influenced the emergence of black women's writing of the time. A proletarian aesthetic infused the work of Zora Neale Hurston and Dorothy West, most demonstrably in West's editorship of the progressive journals *Challenge* and *New Challenge* (1934–37), which consistently published clarion calls for African Americans to resolve the crippling effects of class fracture in the vein of earlier established journals such as *New Masses*, an organ of communism to which Hughes and others frequently contributed. Some of Hughes' notions about communism may have even been sharpened in repartee with his sometime typist and longtime friend, Louise Patterson.

Often behind the scenes, Patterson functioned as intellectual liaison to communism for many black writers, assisting Hughes and Hurston in their unfinished play “Mule Bone,” hosting the Vanguard, a leftist salon, from her Convent Avenue apartment, founding the Friends of the Soviet Union, and leading the oft-noted culmination of Harlem’s connection to communism in the film excursion to Moscow of 1932. Funded by literary grandees Malcolm Cowley, Waldo Frank, and others, the group included Patterson, Hughes, West, and nineteen other bohemians enthused by the promise of a color-blind system of social justice. The film *Black and White* was intended to dramatize this promise and to cement Soviet ties to the plight of “Negro life” in its depiction of an alliance between white and black workers. But whereas the project began with the troupe’s reception, akin to McKay’s in Russia, of ebullient celebration, it ended some months later with discord and disappointment. With her communist idealism intact, Patterson acquired the sobriquet of “Madame Moscow” by disagreeing with the opinion of some members of the company who felt the Soviets sabotaged the film’s success in order to gain official US favor. After the dissolution of the film project, Patterson remained a committed Communist Party leader as well as a staunch defender of civil rights, taking the lead in protesting the Scottsboro affair, and producing the 1934 *Crisis* article “Southern Terror,” which, according to Maxwell, evinces a style of “radical reportage in opposition to a triangular-homosocial rhetoric of working-class interracialism.”²³ The majority of the Moscow film troupe also returned to the USA, while others, inspired by the racial tolerance they met with in Russia, continued to travel throughout Asia. Three members of the group even settled in Russia permanently. Hughes, on the other hand, aroused by yet another opportunity for international experience – he had already been to Mexico, Africa, Europe, and the Caribbean – deferred immediate return, choosing instead to spend a year touring Russia, China, and Japan, translating poetry, as in Cuba and Haiti, of leading writers and contributing blistering poetic attacks on America’s military control of Columbia, that “dear girl” who has “slept with all the big powers/In military uniforms.” Although rebuffed by Van Vechten as too sensational and lacking in lyricism, Hughes submitted such poems as well as essays on his personal experiences abroad (“Moscow and Me” and “Negroes in Moscow”) to the *International Journal*.²⁴

Itinerant impulses may have been particularly strong in Hughes and McKay, but many literary figures of the Harlem movement traveled widely and for various reasons, shoring up experiences as creative and intellectual fodder and honing a much-needed critical distance from American systems of racialization. In 1924 Jean Toomer spent time in France to study a brand of spiritual and physical enlightenment under Gurdjieff at the Institute for the

Harmonious Development of Man at Fontainebleau. Fashioning himself as a sort of guru of the Gurdjieff system, Toomer set up shop the following year in Harlem, performing magnetic lectures and attracting the likes of Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston, Wallace Thurman, Nella Larsen, Rudolph Fisher, and Dorothy West. Toomer's zest for Eastern mysticism would result in several return trips to Gurdjieff's institute and a visit to India in 1939. Guggenheim Fellowships drew a number of writers abroad: Cullen to Paris in 1928, Larsen (the first African American woman to win the award for creative writing) to Spain and France in 1930, and Hurston to Jamaica and Haiti from 1936 to 1938 to investigate the Caribbean voodoo practices described in her travelogue *Tell My Horse* (1938).

More than any other region of the world, however, Africa became a galvanizing but also much disputed center of intellectual and political interest for the movement. As perhaps the most outspoken and prolific activist in the cause of African and African American coalition, W. E. B. Du Bois' interest in the liberation of Africa grew out of timely international concerns which he broadcasted to black America in *The Crisis* in 1919. The June issue of that year became the best-selling issue in the history of the journal, as it, like other issues of that year, extolled the promises of European ethnic liberation fostered by the Paris Peace Conference. After attending the conference, Du Bois used *The Crisis* to vehemently assert the need for such liberation to be extended to Africa and to lament the dearth of educational and employment opportunities for returning black soldiers who had helped to make the peace in Europe possible. Articles from that year also drummed up hope for what would become a life-long commitment for Du Bois: the establishment of the Pan-African Congress.

Although officially mantled as the secretary of the second Pan-African Congress, Du Bois was in reality its driving force, organizing meetings in 1919, 1921, 1923, and 1927 and canvassing for support through repeated *Crisis* essays that provided updates on the evolving mission of Pan-Africanism. Among its premier objectives was the creation of an Africa for Africans freed from the grasp of colonialism though aided by a heterogeneous confederation of international activists. And, as Cheryl Wall notes, Jessie Fauset's record of the alliance registers the "false simplicity" inherent to parallels between African and African American delegates who, to Fauset, seemed to possess a more militant ardor for the goals of the movement.²⁵ Like other writers of the period, Fauset's concerns would eventually lead her to visit the continent. In 1923, Du Bois had made his first visit there touring Liberia as Hughes was touring Senegal, Nigeria, the Cameroons, the Belgian Congo, and other coastal regions. Two years later, Fauset compiled her cinematic impressions of Algiers in an essay for *The Crisis*, maintaining an

air of respectful appreciation for North African diversity that at times drifts toward exoticization.²⁶

Some of these problems of translation were the result of twin exaggerations regarding Africa that were pervasive both in the New Negro movement and in American society at large. On the one hand, Africa was the exotic “dark continent,” a land awash in a primitive culture that some elite artists and white philanthropists opposed to the desiccated exhaustion of western modernity. On the other hand, that same primal culture was to many African Americans a mark of shame, supposedly both anterior and inferior to European traditions. For many writers of the movement, these mixed attitudes resulted in a conflicted sense of Africanity formed out of the simultaneous disavowal of white exoticization or idealization of Africa and affirmations for a sense of diasporic connectedness to African history, politics, and culture. An example of this conflicted predicament resounds in Countee Cullen’s poem “Heritage,” with its evocation of the “double part” the black American plays with respect to an African heritage he rejects consciously and aesthetically, but never completely nor without acknowledging the significance of that heritage, if only as a mystery. As “great drums” beat and “dark blood dammed within” is ready to burst, he disclaims Africa and asserts unconcern for the past or “Last year’s anything?” Africa, therefore, is associated with an image assembled by whites of the sensual and exotic, the dark past steeped in primitivity, an image which must be rejected or at minimum renegotiated to be of use to the more conventional poet Cullen aspires to be.

Appealing more to the sensibilities of the black urban masses, Marcus Garvey redirected the growing hold that western visions of Africa imparted to blacks by spreading a triumphantly Afrocentric message. “A renascent mother Africa” was a theme of his earliest performances on Harlem street corners in the spring of 1916, and would remain so when his words attracted thousands by the end of 1918. By then, the message would be carried by more than words as Garvey adorned his celebrity and his organization (UNIA) with sensational uniforms, titles, and pageantry. With sights set on one of the few African independent nations, Liberia, Garvey amplified the entrepreneurial spirit that characterized many Caribbean immigrants, starting the Black Star Line Steamship Corporation and its successor shipping line, the Black Cross Navigation and Trading Company, as well as the Negro Factories Corporation, grocery stores, a restaurant, and a publishing house in order to fund his ambitious quest to redeem Africa for African American resettlement. Thus, while his militancy alarmed many at first, he gained wider support by tying the idea of Africa centrally to black American unity as well as to industrial and commercial self-reliance and pride. But a skillfully

presented platform was not the only reason for UNIA's expansion. The growth of Garvey's organization was proportionate to postwar disillusionment and the disturbing increase of racial violence throughout the South, as in the infamous red summer of 1919, and northern metropolises. Poor money management ended his rise in 1922 as he was convicted of mail fraud.

Nevertheless, Garvey was considered by many to be a prophet and, at the very least, the most vociferous advocate of an Afrocentric political philosophy that continued to shape the ancestral imaginary of African Americans from the Harlem movement to the present day. After all, though his methods were often bombastic his message seemed to encompass those voiced from various political and social quarters of African America: that all people of African ancestry, no matter how disconnected across the globe, have a common origin, which could and perhaps should unite them to pursue a collective self-governance that would compete with colonial western powers as equals.

NOTES

1. Audrey Fisch, *American Slaves in Victorian England: Abolitionist Politics in Popular Literature and Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 10.
2. George Hutchinson, *The Harlem Renaissance in Black and White* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), p. 106.
3. Brent Hayes Edwards, *The Practice of Diaspora: Literature, Translation, and the Rise of Black Internationalism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), p. 141.
4. Nathan Irving Huggins, ed., *Voices from the Harlem Renaissance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), p. 6.
5. Willis Richardson, "The Hope of a Negro Drama," *Crisis* 19 (1919), 338.
6. James Weldon Johnson, *The Book of American Negro Poetry* (1922; New York: Harcourt, 1931), p. 41.
7. Alain Locke, ed., *The New Negro* (1925; New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992), p. 7.
8. "Report of a Madison Square Garden Meeting," in *The Marcus Garvey and Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers*, ed. Robert A. Hill, 8 vols. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), vol. 2, p. 499.
9. Jan Rogozinski, *A Brief History of the Caribbean from the Arawak and Carib to the Present* (New York: Facts on File, 1992), p. 265. See also Hans Schmidt, *United States Occupation of Haiti 1915-1934* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1995).
10. Arnold Rampersad, *The Life of Langston Hughes*, vol. 1: 1902-1941: I, Too, Sing America (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 202.
11. Quoted in *ibid.* p. 205.
12. Quoted in *ibid.* p. 207.
13. Edwards, *The Practice of Diaspora*, p. 20; *Opportunity: A Journal of Negro Life* 4 (1926), 334.

14. Winston James, *Holding Aloft the Banner of Ethiopia: Caribbean Radicalism in Early Twentieth Century America* (New York: Verso, 1998), p. 76.
15. W. A. Domingo, "Gift of the Tropics," in *The New Negro*, p. 341.
16. Irma Watkins-Owens, *Blood Relations: Caribbean Immigrants and the Harlem Community, 1900-1930* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), p. 94.
17. Joyce Moore Turner, *Caribbean Crusaders and the Harlem Renaissance* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2005) p. 71.
18. Mark Naison, *Communists in Harlem during the Depression* (New York: Grove, 1983), p. xv.
19. William J. Maxwell, *New Negro, Old Left: African-American Writing and Communism between the Wars* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), p. 16.
20. Harold Cruse, *The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual* (New York: Morrow, 1967), p. 63.
21. Maxwell, *New Negro*, p. 88.
22. Quoted in *ibid.* p. 33.
23. *Ibid.* p. 145.
24. Rampersad, *Hughes*, p. 266.
25. Cheryl Wall, *Women of the Harlem Renaissance* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995) p. 49.
26. *Ibid.* p. 34.