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The literary heroes of Fitzgerald and Hemingway; Updike and Bellow

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The literary heroes of Fitzgerald and Hemingway; Updike and Bellow

by

Martha Ristine Skyrms

A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of MASTER OF ARTS

Major: English

Approved:

Signatures have been redacted for privacy

Iowa State University
Ames, Iowa

1979
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INTRODUCTION

This thesis will undertake an examination of the literary heroes of the nineteen-twenties and the nineteen-sixties, emphasizing the qualities which those heroes share and those qualities which distinguish them.

I have chosen two authors to represent each decade: F. Scott Fitzgerald and Ernest Hemingway for the nineteen-twenties and John Updike and Saul Bellow for the nineteen-sixties. I will discuss each author's work focusing for the most part on the works published during the twenties or the sixties. I have chosen these writers because of their critical reputations and because their work reflects the atmosphere and concerns of their respective decades.

Because the works of Updike and Bellow are less familiar than those of Fitzgerald and Hemingway, I have discussed them at greater length.

The Decades

In his book The Twenties, Frederick J. Hoffman tries to determine what there is about that decade that makes it distinctive, though he says that from the start it was "designated as something distinguished and special."¹

One of the things that makes the decade distinctive is the fact that it was bounded on either end by the harsh
realities of war and depression. Malcolm Bradbury aptly describes the twenties as "a period of illusion between two severe political realities." For many Americans the ten-year respite from difficult social and political realities was tremendously prosperous.

"America," said F. Scott Fitzgerald of the nineteen-twenties, "was going on the greatest, gaudiest spree in history . . . ." This "gaudy spree" brought about moral and social transformations and was characterized, according to Hoffman, by "evasions of serious responsibility" (Hoffman, p. 422).

Bradbury succinctly characterizes the twenties as a period in which American life-style totally changed, in which the nation turned from being a production-oriented to a consumption-oriented society, in which the great capitalists gave way to the managerial revolution, in which there was a large-scale movement from the small town to the big city, and in which all of these things were accompanied by a vast acceleration in 'modernity', in emancipated sexual mores, increasing stratification of the generations, an accelerating tense pace of life, and an enormous change in moral focus. (Bradbury, p. 12)

The nineteen-twenties was dominated by youth; as Alfred Kazin points out, "Everyone now seemed to belong to the Younger Generation, and the Younger Generation seemed to be everywhere." This is substantiated by the tremendous and immediate popularity of Fitzgerald's This Side of Paradise published in 1920. With the publication of This Side of Paradise, Fitzgerald was
recognized, according to Kazin, as "not so much a novelist as a new generation speaking" (Kazin, p. 317). This Side of Paradise was the "generation's masculine primer . . . hardly considered a novel when it appeared in 1920. It was a manifesto." The book rocketed Fitzgerald to fame—and fortune.

The nineteen-twenties may have been a "period of illusion," confidence, and prosperity for many Americans, but for the writers and intellectuals of the decade it was a period of disillusion. Even in This Side of Paradise the disillusion is evident. Kazin is especially perceptive about the book when he notes that beneath it "lay a terrible fear of the contemporary world, a world young men had never made. . . . 'We want to believe, but we can't.' . . . But how did one learn to believe? What was there to believe in?" (Kazin, p. 318).

The First World War was, undoubtedly, the single most profound experience to influence the young writers of the twenties. It had dislodged them from their homes and the old restraints, given them an unexpected and disillusioning education, and left them entirely rootless. They were—in the slogan Gertrude Stein gave to Hemingway—the lost generation, the branded victims, the generation that had been uprooted and betrayed, a generation cast, as one of them wrote, "into the dark maw of violence." Life had begun for them and would forever after be shadowed by violence and death. (Kazin, pp. 313-14)
The problems of living in a society increasingly influenced by science and technology began to be apparent in the twenties. Bertrand Russell noted the significant and unavoidable impact of science on the modern world. Science, according to Russell, can only describe a meaningless world wherein belief is impossible. His essay, "A Free Man's Worship," in Mysticism and Logic (1918) states:

That Man is the product of causes which had no prevision of the end they were achieving; that his origin, his growth, his hopes and fears, his loves and his beliefs, are but the outcome of accidental collocations of atoms; that no fire, no heroism, no intensity of thought and feelings, can preserve an individual life beyond the grave; that all the labors of the ages, all the devotion, all the inspiration, all the noonday brightness of human genius, are destined to extinction in the vast death of the solar system, and that the whole temple of man's achievement must inevitably be buried beneath the debris of a universe in ruins—all these things, if not quite beyond dispute, are yet so nearly certain, that no philosophy which rejects them can hope to stand. Only within the scaffolding of these truths, only on the firm foundation of unyielding despair, can the soul's habitation henceforth be safely built.

Russell's statement seemed even more pertinent in the nineteen-sixties, a decade wherein science and technology seemed, to some, rampant and beyond control.

The concerns of the sixties are succinctly stated by Ihab Hassan in Contemporary American Literature:

Survival appears indeed both the secret and paramount obsession of contemporary man. In America, particularly, where change changes at a dizzy rate, man rushes ever faster toward
a destiny overcast with final questions. These questions do not only concern the Doomsday Bomb. Memories of holocausts from Auschwitz to Hiroshima, a succession of wars from Korea to Vietnam, the earth exploding in numbers, ravages to the natural environment, renewed awareness of poverty in America, the discriminations of race and sex, political protest of every kind—all these perpetuate a mood of crisis that no writer can entirely ignore. Science can capture the moon or alter the genes of mankind, but none knows how the ultimate moral and historical decisions can be made. Some think technology heroic, others viciously rampant, yet many agree that the collapse of older values leaves the world in the form of organized chaos, a demonic mixture of order and anarchy.  

Both the twenties and the sixties were colored by war experience. Americans in the sixties were still trying to make sense of Hiroshima, Korea, and Vietnam. The sixties saw the profound disillusionment of many Americans with the war in Vietnam, believing it was fought without just cause and, unlike World War I, did not offer even an illusion of a positive outcome.

Both decades were marked by the insurgence of a younger generation determined to abolish the old values and establish new ones. Young people in the sixties became active, rebellious, and violent in their protests against the established order and in their demand for a new order. Campus demonstrations were common during the late sixties. With the United States' intervention in Cambodia, college students all over the country went on strike. Some of these demonstrations,
most notably the one at Kent State, were violent. The Democratic National Convention in Chicago in 1968 was characterized by violent protests and demonstrations.

Americans living during the sixties, as the protests and demonstrations indicated, were much more politically active than those living during the twenties. As Fitzgerald said, "It was characteristic of the Jazz Age that it had no interest in politics at all." 8

As Hassan points out, the sixties began hopefully with the inauguration of John Kennedy. However, his assassination in 1963 seems to trigger a new kind of violence or insanity in the nation; the murderers of Martin Luther King and of Robert Kennedy strike in that same decade. Meanwhile, the Johnson administration fails to create the Great Society; America sinks deeper into the Vietnam War, rending itself with dissent and division. (Hassan, p. 4)

Of the sixties Hassan concludes, "All is called into doubt; new styles of life evolve in every direction" (Hassan, p. 8). The moral revolt which characterized the twenties is reborn in the sixties and made manifest from Haight Ashbury to Manhattan.

There are evident similarities between the two decades: the important role which youth played in each, the disillusion as a result of war experience, and the social transformations which each decade underwent.
The intense political activism of the sixties, the violent nature of some of that activism, and the more rapidly increasing pace of life distinguish the two decades. These similarities and differences are reflected by the literary heroes of each period.
Today F. Scott Fitzgerald's critical reputation is secure. When he died in 1940, however, his books were out of print; his royalties were only $33 a year. He was a "has-been." Since then he has won increasing acclaim, so much so that he is recognized as a major American literary figure.

Fitzgerald is now the subject of a flourishing journal, The Fitzgerald/Hemingway Annual. Andrew Turnbull's biography was a best selling book. His life and work are the subjects of continuing critical discussion.

From the publication of his first book, Fitzgerald received rave reviews. This Side of Paradise was called "a first-rate novel,\(^1\) "the most exciting first novel in many a weary day,\(^2\) and "as nearly perfect as such a work could be.\(^3\) According to reviewers, The Great Gatsby was, "a brilliant work\(^4\) which approached "perilously near a masterpiece.\(^5\) He was called "probably the finest American writer of our time.\(^6\) and "one of the greatest literary artists of our age.\(^7\)

With the publication of The Great Gatsby, Fitzgerald won the admiration of such contemporaries as Willa Cather, Edith Wharton, and Ernest Hemingway. Gertrude Stein felt that "Fitzgerald was creating the contemporary world as much as Thackeray had created his in Pendennis and Vanity Fair.\(^8\)
T. S. Eliot wrote that Gatsby "was the first step American fiction had taken since Henry James."³

Alfred Kazin rightly points out that Fitzgerald was as much a part of the twenties as Calvin Coolidge, and like Coolidge, represented something in the twenties almost too graphically. He had announced the lost generation with This Side of Paradise in 1920, or at least the home guard of the international rebellion of postwar youth, and the restiveness of youth at home found an apostle in him, since he was the younger generation's first authentic novelist. (Kazin, p. 316)

Henry Dan Piper states that "of the novelists of the twenties, Faulkner, Fitzgerald and Hemingway are the most widely read and studied today."¹⁰ He says that after 1944, there was a "growing recognition of the fact that the works of Faulkner, Hemingway and Fitzgerald were exercising a more important continuing influence on contemporary fiction than any American writers since James and Mark Twain" (Piper, p. 61).

The Fitzgerald Hero

As The Great Gatsby and Tender Is the Night are Fitzgerald's greatest literary achievements, so Jay Gatsby and Dick Diver are Fitzgerald's greatest heroes. Amory Blaine, Anthony Patch, and Monroe Stahr all have characteristics which appear in the two other heroes, but Stahr's story is unfinished, and Amory and Anthony appear in works less worthy and are themselves less mature.

Fitzgerald's heroes are romantics. They commit themselves
to youth and beauty. They are illusioned heroes, trying to live in a world not of things as they are, but of things as they want them to be, or as they have been.

Robert Sklar contends that Fitzgerald's heroes are the last heroes in the genteel tradition. For the romantic hero of that tradition

The infinite possibilities of life were open, in theory, to his will; but if he sometimes opposed his will in practice, to the dictates of social order, he never questioned their essential justness. More likely, his will moved only in harness with his romantic imagination. The true foundation for his heroism lay in his ability to devise fanciful ways to reach goals others drove toward more prosaically.

Indeed, Fitzgerald's heroes, especially Gatsby, Diver, and Stahr, are men with extraordinary powers of imagination.

Milton R. Stern perceptively distinguishes two different types of hero in Fitzgerald's fiction, the innocent and the moral commentator, though he fails to note that in some of Fitzgerald's heroes the two are combined. According to Stern:

The innocent has high hopes. He is completely a romantic. He believes in the American Dream: through his dedication or talent or shrewdness or charm he will either remake the world or will discover a success in which the flood of money gained will wash him onto an enchanted shore of brilliance and gaiety and endless invulnerable youth in which the inhabitants really are "different from you and me."

Gatsby is this kind of hero as is Dick Diver, although along with qualities of the innocent, he shows those of the moral commentator who
knows better, who is aware of the historical, actual America as well as of the America that is a metaphor for the dream of the New World, the Golden West, the Paradise regained of happy youth and immortality. He is the person through whose intelligence the events are filtered. . . . he is the person who enjoys a real, self-destructive imaginative superiority to others. (Stern, p. 6)

Amory Blaine and Anthony Patch of Fitzgerald's first two novels, *This Side of Paradise* (1920) and *The Beautiful and Damned* (1922), are egoists. They are young, self-centered, and self-satisfied. Even at thirteen Amory has trouble concealing "how particularly superior he felt himself to be." Anthony has times when he thinks himself "rather an exceptional young man, thoroughly sophisticated, well adjusted to his environment, and somewhat more significant than any one else he knows."13

Neither Amory nor Anthony, however, is totally blind to his own weaknesses. After a glimpse at Amory's "code" which reveals his high opinion of himself, we are told that "he was a slave to his own moods and he felt that though he was capable of recklessness and audacity, he possessed neither courage, perseverance, nor self-respect" (*TSP*, p. 25). And even though Anthony is as totally self-centered at the end of *The Beautiful and Damned* as at the beginning, he has had glimpses of himself which are not flattering. For instance, when we first meet him, he "wonders frequently whether he is not without honor and slightly mad, a shameful and obscene thinness glistening
on the surface of the world like oil on a clean pond. . . ."  
(B&D, p. 3).

Amory's story, unlike Anthony's, is one of growth. The Amory we see is young and can be forgiven some of his self-centeredness, excessive romanticism, and quasi-intellectual ramblings. By the end of This Side of Paradise Fitzgerald asserts that Amory has lost his youthful egoism and grown to be a more worthwhile individual, a "personage." He comes to reject the shallowness of mere personality.

Personality is represented in This Side of Paradise by Dick Humbird who possessed infinite courage, an averagely good mind, and a sense of honor with a clear charm and noblesse oblige that varied it from righteousness. . . . People dressed like him, tried to talk as he did. . . .

. . . Some people couldn't be friendly with a chauffeur without having it returned; Humbird could have lunched at Sherry's with a colored man, yet people would have somehow known that it was all right. He was not a snob, though he knew only half his class. His friends ranged from the highest to the lowest. . . . He seemed the eternal example of what the upper class tries to be. (TSP, p. 77)

In This Side of Paradise, personality becomes identified with evil. Amory recognizes the face of Dick Humbird in his confrontation with the devil. It is "a face pale and distorted with a sort of infinite evil that twisted it. . . ." (TSP, p. 110). Humbird is one of many Fitzgerald characters, possessed of exterior grace and glamour, yet essentially
selfish, irresponsible, and careless. Already in this novel, we see the Fitzgerald hero rejecting irresponsible, superficial people, charming and glittering though they may be. This rejection of superficial charm and glamour will be even more clear in *The Great Gatsby* when Nick makes this final judgment of Tom and Daisy:

> They were careless people . . . 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.15

Likewise, Baby and Devereux Warren of *Tender Is the Night* are careless people who, because they have money, believe in their own superiority. Devereux Warren does commit incest with his young daughter, and though he suffers remorse, his money conveniently pays for her cure.

Contrasted to the personality, Dick Humbird, in *This Side of Paradise* is the personage, Burne Holiday:

> The intense power Amory felt later in Burne Holiday differed from the admiration he had had for Humbird. This time it began as a purely mental interest. With other men of whom he had thought as primarily first-class, he had been attracted first by their personalities, and in Burne he missed that immediate magnetism to which he usually swore allegiance. But that night Amory was struck by Burne's intense earnestness, a quality he was accustomed to associate only with the dread stupidity, and by the great enthusiasm that struck dead chords in his heart. Burne stood vaguely for a land Amory hoped he was drifting toward . . . . *(TSP, p. 116)*
Amory comes to recognize the superficiality of personalities like Dick Humbird and to admire Burne Holiday's responsibility and commitment to ideas.

Amory is neither the innocent hero nor the moral commentator, but something of both. "Even if deep in my heart," he says, "I thought we were all blind atoms in a world as limited as a stroke of a pendulum, I and my sort would struggle against tradition; try, at least, to displace old cants with new ones" (TSP, p. 252). This may not indicate high hopes, but it indicates hope. He may not be able to remake the world, but he'll try to change it.

Amory is also, however, the "Fitzgerald who knows better" (Stern, p. 6). He recognizes

a new generation, shouting the old cries, learning the old creeds, through a revery of long days and nights; destined finally to go out into that dirty gray turmoil to follow love and pride; a new generation dedicated more than the last to the fear of poverty and the worship of success; grown up to find all Gods dead, all wars fought, all faiths in man shaken. . . . (TSP, p. 155)

Anthony, unlike Amory, makes no progression toward maturity. He makes the mistake of believing in "old illusions." The original ending to the novel published in the serialization in Metropolitan Magazine, makes this mistake clear:

In the search for happiness, which search is the greatest and possibly the only crime of which we in our petty misery are capable, these two people were marked as guilty chiefly by the freshness and fullness of their desire. Their disillusion was always a comparative thing--
they sought glamour and color through their respective worlds with a steadfast loyalty. . . . Their fault was not that they doubted but that they believed. (Piper, pp. 90-91)

Anthony, unlike Gatsby, Diver, and Stahr, lacks the force of will and imagination to sustain his belief, or to create a world wherein it can live.

I think both Amory and Anthony would agree that "Life was a damned muddle . . . a football game with every one off-side and the referee gotten rid of--every one claiming the referee would have been on his side." (TSP, p. 240). However, where Amory can cope, can at least know himself, Anthony only dissipates. He cannot work when work is necessary. He has no self-respect. Near the end of the novel we are given a vivid picture of Anthony. He lies, beaten and bleeding after a drunken misunderstanding, on the steps of the apartment house, laughing, and the sound is "like a pitiful retch of the soul" (B&D, p. 441).

Amory and Anthony, immature and egocentric though they are, do share some of the romantic qualities of Gatsby, Diver, and Stahr. They all believe in youth and beauty. A sense of transience is a common characteristic of Fitzgerald's heroes, and it is a sense not only of the irrevocable passage of time, but a sense of loss. It is nostalgia and melancholy. Amory feels it at Princeton as he lies in the grass in the darkness:
The cool bathed his eyes and slowed the flight of time—time that had crept so insidiously through the lazy April afternoons, seemed so intangible in the long spring twilights. Evening after evening the senior singing had drifted over the campus in melancholy beauty, and through the shell of his undergraduate consciousness had broken a deep and reverent devotion to the gray walls and Gothic peaks and all they symbolized as warehouses of dead ages. (TSP, p. 56)

As he tells Alec, "It's just that I feel so sad these wonderful nights. I sort of feel they're never coming again, and I'm not getting all I could out of them" (TSP, p. 80).

Anthony, too, feels the transience of life and recognizes its romantic quality. Looking at Gloria

Anthony for the moment wanted fiercely to paint her, to set her down now, as she was, as with each relentless second she could never be again . . .

"I'm not a realist," he said, and then: "No, only the romanticist preserves the things worth preserving." (B&D, p. 73)

Even as Fitzgerald's heroes watch their youth and dreams blossom, they have already begun to fade. Yet there is a strange beauty in the very transience. As Anthony tells Dot:

Things are sweeter when they're lost. I know—because once I wanted something and got it. It was the only thing I ever wanted badly, Dot. And when I got it it turned to dust in my hands . . . . It's like a sunbeam skipping here and there about a room. It stops and gilds some inconsequential object, and we poor fools try to grasp it—but when we do the sunbeam moves on to something else, and you've got the inconsequential part, but the glitter that made you want it is gone— (B&D, p. 341)
Amory and Anthony recognize the poignancy of beauty's transience. So does Dexter Green of "Winter Dreams" who was a golf caddy when he was young, and who finds himself "glancing back at the four caddies who trailed them, trying to catch a gleam or gesture that would remind him of himself, that would lessen the gap between his present and his past."^{16}

Dexter is acutely aware of the past, and Fitzgerald evokes his mood of nostalgia before his fateful encounter with Judy Jones.

There was a fish jumping and a star shining and the lights around the lake were gleaming. Over on a dark peninsula a piano was playing the songs of last summer and the summer before that--. . . . The tune the piano was playing at that moment had been gay and new five years before when Dexter was a sophomore at college. . . . The sound of the tune precipitated in him a sort of ecstasy. . . . It was a mood of intense appreciation, a sense that, for once, he was magnificently attuned to life and that everything about him was radiating a brightness and a glamour he might never know again. (SFSF, p. 133)

This perception of the "brightness" of the moment as it is fading is shared by Andy of "The Last of the Belles." He is leaving the South and a part of his life forever. On the night before he leaves he describes the nostalgic mood of a dinner party concluding, "then we left our napkins and empty glasses and a little of the past on the table, and hand in hand went out into the moonlight itself" (SFSF, p. 248).

But, Andy really cannot stand to lose this "past" and so he returns some time later to the site of the camp where that
dinner party had taken place, and stumbles "here and there in
the knee-deep underbrush, looking for his youth in a clapboard
or a strip of roofing or a rusty tomato can" (SFSF, p. 253).

Gatsby, too, searches for his lost youth though his
dedication to that search is far more intense than Andy's.
Gatsby loses, just as Dexter does in "Winter Dreams," his dreams
and illusions. Dexter's loss is like Gatsby's, for it is the
loss of a dream:

He had thought that having nothing else to lose
he was invulnerable at last--but he knew that
he had just lost something more, as surely as
if he had married Judy Jones and seen her fade
away before his eyes.
The dream was gone. Something had been taken
from him . . . .
For he had gone away and he could never go back
anymore. The gates were closed, the sun was gone
down, and there was no beauty but the gray beauty
of steel that withstands all time . . . .
"Long ago," he said, "long ago there was
something in me, but now that thing is gone. Now
that thing is gone, that thing is gone. I cannot
cry, I cannot care. That thing will come back
no more." (SFSF, p. 145)

Fitzgerald's heroes all share a commitment to the beauty
and aspirations of youth and this commitment marks them as
romantic heroes. None has as great a commitment as Jay Gatsby,
however, and nowhere is that commitment expressed so well as
in The Great Gatsby (1925).

Jay Gatsby is an extraordinary hero because of the
strength of his charm, passion, and imagination. He is a
believer and a romantic who lives for a dream to which he is
utterly committed.
If personality is an unbroken series of successful gestures, then there was something gorgeous about him, some heightened sensitivity to the promises of life, as if he were related to none of those intricate machines that register earthquakes ten thousand miles away. This responsiveness had nothing to do with that flabby impressionability which is dignified under the name of the "creative temperament"—it was an extraordinary gift for hope, a romantic readiness such as I have never found in any other person and which it is not likely I shall ever find again. (TGG, p. 2)

Gatsby's imagination is greater than ours. Because his parents were poor, uneducated, and unsuccessful, "his imagination had never really accepted them as parents at all. . . . [He] . . . sprang from his Platonic conception of himself. . . . and to this conception he was faithful to the end" (TGG, p. 99). Even as a youth Gatsby had a wild imagination.

A universe of ineffable gaudiness spun itself out in his brain while the clock ticked on the washstand and the moon soaked with wet light his tangled clothes upon the floor. Each night he added to the pattern of his fancies . . . . For a while these reveries provided an outlet for his imagination; they were a satisfactory hint of the unreality of reality, a promise that the rock of the world was founded securely on a fairy's wing. (TGG, p. 99-100)

Later he commits himself to the love of Daisy, and when he loses her he dedicates all his energy and imaginative power to winning her back. Other Fitzgerald heroes are nostalgic and wish for their lost youth and dreams, but Gatsby intends actually to recover them. As he says to Nick, "Can't repeat the past. . . . Why of course you can" (TGG, p. 111).
Because he is extraordinary, Gatsby, like Diver and Stahr, is isolated from the people and society which surround him. The intensity of his dream and his total commitment to it, isolate him. We see him at one of his parties standing alone on the marble steps and looking from one group to another with approving eyes. . . .—but no one swooned backward onto Gatsby, and no French bob touched Gatsby's shoulder, and no singing quartets were formed with Gatsby's head for one link. (TGG, p. 50)

The image of Gatsby standing high up and alone is repeated as the party ends:

A sudden emptiness seemed to flow from the windows and the great doors, endowing with complete isolation the figure of the host, who stood on the porch, his hand up in a formal gesture of farewell. (TGG, p. 56)

These images not only suggest his isolation, but his tragic stature. Critic Northrop Frye classifies the hero of tragedy as a man superior to other men and isolated in some sense from them. Gatsby fits this classification.

When it appears that Gatsby's dream is to be realized, Nick knows also:

There must have been moments even that afternoon when Daisy tumbled short of his dreams—not through her own fault, but because of the colossal vitality of his illusion. It had gone beyond her, beyond everything. He had thrown himself into it with a creative passion, adding to it all the time, decking it out with every bright feather that drifted his way. (TGG, p. 97)
Gatsby fails to realize his dream, although he continues his devotion, his "sacred vigil." But that to which he has dedicated his youth and effort has vanished, and Nick speculates

he must have felt that he had lost the old warm world, paid a high price for living too long with a single dream. He must have looked up at an unfamiliar sky through frightening leaves and shivered as he found out what a grotesque thing a rose is and how raw the sunlight was upon the scarcely created grass. A new world, material without being real. . . . (TGG, p. 162)

It is fitting that with the death of his dream, Gatsby too dies.

Gatsby is the "innocent" hero of Stern's classification. He is a romantic who believes in the American Dream, an extraordinary hero because of the intensity of his belief and hope.

Dick Diver (Tender Is the Night, 1933), like Jay Gatsby, is an exceptional man. He has extraordinary charm and talent. Dick does not live in the past, though he recognizes himself as a product of it. He makes his own world based on the illusions of his past. He lives in this illusion and sustains himself and others with his created world.

We are introduced to Dick through Rosemary who, still immature, falls in love with him and thinks him an ideal man. In loving Dick, Rosemary also falls in love with his whole world, as Robert Sklar so aptly points out, "an atmosphere, a setting, and a time" (Sklar, p. 268).
The novel begins on a beach on the Riviera during the off season. There is a sense that all the characters here are out of touch with real time and the real world. It is after all, "the lull between the gaiety of last winter and next winter, while up north the true world thundered by." And, Dick's world is a created world, as Sklar says, Dick's "theater stage, his artificial world" (Sklar, p. 268). Dick has created the scene on the beach. Indeed, Nicole calls it "Our beach that Dick made out of a pebble pile" (TITN, p. 20). And Abe North tells Rosemary, "They have to like it . . . . They invented it" (TITN, p. 17).

Dick's charm is irresistible. He has, as Nicole realizes, "the power of arousing a fascinated and uncritical love" (TITN, p. 27). When Rosemary meets him, she worships him. "He seemed kind and charming--his voice promised that he would take care of her, and that a little later he would open up whole new worlds for her, unroll an endless succession of magnificent possibilities" (TITN, p. 16).

Thus Dick also creates the atmosphere which surrounds him. From the beginning Rosemary notices that he is "giving a quiet little performance for this group . . . . " (TITN, p. 6). Dick makes them all feel special.

To be included in Dick Diver's world for a while was a remarkable experience: people believed he made special reservations about them, recognizing the proud uniqueness of their destinies, buried under the compromises
of how many years. He won every one quickly
with an exquisite consideration and a polite-
ness that moved so fast and intuitively that it
could be examined only in its effect. Then,
without caution, lest the first bloom of the
relation wither, he opened the gate to his
amusing world. (TITN, pp. 27-28)

His talent for parties is another manifestation of the special
atmosphere Dick is capable of creating. Baby Warren, Nicole's
sister notes: "That's something you do so well, Dick. You
can keep a party moving ... I think that's a wonderful
talent" (TITN, p. 216). What Dick comes to know too late is
that he has traded his professional talent to live by what he
has elsewhere called a "trick of the heart."

When Rosemary first sees the Villa Diana, she feels it is
the "centre of the world" (TITN, p. 29). Dick has the power
to make his world the center of the world for others. However,
we are told what Rosemary does not know, that "the lush mid-
summer moment outside of time was already over," (TITN, p. 163).
Dick's world has already begun to crumble and collapse.

In Book II we learn how much Dick has sacrificed of him-
self in order to live this life on the Riviera. At the
beginning of this flashback, he is a successful and promising
young psychiatrist whose ambition is to become a great doctor.
But, he marries Nicole and slowly that dream fades.

Nicole is a patient when Dick first meets her, and within
their relationship and marriage Dick is therefore always taking
care of her, seeing that she remains psychologically stable.
Nicole's money makes it easy for him to give up his work. We are told, "his work became confused with Nicole's problems; in addition her income had increased so fast of late that it seemed to belittle his work" (TITN, p. 170). In a sense, Dick trades his profession for Nicole.

In his general outline of the novel, Fitzgerald wrote that:

The novel should do this. Show a man who is a natural idealist, a spoiled priest, giving in for various causes to the ideas of the haute Burgeoise, and in his rise to the top of the social world losing his idealism, his talent and turning to drink and dissipation.18

Dick realizes how much of his self has been caught up in Nicole's sickness and her money. Dick realizes that time is rushing him away from his youthful potential, his career and ambition, and Nicole. He sees her growing away from him, growing stronger and more independent and he lets her go.

By the end of the novel Dick is no longer a man in control, or even apparently in control. Baby Warren has to get him out of jail after he has drunkenly struck a policeman and been hurt himself. He relinquishes his position at the clinic after being accused of drinking too much. He is now, in Fitzgerald's words, "only a shell" (Mizener, p. 333). "I guess I'm the Black Death," he says, "I don't seem to bring people happiness anymore" (TITN, p. 219). Nicole calls him "ruined" then says, "I didn't mean that. But you used to want
to create things—now you seem to want to smash them up” (TITN, p. 267).

As Dick prepares to leave, he looks at the scene of the world he had once created, "his beach, perverted now to the tastes of the tasteless; he could search it for a day and find no stone of the Chinese Wall he had once erected around it, no footprint of an old friend" (TITN, p. 280).

Fitzgerald respected qualities such as work, honor, and responsibility and he emphasized their value more and more in his later fiction. These are the qualities Dick Diver too has been raised to respect, but which he relinquishes one by one as his world begins to crumble. He is like Charlie Wales of "Babylon Revisited" who "believed in character" and "wanted to jump back a whole generation and trust in character again as the eternally valuable element. Everything else wore out (SFSF, p. 388).

Dick tries to jump back a generation by re-creating the world of grace and charm in which he was raised. For a short time it appears that he succeeds. We are told that the Divers' day was spaced like the day of the older civilizations to yield the utmost from the materials at hand" (TITN, p. 21). We are told also that the Divers "represented externally the exact furthest evolution of a class" (TITN, p. 21).

But Dick cannot sustain this performance as he himself clearly
recognizes and so he eventually drops even the attempt and leaves Nicole who needs him no longer.

Monroe Stahr of *The Last Tycoon* (1941), like Dick Diver and Jay Gatsby, is a romantic and tragic hero. Like them, he has tremendous personal charm. He is responsible, ambitious, talented, respectful, and kind. Cecilia introduces us to Stahr and shows us his talents and superiority:

> His dark eyes took me in. . . . They were kind, aloof and, though they often reasoned with you gently, somewhat superior. It was no fault of theirs if they saw so much. He darted in and out of the role of "one of the boys" with dexterity—but on the whole I should say he wasn't one of them. But he knew how to shut up, how to draw into the background, how to listen. From where he stood (and though he was not a tall man, it always seemed high up) he watched the multitudinous practicalities of his world like a proud young shepherd to whom night and day had never mattered. He was born sleepless, without a talent for rest or the desire for it.

Fitzgerald's notes call Stahr "scrappy" and Cecilia tells us that, "he looked spiritual at times, but he was a fighter" (*LT*, p. 15). Stahr is a born leader, "the best of them all" (*LT*, p. 16). His perceptions are acute, beyond the ability of other men to perceive. Cecilia refers to him as "high up" and Fitzgerald describes Stahr in a passage which conveys this greatness:

> He had flown very high to see, on strong wings, when he was young. And while he was up there he had looked on all the kingdoms, with the kind of eyes that can stare straight into the sun. Beating his wings tenaciously—finally frantically—and keeping on beating them, he
had stayed up there longer than most of us, and then, remembering all he had seen from his great height of how things were, he had settled gradually to earth. (LT, p. 20)

Stahr is looked up to and admired, and deservedly so. He

is compared to royalty several times.

He spoke and waved back as the people streamed by in the darkness, looking, I suppose, a little like the Emperor and the Old Guard. There is no world so but it has its heroes, and Stahr was the hero. . . . still he was their man, the last of the princes. And their greeting was a sort of low cheer as they went by. (LT, p. 27)

The Last Tycoon is the beginning of a strong heroic portrait which represents, even unfinished, the culmination of Fitzgerald's heroic conception.

The Fitzgerald Hero: Summary

The Fitzgerald hero is not a realist. He lives in a world of illusion, either of things as they used to be or of things as he wants them to be.

Fitzgerald's heroes are superior by virtue of their extraordinary imaginations, and their ability to sustain their illusions far longer than most people ever could.

Fitzgerald's heroes are disillusioned with the world. It is a place where as Amory says, "all Gods are dead," and "all faiths in man shaken" (TSP, p. 282). The real world is one where George and Myrtle Wilson live in a valley of ashes. Fitzgerald's heroes avoid this existence; they live where
Daisy can gleam "like silver, safe and proud above the hot struggles of the poor" (TGG, p. 150). They live in worlds where they can pursue the dreams of their youth.

Fitzgerald's heroes live, until their dreams shatter and their illusions fade, in a world where they believe things can be as they want them to be. They expend heroic effort in their belief and their attempts to live their dreams and illusions.

As Zelda Fitzgerald said of her husband, "The poignancy of human aspirations and the significance of purposes long pursued were Scott's deepest inspiration." This dedication to aspirations or dreams is the unmistakable mark of a Fitzgerald hero.
Ernest Hemingway has perhaps the most solid reputation of any twentieth-century American writer. He was representative of his decade. Alfred Kazin calls The Sun Also Rises (1926) the second primer for the generation growing up in the twenties (This Side of Paradise was the first). "By the time he was thirty," says Richard B. Hovey author of Hemingway: The Inward Terrain, "Hemingway was recognized on both sides of the Atlantic as an outstanding spokesman for his generation." Hemingway was also a profound influence on other writers. In his book on Hemingway, Earl Rovit calls him "certainly the most important twentieth century writer," if "one of the measures of an artist's success is the influence which he himself exerts on his contemporaries and successors." "After 1930," Rovit says, "no writer in any country of the world failed to feel Hemingway's influence."  

Edmund Wilson who wrote the first review of any of Hemingway's work, praised it highly. "His prose is of the finest distinction. . . . he is rather strikingly original. . . . I am inclined to think that his little book [in our time] has more artistic dignity than any other that has been written by an American about the period of the war."  

Fitzgerald and Hemingway together are representative of their generation. Fitzgerald recorded the "flaming youth" and
the glamour and superficiality of the affluent. Hemingway recorded the horrors and effects of the war.

Although Alfred Kazin contends that "the whole lost-generation conception of art and society reached its climax in him" (Kazin, p. 341), that Hemingway did seem to speak for the generation growing up in the twenties is puzzling. In dealing with this question, James T. Farrell points out that after 1923 the Weimar Republic appeared to be stable; peace pacts and peace conferences had begun; the United States was booming economically, all of which led many to believe "that this country was paving the way toward a new era of unprecedented world prosperity." Why then would a war novel of disillusion such as *The Sun Also Rises* become so popular? Farrell explains:

> With signs of a return to world prosperity there were growing evidences of pacifism. In particular, the youth which had been too young to have been in the trenches was deeply pacifistic. Disillusionment with the war was more or less accepted. (Farrell, p. 4)

Carlos Baker, Hemingway's biographer, agrees: "The 'Lost Generation' catch phrase facing the title page seemed to sum up for many people an aspect of the social history of the nineteen-twenties." Baker goes on to cite Ernest Boyd who said that Hemingway had triumphantly added a new chapter to the story Fitzgerald began in *This Side of Paradise*. The feeling was that both books, though in far different ways, helped to anatomize the desperate gaiety with which the Jazz Age covered its melancholia. (Baker, p. 79)
Thus Hemingway was representative of the twenties just as Fitzgerald was. Indeed, his popularity and critical reputation are perhaps unsurpassed by any other modern American writer.

The Hemingway Hero

A great deal has been written about the Hemingway hero. In *Ernest Hemingway and the Pursuit of Heroism* Leo Gurko contends that this is because Hemingway's central theme is heroism. His novels are not just demonstrations of the world's emptiness, of how all things are nada. They are essentially portrayals of the hero, the man who by force of some extraordinary quality sets the standard for those around him.6

Hemingway's heroes of the nineteen-twenties are realists. They are isolated from family and society and live in a world in which they must construct their own values. These values, when adhered to, give a man grace and dignity; they allow him to hold the world, the painful awareness of the world's emptiness which confronts him at night, at arm's length. Sometimes the "nada" come nearer, but the Hemingway hero, by virtue of his courage, skill, and appreciation of nature survives with a measure of dignity.

The Hemingway hero perceives the world as bleak and indifferent, and it is in how he confronts such a world that he is heroic. Gurko makes a point of this when he says the
heroism of the Hemingway characters is a reaction to the moral emptiness of the universe, an emptiness that they feel compelled to fill by their own special efforts . . . . They are driven to set up a counter-vailing force that will preserve them as human beings in the face of the world's indifference . . . . (Gurko, p. 236)

Hemingway's bleak view of the world is presented nowhere more clearly than in "A Clean, Well-Lighted Place." The older of two waiters waiting to close a cafe in Paris points out an old man still drinking there:

"Last week he tried to commit suicide," one waiter said.
"Why?"
"He was in despair."
"What about?"
"Nothing." 7

The younger waiter cannot understand the old man, but the other does. "I am one of those who like to stay late at the cafe," he says. "I am one of those who like a light for the night" (SSEH, p. 382). After the younger waiter leaves, the older man continues thinking that while the light is the most important thing, "it is necessary that the place be clean and pleasant" (SSEH, p. 382).

What did he fear? It was not fear or dread. It was a nothing that he knew too well. It was all a nothing and a man was nothing too. It was only that and light was all it needed and a certain cleanliness and order. Some lived in it and never knew it but he knew it all was nada y pues nada y nada y pues nada. Our nada who art in nada . . . . (SSEH, p. 382-83)
In his discussion of this story, Earl Rovit points out that the "clean, well-lighted place" is a metaphor for the order and "light" which values or conduct temporarily provide in the formless, chaotic darkness, nada. The cafe is a lighted place within the darkness and confusion of the hero's life. In such a place he can, for the time being, relax with dignity, not confronted with the meaninglessness of life. It is at best a temporary respite, but one which allows him to maintain the dignity which is his only reward for living well.

The world depicted in "A Clean, Well-Lighted Place," and in Hemingway's other fiction, is a meaningless, empty world in which man can only conclude that life is a futile, "biological trap." It is a world in which the only value lies in stoically enduring with this knowledge.

Many critics have tried to categorize Hemingway's heroes. Most apt is the distinction Philip Young makes between the sensitive wounded heroes, Nick Adams, Jake Barnes, and Frederick Henry, and his code heroes, Romero, Wilson, Manuel, and the Major. Young characterizes the wounded hero as honest, virile, but—clearest of all—very sensitive. He is an outdoor male and he has a lot of nerve, but he is also very nervous. . . . This man will die a thousand times before his death, and although he would learn to live with some of his troubles, and how to overcome others, he would never completely recover from his wounds . . . .
The wounded hero's world is one of "violence, disorder, and misery" in which he learns to live by looking to the code hero as an example of "honor, courage, and endurance which in a life of tension and pain make a man a man . . . and enable him to conduct himself well in the losing battle that is life" (Young in Novelists, p. 158). Typical of this code hero is the matador or sportsman who plays by a rigid set of rules. The code hero knows his art or profession precisely and has developed it to its perfection. If, in his sport or profession, he bravely confronts physical danger, as a soldier, hunter, or matador would, then he is the epitome of the code hero.

Manuel, the bullfighter in "The Undefeated" is a code hero. His skill is failing because he has grown old, yet he refuses to give up his profession, which is symbolized by his wearing of the coleta, hair braided at the back of his neck. Performing well with the bull, Manuel is gored before killing it, though he does succeed after numerous attempts despite the torment of the jeering crowd and the wound in his side. Zurito, another code hero, recognizing the sense in which Manuel does remain "undefeated" decides not to cut the coleta.

The Major in "In Another Country" is another of Hemingway's code heroes. His code is more fundamental than the matador's or hunter's code. He must learn, as Rovit puts it, "how to make one's passive vulnerability . . ."
into a strong, rather than a weak position, and how to exact the maximum amount of reward ('honor,' 'dignity') out of these encounters" (Rovit, p. 64).

The Major is a professional soldier who, like the narrator, goes to the hospital every day for mechanical treatments of his hand, though he does not believe in the therapy. His teaching the narrator Italian grammar during their time there is indicative of his precision and demand for order. One afternoon the narrator and the Major argue about marriage. Though the narrator does not know it, the Major's young wife has just died. "If he is to lose everything," the Major exclaims, "he should not place himself in a position to lose that. He should not place himself in a position to lose. He should find things he cannot lose." The Major later apologizes for his outburst, "I am so sorry . . . . I would not be rude. My wife has just died. You must forgive me . . . . It is very difficult . . . . I cannot resign myself" (SSEH, p. 271-72). Three days later he returns for his treatments with mourning crepe on his uniform sleeve. I agree with Rovit who sees that what confronts the Major is worse than death. He says:

It would have been quite simple for the Major to have died well; his challenge is far greater than his own death . . . . The Major, in losing his wife, suffers a death of himself accompanied by the absurdity of his own continued life. It is a meaninglessness--nada--that confronts the Major in full assault. (Rovit, p. 63)
The Major, like all of Hemingway's heroes, is a realist. He knows that when he allows himself to care he risks losing that which he cares for and, indeed, will lose. When the narrator asks, "But why should he necessarily lose it?" the Major answers, "He'll lose it" (SSEH, p. 271), the reply of a sensitive and defensive hero.

This defensiveness is clearly a characteristic of both Jake Barnes and Frederick Henry. The latter (A Farewell to Arms, 1929) is a hero who tries to avoid situations wherein he might be hurt. He does not want to get emotionally involved with anything or anyone. When he first meets Catherine Barkley he says, "This was a game, like bridge, in which you said things instead of playing cards." But, after he is wounded and sees Catherine again, he realizes that he is in love with her. "God knows," he says, "I had not wanted to fall in love with her. I had not wanted to fall in love with anyone" (FA, p. 93).

But, even with love, which Count Greffi later reminds him is "a religious feeling," Frederick Henry has a pessimistic—or perhaps strictly realistic view of the world. He is not so cynical as his friend Rinaldi, but he tries not to have any illusions, to limit himself to the concrete, the real, that which he can depend on as being true. In his rejection of idealistic abstractions he says:
I was always embarrassed by the words sacred, glorious, and sacrifice, and the expression in vain. I had seen nothing sacred, and the things that were glorious had no glory and the sacrifices were like the stockyards at Chicago if nothing was done with the meat except to bury it. There were many words that you could not stand to hear and finally only the names of places had dignity. Certain numbers were the same way and certain dates and these with the names of places were all you could say and have them mean anything. 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. (FA, p. 184-85)

Frederick Henry is not the only Hemingway hero to prefer concrete reality. Krebs, in "Soldier's Home," has a comparable reaction. Krebs returned to his home town in Oklahoma after the war, and at first he "did not want to talk about the war at all" (SSEH, p. 145). Later, when he wanted to talk about it, he discovered that no one would listen unless he lied, and he couldn't stand to lie about his war experiences.

Still Krebs loves to read about it. He finds histories the most interesting reading he had ever done. He wished there were more maps. He looked forward with a good feeling to reading all the really good histories when they would come out with good detail maps. (SSEH, p. 148)

Thus Krebs has the same preference for the realities of place, specific rivers, roads, and villages that Frederick Henry has. He too feels the concrete reality of the war which cannot be verbalized except in the most objective way.
Krebs, like Frederick Henry, rejects personal involvement; he is defensive. "He did not want any consequences ever again. He wanted to live along without consequences" (SSEH, p. 147). Krebs avoids girls, his family, and getting a job. He would rather sit at home than go out to find a career or a girl which would satisfy his parents. This wanting to live without consequences is similar to the attitude Frederick Henry has before he falls in love with Catherine.

After his wound is healed, Frederick returns to the front. He is involved in a massive and chaotic retreat during which he attempts to lead his men back to safety. When it becomes clear that he is going to be shot by his own army because of his foreign accent, he deserts. He is forced to make a "separate peace." He escapes with Catherine, and they enjoy an idyllic existence until her death in childbirth leaves him with nothing. His involvement with the war is over and so is his love.

What has he learned? That loving Catherine was respite from an ugly world, an escape that couldn't last? That loving Catherine gave him more strength to cope with a world where, "you did not know what it was about," where "you never had time to learn," where "they threw you in and told you the rules and the first time they caught you off base they killed you" (FA, p. 327). Richard Hovey concludes his discussion of the novel with the claim that Frederick learns that both love
and war alienate and destroy. But Rovit's is a more perceptive response. He does not find the novel quite so bleak. Though Frederick Henry does not really care about the war or much of anything at the outset, he

    does possess a strong essential "caringness." 
    Because of that he can love Catherine. He establishes a connection with the world in his love affair . . . . That she dies does not negate his experience; it pushes him into the position of the Major who also has found things he cannot lose . . . . (Rovit, p. 105-6)

Frederick Henry is a sensitive "caring" hero who, because of his involvement with the war and with Catherine, is confronted powerfully with the bleak ugliness of the world. He has not given up learning how to live in it; he has just been confronted with a profound experience of it with which he must cope. Much of Frederick Henry's learning must come between the termination of the action and the time he narrates it. We may assume that his defensiveness and disillusion has developed to some extent since Catherine's death. A passage such as the following is bitter and disillusioned and indicates that Frederick's reaction to Catherine's death does not affirm the value of his experience, but cries out against the world, against forces which he cannot control.

    If people bring so much courage to this world the world has to kill them to break them, so of course it kills them. The world breaks every one and afterward many are strong at the broken places. But those that will not break it kills. It kills the very good and the very
gentle and the very brave impartially. If you are none of these you can be sure it will kill you too but there will be no special hurry. (FA, p. 249)

Jake Barnes (The Sun Also Rises, 1926) is like Frederick Henry in that he too has been wounded by love and war. Jake is trying to cope with life after the war has ended. Because of a wound which has left him impotent, he is unable ever to have the woman he loves and must cope with abiding loneliness. As Richard Lehan observes, Jake sees himself as an outsider and the only way he can live his life "is to bring to it a private discipline and a capacity to endure."10

Throughout the novel Jake copes fairly well. He is dispelling his illusions about Brett at the beginning of the novel. "I suppose," he thinks, "she only wanted what she couldn't have."11 He is subject to illusion when she is near him, however. He lets himself dream that things can work out. At one point he asks her, "Couldn't we live together, Brett? Couldn't we just live together? . . . Couldn't we go off in the country for a while?" (TSAR, p. 55).

Instead Brett goes off to the country with Robert Cohn, who is full of illusions, after having read and re-read "The Purple Land" a romance about which Jake says,

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 from a French convent, equipped with a complete set of the more practical Alger books. (TSAR, p. 9)
Cohn allows his mistress to browbeat him in front of Jake, and he goes to pieces emotionally in public. When he can't believe that it didn't mean anything to Brett that they went away together, he behaves childishly and earns everyone's contempt.

Cohn is the example of the way Jake does not want to behave. Pedro Romero, a code hero, is the example he would like to emulate. Romero's personal and professional lives are dignified and purposeful. His bullfighting, we are told, "gave real emotion because he kept the absolute purity of line in his movements and always quietly and calmly let the horns pass him close each time" (TSAR, p. 168).

Romero has his work to give his life order and meaning. Through Romero we see the value which Hemingway placed on the skill or art that makes order within nada. In Jake and Bill's fishing experience in Burguette, we see the value his heroes place on nature and on friendship. Jake's sensitivity to these things is evident as they ride up into the mountains on the bus:

After a while we came out of the mountains, and there were trees along both sides of the road, and a stream and ripe fields of grain. . . . Robert Cohn was asleep, but Bill looked and nodded his head. (TSAR, p. 93)

While in the mountains, Jake feels good. He comments, "Once in the night I woke and heard the wind blowing. It felt good to be warm and in bed" (TSAR, p. 111). When contrasted with his earlier statement, "It is awfully easy to be hardboiled
about everything in the daytime, but at night it is another thing" (TSAR, p. 31), his comment made while in the mountains illustrates the restorative power nature has for him.

But after this interlude Jake still succumbs to romantic illusions about Brett, and he still suffers loneliness at night. He betrays his passion and reverence for the art of bullfighting by introducing Brett to Romero. However, he is not one of the "lost" group to which Brett and Mike belong. For one thing, he works, and we are led to believe that he likes working and is good at it. He maintains a strict schedule and in his personal habits is very clean and orderly.

By the end of the novel, Jake accepts the fact that he can't have Brett and he isn't quite so certain he still wants her. They are jostled close in the taxi, and Brett says, "Oh Jake, we could have had such a damned good time together." He replies, "Yes, . . . Isn't it pretty to think so" (TSAR, p. 247). Jake realizes there is no point in discussing a situation he cannot change and must live with as it is.

Jake is still learning to live without illusions, to relish his work, his male companionships, and nature. Jake's heroism, according to Gurko, "unlike Romero's is not that of consummation but of effort" (Gurko, p. 64). Perhaps as Jake himself says, "Enjoying living was learning to get your money's worth and knowing when you had it" (TSAR, p. 148; my emphasis).
The Hemingway Hero: Summary

In a letter to Maxwell Perkins written in 1926, Hemingway said:

I've known some very wonderful people who even though they were going directly to the grave (which is what makes any story a tragedy if carried out until the end) managed to put up a very fine performance en route. (Baker, p. 81)

This admiration of a "fine performance" in the face of an unkind reality defines the Hemingway hero.

Frederick Henry's notion that life is a game where you are never told the rules but where "they" will break and kill you for violating them, and Jake Barnes' view of the world as a place where "the bill always came," and where "you paid some way for everything that was any good" (TSAR, p. 148), are disillusioned views. What the Hemingway hero does in the face of this world of inevitable retribution, loneliness, violence, and death is try to learn "how to live in it" (TSAR, p. 148).

The Hemingway hero tries always to live well, to impose order, to maintain his own dignity. He does this by taking pride in doing his work properly, by appreciating nature, by trying to discard illusion, and by being brave.

The citation which accompanied Hemingway's Nobel Prize commends his "natural admiration for every individual who fights the good fight in a world of reality overshadowed by violence and death." Much of the emphasis of Hemingway's
fiction is on the individual fighting against whatever threatens his emotional stability, his sanity, and the essential dignity of his manhood.
The heroes of Fitzgerald and Hemingway seem significantly different from each other. Fitzgerald's is a dreamer, living in a world made bright by illusions of youth, wealth, success, love. He looks backward toward a golden time of youth and beauty which has vanished. Hemingway's is a realist, sincerely attempting to rid himself of illusion. He lives in the present.

However, both Fitzgerald's and Hemingway's heroes live in worlds they cannot resign themselves to. Fitzgerald's seek to escape it, Hemingway's to endure it. They are men essentially alone, individualistic, relying solely upon themselves to find meaning or value in the world.

Robert Penn Warren notes this basic similarity between Fitzgerald's and Hemingway's heroes:

For the young people about whom Fitzgerald wrote... were like Hemingway's expatriates under the shadow of the war and were groping to find some satisfaction in a world from which the old values had been withdrawn... "All the sad young men" of Fitzgerald... and the "lost generation" of Hemingway are seekers for landmarks and bearings in a terrain for which maps have been mislaid.¹

The Fitzgerald and Hemingway heroes, if not tragic, are potentially tragic. We have seen that Gatsby, Diver, and Stahr are conceived as men superior in degree to other men; their stories are stories of their descent from high to low. Likewise, Hemingway's heroes are extraordinary men by virtue of their stoic endurance and their courage.
The hero of the twenties is disillusioned, is isolated in the sense that he relies solely on himself to find and maintain value, and is of tragic stature.
Updike's popularity is beyond debate. He has written several bestselling novels and won a National Book Award for *The Centaur*. *Rabbit, Run* is a contemporary classic.

His critical reputation, too, is solid. Richard H. Rupp says that Updike is "probably the finest stylist writing fiction today. . . ."\(^1\) Alice and Kenneth Hamilton, in the first book-length study of Updike say that he "is one of the most elegant and most serious authors of our age."\(^2\) Rachael Burchard notes his "almost unprecedented success in an age of unparalleled competition,"\(^3\) and Arthur Mizener calls him today's "dazzlingly talented young man" in prose fiction.\(^4\)

Critics agree that Updike is a brilliant stylist, and the vast number of articles on him, along with the book-length studies and chapters in critical collections devoted to him, single him out as one of the writers of contemporary American fiction most worthy of discussion. Joyce Markle notes that "the sales of the seventh novel and the amount of discussion prompted by it indicated that Updike had unquestionably become a leading literary figure"\(^5\) and Howard M. Harper notes in 1967 that Updike has "the beginnings of a major reputation . . . his work in the 1960's shows a deepening concern with the ultimate questions."\(^6\)
In his introduction to the chapter in *The Open Decision* which includes a discussion of Updike, Jerry H. Bryant claims that Updike's novels are good because "they express so incisively the quality of the modern experience." He goes on to characterize that experience:

The paradox and contradictoriness of human life are not some exasperating imperfections which, if we strive long enough, we can rid ourselves of. They are definite features of human life. To accept life is to affirm this condition. . . . Alone in the face of an absolutely enigmatic world, without appeal to a higher, wiser, more benevolent power, bereft of any assurances or certainties beyond himself, the human being forges his own identity. (Bryant, p. 234-35)

All of Updike's work is truly representative of this kind of experience, in its search for spiritual value to replace God and church; its ambiguity; its joining of good and bad, moral and immoral, mortal and divine, in the individual hero.

The Updike Hero

Updike's heroes find themselves in a world which appears senseless and chaotic. They lack the comfort of order and stability and are compelled to seek new order or to discover the order they cannot seem to see. Old beliefs and traditions have failed them and they seek a new stability.

Updike's heroes are representations of what Bryant calls "the paradox and contradictoriness of human life" (Bryant, p. 234). They are caught in this contradictoriness, and they
themselves embody it. They are simultaneously admirable and
despicable, certain and uncertain. In an article in *Modern
Fiction Studies*, in which Joseph Waldmeir discusses the modern
quest novel, he observes that Updike's protagonists are:

> Off on quests, presumably for identity, for a
> means to square themselves with the enigmatic
> universe. . . . But he [Updike] is only
> nominally concerned with bringing his
> protagonists through successfully or unsuc-
> cessfully. His real concern is a critical
> examination of the temptations, the problems,
> the questions, and the answers as they conflict
> both inside and outside the protagonist,
> alternately promising and denying solutions
> to the quest.\(^3\)

Of Updike's heroes, Harry "Rabbit" Angstrom is the most
important, interesting, and memorable. He is the protagonist
The former has been the subject of much critical controversy
concerning the admirable or despicable nature of Harry
Angstrom. As Edward P. Vargo points out, the fundamental
question concerning the novel is, "Do you like or dislike
Harry Angstrom?"\(^9\) I like him although I agree with Vargo's
further statement that, "The attempt to categorize Rabbit as
hero or anti-hero is . . . a futile exercise. He is neither
and he is both" (Vargo, p. 55).

"Rabbit" Angstrom is a twenty-six-year-old middle-class
American who is married, has a young son, and is expecting a
second child. He sells Magi-Peel Kitchen Peelers for a living.
We are told in the first chapter that "in his time Rabbit was
famous through the county" as a basketball star who set a scoring record in his senior year of high school. As the novel begins, Rabbit joins an impromptu alley game of basketball and is elated "that his touch still lived in his hands" (R,R, p. 11).

He returns to his apartment after this game to find his pregnant wife drunk. She is watching T.V. and has left Nelson, their young son, at his grandparents' where Rabbit is to pick him up. The apartment is a mess and when Janice asks him to bring home a pack of cigarettes, he suddenly feels so trapped that he runs away.

He drives south all night feeling only that he doesn't know where he's going. "The only way to get somewhere you know," a gas station attendant tells him, "is to figure out where you're going before you go there." "I don't think so," Rabbit says (R,R, p. 32), and we are early given an indication of his lack of direction, evident throughout the novel.

Eventually he returns to his hometown but not to Janice. He goes to his old basketball coach, Tothero, and later moves in with Ruth, a prostitute.

Jack Eccles, Janice's clergymen, meets with Rabbit to try to persuade him to return to his wife. Through his conversations with Eccles, we learn more about the spiritual nature of his quest. He tells Eccles, "I do feel, I guess, that somewhere behind all this ... there's something that wants me to find it" (R,R, p. 120). Eccles finds this laughable. "What
is it? What is it?" he asks. "Is it hard or soft. Harry. Is it blue? Is it red? Does it have polka dots?" "Don't ask me," says Rabbit. "It's right up your alley. If you don't know nobody does" (R,R, p. 125).

In his search, Rabbit turns to the past. He attempts to recover something--whatever it was--that made life better when he was younger. Like Tom Buchanan of The Great Gatsby, he is in danger of drifting "on forever seeking, a little wistfully, for the dramatic turbulence of some irrecoverable . . . game" (TGG, p. 6). "I was great," Rabbit tells Ruth. "It's a fact. I'm not much good for anything now, but I really was good at that" (R,R, p. 73). The fact that Rabbit runs to Tothero is indicative of his desire to recapture his former greatness. He and Tothero discuss basketball with some girls at a bar and Rabbit tries to explain how he felt playing on one of those nights. And how he felt is important because as he has told Jack Eccles, "All I know is what's inside me. That's all I have" (R,R, p. 102), on that basketball court, he felt as if he could do anything.

Tothero gives a lot of advice which Rabbit still seems to accept. He expresses his philosophy this way:

Give the boys the will to achieve. I've always liked that better than the will to win, for there can be achievement even in defeat. Make them feel the, yes, I think the word is good, the sacredness of achievement." (R,R, p. 62)
Some critics see Rabbit's quest as a striving toward this "sacredness of achievement." As he has told Eccles in answer to the question, "In what way do you think you're exceptional?"
"I once did something right. I played first-rate basketball. I really did. And after you're first-rate at something, no matter what, it kind of takes the kick out of being second-rate" (R,R, p. 101).

In his looking back to the past, Rabbit like Jay Gatsby, "wanted to recover something, some idea of himself perhaps" (TGG, p. 111), that feeling he had on the basketball court. This is clear when Rabbit remembers Mary Ann, his high school sweetheart who "was the best of them all because she was the one he brought most to. . . . He came to her as a winner and that's the feeling he's missed since" (R,R, p. 184).

In addition to the past, Rabbit has an interest in church which indicates a search for meaning, for the "something" beneath everything. From Ruth's window he notices immediately the church across the way. . . . Lights behind its rose window are left burning, and the circle of red and purple and gold seems in the city night a hole punched in reality to show the abstract brilliance burning underneath. (R,R, p. 78)

On the Sunday morning Rabbit first spends with Ruth, he is pleased and reassured at "the thought of these people having the bold idea of leaving their homes to come here and pray" (R,R, p. 86-87). He asks Ruth if she believes in anything, and
she answers no. When she asks him the same question, he admits, "Well, yeah. I think so." He wonders if he's lying. If he is, he is hung in the middle of nowhere, and the thought hollows him and makes his heart tremble" (R/R, p. 87). This is Rabbit's view of "nada," being "hung in the middle of nowhere."

Rabbit's spiritual interest mounts to a fervor after his baby is born and he returns to his wife. Walking to church:

He hates all the people on the street in dirty everyday clothes, advertising their belief that the world arches over a pit, that death is final, that the wandering thread of his feelings leads nowhere. Correspondingly, he loves the ones dressed for church: the pressed business suits of portly men give substance and respectibility to his furtive sensations of the invisible... He could kiss their feet in gratitude; they release him from fear. (R/R, p. 217)

In addition to looking to the past and to religion for answers, Rabbit looks to nature. He works in old Mrs. Smith's garden and "He loves folding the hoed ridge of crumbs of soil over the seeds. Sealed they cease to be his. The simplicity. Getting rid of something by giving it to itself" (R/R, p. 128).

Rabbit also seeks his answers in sexual activity which, according to Markle, expresses his desire "to comfort and heal" (Markle, p. 48). During his first night with Ruth, Rabbit feels he has almost found "it," but is disappointed. His sexual activity is frantic and closely related to his religious craving.
The church is the view from Ruth's bedroom window. And, it is in church that Rabbit becomes excited and desires Janice. This is after she has come home from the hospital with June. Because she refuses him, Rabbit leaves her again. The next morning Janice, in a drunken stupor, accidentally drowns the baby.

At the burial of little June, it seems that Rabbit is finally coming to some answers. Earlier he has started to realize that his life cannot be as it was when he was a high school star. "He feels the truth, the thing that has left his life has left irrevocably; no search would recover it. No flight would reach it" (R,R, p. 208). This is one illusion shed. On the bus home, after discovering little June's death, Rabbit attempts to rid himself of other illusions:

What held him back all day was the feeling that somewhere there was something better for him than listening to babies cry and cheating people in used-car lots and it's this feeling he tries to kill, right there on the bus, he . . . closes his eyes and tries to kill it. (R,R, p. 250)

At June's funeral and graveside service Rabbit feels "liberated." "The sky greets him," we are told. "A strange strength sinks down into him. It is as if he has been crawling in a cave and now at last beyond the dark recession of crowding rocks he has seen a patch of light" (R,R, p. 271). But Janice blocks the light and he says, "Don't look at me . . . . I didn't kill her" (R,R, p. 271). But no one, least of all
Janice, understands. She had the chance to join him in "just the simplest factual truth, and she turned away" (R,R, p. 272).

Rabbit cannot tolerate this turning away and he runs.


But Rabbit's new found strength and his "way" do not last in the face of his responsibilities in the world. He returns to Ruth only to find that she is pregnant and considering abortion. She tells him he must divorce Janice. "I don't know" he keeps responding to her questions. He goes out to get some sandwiches and his worries tumble upon him. He is afraid and he looks to the church window whose brightness once consoled him, but the window is "a dark circle in the stone facade" (R,R, p. 283). He muses:

Goodness lies inside, there is nothing outside. . . . He feels his inside as very real suddenly, a pure blank space in the middle of a dense net. I don't know, he kept telling Ruth; he doesn't know, what to do, where to go, what will happen. . . . (R,R, p. 282)

Finally,

His hands lift of their own and he feels the wind on his ears even before, his heels hitting heavily on the pavement at first but with an effortless gathering out of a kind of sweet panic growing lighter and quicker and quieter, he runs. Ah: runs. Runs. (R,R, p. 284)
The book poses several problems. What kind of ending is this, and what kind of man is Rabbit? Is he a saintly and devoted searcher, unwavering in his belief in something better? Or, is he irresponsible, selfish, and immature? His nickname certainly does not connote any heroic or even respectable qualities. Ruth calls him "Mr. Death" and he is indirectly responsible for the death of his daughter and Ruth's fetus if she aborts it.

On the other hand, old Mrs. Smith tells him that he has kept her alive by working for her. "That's what you have, Harry," she says, "life. It's a strange gift and I don't know how we're supposed to use it, but I know it's the only gift we get and it's a good one" (R,R, p. 207). Ruth admits to Rabbit that she likes him because "You haven't given up. In your stupid way you're still fighting" (R,R, p. 89). Though he is repeatedly told that he is selfish, that "he just lived in his skin and didn't give a thought to the consequences of anything" (R,R, p. 139), he is thoughtful at times. Jack Eccles admits that when he's with Rabbit he feels absolutely cheerful (R,R, p. 153). As Ruth exclaims:

"Oh all the world loves you . . . What I wonder is why?"
"I'm lovable," he says.
"I mean why the hell you. What's so special about you?"
"I'm a mystic," he says. "I give people faith." (R,R, p. 135)
Markle notes this quality in Rabbit when she calls him a "star" off the courts, too. He is a life-giver, "one who can communicate a feeling of specialness to others" (Markle, p. 48). She excuses Rabbit for his irresponsibility toward Janice, Nelson, and Ruth:

But it is only by looking above the level of social responsibility that Rabbit can maintain the vision which makes him a star. To force him to be a team player, a group-oriented, responsible, "mature," member of society would be to force him back to Janice, Magi-Peelers, and "fetching and hauling" where his special gifts would go largely unused and where a horizontal outlook would threaten to cloud his awareness of the higher something—that-wants-me-to-find-it. (Markle, p. 49)

Markle sees the end of the novel as an unquestionable affirmation. "He is alone and an outcast," she says, "but he is still running, and now that all ties have been broken there is hope of a sustained achievement for him" (Markle, p. 51). William Van O'Connor finds Rabbit, Run a qualified affirmation: "The novel seems not to be saying that man's moral gestures are all fraudulent. It could even by saying, with Auden, Love your crooked neighbor with your crooked heart." 11

Robert Detweiler, calls Rabbit, Run a tragedy, not only because Rabbit is weak and irresponsible, but also because the institutions to which he turns for help fail him. "Neither marriage, nor parenthood, nor job, nor church, nor nature can provide him with a reason to take up the responsibilities which they entail." 12
Rabbit Angstrom is both admirable and contemptible. He is admirable in his persistence and his refusal to accept the second-rate. He is striving for the first-rate. However, we cannot overlook Rabbit's selfishness, his mistreatment of his wife, of his young son, and of Ruth as well. He is grossly irresponsible.

Because Rabbit is admirable yet irresponsible and selfish, he is a hero who embodies the confusion of values and the directionlessness which Updike depicts in his fiction. Updike's heroes differ from Bellow's in that they do not find a way out of their lostness, they merely learn to accept it. Rabbit's acceptance comes later, in *Rabbit Redux* (1972).

George Caldwell, the hero of Updike's next novel, *The Centaur* (1961), is definitely a saintly searcher. His self-sacrificing love makes him almost Christlike. Larry Taylor who has studied the pastoral patterns in Updike's fiction, calls Caldwell, a "rough hewn saint" who "drives himself mercilessly in dedicated service to his profession, community, family. Service is his way of life, his way of searching for his place in the cosmic design."  

Updike equates Caldwell with the centaur Chiron; his son Peter is Prometheus. In the classical version of the story, Chiron, tormented by an accidental wound, offers to trade his immortality as an atonement for Prometheus' theft of fire. The gods accept Chiron's death and set him, as the archer, among the stars.
In Updike's version, Chiron-Caldwell is a high school teacher in Olinger, Pennsylvania, who devotes himself fully to his job and who, though he fails to discipline his students, is a good teacher. He is tormented by the frustrations of daily teaching and believes his life has been wasted.

Peter narrates alternate chapters of the novel almost ten years after the events have taken place. The action takes place over three days in which Caldwell and son Peter face a number of trying mishaps (primarily the breakdown of their car) and in which both face the possibility and inevitability of Caldwell's death.

As the novel begins, Caldwell is wounded by a poisoned arrow in one of his classes. The poison from the arrow, metaphorically the hate or enmity of his students, builds in him until he goes to the doctor who tells him that he is medically sound. At the conclusion of the novel, Caldwell and his son have returned home from their three-day absence (due to the failure of the car). Peter is sick in bed with a fever as his father prepares to return to school for another day.

As he walks to the car, Caldwell is troubled by Peter's illness and by how little he feels he has to offer his son. He muses upon his recent encounter with death: "He had been spoiled. In these last days he had been saying goodbye to everything . . . readying himself for a change, a journey. There would be none." And "he thought of his wife's joy in
the land and Pop Kramer's joy in the newspaper and his son's joy in the future and was glad, grateful that he was able to sustain these for yet a space more. The X-rays were clear' (TC, p. 220). However, as he approaches the car, it appears to him to be a chariot that Zeus has sent for him, Chiron. "His will," we are told, "a perfect diamond under the pressure of absolute fear, uttered the final word. Now ... Chiron accepted death" (TC, p. 222).

This is another of Updike's enigmatic conclusions. Does Caldwell die, or does he just accept the fact of his mortality and continue his life liberated by that acceptance? Detweiler cites a reviewer who claims that Chiron's death is not actual, but

symbolic of Caldwell's existential resignation— that he does not die physically, in love with death as he is, but chooses, for the sake of his family and vocational duty, to return to the hell of daily teaching. (Detweiler, p. 84)

Whatever way, the novel is a positive statement about the value of love and the existence of goodness.

The epigraph Updike has chosen for the book is from Karl Barth: "Heaven is the creation inconceivable to man, earth the creation conceivable to him. He himself is the creature on the boundary between heaven and earth" (TC, title page). Chiron-Caldwell is the perfect embodiment of the man caught between heaven and earth. He is plagued by doubts about man's tenuous relationship to the heavens and about man's own worth.
In his mythical form he is, of course, half man, half beast. As Caldwell he is torn between his devotion to knowledge and truth, and the practical demands of life in Olinger.

Caldwell is a good man, despite his ineffectual manner and acute humility. He lectures:

> There is no reason why life should ever end. . . . while each cell is potentially immortal, by volunteering for a specialized function within an organized society of cells, it enters a compromised environment. . . . It dies sacrificially for the good of the whole. (TC, p. 37)

The first cells which got together were the first "do-gooders" according to Caldwell. He himself makes sacrifices for the good of his students and family.

Caldwell's devotion to his students is personal. He cares for them even more because of their inadequacies. He helps Judy prepare for her quiz because he knows that she cannot cope with more failure, and he is patient and kind with Deifendorf, the class trouble-maker whom Peter calls an "obscene animal." In fact, Caldwell's effect on Deifendorf is so great that he later becomes a teacher. Caldwell is acclaimed in the obituary, Peter imagines, supposedly written by a former student, as an admirable and exceptional teacher.

"What endures. . . in the minds of his ex-students was his more-than-human selflessness. . . . To sit under Mr. Caldwell was to lift up one's head in aspiration" (TC, p. 133).
Caldwell's goodness is evident apart from his profession as well. He stops to pick up a drunk hitchhiker on the way to school, gives his last thirty-five cents to an insulting bum, and worries endlessly about Peter. "He needs me to keep him going," he tells one of his colleagues, "the poor kid doesn't have a clue yet" (TC, p. 168).

Caldwell is a truth seeker. Peter tells us, "My father brought to conversations a cavernous capacity for caring that dismayed strangers. They found themselves involved, willy-nilly, in a futile but urgent search for the truth" (TC, p. 66). Because he seeks truth, Caldwell is beset with doubts. His father, who was a minister, asked on his death-bed, "Do you think I'll be eternally forgotten?" This thought torments Caldwell. "That was," he says, "a terrible thing for a minister to say. It scared the living daylights out of me" (TC, p. 73).

Peter, an aspiring artist, is the other hero of this novel. His father has said to him, "He doesn't have a clue." Thus Peter is labeled; he is a searcher, too. He narrates his parts of the novel from his studio in New York where he lives with his girl friend. He has become an artist, and like his father, he doubts. As he sits in his studio remembering the three days with which the novel deals, he grapples with guilt. He remembers thinking, "I'm killing my father" (TC, p. 193), but many of his memories are happy. He says:
And yet, love, do not think that our life together, for all its mutual frustration was not good. It was good. We moved, somehow, on a firm stage, resonant with metaphor... Yes. We lived in God's sight. (TC, p. 57)

Peter recognizes his failure as an artist. "My vast canvases," he says, "so oddly expensive as raw materials, so oddly worthless transmuted into art" (TC, p. 200). Peter, immersed in his art, is like Rabbit, "straining to say the unsayable thing" (TC, p. 201). He wonders, "Was it for this that my father gave up his life?" (TC, p. 201).

Despite Peter's failure as an artist, this novel is unquestionably affirmative. Caldwell thinks, "Only goodness lives. But it does live" (TC, p. 220). He dies at the end of the book and we are told:

Zeus had loved his old friend, and lifted him up, and set him among the stars as the constellation Sagittarius. Here, in the Zodiac, now above, now below the horizon, he assists in the regulation of our destinies, though in this latter time few mortals cast their eyes respectfully toward Heaven, and fewer still sit as students to the stars. (TC, p. 222)

George Caldwell is the only one of Updike's heroes who seems to have found some value by which to abide, though he is never certain of it. He resembles Rabbit in that he, too, seeks for some clear-cut answers. Like Rabbit, Caldwell is not a superior hero. He is a man confronted with mundane problems and uncertainties.

Piet Hanema of Couples (1968) is, like other Updike heroes, a searcher, and a passive man who waits for things to
happen to him without initiating action himself.

Couples is a novel set in Tarbox, U.S.A., about ten couples who make "a church of each other." Their search is manifested in their constant and desperate sexual activity. Though they have all material comforts, they are not satisfied. "The men," Piet thinks, "had stopped having careers and the women had stopped having babies. Liquor and love were left."

Piet is plagued by his recurring and inescapable fear of death. His parents were killed in an accident, and since then, the world wore a slippery surface for Piet; he stood on the skin of things in the posture of a man testing newly formed ice, his head cocked for the warning crack, his spine curved to make himself light. (C, p. 24)

Piet dreams his death and afterward tries to pray; but, his "up-pouring thoughts touched nothing" (C, p. 271).

Piet is a "dear little old-fashioned kind of man" (C, p. 40), a professional builder of homes who appreciates real craftsmanship. However, his work is not enough to sustain him. Work or profession is not satisfying for the couples in Tarbox. One of the couples' unspoken rules is not to criticize professions; "One's job was a pact with the meaningless world beyond the ring of couples" (C, p. 246).

That the novel deals with the failure of spirituality in our culture is evident. The couples have made a "church of each other" (C, p. 12) and, "virtue was no longer sought in temple or marketplace but in the home--one's home, and then
the homes of one's friends" (C, p. 114). Freddy Thorne takes
the role of cynical priest in the secular society. He
worships nothing. "People," he says, "are the only thing
people have left since God packed up. By people I mean sex"
(C, p. 155).

Whether or not Piet grows during the course of the novel
is debatable. He comes no nearer to accepting his own death,
and though he is no longer a member of the circle of couples,
he joins another circle.

Couples is a rambling, redundant novel. Though it may
well point to the lack of spiritual value in contemporary
society, and the everpresent question of God's existence, it
points to no countervailing heroic qualities. There is only
resignation. Piet marries one of his mistresses, after she
has had an abortion and caused his wife to divorce him, and
they move to Lexington "where, gradually, among people like
themselves, they have been accepted as another couple" (C,
p. 480).

Rabbit Redux (1972) takes up the story of Rabbit Angstrom
ten years after Rabbit, Run. At twenty-six Rabbit was an
active and passionate searcher. At thirty-six, he has to be
pushed to question his life and values. He has become a con-
servative and, according to Edward Vargo, his belief in
America has replaced his searching. However, in this novel,
Harry is forced to face questions and forced to realize that
they do not all have easy answers. Largely because of the influence of Jill, a young runaway, and Skeeter, a militant black, he is shaken from his comfortable, middle-aged complacency.

In the ten years since *Rabbit, Run*, Harry has settled into a job as a printer and his marriage with Janice. During the course of this book, however, Janice leaves him. Jill comes to live with him, and later Skeeter moves in as well. Harry's involvement with Jill and Skeeter has disastrous consequences. His home is destroyed by fire and Jill dies in the blaze.

Detweiler says of Harry's growth in the novel:

He learns, a bit, to reflect and to react less on visceral reflex. He learns the advantages of enduring in a marriage, of accepting the subtly deepening and unifying dimensions of its daily routines rather than expecting the excitement of a lover. He learns to forgive, and to function while suffering. In sum, he acquires, no doubt belatedly, a fair degree of maturity and emerges not as the despicable fugitive of the *Rabbit, Run* conclusion but as a man who has asserted himself in the midst of overwhelming personal weaknesses and social confusion and gained a measure of dignity thereby. (Detweiler, p. 161)

There is hope that Rabbit has come to face responsibility at the end of the novel:

"I feel so guilty."
"About what?"
"About everything."
"Relax. Not everything is your fault."
"I can't accept that."
Thus Rabbit is acknowledging that he is at fault for some of the things that have happened. His recognition of guilt implies that he'll try to do better, be more responsible. Janice is right that not everything is his fault, but some things he needs to assume responsibility for. The conclusion is hopeful. Janice and Harry, in their meeting of reconciliation, rest. "He. She. Sleeps. O.K.?" (RR, p. 352). This indicates peace and acceptance. "O.K.?" is a qualified affirmation, but an affirmation nevertheless.

Rabbit Redux is a highly topical book. Page after page is filled with historical detail. The moon landing provides a kind of background for the novel. The Vietnam War is of crucial significance. Black militancy, drugs, and the anti-establishment sentiment of the sixties are boldly rendered, so much so that Harry is overpowered. In the face of such vast, violent chaos, it is no wonder he cannot act. Such teeming reality stuns.

The Updike Hero: Summary

The Updike hero is a man caught between the earth and the stars, as the epigraph to The Centaur suggests. He is a seeker after spiritual realities to make the physical and social realities of his life meaningful or acceptable. For Harry Angstrom of Rabbit, Run, this search is for "something" not second-rate, that can make him feel that there is a floor
and a ceiling to his world, that he is not "hung in the middle of nowhere." For Piet Hanema the search is for comfort and relief from his fear of death, for something permanent like a solidly built building. For the Harry of *Rabbit Redux*, the search is for peace, for acceptance of his changing life and world, and a way to live comfortably with himself in a chaotic world he cannot control. For George Caldwell, the search is for truth and an answer to the question of man's rightful position in the universe.

The Updike hero is a "man in the middle." Between life and death, heaven and hell, isolation and communion, he wants answers. However, he never really gets those answers. He gets intuitions, advice, relief from his search, but he never arrives--"aha!"--at an answer.

Nevertheless, the novels represent a positive movement from beginning to end. *Rabbit, Run* can be seen as affirmative because of Rabbit's unceasing search. *Rabbit Redux* is affirmative because of the acceptance and maturity Harry has gained. *The Centaur* is clearly a statement about the worth of service to community and the ability to believe in goodness. Even Piet Hanema comes finally to rest and yields his frantic, harried pursuit of comfort.

The Updike hero is not an exceptional man. In some cases he is contemptible. He is a man totally human, capable of mistakes, shortcomings, failures. His victory may lie in
acknowledgement of his frailty and the narrow scope of his influence.

The Updike hero represents the *angst* of modern man: trapped, caught in between, unenlightened, buffeted by circumstances beyond his control, striving to cope, to maintain, and, perhaps, to achieve something better.
Saul Bellow is one of the most significant writers of modern American fiction. Tony Tanner claims that, "there is a general consensus among critics that Bellow is the most important of the postwar American novelists."¹ Robert G. Noreen begins the introduction to his bibliography of Bellow:

For some years Saul Bellow has been considered by literary critics and the well-read public alike to be America's most important living novelist, the heir and successor to Faulkner and Hemingway.²

Bellow has been awarded a number of impressive honors and awards, from a Guggenheim Fellowship in 1948 to the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1976. He has also won three National Book Awards, the International Literary Prize, and the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction. The awards are indicative of his major international reputation.

In his portrayal of the increasing pace and complexity of modern life, his concern for the survival of the individual in a mass society, and his portrayal of men searching for answers to the apparent absurdity and spiritual vacuity of life, Bellow is representative of his decade.

What Noreen says about Bellow is strikingly reminiscent of what Updike's novels illustrate:

In Bellow's view, man's condition is to be caught between extremes, between the good and the bad, between the beautiful and the ugly, between a state of war and a state of peace.
between the finite and the infinite. Man is constantly being pulled in different, opposing directions. (Noreen, p. ix)

In this conception of man's condition, both Updike and Bellow are representative of the contradictory nature of thought and experience which characterized the sixties.

In his attempt to define man as a being for whom social engagement, responsibility, and love are unavoidable consequences of his existence, Bellow is representative of his decade, a decade of "love-ins," protests for peace, and demonstrations for civil rights.

The Bellow Hero

The Bellow hero is a quester. Like all the heroes so far discussed, Bellow's heroes, when confronted with a meaningless chaotic world wherein traditions and ideals seem to be failing, set out to find their own answers and values. But, the Bellow hero is a more conscious seeker than any of the others. He is burdened by reality, compelled, driven to his quest. Tony Tanner appropriately characterizes him as contemporary man in all the comedy and anguish of trying to cope with the disorderly mess of modern life pouring in from all sides, haunted by failure, threatened by insanity. He knows the "1,000 negatives" that can be uttered about the individual life; he knows too that "the sacred affirmative" will not easily be found. But he believes it is and must be a possibility. (Tanner, p. 113)
Henderson, of Henderson the Rain King (1958) is a unique and delightful creation. Huge, six-feet-four-inches tall and two-hundred-thirty pounds, he is ridiculous, pathetic, intense, laughable, vital. He is a monumental sufferer and tireless searcher. An incessant voice within him, "I want, I want," never tells him what it wants. Henderson believes his spirit is sleeping.

One of the things bothering Henderson is his desire to believe in the life of the spirit. He wants to believe that death is not final. "It so happens," he says, "that I have never been able to convince myself that the dead are utterly dead." "What is life for?" Henderson wants to know, and "how is it best to live it?" On a particularly nice day which Henderson remembers vividly, the "crimson begonias" make him "crazy with misery." "To somebody these things have been given," he muses, "but that somebody is not me .... So what am I doing here?" (HRK, p. 29).

In the course of the book, Henderson does "burst the spirit's sleep." He journeys the interior of Africa where, through his exposure to the Arnewi and the Wariri tribes, his life is transformed. "The world," he tells us at the very beginning, "which I thought so mighty an oppressor has removed its wrath from me" (HRK, p. 7). Later he says, "Living proof of something of the highest importance has been presented to me so I am obliged to communicate it" (HRK, p. 22).
The first four chapters of the book are an introduction to Henderson's character, extraordinary behavior, and quest. They are an attempted explanation of the trip to Africa. Henderson says, "There is no quick explanation. Things got worse and worse and pretty soon they were too complicated" (HRK, p. 7).

Henderson, a very rich graduate of an Ivy League school, is in his own words, "moody, rough, tyrannical, and probably mad" (HRK, p. 8). We are told that he suffers violently, though it is not clear to him just what causes his misery. In the first four chapters we learn of his courtship and marriage to Lily, his second wife, of his decision to raise pigs and of the experiences he has doing so. He tries to reach the spirit of his dead father by playing the old man's violin and has a vivid experience while chopping wood when a chunk flies up and hits him in the nose. "Truth," he thinks. "Does truth come in blows?" (HRK, p. 23).

On the day on which Henderson decides to go to Africa which he calls the "day of tears and madness," he is raging at his wife so violently that he upsets the coffee pot. In the midst of this scene he walks into the kitchen where he finds Miss Lenox, "a queer, wacky little spinster" who fixes their breakfasts, dead on the floor. He stares at her thinking, "So this is it, the end--farewell?" (HRK, p. 37). He walks across the yard to her junky little cottage; she has been a
packrat, and he thinks:

Oh, shame, shame! Oh, crying shame! How can we? Why do we allow ourselves? What are we doing? The last little room of dirt is waiting. Without windows. So for God's sake make a move, put forth effort. You, too, will die of this pestilence. Death will annihilate you and nothing will remain, and there will be nothing left but junk. Because nothing will have been and so nothing will be left. (HRK, p. 37)

So, Henderson decides to go to Africa with some friends who have planned to travel there. Soon after arriving, however, Henderson leaves his friends and hires a guide to take him to the remote depths of the continent. The first tribe they visit is the Arnewi tribe where Henderson has several profound experiences. Upon his first encounter with them, they burst into tears. Henderson, guilt-ridden sufferer that he is, feels at fault. He considers running back into the desert until he learns that the Arnewi are plagued by a drought and that their cattle, which they treat as family, are dying. Although there is a cistern full of water, it is contaminated by frogs. Henderson resolves to rescue these people and their cattle by killing the frogs.

During the course of Henderson's brief stay with the Arnewi, he meets two women of Bittahness (Bittah is a term of profound respect), Mtalba and Willitale. "A Bittah was a person of real substance," we are told. "You couldn't be any higher or better" (HRK, p. 66). Henderson is deeply affected by these women.
When he meets Willitale and touches his hand to her heart, he feels as if he is "touching the secrets of life" (HRK, p. 63). He feels a power emanating from her and he keeps thinking of "the hour that burst the spirit's sleep" (HRK, p. 68). He feels that Willitale can help him wake up, that she has the "source, the germ—the cipher. The mystery, you know" (HRK, p. 69).

Willitale recognizes Henderson as a seeker and a sufferer and says of him, "Grun-tu-molani. Man want to live" (HRK, p. 72). This excites Henderson immensely. "I could not bear how sad things have become in the world," he says, "and so I set out because of this molani. Grun-tu-molani old lady—old queen. Grun-tu-molani everybody" (HRK, p. 74).

Having resolved to rid the Arnewi of the frogs, Henderson fashions a kind of bomb with which to destroy them. He muses upon the "service ideal" which exists in his family and which is manifest in his desire to become a doctor. The beautiful color of the sunrise in which Henderson glories, he takes to be a good omen for his project. However, in blowing up the frogs Henderson also blows up the wall of the cistern and all the water is lost. Completely humiliated, he leaves the Arnewi.

Romilayu, his guide, then takes him to the Wariri. These, he tells Henderson, are people of darkness. Indeed, Romilayu and Henderson are taken into the village at gun point and spend
a rather harrowing night there because first of all, Henderson breaks his dental work which makes him desperate and angry. Then, they discover that they have been placed in a hut with a dead man which Henderson feels is a kind of challenge to him. He carries the body away and throws it into a ravine. However, when they awake in the morning, the body has been returned. Henderson wonders why he is lately being exposed to so many corpses, first Miss Lenox, then the cattle and the frogs, and now this dead man who seems to speak to him saying, "Here, man, is your being which you think so terrific." "Oh, be quiet, dead man," Henderson says, "for Christ's sake" (HRK, p. 117).

In the morning, Henderson is taken to see King Dahfu whom he almost immediately admires. Dahfu takes Henderson to the rain ceremony where Henderson, in a frenzy to do something, becomes the rain king. This desire to "do a dis-interested and pure thing—to express my belief in something higher" (HRK, p. 160) ended disastrously at the Arnewi tribe and now Henderson wants another chance. Indeed, the ceremony has been pre-arranged so that he will take this chance. He doesn't know it yet, but no one else wants the position as rain king. Henderson moves the statue of the rain goddess, Mummah (for which the movement of the dead man was a preliminary trial) and becomes the rain king, the Sungo.

Henderson performs certain ritual activities daily and then spends the rest of his time with Dahfu, whom he loves.
and respects for his strong gift of life, his energy, serenity, and appreciation of the moment. Henderson learns that the king will be killed as soon as he fails to satisfy any of his many wives and that before Dahfu can officially become king, he must capture the lion Gmilo, the spirit of his dead father. Dahfu has already captured one lion whom he keeps beneath the palace. He cannot part with her, though his people feel that she is the incarnation of a witch. It is through Henderson’s imitation of Atti, this lioness, that Dahfu expects to bring him to the truth. Dahfu recognizes Henderson’s passion and his quest and he likes him and believes that Henderson can be changed for the better.

Dahfu believes that "the noble will have its turn in the world" (HRK, p. 182) and this is precisely the kind of thing that Henderson wants to hear. But, he tells Henderson, the grun-tu-molani—man wanting to live—is not enough. So, Dahfu takes him daily to Atti. Henderson is, of course, terrified. Dahfu tells him:

You ask what she can do for you? Many things. First she is unavoidable. Test it and you will find she is unavoidable. And this is what you need as you are an avoider. Oh, you have accomplished momentous avoidances. But she will change that. She will make consciousness to shine. She will burnish you. She will force the present moment upon you. Second, lions are experiencers. But not in haste. They experience with deliberate luxury. (HRK, p. 219)
Dahfu believes that Henderson fled from himself, trying to believe he wouldn't ever die and to see if he could change. Dahfu believes that he can, that he can be "noble." So, every day Henderson crouches on all fours and roars in imitation of the lion.

In a letter which Henderson writes to Lily there are indications that his African experience is indeed changing him. "I am giving up the violin," he writes. "I guess I will never reach my object through it." Then he thinks, "to raise my spirit from the earth . . . I was very stubborn. I wanted to raise myself into another world. My life and deeds were a prison" (HRK, p. 239). He also announces his intention to study medicine although he will be in his sixties by the time he can practice. "I might as well do something in the interests of life, for a change," he writes. Indicating that he has learned something about himself, he says, "Lily, I'm going to quit knocking myself out," then thinks, "I don't think the struggles of desire can ever be won" (HRK, p. 240). He concludes the letter, "I had a voice that said I want! I want? It should have told me she wants, he wants, they want. And moreover, it's love that makes reality reality. The opposite makes the opposite" (HRK, p. 241). Thus Henderson realizes that his quest to fill a spiritual void, others, too, feel; and he realizes the importance of love in filling that void.
The ultimate experience which "bursts" Henderson's sleep is Dahfu's death. He goes out to capture the lion believed to be Gmilo and is killed by that lion which is not Gmilo after all. Henderson's confrontation with the lion is very significant. He says:

The snarling of this animal was indeed the voice of death. And I thought how I had boasted to my dear Lily how I loved reality. 'I love it more than you do,' I had said. But oh, unreality! Unreality, unreality! That has been my scheme for a troubled but eternal life. But now I was blasted away from this practice by the throat of the lion. His voice was like a blow at the back of my head. (HRK, p. 258)

And, of course we know, "Truth comes in blows." Henderson realizes that he has avoided facing reality, especially the reality of death, and that he has searched for proof of life's worth and of immortality, for which no proofs are available.

Upon Dahfu's death, Henderson discovers that he, the rain king is to be the next king. Locked in the tomb with Dahfu's body for a period of several days while the religious leaders of the tribe wait for Dahfu's spirit to enter the lion cub they have entombed with him, he grieves for his friend. He thinks about remaining and trying to be king, but he also thinks, "I have to go home. . . . The only decent thing about me is that I have loved certain people in my life" (HRK, p. 265). Romilayu and Henderson escape the tomb and head back to civilization. Henderson takes the lion cub, supposedly the incarnation of Dahfu, with him.
Henderson is very ill for some time after Dahfu's death. But Romilayu gets him to civilization and he recovers. While feverish he says, "What's the universe? Big. And what are we? Little. I therefore might as well be at home where my wife loves me" (HRK, p. 275).

So, Henderson, with his lion cub, takes the plane back home. During the flight he is kind to a little Persian orphan. He also looks back at his life, concluding, "Whatever gains I made were always due to love and nothing else" (HRK, p. 284). When the plane lands in Newfoundland to refuel, Henderson, the child in his arms, runs around and around the plane breathing deeply the cold air which he calls "pure happiness." "I guess," he says, "I felt it was my turn to move, and so I went running--leaping, pounding, and tingling over the pure white lining of the gray Arctic silence" (HRK, p. 286).

Henderson the Rain King is clearly a quest novel. As Henderson himself says, "my purpose was to see essentials, only essentials, nothing but essentials, and to guard against hallucinations" (HRK, p. 137). Henderson learns something in his search for essentials, and Brigitte Scheer-Schazler contends that it is by Dahfu's example that he learns it.

By returning from civilization into the wilderness of his tribe, by willingly submitting himself to possible death in the framework and context of his culture, by living joyfully "in the knowledge of annihilation" and by avoiding all easy escapes, Dahfu bears witness to the
possibility of a more brilliant reality and thus becomes the agent of Henderson's redemption.  

She also points out that this, like other Bellow novels, concludes with "the first step. The first real step. There is then, the firm belief in the possibility of a new start in life" (Scheer-Schazler, p. 89).

David Galloway's article, "The Novels of Saul Bellow," calls Henderson a "prodigious" and "devotedly conscious seeker, and Dahfu an "elegant, graceful, resplendent, non-conformist monarch who shows Henderson how to move from an apparently arrested state of 'becoming' to a state of 'being'." This becoming-and-being problem troubles Henderson considerably. He tells the king, "I am a Becomer. Now you see your situation is different. You are a Be-er. I've just got to stop Becoming. Jesus Christ, when am I going to Be?" (HRK, p. 162).

Henderson finds reality unacceptable so he diligently pursues Dahfu's training, painful as it is for him. His dedication indicates his "insistence that the world can be changed for the better" (Galloway, p. 252). And, Henderson's quest is ultimately successful in that he accepts reality without giving up this belief in nobility. Galloway puts it this way:

What Henderson has found is the way back to the world and to a life of service, and his victory comes suddenly after he has dedicated himself to a struggle which seems hopeless but which he must maintain in order to be true to himself. . . . Out of an absurd, chaotic, fragmentary world in which loneliness and pain
seem the only constraints, Henderson achieves a vision which permits him to take hold of his own fate. (Galloway, p. 253)

There is no doubt that Henderson's quest is successful. He returns to the world ready to accept and affirm it. He has ceased his passionate searching and is ready to be, to take up a life of service he has always wanted to pursue, to love his wife and allow himself to be loved by her. He is, as Herzog would come to be, "Pretty well satisfied to be, to be just as it is willed, and for as long as [he] may remain in occupancy." 6

Herzog, the hero of the novel which bears his name (1961), is more sedate than Henderson and less dramatic, though he is also a quester. Throughout the book, Herzog is "taking stock."

Considering his entire life, he realized that he had mismanaged everything—everything. His life was, as the phrase goes, ruined. But since it had not been much to begin with, there was not much to grieve about. . . . He went on taking stock, lying face down on the sofa. (H, p. 10)

We are told that, "Late in spring Herzog had been overcome by the need to explain, to have it out, to justify, to put in perspective, to clarify, to make amends" (H, p. 8).

The whole book is an attempt to "justify" and "explain." Herzog is trying to make order out of his own personal and intellectual chaos and this attempt takes the form of letters written by Herzog to friends and family, to thinkers alive and dead. And, "he knew his scribbling, his letter-writing,
was ridiculous. It was involuntary. His eccentricities had him in their power" (H, p. 19).

Herzog is a man "deeply preoccupied" (H, p. 9). We are told:

At first there was no pattern to the notes he made. They were fragments—nonsense syllables, exclamations, twisted proverbs and quotations... retorts that came too late. . . .

He wrote for instance, Death—die—live again—die again—live.

No person, no death.

And, On the knees of your soul? Might as well be useful. Scrub the floor. (H, p. 9; underlining indicates Herzog's writing)

During the course of the novel, Herzog attempts to conquer this chaos.

Divorced twice, Herzog is still troubled by the failure of his marriage to his most recent wife, Madeleine who is now living with his best friend. He feels that any suffering he undergoes is deserved, but this doesn't make the pain or confusion any more bearable. At one point Herzog travels to Chicago to take revenge on Madeleine and his friend Gersbach. He also travels impulsively from New York to Martha's Vineyard back to New York, to Chicago and then to Ludeyville, his home in the country, all in the course of a few days.

Herzog's intellectual chaos derives from his compulsive thinking. He attempts to relate the thought of the past four centuries to himself and his world. He refuses to accept
nihilistic or pessimistic views of the world, yet fears any other position may be indefensible. He is living a constant philosophical debate. He writes:

"The canned sauerkraut of Spengler's "Prussian Socialism," the commonplace of the Wasteland outlook, the cheap mental stimulants of Alienation, the cant and rant of pipsqueaks about Inauthenticity and Forlornness. I can't accept this foolish dreariness. We are talking about the whole life of mankind. The subject is too great, too deep for such weakness, cowardice--too deep, too great..." (H, p. 96)

Herzog believes that "reason can make steady progress from disorder to harmony and that the conquest of chaos need not be begun anew every day" (H, p. 225). Though Herzog spends his time deep in thought, he wonders:

"But can thought wake you from the dream of existence? Not if it becomes a second realm of confusion, another more complicated dream, the dream of intellect, the delusion of total explanations (H, p. 206)."

Later he laughs at himself when he realizes that he did not need to perform elaborate abstract intellectual work--work he had always thrown himself into as if it were the struggle for survival. But not thinking is not necessarily fatal. Did I really believe that I would die when thinking stopped? Now to fear such a thing--that's really crazy. (H, p. 324)

This realization marks a step from chaos to order for Herzog. Another realization or revelation comes to Herzog after his minor car accident with his daughter, June. "Is this by chance," he thinks, "the reality you have been looking for, Herzog, in your earnest Herzog way? Down in the ranks
with other people—ordinary life?" (H, p. 350).

Herzog finally decides to end his suffering; he's had "all the monstrosity" he wants. "We've reached an age," he writes, "in the history of mankind when we can ask about certain persons, "What is this Thing?" No more of that for me--no! I am simply a human being, more or less" (H, p. 387).

Herzog has retreated to his house in Ludeyville where he is in the country and away from everything. He is happily occupied painting a piano for his daughter. Like other Bellow heroes, he feels ready to begin life again in a new relationship to others and with a new perspective. He says:

Luckily for me, I didn't have the means to get too far away from our common life. I am glad of that. I mean to share with other human beings as far as possible and not destroy my remaining years in the same way. Herzog felt a deep, dizzy eagerness to begin. (H, p. 392)

In the last letter he addresses God:

How my mind has struggled to make coherent sense. I have not been so good at it. But have desired to do your unknowable will, taking it, and you, without symbols. Everything of intensest significance. . . . The life you gave me has been curious, he wanted to say to his mother. . . . I have sometimes wished for it [death] to come soon. But I am still on the same side of eternity as ever. It's just as well for I have certain things still to do. . . . I want to send you, and others, the most loving wish I have in my heart. This is the only way I have to reach out--where it is incomprehensible. (H, p. 396-98)
By the end of the novel, Herzog is at peace, he accepts the fact that there is an incomprehensible realm and he is totally at rest. He has had a change of heart and shrugged off his suffering and compulsive thinking. Inside he feels "something, something, happiness" (H, p. 414). His mind is quiet, "At this time he had no messages for anyone. Nothing. Not a single word" (H, p. 416).

Herzog, like Henderson, has passed through a stage of compulsive questioning and frantic searching for something on which to base his belief in the possibility and worth of human life. He too comes to a new beginning by accepting reality. Both men feel the need to love and be loved, and both believe that life has meaning and worth though they may not know what or why.

Bellow's own intentions about the novel are clear. "I think a good deal of Herzog can be explained simply by the implicit assumption that existence, quite apart from any of our judgements, has value, that existence is worth-ful" (Scheerschazer, p. 107).

The hero of Mr. Sammler's Planet (1969), Mr. Artur Sammler, also believes that existence is "worth-ful." Sammler's world is more chaotic, violent, and banal than Herzog's. He is not quite so buried in his own consciousness, but is daily confronted with the chaos of New York City. He is alienated from society and those around him by his age, his introspectiveness,
and his traditional way of viewing the world.

Sammler is a man literally raised from the dead. He has crawled out from under a pile of bodies, among them his wife's, at a German concentration camp. Now "a refugee in Manhattan" he has friends who often seek him out for advice. His daughter, Shula, his friend Lionel Feffer, his nephew Elya, his nephew's children, these people surround him, and though he does not always understand or agree with them, they are important to him.

Like Herzog, Sammler is preoccupied with explaining life in all its manifestations, though he too acknowledges the realm of the incomprehensible. His story begins:

Intellectual man had become an explaining creature. Fathers to children, wives to husbands, lecturers to listeners, experts to laymen, colleagues to colleagues, doctors to patients, man to his own soul explained. . . . The soul wanted what it wanted. It had its own natural knowledge. It sat unhappily on superstructures of explanation, poor bird, not knowing which way to fly. (MSP, p. 7)

Sammler sees man torn between explanations and the "natural knowledge" of the soul. Sammler's work on H. G. Wells illustrates man's complete belief in and devotion to rationality and science. But he also believes in forces beyond comprehension. Speaking of psychic unity with Wallace Gruner, he says:

it is based on something. It's not an arbitrary idea. It's based on the belief that there is the same truth in the heart of every human being, or a splash of God's own spirit, and that this
is the richest thing we share in common. And up to a point I would agree. (MSP, p. 173)

Sammler is troubled by the complexity and fast pace of the life which surrounds him. He sees people, "turning former respectability inside out" (MSP, p. 12). He is troubled because he recognizes the difficulty of imposing order on the world. He sees people turning away from religion, tradition, and other people. According to Sammler, all of man’s existence is "compelling the frail person to receive, to register, depriving him because of volume, of mass, of the power to impart design" (MSP, p. 28). Sammler’s is a frightening vision:

He saw the increasing triumph of Enlightenment, Liberty, Fraternity, Equality, Adultery! . . . the struggles of three revolutionary centuries being won while the feudal bonds of Church and Family weakened and the privileges of aristocracy (without any duties) spread wide, democratized, especially the libidinous privileges, the right to uninhibited, spontaneous, urinating, defecating, belching, coupling in all positions, tripling, quadrupling, polymorphous, noble in being natural, primitive, combining the leisure and luxurious inventiveness of Versailles with the hibiscus-covered erotic ease of Samoa. (MSP, p. 33-34)

For Sammler in this churchless, traditionless world, where coherence is lacking, man is eaten alive. "Endless literal hours in which one is internally eaten up. Eaten because coherence is lacking. Perhaps as a punishment for having failed to find coherence. Or eaten by a longing for sacredness" (MSP, p. 86).
Throughout the course of the novel, Sammler tries to maintain his human dignity in the face of frightening incoherence. He tells Govinda Lal, the author of a manuscript Sammler has been reading:

We have fallen into much ugliness. It is bewildering to see how much these new individuals suffer, with their new leisure and liberty. Though I feel sometimes quite disembodied, I have little rancor and quite a lot of sympathy. Often I wish to do something, but it is a dangerous illusion to think one can do much for more than a very few... Perhaps the best is to have some order within oneself. Better than what many call love. Perhaps it is love. (MSP, p. 208)

And he also notes: "We are mad unless we are saintly, saintly only as we soar above madness.... A few may comprehend that it is the strength to do one's duty daily and promptly that makes saints and heroes" (MSP, p. 87).

During the course of this novel, one of the "very few" people whom Sammler feels he can do something for is dying. His nephew, Elya Gruner, has taken care of Sammler and Shula for years; Sammler feels very close to him because of their common tradition. He genuinely loves Elya and feels needed by him. He thinks he has something to say to him. Not another relationship is as important to him as this one. Early in the book, Sammler visits him in the hospital but is prevented from returning until after Elya has died. He prays:
Remember, God, the soul of Elya Gruner, who, as willingly as possible and as well as he was able, and even to an intolerable point, and even in suffocation and even as death was coming was eager, even childishly perhaps (may I be forgiven for this), even with a certain servility, to do what was required of him. At his best this man was much kinder than at my very best I have ever been or could ever be. He was aware that he must meet, and he did meet--through all the confusion and degraded clowning of this life through which we are speeding--he did meet the terms of his contract. (MSP, p. 286)

Mr. Sammler is a man who maintains his dignity in the face of gross indignities. He is the least comic and most serene of Bellow's heroes, but he believes the same things. People need each other; order, daily routine order, is essential and is in itself an affirmation of reality; though life may be brutal, ugly, and beyond explanation, it has value.

The Bellow Hero: Summary

The Bellow hero is a man confronted with a chaotic world in which he must find or make order and coherence. He is typically an intellectual, plagued by his attempts to explain what seems to be inexplicable. He is a sufferer, like Henderson, driven to a search for meaning. He comes, ultimately, to affirm life in its day-to-day, routine, unspectacular manifestations.

Bellow's heroes are not superior men. They are laughable, pathetic, inclined to foolishness and failure. Henderson,
Herzog, and Mr. Sammler are all simply human. They all find this admission extremely significant. It leads Henderson and Herzog to a new perspective and to new beginnings. It allows Mr. Sammler the ability to maintain order and the belief that life has value.

Bellow's heroes see man as a social being whose role is inextricably involved with other men. Sammler believes that it is important to do something for those few we can really touch. Both Herzog and Henderson affirm the value of love as one of the revelations of their searches. Bellow and his heroes reject the doctrine of alienation, they believe in the worth of human life. In an interview in Quest Bellow says:

Here's one worthwhile accomplishment. Almost every man has been educated to think himself an object among objects in an object world. It would be worthwhile to induce him to see himself as a true subject, not some 98¢ worth of minerals which will disappear forever into a $1,500 coffin.

Bellow's heroes achieve this "worthwhile accomplishment." They never succumb to the weakness of vision which professes alienation and fails to recognize the value of life.

The Bellow hero is truly representative of contemporary man. He is confronted with an accelerating pace of life, an increasing breakdown of tradition, and increasing abdication of responsibility. Increased freedom seems to him chaos. In this chaos he struggles to make some sense and maintain his belief in the worth of his existence.
THE HERO OF THE SIXTIES

Both the Updike and Bellow heroes are confronted with a chaotic world. They cannot escape it, so they struggle to make sense of it. They both seek to affirm life, to believe in the value of existence. With Rabbit, for example, this takes the form of a search for something better, for a "first-rate" existence. For Henderson, the search is for an answer to the question "What am I doing here?"

The Bellow hero is more intellectual than the Updike hero who acts only when pushed and then does so mostly on impulse. Both Updike's and Bellow's heroes are actively involved in their searches for meaning and answers, for a way to accept the world.

Both heroes are men like other men. They are not, for the most part, superior to us. They are fallible, sometimes contemptible, sometimes pathetic, sometimes laughable. They tend to be comic rather than tragic.

Updike's and Bellow's heroes confirm the value of relationships. Rabbit returns to his wife in *Rabbit Redux* and learns to value the routine existence which she shares. Henderson returns home to his wife, where he can love and be loved. Herzog resolves to share with others as much as he can. George Caldwell dedicates his life to his students and his son.
These heroes confirm the positive value of life. George Caldwell knows that goodness lives. Henderson, Sammler, and Herzog will not accept pessimistic views though they know the optimistic is more difficult to maintain. Indeed, these heroes devote their energies to their faith in life and the human spirit. Bellow's heroes do so more emphatically than Updike's, but the affirmation is there for both.
CONCLUSION

Each of the heroes here discussed is confronted with a world in which he must find or make meaning and value because the old traditions and values have lost their meaning. Man seems overpowered by the indifference of the world in which he lives and is confronted with apparent chaos and disorder.

The hero of the nineteen-twenties is disillusioned. He sees the failure of old values and the destruction of old illusions. The hero of the nineteen-sixties more readily accepts the fact that his world is chaos, that it has always been thus a fact of his existence, and more consciously seeks to make his own order and meaning. The hero of the nineteen-twenties seeks to reconcile himself to life, to accept the world as it is. The hero of the nineteen-sixties goes beyond mere acceptance, or tries to. He seeks a way to maintain an affirming attitude, to find and understand the order and meaning which he feels must exist in the apparent chaos which confronts him. But they all share a lostness; they exist in a world indifferent or chaotic. It is up to them to establish or identify order and value.

The Hemingway hero, for example, seeks only to maintain himself, his sanity and stability, in the face of the world's indifference. He does not seek to believe or affirm anything beyond that which can be proved, that which is concrete. He
does not want to risk further disillusionment. Where he does maintain faith, romanticism, or idealism, it is not something he professes. His faith is covert; he is defensive. The Bellow hero on the other hand, comes to relinquish his complete faith in explanation and claims that there is an incomprehensible realm. He professes faith in human life and its worth, though the world which confronts him seems to deny any such possibility.

The hero of the nineteen-sixties has the ability to affirm life. Fitzgerald's and Hemingway's heroes are not affirmers. They cope. They find a way to deal with reality—by escaping through a belief in the past or by living by a code which provides order within their personal existence, or by making a world of their own. The Bellow hero, however, takes a positive stance. He is more life affirming.

The Updike hero can also be called affirming if we take his acceptance of the world as positive. He is not resigned, he accepts. The Rabbit who can finally rest and accept responsibility is accepting; Piet who marries Foxy is accepting; Caldwell is accepting and affirming. "Only goodness lives," he says. "But it does live."

A significant difference between the heroes of the nineteen-twenties and those of the nineteen-sixties is in stature. The twenties hero tends to be a better man than we are. We admire and respect him for his extraordinary qualities.
These may include an extraordinary imagination, as with Fitzgerald's heroes, or extraordinary endurance and courage, as with Hemingway's heroes.

The sixties hero is a man more on our own level. His life is often one we recognize and are ourselves immersed in. Updike's heroes, for example, live in suburbia or in a small town. Bellow's heroes all live in some American city. With the exception of Henderson, whose story is a fantasy, they are middle-class men. Hemingway's heroes on the other hand live in Europe after the war where their experiences do not so closely resemble our own. Neither do those of the Fitzgerald hero, for the society in which he lives and dreams, though essentially American, is affluent society, Hollywood or Riviera society.

The hero of the sixties is often a failure, in his career, profession, and personal relationships. He tends to be a comic hero; we can laugh at him. The twenties hero commands more respect. His story does not inspire laughter.

The twenties hero is more self-centered than the sixties hero. Fitzgerald's and Hemingway's heroes are essentially alone in their attempts to remake the world or to find order within it. They do not sustain lasting relationships, though they do commit themselves to others: Gatsby to Daisy, Frederick to Catherine, Dick to Nicole, Jake to his friend Bill. The twenties hero finds a way to cope with his world, but it is
a way he follows alone. The Bellow and Updike heroes find
that part of their acceptance of the world is their acceptance
of others and their responsibility to others. Harry of Rabbit
Redux is ready to accept his responsibility toward his wife.
Henderson returns to Lily and cares for the little orphan en
route. Sammler knows that love, such as that Elya always
showed him, is what makes a man good and life valuable.

Hemingway and Fitzgerald might not deny the value of love,
but their fiction does not emphasize it. Their fiction
emphasizes the disillusion of man with his world and his
attempt to cope with it. That coping, in Fitzgerald and
Hemingway, is a one-man job. It is a one-man job in Updike
and Bellow as well, but their heroes arrive at the point where
they are ready to enter into society.

Thus, all these heroes seek to find meaning and a way to
live a worthwhile existence. However, in the fiction of the
twenties, they are admired and respected, in some way superior
to us. They are extraordinary men fighting a battle they
can't win, from which they can only take a small measure of
success. In the fiction of the sixties, where the world is
more chaotic and violent, the hero is a man not really differ-
ent from us, who finds his way to lead life, and beyond that
finds the means to affirm that life.
NOTES

Introduction


Fitzgerald


13 F. Scott Fitzgerald, This Side of Paradise (New York: Scribner's, 1920), p. 16.


Hemingway


The Hero of the Twenties

Updike


**Bellow**


8 Maggie Simmons, "Free to Feel: A Conversation with Saul Bellow on One Writer's Search for Authenticity in his Life and Work," *Quest*, February/March 1979, p. 36.
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