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The Representation of the Businessman in the Modern American Novel from William Dean Howells to Thomas Wolfe

A Dissertation Submitted to the College of Arts / University of Baghdad in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English Literature

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Abstract

The figure of the businessman is a phenomenon peculiar to modern American novel due to the fact that this novel is deeply enmeshed in the businessman's civilization that produced it. This figure, in fact, has made its most significant appearance in modern American novel in the period between William Dean Howells (1837-1920) and Thomas Wolfe (1900-1938) as an epitome of the socio-economic transformations that took place in the united states during these years .

Although Howells is not a modern novelist in strict chronological sense, his treatment of the figure of the businessman is essentially modern. Like those of twentieth century American novelists his businessmen are essentially personifications of the socio-economic system that begets them. This process of personification culminates in the novels of Thomas Wolfe when the businessman becomes the system itself.

The present study, therefore, proposes to trace the development of this personifying process of the ethical values of the American socio-economic system in the figure of the businessman in selected American novelists between Howells and Wolfe, namely, Frank Norris (1870-1902), Theodore Dreiser (1871-1945), Sinclair Lewis (1885-1951), F. Scott Fitzgerald (1896-1940) and John Dos Passos (1896-1970).

The study falls into five chapters:

Chapter one is an introductory chapter that traces the origins and rise of the figure of the businessman in post-Civil War American culture and its reflection in the novels of the late nineteenth-century. Special attention will be devoted to the serious treatment that this character-type received with the rise of realism in American novel. The dynamics and policies of the realistic

treatment will be analysed in-depth in Howells's ***The Rise of Silas Lapham*** (1885) which is ,in many ways, the first serious treatment of this character-type in American novel.

Chapter two analyses the treatment of the businessman figure in American naturalistic novel that flourished in the pre-World War I years. The novels selected for analysis here are Norris's ***The Pit*** (1903) and Dreiser's "Trilogy of Desire", notably, ***The Financier*** (1912) and ***The Titan*** (1914).

Chapter three analyses the treatment of the figure of the businessman in the nineteen twenties with particular reference to those of the "Lost Generation" novelists. The text chosen for analysis here are Lewis's ***Babbitt*** (1922) and Fitzgerald's ***The Great Gatsby*** (1925).

Chapter four analyses the treatment of the figure of the businessman in the novels of the Great Depression, especially those novels dealing with the figure of the businessman from the perspective of the 1929 crash and the subsequent Great Depression. The novels selected for analysis are Dos Passos's ***U.S.A*** trilogy (1930-6) and Wolfe's ***You Can't Go Home Again*** (1940)

Chapter five is the conclusion of the study that sums up its views and findings.

Chapter One

The Businessman in the Late Nineteenth Century American Culture and Novel

1.1.The Businessman in Modern American Cultural Paradigm:

The rise of the figure of the businessman on the American social and literary scenes during the late nineteenth century is in many ways an epitome of the traumatic experience of the Civil War (1861-1865) which was a watershed in American cultural history. The innocent optimism of the democratic republic gave way, after the war, to a period of exhaustion which resulted in the reorientation of American idealism. Americans who championed human rights, like the abolition of slavery, before the war, came to idealize progress and the self-made man. This was the era of the millionaire manufacturer and the speculator, when Darwinian evolution and the "survival of the fittest" seemed to sanction the sometimes unethical methods of the successful tycoos.

The tycoon became the national American type. The social critic and novelist William Dean Howells (1837-1920) gives an insight into this change as personified in the figure of the tycoon in his utopian romance ***A Traveler from Altruria(1894)***. Howells gets one of his symbolic characters, the Banker, to survey the changes that the national American ideal underwent after the War of Independence (1712-17). It is this war that made the great politician, the publicist, and the statesman the national type. But with the growth of intellectual life in America the man of letters became the type of greatness. The Civil War, then, brought the soldier to the front. This type dominated the national imagination for ten or fifteen years. When that period passed, the Banker proceeds:

> The great era of national prosperity set in. The big fortunes began to tower up, and heroes of another sort began to appeal to our admiration. I don't think that there is any doubt, but the millionaire is now the American ideal… . It is the man with most money who takes the prize in our national cake-walk[1].

Howells's conclusion that the millionaire is the ideal American of the post-Civil War period is statistically consolidated. In 1860 there were fewer than 100 millionaires but the number rose to more than a thousand by 1875. While in 1892 the ***New York Tribune*** counted 4047 private American fortunes, notably in manufacturing, merchandising and real-estate[2]. Those millionaires were largely tycoons who rose to power and wealth on the spoils of the Gilded Age[3]. They were formerly known as the "Captain of Industry". Some of the more important of them were Vanderbilt, Hill and Harrimon in railroads; Rockeffller in oil; Carnegie in steel; Duke in tobacco; Havemeyer in suger; McCormick in agricultural machinary; and Morgan in investment banking[4].

These Captains of Industry, according the economist Thorstein Veblen, were "astute," rather than "ingenious," men whose "captaincy is a pecuinary rather than an industrial one"[5]. This indicates that these entrepreneurs were primarily motivated by a desire to make as much money and acquire as much power as possible by any means whatever. Hence, the conventional associations of the Medieval label "the Robber Barons" that was commonly used to describe them by their contemporaries. This also refers to the failure of business to reconcile to traditional ethics which is, in turn, symptomatic of the perversion of the older social and moral values to a

search for prestige and power in this modern world of chance. The businessman Hugh Paret, the hero of Winston Churchill's novel ***A Far Country*** (1915) explains this unethical nature of modern business to the friend he was about to rob:" It was impossible, "Paret says," to apply to business an individual code of ethics-the two were incompitable, and sooner one recognized that the better: the whole structure of business was built up on natural, as opposed to ethical law"[6].

This natural law of modern law is that of self-interest and competition which gave the robber barons the freedom to manage the business without burdening themselves with the question of ethical responsibility. It provided them with a ready-made rationale to justify their sometimes unethical business practices. Veblen, therefore, argues that the pecuniary economy is itself an abuse and that its beneficiaries are a predatory class. He also finds that the business class has the tendency "to conserve the barbarian temparament, but with the substitution of fraud and prudence, or administrative ability, in place of that predilection for physical damage that characterizes the early arbarians"[7]. Furthermore, this lack of cultural refinement, that the word barbarian epitomizes, is further endosed with the stigma of moral defficiency which Veblen finds incarnate in the character of the tycoon. Thus ,"the ideal pecuniary man," according to Veblen," is like the ideal delinquent in his unscrupulous conversion of goods and persons to his own ends"[8].

Taken as a whole, this barbarianism and delinquency reflect the cultural perversion of the entrepreneur whose sole interest is the sole pursuit of money which means power[9]. Indeed, it is this money/power equation that has fashioned the cultural image of the businessman after the system of values which begets him. This process of self-imaging assumes the form of cultural dialectics where the businessman is posited as a type personifying the abuses of the system. Furthermore, the casting of the character of the

businessman as a personification of a system of cultural values presupposes an ideological dimension to operate in that process of cultural personification. The figure of the businessman can be seen as an ideological composite of diversified strands and traditions derived from the pre-industrial era. The critic Michael Spindler identifies three such traditions that operate in the character of the post-Civil War businessman, namely, the puitan tradition, the democratic tradition and the ideology of individualism[10].

The puritan tradition, centred on the Protestant ethic, was a legacy inherited from the colonial era. The Protestant ethic, according to Max Weber, was more than a religious dogma. It has come to provide the American businessman with a code of conduct throughout the colonial, revolutionary and agrarian periods[11]. The Calvinist emphasis on the moral duty of hard work and the condemnation of luxury is basically of an economic nature. This means an encouragement of production and the limitation of spending whereby profits are increased, providing a surplus capital which could be reinvested in the business. This fusion of the material and moral values in the Protestant ethic is further revealed in the Protestant conception of wealth which was considered a sign of practical business success and an emblem of ehical grace. This latter aspect is a proof that man has laboured faithfully in his calling and that Providence is on his side. But wealth is not always honorific for the puritans. It becomes sinful when it runs counter to the ascetic mode of life that man should lead in the Protestant scheme[12].

Although this ascetic life-style is evident in the career of many nineteenth-century tycoons, they did not owe their large-scale capital accumulation to the precepts of the puritan ethic. The great fortunes that were amassed during the Gilded Age were mostly the result of such business practices as high-risk/high-return speculations, enormous capital gains and the monoply of markets and credits[13]. Indeed, the failure of the Protestant

precepts of hard work and thrift to initiate the individual in the pursuit of wealth has come to cast its shadows even on the immensely popular success tales of Horatio Alger (1834-1899). Although Alger always preaches the values of thrift and diligence, notably in the ***Ragged Dick*** series (1867 on) and the ***Tattered Tom*** series (1871 on), he usually bows in the end to the demands of credulity to transport his boy-heroes to the ranks of the rich through the device of a gigantic inheritance.

It is clear, then, that by the late nineteenth century, the theological springs of Protestantism were running dry, yielding a cluster of secularized values that were fully promulgated in the pursuit of wealth. The outcome of this is to constitute an ideological stance to be utlized by the entrepreneurial class to sanction its position and business practices. This eventually engendered a divorce between the world of business and the world of faith. No wonder that the image of the businessman that haunted the literary imagination of the period was one of spiritual hollowness that was thinly disguised with the façade of glittering material prosperity. A classic example, here, is provided by the poet A.E. Robinson (1869-1935) in his portrait of the businessman "Richard Cory":

> And he was rich-yes, richer than a king-
> And admirably schooled in every grace:
> In fine, we thought that he was everything
> To make us wish that we were in his place
>
> So on we worked, and waited for the light,
> And went without the meat, and cursed the bread;
> And Richard Cory, one calm summer night.
> Went home and put a bullet in the head[14]

The figure of the businessman, that Richard Cory represents is, in many ways, the end-product of an on-going historic process of belated cultural effacement of the traditional ideological signifiers of the traditional American character. The character of the businessman shows two such belated cultural effacements. It, on the one hand, reflects, and is itself the product of, a signifying appropriation of the values of the Calvinist theology into the ideology of big business enterprise after the Civil War. It shows, on the other hand, symptoms of ideological effacement whereby ideology is itself being subverted as in the case of the doctrine of natural rights and the democratic tradition it helped to foster[15].

The doctrine of the natural rights was the foundation of the Bill of Rights and the Constitution of 1787. The economist Charles A. eard argues that the Constitution is deliberately fashioned to express the economic and political interests of the property-owning middle-class. It sanctioned private property, free enterprise and individual liberty in order to secure the freedom and property rights of the petty-bourgeoise of small businessmen, farmers and self-employed artisans that were the typical varieties of the average freeholder in an exclusively agrarian society[16].

The ideal of this economo-political model of democracy was then agrarian. Although this agrarian ideal was still the core of American view of life well into the nineteenth century, it was rapidly proving incompitable with the growth of big industries in the post-Civil War era. This incompitability is masterly invoked in Robert Herrick's powerful analsis of the ethics of the modern American businessman in his novel ***The Memoirs of an American Citizen*** (1905). "No business in this modern world," says the businessman Van Harrington, contrasting his methods with those of his wife:

Could be done on her plan of life. The beautiful
scheme of things that the fathers of our country had drew

> up in the stage-coach days had proved itself inadequate in a short century. We had to get along with it as best we could. But we men who did the work of the world, who developed the country, who were the life and force of the times, could not be held back by the swadling clothes of any political or moral theory[17].

This sharp shift in animus, that Harrington indicates, is of a subversive effect. It has encouraged new interpretation of the right of property as traditionally stated in the Fourteenth Amendment. Here, the eighteenth-century agrarian conception of property rights as the ownership of tangible possessions was legally extended by the Supreme Court to include the right to make money from one's own possessions by selling them. This, in effect, transferred the legal immunities of the individual to big business operations in the form of contractual immunity from governmental interference. No wonder that the Fourteenth Amendment has come to be called the "Magna Carta of Big Business18. The exponents of this ideology of big business enterprise justify this on the basis that "if able and energetic individual were permitted to develop themselves in the process, then the whole of society would benefit"[19]. underlying this argument is the Carlylian belief in the leadership of an elite whose unchecked drive towards wealth and power is presented as a civilizing force. Attepts to interfere with them are attributed to the envy of the lazy and the inefficient, who deserve no protection or consideration. This policy, therefore, has helped to promote a laissez-fair model of individualism to cope with the bourgeois-industrial spirit of the post-Civil War era.

Such an argument, then, is well-steeped in the changing policies and emphases of the ideology of individualism. The figure of the businessman,here,highlights the ideological subversion that individualism

underwent in the later part of the nineteenth century. Originally, individualism was conceptualized around the ethical principle of self-reliance whereby a transcendentalist self-reliant mode of life is being fashioned. This mode of individualism was shaped by a variety of factors including the democratic values which were founded on the individual ownership of property and economic autonomy, Protestantism and its attending individualistic morality, and ultimately the existence of the frontier. Indeed, it is this persistence of the frontier values that maintained the vitality and authenticity of individualism as late as 1890 when the frontier was declared officially closed[20].

The ideology of individualism, however, witnessed a conceptual reorientation after the Civil War whereby self-interest came to displace self-reliance as the creed of the ideology. This shift in animus resulted in the rise of laissez-faire individualism which is emblematic of the competitive ethos of modern industrial America. This, in many ways, is a corruption of the sturdy values of frontier individualism in the form of the commercialization of the frontiersman into the businessman[21].

These changing modes of individualism were fully realized in the changing image of the businessman in the fiction of the period. After all, it is individualism that is responsible for the rise of this character-type and the modes of its literary representation. Transcendental individualism, for instance, fashioned the figure of the businessman after the romantic image of the self-made man, an image that finds its full embediment in romance. This figures starkly in the self-made heroes of Horatio Alger's many insperational tales (over a hundred between 1867 and 1896) which helped to further the national legend that the simple commercial values of self-reliance and hard work lead men from rages to riches .

This romantic image of the businessman, however, culminated in the local colour novels of the late nineteenth-century[22]. But in spite of the

proliferation of such novels the American businessman did not become an established literary type because the local colour novel "lacked the basic seriousness of true realism, by and large it was content to be entertainingly informative abut the surface peculiarities of special regions. It emphasizes versimilitude of detail without being concerned often enough about truth to the larger aspects of life or human nature[23].

This, in other words, means that the local colour novels lack the authentic historical consciousness necessary for the ideological fashioning of the businessman character into a socio-literary type because the emphasis is on the physical attributes of setting as fashioned in the speech, dress and customs of characters. This is well-expressed in Carl Van Doren's remark that the American businessman was likely to be shown in the local colour novels before 1900 "chiefly in his domestic relationships, highly sentimental in affairs of the heart, and easily susceptible to the influence of good women. He was never quite typical unless he was self-made"[24]. This indicates a lack of, at least, genuine sociological insight for the businessman is almost always presented as a cultivated and altogether attractive scion of wealth regardless of the sometimes sordid truth of his business practices. Major among the local colour novels that deal with this idealized image of the American businessman are Charles Fenimore Woolson's ***Horace Chase***, a novel (1894), Edward Eggleston's ***The Faith Doctor*** (1891) Thomas Bailey Aldrich's ***The Stillwater Tragedy*** (1880), and Albion W.Tougee's ***Murvale Eastman***: ***Christian socialist*** (1889)[25].

The idealized image of the businessman, however, was not the rule, especially after 1880. It is more or less the index of American cultural nostalgia or, rather, a form of escapist reaction that the local colour novelists seem to promote to counter the increasing complexities of contemporary social reality. Indeed, by the early 1880s Americans started to feel the impact of the sudden and painful transformation of the simple, egalitarian and

homogenous society of agrarian America into a more fragmented and stratified society under the pressure of urbanization and industrialization. This dictated a difference in the quality of the literary response of the time which was altogether critical and anti-romantic. Historians of American literature have frequently referred to the importance of this traumatic experience in American cultural history for the rise of the entrepreneurial character into important social type and consequently its culmination into a fit subject for fiction[26].

Thus, by the late 1870s the millionaire businessmen, who rose to power and wealth on the spoils of the Gilded Age, began to consolidate themselves into a distinct social class with the foundation and endowment of exclusive boarding schools and private universities, the establishment of an exclusive life-style based on country clubs and fashionable resorts.

This increasing social consciousness on the part of the businessman materialized in the consolidation of the entrepreneurial class into a ruling position. This is mainly due to the phenomenal rise of the philosophy of big business enterprise which acquired for a period an almost complete domination over the American mind after the Civil War. It was "taught in schools and colleges; it was propagated by most reputable writers; it was accepted by the responsible and educated classes… . And until the twentieth century it determined both the policies of the federal government and the decisions of the federal judiciary[27]. Underling this influential status of the entrepreneural class is an increasingly varying and dense social experience that has eventually come to provide the aspiring novelist with a compelling dramatic material. But the literary representation of this social experience requires a high degree of versimilitude in the form of a close attention to/and detailed specification of the actual social processes by which the entrepreneurial character rose to power and wealth. American novelists of the time had to discard with romance as a fictional mode because of its

lesser memtic potentials. They, therefore, “found themselves forced to adopt from foreign sources and develop in relation to their native American material the assumptions, emphases and techniques of literary realism[28].

1.2 The Representation of the Character of the Businessman in American Realistic Novel-The exemplary case of William Dean Howells' *The Rise of Silas Lapham*. (1885)

The serious treatment of this character-type in American novel is closely associated with the rise of realism in American literature in the late nineteenth-century, it has come to provide a fertile literary environment for readers and novelists interested in understanding the rapid shifts in post-Civil War American culture. In drawing attention to this connection, Warner Berth off says that, "as realism in these years represents a critical response to the era's multiplying social confusion, so it also involves the capturing of a whole new set of literary subjects and occasions that were being criminally neglected by the complacent professionalism of the day"[29].

The American tycoon, according to Henry James, was one of these great unexploited subjects. Here was a figure "whom the novelist and the dramatist have scarce yet seriously touched". The American businessman of the grander sort, James goes on, would make splendid subject in both his public and his private life:

> An obscure, but not less of ten an epic hero, seamed all over with the wounds of the market and the dangers of the field, launched into action and passion by the immensity and complexity of the general struggle a pound less ferocity. Of battle-driven above all by the extra-Ordinary, the unique relation in which he For the most part stands to the life of His lawful, his immitigable womankind … While, like a diver for shipwrecked Treasures, he

gasps in the depths and breaths Through an air–
tube–30

James's businessman, one has to admit, is more of a force personified than an individual-This is so because this character-type is originally conceived as a cultural type important for the analysis and subsequent understanding of the working of the new socio-economic order that was evolving during the Gilded Age, therefore, almost all the major practitioners of American realism exploited this figure to shed critical lights on the negative aspects of this order. The fictional portrayal of the businessman in the works of Howells's, and his successors Winston Churchill and Robert Herriek in particular, has, in fact, linked this character-type with the tradition of critical realism. The figure of the business man retains its key-position in this tradition in the light of its instrumentality for the critical exposition of the economic order and also for the exploration of the dynamics of social change attending this economic order.

The beginning of this technique of literary Representation of the figure of the businessman is accredited to the champion of American realism William Dean Howells, who provided the most penetrating analysis of American economy in the transition years from the Civil War to the turn of the twentieth century. Howells's criticism of the economic order of the eighties and nineties was carried in a series of economic novels[31]. Some of these novels are wholly concerned with the character of a businessman, like ***The Rise of Silas Lapham and A Hazard of New Fortunes*** while in the majority of these novels the figure of the American businessman makes no less powerful presence.

Furthermore, the significance of Howells's businessmen is not only due to his conception of the novel as a means of social criticism, They drive further significance from the moral outlook of Howell's realism. Thus, in his

Criticism and Fiction Howell's defines realism as a moral obligation to portray the truth, stating that the object of a novel should be to charm through a faithful representation of human actions and human passions[32]. The practice of such critical notions is actually responsible for the marked ethical, but not didactic, perspective that dominates Howells's economic novels. Indeed, it is this ethical quality that distinguishes Howells's from most of his fellow realists, who described the ravages of the new industrial urban order in terms of mere victimization. Unlike them, "he presented his stories as parables and quiet homilies. He brooded over his characters as his characters brooded over society, and to the same purpose … he considered it his function to mediate between moral men and immoral society[33]. But this does not mean that Howells's businessmen are morally good in the sense of religious virtue. Their morality, in fact, subsists of the sense of human defiance they retain to face the ruthless and inhumane economic order they are posited against. Even in the rare cases when the businessman is dubiously cast in the role of villain, Howells response is more of pity than contempt. The businessman northwiek, for instance, in ***The Quality of Mercy*** is dying in distant Quebec, gloating over the money he has amassed illegally but knowing, too, that he has missed what he wanted. Such businessmen, in Howells's view, are defeated, as society itself is defeated, by the competitive spirit which brings out the worst in men and by the commercialism which perverts values. Hence, the subdued note of sympathy in Howells's treatment of those businessmen.

Furthermore, the figure of the businessman is deeply enmeshed in the moral perspective of Howells's economic novels through the theme of the incompatibility between moral scruple and material rise that runs throughout these novels. This theme finds its most powerful representation in ***The Rise of Silas Lapham*** which was serialized in the ***Century*** magazine between 1884 and 1885. This novel is considered the first serious and full-length

fictional treatment of the American businessman in the history of the American novel. This novel is concerned with the business career of the paint manufacturer Silas Lapham who rose to material prosperity out of the hills of Vermont. He established a prosperous business in Boston where he was tempted to achieve something of a social position. But Lapham collapsed financially through others' dishonesty, his own speculation in the stocks, and his unrelenting conscientiousness. He was eventually obliged to return to his starting-point in the little Vermont town of hard beginnings.

Howells uses an ironic title to establish the moral perspective of his novel. The title promises a Horatio Alger plot that hinges on material rise through hard work and moral sternees. But as the story unfolds we come to discover that Lapham's rise is moral rather than material. Lapham's material rise in the first half of the book is morally dubious. He became rich by cheating a former business partner, Milton K. Rogers, whose money was the basis of Lapham's business success. It is through Rogers's money that Lapham was able to exploit the mine of mineral paint that old Lapham discovered forty years ago on his farm. But when business prospered Lapham forced Rogers out in order to monopolize the benefits of this booming business. Although Lapham could not see that he had acted improperly, his immoral act was an unconscious nausea for him and for his family. Thus, when Lapham touched on the episode of his former business partner in the interview for the "solid men of Boston", his interviewer, Bartley Hubbard, surmised that this episode was a sore spot in Lapham's memory, and was to have a ruinous effect on his later life. In fact, Rogers's appearance in Lapham's life was a constant source of irritation, more or less one of remorse, for Lapham's conscience and his wife Persis, who is projected as his own conscience. There is an indication, however, that Lapham's action is being dictated by the general change in the cultural atmosphere of American life after the Civil War. Thus, in his prelude to the

partnership account, Lapham grounds his motives in the new economic order of the post-Civil War era, stating that: "but I found that I had got back to another world. The day of small things was past, and I don't suppose it will ever come again in this country"[34]. so it is the world of big business enterprise and its economic principle of self-interest that lie to the core of Lapham's immoral business ethic.

This material rise, furthermore, has tempted Lapham to aspire to a social position in the Boston society. This is worked out through the new house that Lapham was building on the fashionable Back Bay area. This house is a symbol of Lapham's social aspirations. This new house, according to G.Thomas Tanselle, is a social manifestation of Lapham's growing domination by materialistic standards[35]. The house as a symbol of materialism is evident in many of Lapham's remarks which show that he is taking money as the basis of everything in life. Thus, when Lapham, for instance, was speaking of the improvements of his daughters' social position that the new house would bring, he asked his wife, "why don't you get them into society? There's money enough!" (P.92). This also figures in Lapham's commentn the architect when he says "And if you come to style, I don't know as anybody has got more of a right to put it on than what we have" (P.73). The appearance of Rogers at the end of chapter three when Lapham and his wife were visiting the site of the new house is mainly used to further the association of the house with Lapham's business rise-a rise, it is clear now, that is achieved at the cost of some human feelings. Rogers's appearance is in fact skillfully timed at decisive moments and this, according to George N. Bennett, functions as a reminder to the Laphams of the price of business success[36].

The dinner party in chapter fourteen is the peak of Lapham's social ambition. It represents the Boston elite's recognition of the Laphams. This party is also a turning-point in the novel because Lapham's fortunes start to

decline after this party. Lapham's paint business faces a period of acute depression. He had to shut down the works and the mine in Lapham's town because of the competition he could not meet from a new and equally good West Virginia paint, which could be produced at a chapter rate, that had come into the already overstocked market. The process of Lapham's financial disintegration started to aggravate with the huge sums of money that Lapham started to lose in speculation. This process culminates in the destruction of the Back Bay house -just after the expiration of its insurance- in the fire that Lapham has accidently set. The sale of this house was, in fact, a good chance for Lapham to avoid complete financial collapse. The destruction of this house is also symbolic of failure of Lapham's aspiration for a social rise since the house is projected earlier as a symbol of Lapham's social aspiration.

Lapham now is faced with an ethical dilemma. He can maintain his financial position only through unethical business practice. He can re-establish himself by taking in the innocent New Yorker who is willing to put money in the paint company without knowing of the ruinous West Virginia competition, or he can sell his now completely devalued western property-mills-either to the rascally Englishmen or to the slippery Rogers. But Lapham decided to sacrifice wealth and position rather than engage in business duplicity[37]. The ethical principle behind Lapham's self-sacrifice is similar to those upheld by the great nineteenth-century Russian realists who believe that man must rise above himself and view life, as, Howells later explained, Toistoy had taught him to view life, "not as a chase of a former impossible personal happiness, but as a field for endeavor toward the happiness of the whole human family"[38]. Lapham uses the ethical ideal effectively to refute Rogers's invocation of the "Golden Rule" to appeal to Lapham to accept the Englishmen's offer. Rogers says that:

> In our dealings with each other we should be guided by the Golden Rule, as I was saying to Mrs. Lapham before you came in. I told here that if I knew myself, I should in your place consider the circum st-ances of a man in mine, had endeavoured to discharge his obligation to me, and had patiently born my undeserved suspcions.I should consider that man's family, I told Mrs. Lapham (p.269)

Lapham's answer shows his awareness of the sophistry of this narrow use of the Golden Rule for individual need. He instead believes in the utility of this rule of Jesus of Nazareth to achieve a wider range of moral obligation than individual need. Thus, he asks Rogers: "Did you tell her that if I went in with you and those fellows; I should be robbing the people trusted them?" (p.269). The critic Donald Pizer suggests that this ethical effect is part of Howells's attempt to "introduce the ethical teachings of Christ within social context and yet avoid supernatural sanctions"[39].

Indeed, the last seven chapters in the novel, in particular, which portray Lapham's moral rise, abounds with christian allusions: when Mrs. Lapham, for instance, at the end of chapter twenty five, hears Lapham pacing the floor all night she thinks of Jacob wrestling with the angle (p.272)[40]. Rogers is presented as a devil-figure, playing his satanic role in the christian drama of Lapham's fortunate fall[41]. Thus, Lapham's struggle is presented as one against temptation raised up by the devil ' "it wan't providence," says Lapham' (p.229), and Lapham in chapter twenty five faces his "tempter" , Rogers, refusing to help him "whip the devil round the stamp" (p.221), despite Rogers's invocation of the "Golden Rule" and his reminder that the Englishmen are "christian gentlemen" (p.271).

This would give the novel a parable-like quality for Lapham's temptation and moral triumph are reminiscent of the Biblical parables of Jesus Christ, which are based on the same principle[42]. Here, the Miltonic paradox of fortunate fall lies to the heart of the novel as a moral parable because Lapham's business fall is his moral rise and his choice of bankruptcy rather than unethical success leads to his moral redemption. This moral point of Howells's parable is no doubt intended for the Gilded Age and its smug business ethics that is incompatible with moral integrity. This moral structure of the novel is particularly geared to shed critical lights on the strility of the ideal of wealth and material success that the Gilded Age cherished and chastened in the Horatio Alger tradition.

The critic Edwin Cady, for instance, labels Lapham's paradox of rise and fall "an antidote against the falsity of the Horatio Alger tradition" which gives a blind eye to the sordid realities of the business world of the Gilded Age[43]. This effect is further authenticated at the end of the novel with Lapham's return to his frontier origins in the hills of Vermont. Seen in terms of the house symbolism, Lapham's return to the farm house in Vermont stands for his social fall. But Lapham, there, is at the peak of his moral rise. The association becomes clear: Lapham's chastened moral vision cannot co-exist with the corrupt commercial ethos of modern urban American society. Ethical integrity can only survive in the context of a wholesome rural America and its agrarian virtues that have managed to outlive the roadway advertisement of "Lapham's mineral paints" in the hills of Vermont. Lapham's agrarian retreat can also be seen as an indication of "Howells's nostalgia of the ante-bellum agrarian era as a morally superior age, as well as his confidence in the power of its characteristic Protestant and democratic values to survive in the face of rapid economic change"[44]. The character of Silas Lapham, in this respect, would acquire a further significance as a cultural type which is important for the exploration of the changes that the

American cultural identity underwent in the post-Civil War era .These changes are posited as a process of subversion of the traditional values of agrarian America. The novel focuses on the exposition of this process as it operates in the character of Silas Lapham.

One such subversion is that of the Protestant ethic which is embodied in Lapham's entrepreneurial character at the beginning of the novel. Thus, in Bartley's interview, Lapham describes his parents as "quite, unpretentious people, religious after the fashion of that time, and of sterling morality, and they taught their children the simple virtues of the Old Testament and Poor Richard's Al-manac" (p.3). This amalgamation of the religious and business values is fully endowed in Lapham's character. He is hard-working and his life is marked with an ascetic style: he arrives to his office early in the morning before his employees and takes no summer holiday. He is spiritually committed to his worldly calling. Lapham, for instance, shows a quasi-religious faith in his paint when he tells Tom Corey that "it's the best pain in God's universe". He said this, we are told, "with the solemnity of prayer" (p.60). Moreover, Lapham adheres to an ascetic life-style that is based on the accumulation of capital and the avoidance of ostentation and unnecessary expenditure. Thus, in their first year in Boston, the Laphams, in spite of their established wealth, "were given to careful getting on Lapham's part, and careful saving on his wife's" (p.19). This eventually culminated on in embarrassing growth of wealth for the Laphams because "suddenly the money began to come so abundantly that she needs not save; and they did not know what to do with it" (p.19). The Protestant ethic dictates that this surplus capital is to be reinvested in the business. Lapham, however, did not follow this precept. He instead took to conspicuous consumption, a course which is drastically in contrast with the worldly asceticism recommended by the Protestant ethic. This subversion of the Protestant ethic takes the form of social climbing on the part of Lapham who is gradually indulging in the issue

of social status and financial pride that many of the real nouveau riches of the time share. Lapham's construction of the Back Bay house is the culmination of this tendency towards social rise. Lapham, in fact, was not aware of these issues until he becomes acquainted with the Corys who represents the aristocratic of Boston. This association with the Corys has the same subversive effect of his financial pride. While the latter causes a perversion of the Protestant scheme of modest living into conspicuous consumption, the former tempted him to abandon his egalitarian individualism by identifying himself with the rigid and snobbish aristocratic of the Boston Brahmins[45].

Thus, we are told that Lapham had always said that he did not care what a man's family was, but the presence of young Corey as an applicant to him for employment, as his guest, as the possible suitor to his daughter, was one of the sweetest flavors that he had yet tasted in his success . This change in Lapham's conduct is due to corruptive social experience. He is losing his innocence which is associated with agrarian values of self-reliance individualism and its underling democratic tradition. This loss of innocence takes plays in the context of urban-industrial America which is governed by laissez-faire individualism and its unethical principle of self-interest. Now this second conception of individualism which Lapham upholds is associated with his social rise and is therefore emblematic of his moral fall. But when Lapham is morally redeemed he is shifted back to his agrarian origins on the frontier Vermont. This is not only a resumption of the agrarian way of life, but also a reassertion of the democratic frontier outlook as the only possible salvation of the nation from the servility of industry and commerce. Howells makes this clear when he himself intrudes to assert in his own voice that Lapham's reversal of fortune and his subsequent resumption of his old life-style "had restored to him, through failure and doubt and heartache, the manhood which prosperity had so nearly stolen from him" (p.282)[46].

The effect of this statement is symbolic because the transformation of the frontiersman into the businessman, that Lapham represents, is a telling metaphor for the change of values and ideologies that took place during the Gilded Age. The restoration of the frontiersman in the person of Lapham at the end of the novel is no less telling. It is in fact exemplary of Howells's assertion of confidence in the utility of the frontier values as an anti-dote to the futility of the ruthless and inhumane commercial ethos of the modern industrial American society.

The Rise of Silas Lapham, however, was the last of Howells's novels to enjoy this pastoral resolution. The perspective was darkening for both Howells and his America in the wake of the Hay-market riots in 1886, and the official closing of the frontier in 1890. This gloomy perspective made itself visible in Howells's portraiture of the businessman in ***A Hazard of New Fortunes*** (1890). Like Lapham, Dryfoos is a frontiersman transformed into a businessman through the operation of economic forces and interest which he could not comprehend or control. But Dryfoos cannot, anymore than America itself, return to the old agrarian way. Thus, when Mrs. Dryfoos please to her husband to go back to their farm, Dryfoos's response is typical of the desperation of the times: "we cannot go back!" shouted the old man fiercely. "There's no farm nay more to go back to. The fields are full of gas wells and oil wells, and hell holes generally: the house is torn down, and the barn's goin"[47]. This is, more or less, the anguished cry of a whole culture lost between irreversible industrial change and irrecoverable agrarian past.

Howells's ability to capture this "cry" in the figure of the businessman made his novels influential critiques of the age of big business. But the increasing irrelevance of the traditional moral and democratic values and the undisputed dominance of the ideology of big business enterprise during the last decades of the nineteenth century had come to outdate

Howells's morally structured cultural nostalgia; and necessitated at the same time new ideologies and modes of literary representation in order to comprehend and then portray, in the image of the American businessman, the socio-economic realities of the early twentieth century.

Notes

1.

William Dean Howells, ***A Traveler from Altrurian*** (New York: sagamore press, 1957). p.138.

2.

Harvey Wish, ***Society and Thought in Modern America*** (New York: Longman, Green and co., 1959), R 175.

3.

This designation is given by Mark Twain to the post-Civil War period of the 1860s and 1870s. Shocked by what V.L Parrington has called the Great Barbecue after the Civil War, Twain published in 1873, in a collaboration with Charles Dudley Warner, ***The Guilded Age***, a satirical attack on the vulgarity and shameless opportunism of that period.

4.

Henry Bomford Parkes, ***The American Experience*** (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1955), p.237-8.

5.

Theory of the Leisure Class (New York: Free press, 1971), p.42.

6.

Quoted in Henry Steel Commager, ***The American Mind*** (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1977), p.257.

7.

Veblen, p.240.

8.

Ibid, p.235.

9.

The term "businessman" is used throughout this study in the senses listed in ***Webster's New World Thesaurus*** 1971 ed., S.V. "businessman".

10.

American Literature and Social Change (London: Macmillan, 1983), p.16.

11.

The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, trans. R. H.Tawney (London: unwin, 1965), pp.44-54 and 155-85.

12.

Spindler, p.17.

13.

Ibid. pp.20-21.

14.

Collected Poems of Edwin Arlington Robinson (New York: Macmillan, 1942), p.85.

15.

The term ideology is used here in the sense defined by Jermy Hawthorn as "a system of ideas" which is utimately "a way of looking at and interpreting-of" living-"the world". ***A Glossary of Contemporary Literary Theory*** (London: Arnold, 2000), p.163.

16.

An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution of the United States (New York: Free Press, 1965), pp.73-150.

17.

Quoted in Commager, p.255.

18.

Parkes, p.240.

19.

Ibid., p.230.

20.

"The frontier", according to Frederick Jackson Turner, "is productive of individualism, and frontier individualism has from the beginning promoted democracy". ***The Frontier in American History*** (New York: Holt, Rinhart, 1962), p.216.

21.

A good reflection of this transformation is given in Edward Eggeleston's novel, ***The Mestry of Metropolisville*** (1873).

22.

William Flint Thrall and Addison Hibbard define local colour fiction as "writing which exploits the speech, dress, mannerisms, habits of thought, and topography peculiar to a certain region … local colour writing exits primarily for the portrayal it presents of the people and life of a geographical setting. About 1880 this interest became dominant in American literature; what was called a "local colour movement" developed". ***A Handbook to Literature*** (New York: The Odyssey Press, (1960), p.266.

23.

Ibid.

24.

The American Novel: 1789-1939 (New York: Macmillan, 1956), p.208.

25.

For further information see Alexander Cowie, ***The Rise of the American Novel*** (New York: American Book Company, 1948), p.536-598.

26.

Brain Lee and Robert Reiders believe that this date ushuers a new era in American cultural history which they designate as the loss of innocence. They state that "the thirty-seven years after 1880 produced deep changes in the quality of American life which seriously tested older value systems and behavioural patterns". They assert that this period engendered a "sense of loss of innocence that arises in many people when the values, mores, even physical qualities of the lives they have inherited and take for granted appear to collapse in a world undergoing change with a rapidity that to many signifies, choose and catastrophe" "The loss of innocence: 1880-1914", ***Introduction to American Studies***, eds. Malcolm Bradbury and Howard Temperley (London: Longman, 1985), p.176.

27.

Parkes, p.231.

28.

Spindler, p.35.

29.

The Ferment of Realism in American literature, 1884-1919 (New York: the Free Press, 1965), p.33.

30.

Quoted in Berthoff, p.36.

31.

This designation was first suggested by W.F. Taylor in his essay "William Dean Howells and the Economic Novel, "***American literature***, 17 (May, 1932), pp.403-12.

32.

William Dean Howells, "***Criticism and Fiction" and Other Essays,*** eds. Clara Marbury Kirk and Rudolf Kirk (New York: New York University Press, 1959), p.15.

33.

Alfred Kazin, ***On Native Ground: An Interpretation of Modern American Prose Literature*** (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1942). p.40.

34.

William Dean Howells, ***The Rise of Silas Lapham*** (New York: Bantam Books, 1967), p.12. Subsequent references to the novel are from this edition unless otherwise indicated.

35.

"The Architecture of The Rise of Salis Lapham" ***American Literature***, 37 (Jan. 1966), p.437.

36.

William Dean Howells: The Development of a Novelist (Norman, Okla: The Free Press, 1959), pp.159-60.

37.

It is interesting to know that Howells years later made a reference to Lapham's decision in his ***A Traveler from Altruria***. Howells discusses, on the tongue of his narrator, Lapham's moral honesty and the reaction it provokes from his contemporaries: "There was a good deal of take about the case, I suppose because it was not in real life, and my friend [the novelist] heard divers criticism. He heard of a group of ministers who blamed him for exalting a case of common honesty, as if it were something

extraordinary; and he heard of some businessmen who talked it over, and said he had worked the case up splendidly, but he was all wrong in the outcome; the fellow would never have told the other fellows. They said it would not have been business". pp.134-5.

38.

William Dean Howells, ***My Literary Passions*** (New York: Greenwood Press, 1969-reprint of 1395 ed.), p.251.

39.

"The ethical Unity of ***The Rise of Silas Lapham***", American Literature, 32 (Nov. 1960), p.325.

40.

Gen. 32: 24 as quoted in the novel.

41.

This notion is thoroughly discussed by Richard Coanda in his explication of the novel in ***Explicator xxii***, 1963. Item 16.

42.

Some critics like Edwin Cady, compare the novel to a morality play. Cady describes Lapham moving "through a series of morality plays". ***The Road to Realism: The Early Year, 1837-1885***, of William Dean Howells (Syracuse:Cyracuse University Press,1956),p.236.

43.

"Introduction", ***The Rise of Silas Lapham*** (Boston: Riverside Press, 1956), p.vii.

44.

Spindler, p.49.

45.

The critic Kermit Vanderbilt traces these operations in Howells's life in Boston and discusses their possible reflection on the novel as a personalized projection on the crisis of wealth and status in the Gilded Age. ***William Dean Howells: A Reinterpretation*** (Princeton: PUP, 1968), pp.96-116.

46.

This is a radical re-working of the American myth of the American Adam that likens the discovery of the virgin land of America to

Adam's entrance to Paradise. Hence, the innocence of the American Adam and his freedom from the complexities of social experience that corrupts the old world. The loss of innocence that Lapham suffers makes him an archetype of the American Adam but in the negative sense.

47.

William Dean Howells, ***A Hazard of New Fortunes*** (New York: The New American Library, 1965), p.296.

Chapter Two

The Representation of the Businessman in American Naturalistic Novel

2.1 Introductory Notes:

The figure of the Businessman has received its most powerful portrayal in American friction from the 1890s to World War I on the hands of the naturalistic novelists[1]. The naturalistic portrayal of this character-type is largerly conditioned by the ideology of social Darwinism which was actually sanctioned by the tycoons who mushroomed during the Gilded Age in order to consolidate their social position and to rationalize their uncivilized pursuit of power and wealth[2].

Being a corollary of social Darwinism, the naturalists would normally cultivate an interest in the character of the businessman as a means of concretizing their theses on the evolutionary nature of social struggle and economic determinism.

Furthermore, the character of the businessman as a social type is also quite compatible with the techniques of the naturalistic novelists. The survival of the businessman in the evolutionary struggle endows this social type with an epical stature as a superman contending with other supernatural forces. The naturalistic fashioning of these forces into social and economic ones reveals the competitive and aggressive nature of the social milieu of the businessman, and the economic-orientation of the determinism against which the businessman's defiance is set. The novelist Frank Norris (1870-1902) puts this more forcibly in his ***Responsibilities of the Novelist***. He states that the novelist must deal with:

> …elemental forces, motives that stir whole nations. These cannot be handled as abstraction in fiction….The social tendencies must be expressed by means of an analysis of the characters of the men and women who compose that society, and the two must be combined and manipulated to evolve the purpose-to find the value of X.[3]

Thus, in their attempt to represent the intermingling in life of the controlling forces and individual worth, the naturalists elevated the character of the businessman to the stature of tragic heroism to demonstrate the overwhelming and oppressive reality of the material forces present in contemporary American social life. The businessman, therefore, is conditioned and controlled by environment, heredity, chance, or instinct; but he has compensating humanistic values which affirm his individuality and life. His struggle for life and economic survival becomes heroic and he maintains human dignity. This would consequently open to the fore a full interplay of materialistic dialectics in this character type. This, however, depends on the contextualization of the character of the businessman in a fully-concretized socio-economic milieu. The naturalists were able to invoke such a milieu in the space of contemporary industrial city, notably Chicago and New York. The end-effect of this process is, first, to confer individuality on the figure of the businessman which is further interpreted as an emblem of an evolutionary survival in an age when the bigness of the economic machine and the greatness of the urban centers have dwarfed the individual and created a sense of impotance and alienation. The second effect of this process of contextualization is to create a sense of scientific objectivity in approaching the material of contemporary urban-industrial life. The naturalist's attempt for a scientist's pose is meant to create a factual and

empirical approach to his subject-matter, a case which ultimately contributes to the memetic validity of his work.

The major practitioners of American literary naturalism in the early twentieth-century, notably Norris and Theodore Dreiser (1871-1945) employed two strategies to achieve these effects in connection with the portrayal of the figure of the businessman in their novels. They, first, amassed great amount of documentary material in their novels which are derived from the actual world of finance and business. The businessman-centered novels of Frank Norris and Theodore Dreiser, in particular, are in many ways finance textbooks for the great deal of technical information and professional details they provide[4].

Secondly, they choose for their fictional businessmen real-models, turning thereby their novels into case histories of real businessmen as in the case of Dreiser's Yeker-Coperwood novels and many others. This thrust for naturalness of the businessman and his milieu in the naturalistic novel derive mainly from the naturalists conceptions of themselves as social historians documenting the state and consciousness of the whole era in their works. This conception makes itself clear through the reformist drive that permeats almost all the major naturalistic novels.

The naturalists, in this respect, are aliened with the "Muckrakers" in their campaign for social, economic and political reform during the Progressive Era (1904-1917)[5]. All the major naturalists had their roots in Muckraking journalism. Norris's association with the Muckraking ***McClure's Magazine*** is well-documented whereas the extension of Dreiser's Muckraking journalistic writing is quite obvious in his novels.

This tendency towards social criticism in the naturalistic novel works through the initiation of the businessman in the economic order of his society. Although this is basically the same strategy of the realists, the naturalists' critical insight is even sharper and more penetrative because their

exposure of inequities and corruption in the socio-economic system is never restricted by the moral assumptions and prejudices of their fictional businessmen. Consequently, this lack of ethical perspective in the naturalistic novel enhanced the awareness of the reading-public of the ruthlessness and sterility of the socio-economic milieu. The figure of the businessman in this case is more than a tool to probe the inequities of the system. It is rather a self-fashioned image of this system whose very values potentate the textual figuration of this character-type. But this process of self-imaging, however, is not self-willed. The businessman is a "caste", to use Spencer's terminology, that drifts rather than directed or guided by the force of free will. Coupled with the lack of an ethical perspective, this strong aspect of determinism adds further critical insight to the figure of the businessman in the novel. Moreover, determinism in the case of the businessman is either internal or external. Internal determinism mostly takes the form of a strong animal or instinctual drive. It is one of heredity. External determinism, on the other hand, is mainly environmental; as in the case of Norris's businessmen whose business behavior is tightly controlled by the magnetic attraction of the supernatural force of the wheat and the financial operations associated with it.

Major among the American naturalists to give a considerable attention to this character-type were Norris and Dreiser. Norris's ***The Pit*** (1903) is the first full-length naturalistic fictional treatment of the American businessman from a deterministic perspective. This novel also prefigures many of the naturalistic themes and techniques that were to culminate in Dreiser's "The Cowperwood Novels" years later.

2.2 The Character of the Businessman in Frank Norris's The Pit (1903)

The Pit is Norris's last novel and second volume in the never-completed "Wheat Trilogy". The first novel in this trilogy, ***The Octopus*** (1901), deals with the production of wheat in the San Joaquin valley in California. The second volume, ***The Pit***, deals with the distribution of wheat and the activities of the Chicago wheat Pit. Norris, unfortunately, died before writing the third novel in this trilogy which deals with the consumption of wheat in Europe and its importance in relieving famine there. Apart from being the first naturalistic novel to deal with the American businessman, ***The Pit*** is Norris's only novel to center exclusively on the character of the businessman. Norris, for sure, has treated this character-type earlier in ***The Octopus*** in the figure of Shelgrim, the railroad magnate despite his brief appearance in the novel, shelgrim makes a powerful presence as a personified force. shelgrim, however, is not the focus of the novel and his personality, at lest the business one, is subordinated to the conflict between the railroad and the farmers in the San Joaquin valley. It is in ***The Pit***, however, that Norris was to fully exploit the potentials of this character-type in the figure of Curtis Jadwin. ***The Pit*** is, to a large extent, the dramatic story of Jadwin's effort to corner the Chicago wheat market. True to the naturalistic tradition, the incidents of the novel are based on the famous attempt in 1897 by the speculator Joseph Leiter to corner the world supply of wheat in the Chicago stock-exchange[7]. Norris's choice of a real businessman as a model for Jadwin is partly an attempt to capitalize on the current public thrust for money romance that was caused by the spectacular speculations of some stocks gamblers during the 1890s. But the choice of a real

business model for his fictional businessman is largely meant to endow his story with the authenticity of business verisimilitude.

Norris, here, has employed two strategies to achieve this effort. He first grounded his story of Jadwin's wheat speculations in the bustling socio- business world of Chicago, the main commercial center for the Mid-West, and this is indeed much related to the choice of the business model, Leiter's actual wheat speculations in the Chicago of the nineteenth-century. The second strategy is to establish a factual approach to the business dimension of the story of Jadwin. This is quite evident in Norris's treatment of the wheat Pit at the Chicago stocks. Norris, in this respect, illicited the help of George Gibbs and the broker George Moulson to document the fictional transactions and operations of the wheat Pit at the Chicago Board of Trade at the turn of the century[8]. The amassing of a great bulk of technical details and the bustling scenes of heated activity at the Pit work towards the invocation of Pit as an irresistable economic force quite influential in human lives. Hence, the significance of the title of the novel.

The title of the book derives from the room in La Salle street in Chicago where wheat trades are consummated and around which much of the action of the novel whirls. But this special dimension of the Pit is metaphorically substantiated throughout the narrational texture of the novel to stand for "the Pit toward which people are hurled as the indulgence of their self-love causes them to attempt to thwart what the novelist calls the resistless forces of nature"[9]. This interpretation of the pit strikes the basic tenants of Norris's naturalism. The pit is presented as a premordial force, inevitable and resistless. It is premordial in the sense of being an abyss, at once supernatural and subconscious at the same time, for it might be as well the unfathomable abyss of the human subconscious whereby the dark forces of the animal within are uneasily repressed. This

interpretation looks forward to the Pit as the Jungian racial memory and the determinism it engenders in the name of heredity. This internalization of the Pit is consistent with the conception of "self-love" as the cause of Man's tragic fall. Given the fact that individuality and the assertion of self-will are but forms of such narracistic pursuits at the expense of the all-powerful resistless forces of nature as represented by the wheat. Here figures the paradox of Man in Norris's deterministic world: he is victimized by the very impersonal forces of nature that stimulate his narracistic "self-love" to defy them.

Now, the textual naturalization of this process in ***The Pit*** requires the inflating of the contending partakers to the epical stature of a supernatural force. Norris, however, employs this strategy in his presentation of the three major partakers in the world of ***The Pit***: namely; the wheat as the agent of nature, the Pit as the agent of business and economy and Jadwin as the human agent. The wheat is the only partaker that enjoys the privilege of a pre-presence. ***The octopus*** fully develops the wheat into a natural force that is conscious, intelligent, benign, leading the world and its people into the facility of god's love. Economic determinism is only incidentally related to this cosmic enterprise. This requires the representation of the wheat as a mystical force in the world of human beings. This would consequently lead to the representation of the human beings as helpless dwarfs.

This culminates in Presley's closing statement at the end of ***The Octopus***: "but the WHEAT remained. Untouched, unassailable, undefiled, that mighty world force, that nourisher of nations, wrapped in Nirvanic calm, indifferent to the human's warm…"[9]. The effect of this rapid and booming succession of phrases is to finalize the image of the wheat as a mystical force. Now, it would be something natural for the reader who comes afresh from ***The Octopus*** to ***The Pit*** to switch forth this mystified

image of the wheat to that of ***The Pit***. But in order to enforce this image of the wheat on the reader of The Pit Norris re-inscribes this image as a narrative trace in the frequent projection of the authorial voice:

> It was as if the wheat, Nourisher of the Nations, as it rolled gigantic and majestic in a vast flood from West to East, here, like a Niagara, finding its flow impeded, burst suddenly into the appalling fury of the Maelstrom, into the chaotic span of a world-force, a primeval energy, blood-brother of the earthquake and the glacier, ranging and wrathful that its power should be braved by some pinch of human spawn that dared by raise barrier across its courses[10].

The focus of this passage is not on the 'primeval energy' of the wheat as a force proper. It is rather directed on the resistless fury of this force as a result of human interference with its courses. Norris, however, uses this strategy to introduce the Pit as a force on one standing with that of the wheat. The power of the Pit as a force is concretized spatially throughout the text. A typical instance of this spatial concretization runs as follows:

> Thus it went, day after day. Endlessly, ceaselessly the Pit, enormous, thundering, sucked in and spewed out, sending the swirl of its mighty central eddy for out through the city's channels. Terrible at the center, it was, at the circumference, gentle, insidious and persuasive…But the circumference was not bounded by the city. All through the Northwest, all through the

> central world of the wheat the set and whirl of that innermost Pit made itself felt…(IX, 142).

This materialistic approach to the Pit as an economic force is but a prelude to the actual power of this force through its impact on the lives of the masses:

> It spread…and spread till grain in the elevators of Western Iowa moved and stirred and answered to its centripetal force, and men upon the street of New York felt the mysterious tugging of its undetow engage their feet, embrace their bodies, overwhelm them, and carry them bewildered and unresisting back and downward to the pit itself (IX, 143).

The effect of these images of fatal and resistless magnetic attraction is to inscribe the Pit as an economic logos in terms of its influence on human life. The vulnerability of the human position here reminds of the image of the moth and the burning candle. But unlike the wheat, the Pit is malgnant and indifferent to human beings for it is, on the one hand, a man-made evil, i.e, the economic system, but, on the other hand, it become a supernatural force out of human control. It is then within this context that the position of the human element is defined in the figure of the businessman. Jadwin's business vocation brings him in contact with these two forces of the wheat and the Pit forming, thereby, a triangle of relations that would, in turn, infuse Jadwin's relational stance to these forces with a dialectical pattern of development. The activation of this pattern requires Jadwin to transcend his humanity to release the potentials of energy

suppressed inside him that will eventually enable him to contend with the Pit and the wheat.

Early in the novel Jadwin's character is revealed in Darwinian terms of virility and struggle for existence through the eyes of his future wife Laura Dearborn. Thus, compared with her other suitor, the doting artist Sheldon Corthell, Jadwin, the financier, is a bidding force: "The figure that held her imagination and her sympathy was not the artist, soft of hand and of speech,…, but the fighter; unknown and unknownable to woman as he was , hard, rigorous …conspicuous, formidable…" (IX, 60). This description serves to strike the note of social fatalism in Jadwin's character. Thus, after a three-year period of 'Conspicuous Consumption' as nouveau riche with his wife Laura Dearborn Jadwin, he is no longer able to subdue the force within. Boredom drives him to resume speculating in the stocks in spite of his promise to his wife years ago to quit. Jadwin's reflection on this point is psychologically projected as a sort of self-justification. He dismisses the luxury that money provides as deadly dull: "what are we fellows, who have made our money, to do? I've got to be busy. I can't sit down and twiddle my thumbs." (IX, 221). He proceeds then to register his discontent with the pleasures of the leisured classes like game, hunting, horse races…etc. He dismisses them as "fine fun" (Ibid). This restlessness is temperamentally inflected upon him. Bourgois culture can no longer repress the forces of heredity latent deep in his irrational self so he turns to stocks speculation in the Pit as a gratification of these energies. It is then in this field that his instinctual aggressiveness finds its best fulfillment.

While heredity provides the impetus for the return of the repressed, the Pit ,on the other hand, provides a full gratification of this impetus. Given the nature of the Pit as a logos, Jadwin's drift towards the Pit becomes an incarnation of the fatality implicit in the decentered universe of Man. Jadwin's subsequent success in the Pit are , therefore, symptomatic of his

resistless drift towards the abyss. This drift culminates in his attempt to corner the wheat market. Now, his attempted corner succeeds as long as his manipulation does not boost the price above what wheat is actually worth. Success, however, increases Jadwin's awareness of his entanglement. Thus he rationalizes his corner of the wheat market in a powerful deterministic argument:

> I corner the wheat! Great heavens, it is the wheat that has cornered me. The corner made itself. I happened to stand between two sets of circumstance, and they made me do what I've done (IX, 270).

Regardless of the question of ethical responsibility that such an argument seems to shovel from Jadwin's shoulders, the latter's problems begin when he reckons without the forces of nature[11]. Farmers are stimulated to plant heavily at the encouragement of the rising prices that the corner has produced. Unusually favorable growing conditions result in a bumper crop that Jadwin cannot corner. Jadwin, however, is not only defeated by an antagonistic environment and unfavorable forces of nature. He is further inflected with a kind of hubris that makes him scoff at the expert's reports of a bumper crop. It, in fact, leads him to feel ,unreasonably, that he can drive wheat to the abnormally high price of two dollars a bushel.

Having defined the forces and laws of human economy, Jadwin's drift leads him at this point to a fatal defiance of the very forces of nature itself. So when his broker warns him that he is "fighting against earth itself", Jadwin replies impetuously: "Well, we'll fight it then" and he "will stop those hay seeds" (IX, 402). What seems here a Promethean defiance is actually no more than a gross act of hubris which would inevitably bring retribution with it. Thus, with exceptionally good growth conditions the

harvest of the July wheat produces a vast grain supply that Jadwin cannot hold. So the market collapses as the prices of the wheat drop acutely and he loses his entire fortune and collapses physically as well. The novel, however, ends with Jadwin and his reconciled wife preparing for a life of simplicity and poverty in the symbolic West. While reminiscent of Silas Lapham whom Jadwin much admires, the recourse to the West is an invocation of the wholesome values of the frontier as an antidote to the corrupting materialism of business commercialism. such an ending, furthermore, completes a cycle of poverty-purity / riches-corruption / poverty-purity that frames Jadwin's business career in the novel. such a frame would ultimately infuse the novel with the structure of a cautionary tale that preaches an anti-speculation moral .

Norris, however, skillfully managed to submerge this element of moral fable in the narrative of the business plot without violating its verisimilitude . he managed to do this by immersing Jadwin in fully-realized business milieu through the establishment of a documentary framework of complex financial operations, especially in the intensive series of the Pit scenes. This process of contextualization endows Jadown with vivid realism of character and motive. His moral consciousness is overshadowed by his business egomania, and that his various intricate business manoeuvring, his clash with the Crookes gangs his gradual physical and financial exhaustion and ultimate collapse are related with gripping naturalness. not with standing, ***The Pit*** fails us a business novel because Jadwin's career in the Pit is only one episode in his domestic life with his wife Luara. ***The Pit***. In fact, suffers from the same old division of romance and economics that infects this late Nineteenth-century romantic novels about the businessman. this division arises from Norris's failure to impose a unified perspective over the whole of his novel. Structurally speaking, two-thirds of ***The Pit*** is devoted to the love story of Jadwin's wife and less than the rest is devoted to the

depiction of Jadwin's business effort to corner the Chicago wheat market. These two episodes, i.e, romance and economics, are well infused together into coherent thematic and structural unity. Thematically, Laura's love story is her own story and is far isolated from the influence of the wheat or the pit that are supposed to be the domineering economic forces in the supposedly deterministic world of the novel. Moreover, the Pit, like the wheat, fails to provide a consistent naturalistic setting for Jadwin's life because Jadwin is not always in the Pit and that the story is his story rather than a story absolutely about the Pit[13]. Norris's failure to integrate these two stories does not only engender a lack of structural unity but also a fissure between social significance and personal experience in the naturalistic conception of Jadwin as a businessman. This experiential fissure in Norris's conceptualization of Jadwin as a businessman and the lack of social insight it engenders was to be redeemed years later by Dreiser in his "Cowperwood Novels".

2.3 The Character of the Businessman in Theodore Dreiser's "Trilogy of Desire "(1912-47)

Dreiser's "Trilogy of Desire " which comprises ***The Financier*** (1912), ***The Titan*** (1914), and ***The Stoic*** (1947), is the most substantial interpretation of the American businessman from a deterministic perspective in American fiction. The trilogy traces the life and business career of one Frank Algernon Cowperwood in the form of a magnificent cradle-to-grave saga. The premises that inform Deiser's portrayal of his businessman in the trilogy are well stated his essy "The American Financier" that Dreiser composed simultaneously with the first two novel of the trilogy.

This essay is an inquiry into the nature of the American financier as the typical variety of the American businessman to date. Dreiser deplores the American phenomenal brightness in the field of finance as a symptom of cultural sterility. He makes this clear through the projection of finance as American's activity to date in the context of the American importance in the fields of arts, philosophy, and even politics. Dreiser, then, proceeds to anatomize the nature of this rare breed of financiers. The financier, according to Dreiser, is born, not made, because the genius for organizing an enterprise or amassing money is a natural gift. Being selected by Nature, the financier promotes, to use Dreiser's term, a shark-like intensity, both physical and mental, in his pursuit of wealth and power. Although the financier, at this stage, might be destructive in his avidity, Nature tends to present him as a constructive force necessary for the exploitation of the resources of nature and the improvement of human society. This paradoxical position of the American financier is also evident in his relationship with democracy. Although democracy' the constitution and the ideology of the natural right exist to be violated by him, the financier's production and dissemination of goods, Dreiser argues without saying how, might serve as a

useful implement for achieving democracy. Dreiser, actually, uses this argument to achieve two ends: first, the elevation of the financier to the status of a superhuman force that operates at the dictates of Nature only, and, secondly, the social and cultural contextualization of this force as personified by the financier through the concretization of its impact on the social experience of human world.

Based on this, Dreiser proceeds to elaborate on the irrelevance of conventional ethics to the American financier. Because the financial mind is essentially acquisitive, self-interest, rather than moral ethics, is the motivation and justification of the financier's unethical practices. The relentless pursuit of money, sex, and social status are means to gratify the animal desire of the financier, who is more a predatory than human in his struggle for economic survival. The American financier can also be benefactory as far as benefaction leads to the promotion of his own popularity. Indeed, the perpetuation of one's own fame was a continuing concern for many of the tycoons of the Gilded Age that Dreiser come to know closely through the interviews he conducted with them for ***Success Magazine*** between 1897 and 1899[14].

These tendencies and drives of the financial mind have exercised a far-reaching influence on the structure of social experience in modern America. The rise of laissez-faire industrial capitalism as indexed in the rising figure of the American financier rendered traditional ethical values irrelevant. The slow realization of this fact on the part of the American people was incompatible with the speed of this process. This resulted in the persistence of the Americans to structure the contemporary social experience according to received models from the past. "The trouble in America", thus declares Dreiser, is that:

> When the financial mind appeared it came rather speedily and roughly into contact with the

> pen-written notion or ideal embodied in our America Declaration that all men are born free and equal, and they are possessed of certain inalienable rights, among which of course are those of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. And these latter were not supposed to be interfered with by the financiers or organizers seeking power. Yet, the race has always been, and will so remain, of course, to the swift, the battle to the strong; chemical and physical laws not being easily upset by fiats of government[15].

The financier, in this perspective of social Darwinism, becomes a superman by virtue of his exercise of Nietzschean will to power. Indeed, Dreiser, reports his biographer A.W. Swamberg, felt compelled, during the composition of ***The Financier*** and ***The Titan***, to agree with Nietzesche that "it is folly not to wish that the significant individual will always appear and will always do what his instincts tell him to do"[16]. The influence of Nietzesche's philosophy of the superman was the major impulse behind the portrayal of Cowperwood as a modern financial superman. Dreiser's choice of the tycoon as his model of the modern superman is influenced by his reading of H.L. Mencken's ***The Philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche*** (1908). Dreiser was not only influenced by the philosophical stance the book offers but also by Mencken's enlisting of the entrepreneurs of the Gilded Age as the most realistic American representative of the Nietzschean superman. Meknken has elevated the American tycoon, in the name of J.P. Morgan, into one of Nietzschean supremen on the grounds that "the man who, in the struggle for wealthand power, seizes a million dollars for himself, is appreciably more intelligent than the man who starves"[17]. This argument

presupposes two conditions necessary for the transformation of the businessman into a superman: first, that the businessman lives in a world of Nietzschean anarchy and, secondly, that the businessman be endowed with a natural capacity to go most violently counter to the view of the herd "and to battle most strenously to prevail against it"[18].

Dreiser, however, has closely modelled the life and business career of his fictional businessman on that of Charles Tyson Yerkes (1837-1905), the traction manate of Philadelphia and chicago. Rather than choosing Menckens Morgan or Rockefeller as his model, Dreiser found in Yerkes a figure of almost mythic proportion. Yerkes was really the most dazzling financier of his day, whose reckless vitality and demonic thirst for money has spelled the highest ambition of his culture. With Yerks, power had become less an instrument than a way of life. Dreiser makes this clear when he refers to the epic stature of Cowperwood-Yerkes in an interview that was conducted shortly before the publication of ***The Titan***. Dreiser says:

> In my limited search and with my selective tendencies none seemed of great import, socially, sociologically, financially, philosophically as the individual whom I have selected. A rebellious Lucifer this, glorious in his somber conception of the value of power. A night black pool his world will seem to some, played over by fulgurous gleams of his own individualistic and truly titanimind[19].

Dreiser's obvious fascination with this figure, here, is representative of his attitude towards Cowperwood in the trilogy. Indeed, Cowperwood was never condemned morally despite his unethical behaviour and corrupt business practices. Critics have frequently tried to justify this fascination in

terms of Dreiser's psychology. Philip L.Gerber, for instance, say that this fascination with Cowperwood, which approaches hero-worship, is the result of Dreiser's projection of his failure to succeed materially. Gerber goes on to enlist statement made by Dreiser's on his failure to make money in order to prove that this failure has become a traumatic experience for Dreiser's. Now this pathological experience is necessary, in Freudian terms, for the projection of the repressed desires into one's own work. Gerber utilizes this argument to conclude that " by inverting his own personality, Dreiser's manages to create his Cowperwood by making him as unlike himself as possible"[20].

Regardless of the validity of this psychological rationalization, Dreiser's own lingering admiration for Cowperwood bold accomplishment helped to bring about a misinterpretation of Dreiser's purpose in the whole trilogy which is that "to display his hero ultimately as one more victim of unbridled individualism and the money ideal through which it was expressed"[21]. But such a purpose takes shape in the third volume of the trilogy, The Stoic, where ***Cowperwood*** dies shortly before attaining his greatest victory. Now, to furnish this purpose into the structure of a thematic continuity throughout the trilogy, Dreiser's had to work this out on two stages. He argues, in the first stage, which comprises the ***Financier*** and The Titan, that "nature creates these supermen who will dominate and reshape the world against any societal resistence"[22]. In The Stoic, which constitutes the second stage, he sets to show that "nature, having used her implement to accomplish whatever purpose he was created for, discards him on the rubbish heap"[23].

But this neat theorizing over the thesis of the trilogy is seriously flawed. First, ***The Stoic*** is distanced in time of composition. It was written hurriedly during the last months of Dreiser's life as if to amend a wrong he has done in the first two novels. Relaying on the authority of Dreiser's

biographer A.W. swamberg, one is tempted to discern a change in ideology behind the over-hurried composition of ***the stoic*** for Dreiser's had come to denounce the philosophy of social Darwinism in his later years and embrace a more humanistic philosophy[24]. It is this latter philosophical stance that underlies much of the action of ***the stoic***. Accordingly, the emphasis, here, shifts to Cowperwood mistress Berenice Fleming who becomes Dreiser's mouthpiece through her conversion to the mysticism of the Bhagavad Gita[25]. ***The Financier and The Titan*** are, therefore, frequently read as one colossal study of the American businessman from the point of view of social Darwinism.

Seen from this perspective of determinism, the Coperwood of ***the financier and the titan*** is essentially similar to Dreiser's previous protagonists, like Carrie Meeber, Jennie Gerhardt or Lester Cane, in that he is another "wisp in the wind"[26] that drifts irresistibly under the inescapable, force of chemisms towards an eventual unfulfillment. He is a mere variation of the same basic pattern of determinism that governs the world of Dreiser's novels. The point of variety that Dreiser brings about in Cowperwood is one of strength and vitality. Thus, instead of being relatively weak, like Dreiser' other characters, Cowperwood is endowed with tremendous mental intensity and physical virility. Indeed much of ***the financier*** is permeated with a strong impulse toward myth-making that ultimately culminates in The Titan, which inflates Cowperwood character into the heroic stature of a superman. Dreiser manipulates two strategics to achieve this end within the frame of myth- aking reference. He either does this in person through authorial intrusions that are mostly cast as philosophical reflections on Cowperwood's personality and significant actions, especially his business practices and manoeuvers, or he uses Cowperwood himself as a mouthpiece to propagate these reflections and other Darwinist catch-phrases at certain points in the text in such a way as to confer epical heroism on the speaker.

Both of these two strategies of myth-making figure starkly in ***The Financier*** mainly. Dreiser, at the beginning of that novel tells us that Cowperwood is a "natural-born leader"[27] and "a financier by instinct" (p.26). even here Dreiser vocabulary is loaded with the intensity of the primitive passion for power. The words "natural" and "instincts" are employed to invoke the archetypal potentials of Cowperwood character. This, in fact, prepares the reader in the early parts of ***The Financier*** to develop a more compromising view of a man whose principle in life is the Machiavellian motto, "I satisfy myself" (p.32). Having employed these two strategies as his initiating gambit of ***The Financier***, Dreiser proceeds to show the diffusion of these Darwinian conceptions in Cowperwood's views of business and money. He, for instance, believes that the stock exchange is a place where:

> Men came down to the basic facts of life- the necessity of self-care and protection. There was no talk, or very little there, of honor … . So far as he could see, force governed this world... hard, cold force and quick -ness of brain (pp.57-8).

The failure of traditional moral values in Cowperwood's business jungle reveals the brutal realities of this world whose only motive is self-satisfaction and gains and the only alternative there is deprivation and misery. No wonder that the appeal of this world of power and money to Cowperwood even at age ten was irresistible: "the whole world of money was like a fairyland full of delight… he would work and coin some money, and then he would become a broker, and then he would become rich." (p.97). But this boy's dream is not in the least unique for without Dreiser shaping hand this dream would be any replica of the dream of success in the it. Horatio Alger tradition[28]. It is rather Cowperwood and the aggressive quality

of his milieu that makes the difference. Although the born financier is, as any one of Horatio Algers heroes, superbly equipped to force his dream of success to assume material shape, the premises that underlie Cowperwood dream are quite distant from the older Franklinesque myth of self-improvement through hard work and moral piety that colours the world of Horatio Alger[29].

Dreiser forces this phenomenological difference through his careful exposition of the nature of the sources of Cowperwood's education in his formative years. Primeaval nature and the spirit of animal strife that informs it are the major sources of Cowperwood education as a businessman. He receives much of his education earlier in the novel by watching a death struggle between a lobster and a squid that are placed in a tank at the fish market :

> The lobster lay at the bottom of the clear glass tank on the yellow sand, apparently seeing nothing-you could not tell in which way his beady, black buttons of eyes were looking-but apparently they were never off the body of the squid… for by degrees small portions of body began to disappear, snapped of by the relentless claws of his pursuer. (p.13)

The battle goes on only to end with the inevitable devour of the helpless squid by the more fit-to-survive lobster. Commenting on the significance of this battle for his protagonist, Dreiser remarks in a loaded phrase that it "cleared things up considerably" for Cowperwood, who, in turn, declares that "that's the way it has to be, I guess" (p.13). The symbolic

significance of this episode helps to impose a Darwinian perspective on the conditions of success in such a world, where only the fittest survives.

Having learned his lesson early, Cowperwood is initiated in the warring world of business at the age of thirteen. He is a success right from the start. He shows an exceptional gift to make money through his work with an auctioneer and later in a commission house. By the time he meets the widowed Lillian Semple, Cowperwood has shifted his operations from the commission business to the stock market. This shift is motivated by his natural bent to dominate, and will to power. Thus when Cowperwood, one evening, reflected on the nature of the commission business Dressier tells us that " it never occurred to him that he belonged in the realm of clerkdom. Those, people were the kind of beings who ought to work for him, and who would. There was nothing savage in his attitude, no rage against fate, no dark fear of failure" (p.35).

Now with the wealth obtained from his subsequent stock-market successes, Cowperwood starts to cultivate new forms of self-fulfillment. All these forms are essentially acquisitive and major among them is the accumulation of objects which Cowperwood considers "artistic". His obsession with things artistic is not a matter of cultural cultivation. He was rather an artist in so far as "finace is an art. And it presents the operations of the of intellectuals and if the egoists" (p.40).

In the accumulation of expensive artistic works, then, Cowperwood, like the actual financiers of the Gilded Age, found both a gratification of his obsessive acquisitiveness and a useful device to confer a semblance of social pretence on his ruthless drive towards money. The invocation of this familiar trail of the multi-millionaires at this point in Cowperwood's business career is, no double, meant to structure his financial impulses and practices within the historiogical dynamics of a cultural zeist-geist. The critic

Lewis Mumford makes this clear in his analysis of Cowperwood's aesthetic desire which he takes to satisfy the two capital impulses of the Glided Age:

> It gave full play to the acquisitive instinct, and, with the possible rise and fall of prices in even time-established securities, it had not a little of the cruder excitement of gambling in the stock market or in real-estate. At the same time, it satisfied a starved desire for beauty and raised the pursuer an estimable step or two in the social scale[30].

But far from being a genuine "desire for beauty", Cowperwood accumulation of artistic works is but a means of self-fulfillment of his acquisitive ego. This pathological desire extends also to other areas of Cowperwood experience, notably his relation with women. His experience with women, including his wife, tends to be acquisitive. It is essentially an extension of his aesthetic desire and, hence, another mode of self-gratification. Cowperwood, for instance, marries the widowed Lillian Semple, who is five years his senior, not because he loves her but because she is "artistic" as we are told several times in the pages of the novel. Lillian, in this respect, is like the lobster that had enlightened Cowperwood business vision. Thus, we are told that she "cleared up certain of his ideas in regard to women" (p.112). But once they are acquired, Cowperwood lose all interest in them, a case that indicates clearly Cowperwood insatiable need of ego gratification. This is well reflected in his motto "I satisfy myself", that marks his life-long dedication to the proposition of more money, more paintings, and more women, regardless of the personal or social consequences of such dedication.

By the end of the first half of the novel, Cowperwood becomes more entangled in business and amorous intrigues. His acquisitiveness leads him from business to business, gaining control of the Philadelphia street-railway network, and buying cooperation from the corrupt politicians. He needs more money to fiancé the operations of the banking house he controls. He, therefore, concludes illicit financial deals with Stener, the city treasurer, who secretly lends him half a million of the city funds to finance his own private business schemes. But Cowperwood is soon to be inflected with a misfortune. When the chicago fire of 1871 causes a financial panic which wipes out his fortune. Cowperwood business collapse, however, was not exactly due to the stock-market panic but was rather the result of a politico-business nature alliance against him. This alliance is essentially of a business nature because Cowperwood's ruthless business activities created many enemies in thee business circle of Philadelphia. The political part was later added to the alliance in the figure of Philadelphin political boss Mr.Butler who was extremely outraged at the adulterous affair between Cowperwood and his daughter, Aileen. The alliance intimidates Stener who consequently refuses to lend Cowperwood any further help in the moment of crisis. Thus, in a powerful scene between Cowperwood and Stener, Dressier sums up the brutal ethos of the whole financial game in Cowperwood last appeal to the city treasurer: " it's a case of dog eat dog in this game … and its up to us to save ourselves" (p.224).

> Cowperwood, however, is accused of misusing the city funds and made a scapegoat to appease an indignant populace. His trial, then, was a political frame-up. During the trial Cowperwood" indignation and anger are directed at the double-morality of the press, the judges and

> the general public who "undisturbed by notable animal passions of any kind, go their way upholding the theory of the Ten Commandment over the order of things as they are" (p.276).

The hypocritical nature of public morality is shown through the interference of the "Citizens Municipal Reform Association" of which a well-known iron manufacture of great probity and moral rectitude, one Skeleton O.Wheat, is president" (Ibid) to redress the wrong done to the public. The fact that this association has been indirectly approached by the anti-Cowperwood alliance to arouse public opinion against him invokes an effective irony that pulls tongues at the failure of conventional moral values to come to any real ethical significance in the world of ruthless business.

Cowperwood was eventually convicted of embezzlement of Philadelphia city council funds. He is forced to surrender all his fortune and is sent to jail for five years. After thirteen months in the eastern district penitentiary, he is pardoned just in time to regain his fortune by selling short in the Jay Cook panic of 1973. Cowperwood business maneuverings here are exemplary of the newly emerging financier. He dose not allow his opponents to suspect anything by keeping his activities hidden. He then swiftly closes in, smashing them and winning another fortune for himself. Although this is reminiscent of the lobster episode early in the novel, Dreiser uses another symbolic episode here to convey the ethics of the newly emerging Cowperwood. Dreiser ends ***The Financier*** with the parable of the black grouper. This fish lives long "because of its very remarkable ability to adapt itself to conditions" (p.539). It is endowed with a chamelon-like gift of altering its appearance to deceive enemy and prey alike. Dreiser regards the grouper as symbolic "of the constructive genius of nature, which is not beatifuic" as "an implement of illusion", "a living lie" (p.540). Dreiser's subsequent reflection on the black grouper as an indictment of conventional

ethics is a fit coda to terminate the first phase of the business career of a person who is quite aware of the failure of such ethics. Thus, with its clear injunction that people should not be blamed to disobey a code of ethics which, if followed, would render them unfit to survive. Dreiser skillfully uses this code to free the reader of any value-laden prejudice towards his protagonist and to prepare him eventually for the life to come in ***The Titan***.

Having invoked, and rationalized, Cowperwood acquisitive egotism in ***The Financier***, Dreiser proceeds to document its full display in his protagonist's business adventures in The Titan. The novel traces the second phase of Cowperwood's business career in Chicago from 1873 to 1898. The business plot of the novel moves linearly through the two great businesses that Cowperwood runs masterly. In both cases Dreiser displays to the full Cowperwood's buccaneering business rivals. His first battle to gain a number of franchises for the distribution of suburban gas secures him a respectable position in the financial world of the late nineteenth century Chicago. It, however, evokes the hostility of many a Chicago financial bosses who eventually thwart his social aspirations. This tone of hostility between Cowperwood and his business rivals increases dramatically throughout the bulk of the navel. Two factors help set this tension: first, the series of considerable zfinancial contests that Cowperwood wins over his rivals through cleverness and treachery, like that of the American match in chapter XLVII. The second factor is Cowperwood's many amorous affairs with the wives and daughters of some of business associates and rivals alike. Thus, by the second great business battle towards the end of the novel, this hostility develops into a struggle for survival[31].

Although revenge might be the immediate impetus of this hostility, Cowperwood battle to buy or control the entire state legislature in order to obtain a fifty-year franchise on Chicago street-railway transportation becomes such a vortex of conflict in which the premises of a whole society

are on stake. The details of the panoramic involvement of banks, local politicians, legislators, governors, and newspapers in these transactions hold authentic in the best Muckraking spirit. To such an extent that ***The Titan***, at times, is misconceived as a novel in the radical tradition[32]. The millionaire businessmen and financiers, who comprise the Chicago elite, cloack their economic opposition to Cowperwood by invoking the strictures of conventional morality at his history of adultery, divorce and imprisonment in Philadelphia. Cowperwood's opponents. Arneel, schryhart, Merrill And hand, furthermore, are also shown to practice another form of hypocrisy during the struggle for the control of the Chicago street-railway. Although they operate out of sheer self-interest, they hide their material motives behind a veil of seeming concern for the public. Dreiser makes this clear in his subsequent exposition of those financiers's engagement in the bribery and purchase of politicians and city councilors in order to further their nefarious ends. Dreiser also highlights the hypocrisy of Cowperwood's opponents in their exploitation of the populace in their struggle against Cowperwood's monopoly. They use their control of the press: "the newspapers, directed by such men as Haguenin, Hyssop…, began to shout, as a last resort, in the interest of democracy"[33]. But when the public agitation they whipped up, to brand Cowperwood as a "menace" begins to evoke socialistic demands for the public ownership of all street railways, then, the capitalists, mindful of their own interests close ranks and withdraw their opposition to Cowperwood's monopolistic schemes.

One consequence of Dreiser's exposition of the hypocrisy of Cowperwood's opponents is the depersonalization of Cowperwood's failure to obtain the franchises. This is so because he was defeated by forces rather than individuals. He was in fact fighting to survive against the finical, legal and public forces collectively. And through all this goes the dynamics of myth-making that inflate his fight, regardless of its apparent animalism, into

an act of heroic defiance. The critic Alfred Karin was the first to recognize this aspect of Dreiser portrayal of his businessman when he states that Dressier " raised Cowperwood-Yerkers to the level of destiny, where another might have debased him below the level of society"[34]. Indeed, egotism and the lust for power are hardly sympathetic traits to be rendered acceptable to the reader but Dressier managed to turn them into sources of appeal to his readers by rendering them as part of his financier's questing temperament.

Dreiser, consequently, draws a series of lofty comparisons to Cowperwood throughout ***The Titan*** in an attempt to highten his hero's stature beyond that of a businessman. Cowperwood is a Prometheus, a Renaissance prince, a Hannibal, a great personage of the Elizabethan order, a half-god Demigoron (p.203). Similarly, Dreiser kept reminding his readers that finance is not a mere business. It is an art and that Cowperwood is "a very great artist in his realm rather than as a businessman" (p.141). The effect of this is to fashion Cowperwood as a Tamburlane-figure. So Cowperwood, in kazen's words, becomes "the highest expression of the acquisitive society in which he rules so commandingly"[35]. And that the readers accordingly, " do not indict him for his ruthlessness and cunning (but) despise his rivals because they envy him the very brutality with which he destroys them"[36].

Dreiser, however, prefers to spell this ruthlessness as a symptom of unchecked individualism. Cowperwood's exercise of power in ***The Titan*** finds its impulse in his early motto "I satisfy myself", which he later hardens into the determination that "he could, should, and would rule alone… by the right of financial intellect and courage he was first, and would so prove it" (p.127). Dreiser speaks also to the same effect when he expatiates, at the end of the novel, upon the spectacle of his financiers career: "rushing like a great comet to the zenith, his path a blazing trail, Cowperwood did for the hour illuminate the terrors and wonders of individuality" (p.500). The fascination

such a meteoric career holds stems from the harsh extremes to which the Emersonian doctrine of self-reliance is taken in the character of Cowperwood. A key to understand this process lies in the business milieu that encourages the espousal of laissez-faire self-interest with self-reliance. The result is a mode of individualism based on the aggrandizement of hard egoism regardless of its heavy repercussions to the social fabric. Dreiser highlights this dimension in the character of Cowperwood when he speculates at the end of the novel:

> And this giant himself, rushing on to new struggles and new difficulties in an older land, forever suffering the good of a restless heart-for him was no ultimate peace, no real understanding, but only hunger and thirst and wonder. Wealth, wealth! A new grasp of a new great problem and its eventual solution. A new the old urgent thirst for life, and only its partial quenchment (p.500-1).

Cowperwood's restless pursuit of self-gratification, then, is dictated by the curse of Midas touch.

Seen from this perspective, Dreiser's last view of Cowperwood is quit appropriate. Although he succeeds in realizing his dreams of business success, he is still rest less and unsatisfied. Dreiser's invocation of a host of mythical allusions in the final paragraphs of the novel is meant to symbolize, with tragic dignity, this restlessness. Each of the tragic figures of myth and literature alluded to here, like Circe, Helen, Hamlet… etc., has come to achieve the stature of tragic heroism through that partially quenched " urgent thirst for life". Thus, while conferring on Cowperwood the dignity of tragic

heroism, these allusions suggest the nature and extent of his feverish activity which transports him to no satisfying destination.

The emptiness of Cowperwood's feverish quest for wealth and power is emblematic of the American way of life in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This emptiness, according to Dreiser's tragically colours the lives of many American businessman, especially those who start up from lowly beginnings and are quit misled to believe that the pursuit of money is everything in life Dreiser's argues in ***The Color of a Great City*** that:

> Unfortunately the money problem, once solved, is not the only thing in the world. Their lives, although they reach to the place where they have gold signs, automobiles. And considered private pleasure, are none the more beautiful. Too often, because of these early conditions, they remain warped, oppressive, greedy and distorted in every worthy mental sense by the great fight they have made to get their money[37].

Money, then, as the objective correlative of success, becomes throughout ***The Financier*** and ***The Ttitan*** symptomatic of Cowperwood's wounded ego and, hence, his profound unfulfillment at the end of ***The Titan.*** Eventually, the Cowperwood that figures here is still a "waif amid forces", trapped forever into the quicksand of American materialism by mirages of success.

With this disillusionment inevitable, dressier has come to furnish an impulse that the American novelists of the twenties were to capitalize on in their fictional portrayal of the American businessman.

Notes

1.

Naturalism is “a mode of fiction that was developed by a school of writers in accordance with a particular philosophical thesis. This thesis, a product of post-Darwinian biology in the nineteenth. Century, held that a human being exists entirely in the order of nature and does not have a soul nor any mode of participating in a religious or spiritual world beyond nature, and therefor, that such a being is merely a higher-order animal whose character and behavior are entirely determined by two kinds of forces, heredity and environment”. M.H. Abrams, ***A Glossary of Literary Terms***, 6th ed. (fort worth: Harcourt Brace. College. publishers, 1993), p.175.

2.

social Darwinism is a philosophical doctrine that applies Charles Darwin’s biological theories of evolution to human society. This doctrine originated in the works of the British philosopher Herbert Spencer (1820-1903) who argues, in his ***Synthetic Philosophy*** (1860), that social progress derives from the natural law of evolution through the process of natural selection that operates in both nature and society. With the result of the dominance of the jnngle principle and the survival of the strongest. The American tycoons Carnegie and Rockeffl;er championed this ideology in their memoirs and addresses.

3.

“The Novel with a Purpose”, the ***Collected Works of Frank Norris*** (New York : Doubleday, Doran and Company, 1928), vol.7, p.22.

4.

Unlike their realistic predecessors, American naturalistic dealt exclusively with financiers rather than entrepreneurs. They had transferred power from industrialists to financiers and shifted emphasis from industrial productivity to pecuniary profits.

5.

Progressivism is a socio-political reform movement that was initiated by president Theodore Roosevelt. The period from 1903 to 1917 was marked by Muckraking, trust-busting and legislative reform. The term “Muckraking” in particular has come to epitomize the reforming tendencies of the Progressive period. The term refers to the intense interest which American writers and journalists took in the investigation of corruption in

business, politics, and other American institutions during this period. Roosevelt himself in 1906 first used the term. He was then alluding to a character in John Bunyan's. ***The Pilgrim Progress*** who was so busy raking the muck beneath his feet that he did not see a heavenly crown that was above his head. Guy E.smith, ***American Literature: A Complete Survey*** (Ames, Iowa: Littlefield, Adams and Co., 1957), p.142.

6.

Kazin, p.97

7.

Norris, however, was not interested in Leiter as a model of Jadwin. He was rather interested in the sensational effects of liter's attempt to corner the world supply of wheat in the Chicago Pit as part of the current public interest in money romance.

8.

Taylor, ***The Economic Novel in American***, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1942) p.301.

9.

Warren French, ***Frank Norris*** (New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1962), pp.115-6.

10.

The Octopus, The Complete Workes of Frank Norris (New York: P.F. Collier and Sons Pubishers, 1901, p.473. Subsequent references to ***The Octopus*** made in this chapter are to this edition of Norris works unless other wise indicated.

11.

The Pit, The Collected Works of Frank Norris (New York: Doubleday, Doran and Company, 1928), vol. ix, p.52. subsequent references to ***The Pit*** made in this chapter are to this edition of Norris worker unless otherwise indicated.

12.

The Critic Warren French says in this respect that jadwin, here uses this argument as a rationalization of his folly. French, then, comments thusly: "obviously, though, he is using this deterministic agreement (as Norris himself was likely to use talk of forces) to a void accepting the responsibility for his personal vitality and wrong notations" p.115.

13.

Spindlier, ***American Literature and Social Changes*** p.60. Spindlier adds that "such a cycle in attenuated form. Moderate wealth-purity/speculation-corruption/ poverty-purity, underlies the pit and similarly invites a didactic interpretation of the novel." pp.60-1.

14.

Charles Child Walcutt, ***American Literary Naturalism:A Divided Stream*** (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 1950), pp.154-55.

15.

Kenneth S.Lynn, ***The Dream of Success: a Study of The Modern American Imagination*** (Westport, Connecticut: The Greenwood Press, Publishers, 1972), pp.25-6.

16.

Theodore Dreiser, "The American Financier", in ***Hey, Rub-A-Dub-Dub*** (London: Collier and Sons, 1913), p.86.

17.

Dreiser (New York: Charles Scribners Sons, 1965), p.170

18.

Quoted in Lynn, pp.58-9.

19.

Ibid., p.58.

20.

Quoted in F.O. Matthiessen, ***Theodore Dreiser*** (Connecticut: The Greenwood Press, 1973), p.135.

21.

Theodore Dreiser (New York: Twayne Publishers, inc., 1964), p.93.

22.

Philip L.Gerber, "Dreiser: Extreme and Bloody Individualism," in Yoshinobu Hakutani and Lewis Fried ceds). ***American Literary Naturalism: A Reassessment*** (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1975), p.116.

23.

Gerber, ***Theodore Dreiser***, p.96.

24.

Ibid.

25.

Swamberg, p.172.

26.

The Bhagavad Gita is one of the major holy writs of Buddism. It has come to exercise a great influence on Western. Culture in the twentieth-century.

27.

Theodore Dreiser, ***Sister Carrie*** (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), p.12. This classic statement of Dreiser pessimistic view of man tragic stature in the universe is the shaping view of all his protagonists. This statement starts with Dreiser's conviction that "among the forces which sweep and play through out the universes, untutored man is but a wisp in the wind" and ends with the conclusion that man is "even as a wisp in the wind, moved by every breath of passion, acting now by his will and how by his instincts … a creature of incalculable variability".

28.

Theodore Dreiser, ***The Financier*** (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1961), p.4. subsequent references to ***The Financier*** in this chapter are to this edition of the novel unless otherwise indicated.

29.

Alex Pitofsky, "Dreiser's ***The Financier*** and the Horatio Alger Myth", ***Twentieth Century Literature***, fall, 1998.url: http: // www. findarticles. Com /.

30.

The Franklinesque Myth of self-improvement refers to the values of success as propagated in Benjamin Franklins many inspirational

books, notably, Poor Richards Almanack and ***The Instructor or Youngmans Best Companion***.

31.

Quoted in Gerber***, Theodore Dreiser***, p.99.

32.

The boring tempo with which Cowperwood amorous escapades alternate with his business adventures has flawed ***The Titan***. The critic Stuart Sherman, for instance, dismisses ***The Titan*** on this basis as "a sort of huge club-sandwich., composed of slices of business alternating with erotic episodes". "The Barbaric Naturalism of Theodore Dreiser", in John Lydenberg, ed., ***Dreiser: A Collection of Critical Essays*** (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prantice-Hall, inc., 1971), p.72.

33.

Walter B.Rideout, ***The Radical Novel in the United States, 1900-1954: Some Interrelations of Literature and Society*** (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1956), p.69.

34.

Theodore Dreiser, ***The Titan*** (New York: the New American Library, Inc., 1965), p.430. Subsequent references to ***The Titan*** made in this chapter are to this edition of the novel unless otherwise indicated.

35.

On Native Grounds, p.86.

36.

Ibid., p.87.

37.

Ibid.

38.

Theodore Dreiser, ***The Color of a Great City*** (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1935), p.99.

CHAPTER THREE

The Representation of the Businessman in the Novels of the Nineteen Twenties

3.1 Introductory Notes:

Although the America of the 1920s was almost wholly a businessman civilization, the prospectus of the businessman in the fiction of the period is not optimistic. This chapter-type is consistently projected, with few exceptions, as an index of the novelists' disillusionment with the promise of American life in general.

> The businessman is culturally, rather than economically, oriented in the novels of the nineteen twenties. This character-type is used to shed critical lights on the stultifying ethos of the consumer's culture of contemporary America. The novels of this period that deal with the businessman are, therefore, not business novels in the proper sense because the business character of the businessman is not an end itself. It is rather subordinated to his expository function. This, in turn, explains the absence of individualizing animation in the portrait of the businessman. Yet, he is not solely the effect of the impulse to typify. He is rather a distancing personification of the negative aspects of the business culture that nurtures them, namely, the standardization of manners and the stultification of morals under middle-class conventions.

This tendency to diffuse culture into the fictive experience of the businessman is further substantiated through the framing of the narrative in a distinctively contemporary temporal perspective which is that of the Jazz age

and the prohibition[1]. But these novels are not period-bound works because they at times maintain an expansive perspective at varying degrees. In such cases they work towards an enlarged vision of the whole America cultural history while maintaining a contemporary frame of reference.

> This concretization of contemporary cultural experience-ziest-geist-in the figure of the businessman in the novels of the nineteen twenties is further reflected in the changing status of this character-types in these novels. The type of the businessman that dominated the American novel from the 1880s to World War I is the tycoon. These novels have depicted a variety of this type: the powerful manufacturer, the gambling speculator, the fabulous financier, the monarch of enormous enterprises, the arch-individual responsible for himself only and his concern is production. But after world war I the tycoon, which was the most colourful and dramatic figure in the business myth, is no longer the characteristic figure. It is replaced by the little businessman, and more particularly the middle man.

This change in literary temper is a reflection of the changes in American economic ideology. Major among these changes is the increasing tendency towards the separation between ownership and control as a result of the merger movement and the growth of joint-stock companies in the early decades of the twentieth-century. This separation has affected a change from a tycoon-oriented business enterprise into one characterized by large staffs of mangers and other white collar personnel. More specifically, it is a change from a highly individualistic entrepreneur to the communal 'organization man'. This change, however, has rendered the ethos of laissez-faire individualism incongruous with everyday reality. This, consequently, led to the suppression of the individualizing personal autonomy of the businessman and the promotion of conforming as the dominant mode of social behaviour.

Conformity, rather than individualism, therefore, became the main feature of the businessman-type as portrayed in the novels of the nineteen twenties[2].

This aspect of business as a force of social conformity has two bearings in the novels of the 1920s which have the businessman as their central character.

First, the businessman has become a less melodramatic figure. He shows a marked lack of the aggressive energy characteristic of his 'naturalistic' predecessors. Second, the power of social conformity has patterned the dynamic humanity of the businessman into the static frame of a social type. The effect here is one of distancing the two identities of the fictional businessman: the rebellious self that is to be identified with the values of egalitarian American society, and the socialized self that the businessman cultivates under the pressure of the contemporary business culture and it's spirit of conformity. This is symptomatic of a larger cultural failure and hence the utility of the businessman to give in-sight into his failure of the promise of the American way of life. This cultural failure which underlies the dominant image of contemporary America as a business wasteland is reflected in the portrayal of the businessman in the novels of the period.

This tendency find its most powerful display in the novels of Sinclair Lewis (1885-1951) and F. Scott Fitzgerald (1896-1940). Despite the marked differences of theme and techniques, these two novelists worked within the context of this image of America as the underling basis of their businessmen in order to dissect the business staples of their society. This character-type, therefore, becomes an index of the cultural perversion of post-industrial American society. Lewis's ***Babbitt*** (1922), and to a certain extent ***Dodsworth*** (1929), and Fitzgerald's ***The Great Gatsby*** (1925) are the culmination of this personifying tendency. They are exemplary of the way in which the novelists of the nineteen twenties employ the personifying potential of this character-

type to dramatize the malaise of their decade within the larger perspective of American cultural history.

3.2 The Businessman in Lewis's *Babbitt* (1922)

Babbitt is the first American novel to portray the American businessman as a twentieth-century man. Previous business novels of the early twentieth-century adopt a retrospective perspective on the American businessman by virtue of their concentration on real case-histories of actual nineteenth-century businessmen. They, therefore, persist to enmesh the businessman in an industrial-laissez-faire-productive complex characteristic of the late nineteenth-century economic ideology. With ***Babbitt*** the perspective is different. The figure of the businessman here is immersed in the mores and values of the consumer's culture characteristic of post-World War I America. This America is characteristically consumption-oriented and predominantly white-collar middle class culture.

Lewis employed the character of real estate businessman George F. ***Babbitt*** to explore these two cultural strains of the 1920s. The novel works this exploration out through the identification of their influence on Babbitt's business personality. Babbitt, therefore, is fashioned as the sociological average of the white-collar middle class and its consumerism. This must have been Lewis's intention for he originally planned the novel as a record of twenty-four hours in Babbitt's life from alarm clock to alarm clock. This early conception, however, is crystallized in the first seven chapters[3]. The remaining twenty-seven chapters are assembled set-pieces covering such topics as politics, club life, family, marriage and leisure, work, structure, class, and religion.

Taken together, these set-pieces provide an almost complete sociology of middle class life and its commercialized mores and ethics. This expansive, but static, structural design provides Lewis with the double vision necessary to distance his protagonist in the panorama of his society. Lewis, himself, makes this clear when he states in an unpublished introduction to

Babbitt that "though this is the individual romance of one G.T. Pumphrey and not the breviary of his community, that community enters his every moment, for it is himself, created in his vanished image"[4].

This presupposes a degree of social personification to operate in Babbitt's character. So, in the portrait of Babbitt Lewis set out to satirize the American businessman and through this, to attack the whole sector of American middle class life.

Early in the novel Lweis utilizes this aspect of setting to create this socio-economic interrelation between Babbitt and his environment. The opening description of Zenith specifies Babbitt's society as a post-industrial environment. Zenith's business centre is dominated by skyscraper office blocks, and the peripheral hills are covered with the new suburban districts of the white-collar middle class. The towers of Zenith which open the novel are described as a "temple-spire of the religion of business"[5].

Zenith is a city where middle class businessmen predominate. Its economic activities are mainly non-industrial such as distribution, service trades and selling. Babbitt is portrayed to epitomize these attributes. He is a typical Zenithite middle class businessman. His activities, whether business or not, are immersed in the institutions of middle class consumerism, namely, selling and large-scale advertising.

Selling is the main business imperative in the consumer's economy of the 1920s. Lewis makes this clear by means of two traveling salesmen. To them "the romantic hero was … the great sales manager … who devoted himself and his samurai to the cosmic purpose of selling-not of selling anything in particular, for or to anybody in particular, but pure selling" (p.143). Babbitt, then, is the hero of his times for he was a real-estate businessman who "made nothing in particular, neither butter nor shoes nor poetry, but he was nimble in the calling of selling houses for more than people could afford to pay"

(p.2). Selling, then, becomes a sign of the spirit of what Veblen labels as "conspicuous consumption" that dominates post-industrial society[6].

This is further consolidated in the indulgence of Babbitt and his community in large-scale advertising. The novel is full of references to advertising as a feature of consumerism.

Babbitt, as a property salesman, writes high-powered advertisements for his own firm. His style of authorship is "diligently imitative of the best literary models of the day of heart-to-heart talk advertisements, sale-pulling, letters, discourses in the development of will-power and handshaking house-organs, as richly poured forth by the new school of poets of business" (p.36).

Selling and advertising then lie to the core of Babbitt and his world. Babbitt, like other zenithites , is seized with a compulsion for energy and drives-what he calls "hustling". It is defined in terms of the restlessness of the zenithites in their relentless pursuit of money and social statues. It represents the misdirected energy and vitality of modern America. The critic T.K.Whipple, for instance, takes this hustling as symptomatic of the over-riding materialism of modern American society. It is a correlative of the motive of self-advancement of its separate members. This spirit of hustling finds its incarnation in Babbitt, the ideal citizen[7].

Babbitt, at this point, is caught in the dynamic interchange of personal desire and social power. Because his desires are structured by social caste, Babbitt can only find fulfillment of his socially-empowered desires through his adherence to the standards and mores of society. But this means that he should sacrifice his individuality in order to succeed socially. It is here that Lewis strikes the major differences between modern American businessman and his nineteenth-century predecessors. Babbitt as the specimen of the modern American businessman can only survive by sacrificing his individuality whereas success for his predecessors is a matter of maintaining an aggressive mode of individualism. The difference is not only a matter of

the changing modes of American capitalism, i.e, from production to consumption, but it is also rooted in the changing motivation and personality pattern of the modern businessman.

Traditionally, American individualism originally stems from the Protestant ethic, and its secularized version. It provided American society in the colonial and revolutionary eras with a code of behaviour. post-World War I American society witnessed the displacement of this ethic by, what the sociologist William H. White has called, "the Social Ethic". This new ethic operates mainly in the white-collar middle class in the form of the subservience of the individual to the group. The individual, notably the businessman, as such, becomes other-directed character-type as distinguished from his predecessors who are inner-directed. The source of direction for the modern businessman is the social group and its means of advertising[8].

Babbitt is a typical representative of this new character-type. He does not only adopt the values and styles cultivated by his peering social group through its organizations and social rites, but also passively accepts those values and styles purveyed to him by advertising:

> Just as he was Elk, a Booster, and a member of a chamber of commerce, just as the priests of the Presbyterian church determined his every religious belief and the senators who controlled the Republican Party decided in little smoky rooms in Washington what he should think about dis armament, tariff, and Germany, so did the large national advertisers fix the surface of his life, fix what he believed to be his individuality. These standard advertised wars … were his symbols and proofs of excellence; at first the

> signs, then the substitutes, for joy and passion and wisdom. (p.95)

No wonder that Babbitt becomes the upholder of everything that is conventional, conservative and respectable. He is a member of the Presbyterian church, the Republican Party and some other local organizations. He cheerfully confessed to being a "joiner" because joining these social institutions and other prosperity-boosting lunch clubs is not only essential for the social respectability of the ideal citizen he was but also to join is good for business. (p.205)

So, business becomes the source of Babbitt's sense of sociability. He even talks about business with religious reverence. It becomes his perspective on the community itself. He mechanically cultivates the views of the social herd without any real conviction. He detests everything that is Bohemian, liberal and intellectual because such things are disruptive of the social status quo. He further identifies liberal and trade unionist with communism, for which he has a patriotic abhorrence. This response is not truly patriotic but a reaction to the radicalism of the liberals and trade unionists which is incompitable with the ideological stance of his business world. Babbitt is also suspicious of the intellectual life because it is impractical. He takes teachers, lecturers and journalists to be scoffers. He insists that if they were to be paid they should be "selling efficiency and whooping it up for national prosperity". (p.188)

This gross encroachment of the business on the imaginative and the spiritual in Zenith has turned Babbitt's world into a social void. This void peeps glaringly in Babbitt's social manners which are equally coarse. He is gruff, loud and aggressively jolly. He is a back-slapping, rib-digging good fellow. But these are mere masks and pretences to hide the

void within. This social easiness is not a sign of self-satisfaction but one of intolerance.

T.K.Wipple provides the leads here again. His anthropological insights into Babbitt's position in his environment relates Babbitt's communal experience to their proper sociological significance. He takes Babbitt to be exemplary of so many American in modern society whose desire to get up in the world has led them to deny themselves:

> All other interests and experiences. They have starved themselves, until in the midest of the at most material profusion they are dying of inanition … for these Folks…… suffer an obscure but acute dissatisfaction. After all the impulse to live can not be altogether extinguished, it can only be frustrated. The victim, through self-sacrificed, realizes that he has missed something.

This insight in the malaise of Babbitt's generation is projected in the novel in the form of social repression and psychic defense. The pressure society exercises on Babbitt to conform is essentially repressive of individuality. Babbitt, therefore, immerses himself in the world of commodities and material objects which supplies him with reassurance and a sense of identity. Pecuniary status becomes substitute rather than a sign of his sense of self and identity. Babbitt, we are reminded, "had enormous and poetic admiration, though very little understanding, of all mechanical devices. They were his symbols of truth and beauty" (p.68). Thus, because Babbitt's inner life is expressed in terms of objects, the externality of Lewis's approach, though the great deal of attention he pays

to surface details, is particularly appropriated to the conception of his character and theme.

But Babbitt, nevertheless, shows a faint strain of dissatisfaction with the external manifestation of his social environment. This strain betrays an incomplete repression of the private, non-commercial selfhood. This regression takes the form of vague longings which can not be satisfied by the commodities and objects which are his substitutes for joy and passion. These longings are expressed in Babbitt's frequent dreams of the fairy child, and his wish to return to a state of frontier-simplicity. Both of these are forms of escape from the crushing materialism of his business environment.

The dream of the fairy child, as an escape to the illusory world of fantasy, is an attempt, on the level of the subconscious, to compensate the lack of beauty and joy in his actual world of social reality. This psychological dimension corresponds to the sociology of the story. The fairy child obviously represents an escape from the oppressive realities of communal life: "Instantly he was in the magic dream. He was somewhere among people who laughed at him. He slipped away, ran down the paths. of a midnight garden, and at the gate the fairy child was waiting" (p.102).

The same psycho-sociological implications are also present in Babbitt's trips to the main woods and his not unfrequent invocations of the frontier nature of his grandfathers. These are other avenues of escape from the sterility of socialized and commercial living. The return to nature is a return to a state of primitivism and the frontier values of self-reliance and stark individualism. The frontier, however, acquires the status of a leitmotif in the novel. It is invokes at critical moments in Babbitt's uneasy relationship with his stifling society. It is mainly associated with his sense of cultural nostalgia: "wish I'd been a pioneer, as, as my dad", says Babbitt wistfully to himself (p.121). He, therefore, finds in the primitive

conditions of the main woods a regenerative, but brief, does for his inner go. But when he resolves finally to be a pioneer, to "take up a backwoods claim with a man like Joe, work hard with his hands, be free and noisy in a flannel shirt" (p.295), discovers that the pioneer has been irredeemably changed into the businessman. It is impossible for Babbitt, as for his America, to return to the frontier state "because in his own brain he bore the office and the family and every street and disquiet and illusion of Zenith" (p.301). The implications of his discovery acquire their significance once related to the totality of the American experience. The schism which such failure highlights between the ideal and the actual in the American experience is but symptomatic of the failure of the historical promise of American life in the twentieth century.

Having exhausted the means of escape, Babbitt engages in an open, but mild, rebellion. It is sparked with the trail and imprisonment of his friend. Paul Riesling for attempting to murder his nugging wife. After the sentence-trial, Babbitt return to his office to realize that he faces a world which, without Paul, was meaningless. This sense of futility contributes to his growing inability to maintain the state of equilibrium with external reality. This develops into disillusionment which is the catalyst of his open rebellion.

Babbitt's rebellion is not altogether radical. Lewis uses mild language to spell this intention to go rebellious: "he came out with a vicious determination to do what he pleased" (p.274). This implies a loose of guidance rather than a re-inscription of authority. This loose of self is not a prelude to an authentic search for identity but rather is symptomatic of an escape from a socially-prescribed identity. This is further consolidated in Babbitt's strong impulse to make his rebellion publicly known. This makes Babbitt's rebellion an act of defiance.

This defiance is socially and politically displayed. Socially, he entangles himself with the Bohemian element of Zenith. He frequents the parties of the "Punch" and engages in an adulterous affair with one of its leaders, Tanis Judique. Politically, he experiences a brief burst of liberalism. He defends strikes and publicly sympathizes with such half-of-the way liberals culminates in his refusal to join "The good citizen league" which is an organization devoted to the repression of dissents. His refusal has a symbolic function. It is the highest point in his rebellion because it demolishes the very essence of middle America which he outlines early in the novel in his address, entitled symbolically "Our ideal citizen", before the annual convention of Zenith Real-Estate Board.

It is at this point that Babbitt incurs the anger of his society which ranges from loose of business to threats of ostracism and even violence. This range of penalties, however, has its status in the symbolic order of things. Radicalism in America, with its two strains of liberalism and Bohemianism, has been alienated with "the other", which is usually conceived as disruptive of the current social status quo, and was, therefore, much feard and censured. The nature and the agency of the penalty, as it comes from "the Good Citizens' Leaque", confirms this "otherness" of Babbitt's rebellion:

> one of the best ways it can put the Kibosh on cranks is to apply this social boy-cott business to folks big enough so you can reach them otherwise. Then if that don't work, the G.C.L can finally send a little delegation around to inform folks that get too flip that they got to conform to decent standard and quite shooting off their mouths so free. (p.346)

Given the nature of the ensuing struggle, Babbitt's defiance is doomed to failure because, as Miriam Winkler suggests, after twenty years of social-patterning conformity in the ways of Zenith's urban culture, "Babbitt's mind has atrophied and there is no intellectual component to his rebellious mood"[10]. Babbitt's sense of self, and that of any member of the modern consumer's culture, is a consequence of business as a mental and ideological atrophy. Business, therefore, becomes a citedal of identity for Babbitt and, hence, his buckling when the community boycotts his business. Babbitt, moreover, fails to sustain his rebellion because the Bohemian-liberal model he adopts does not hold the test of social reality. His rebelliousness then deteriorates into dissipation. Babbitt's sense of self, and ultimately the object of his rebellion, is lost in this dissipation. His situation becomes so acute that he starts to show symptoms of paranoia under the pressure of self-alienation.

It is at this point that Babbitt becomes reticential as he starts to long for a face-saving return to the community. He, however, is allowed to readjust through the appendectomy suffered by his wife Mura. He reassumes the self-effacing mask of social conformity in order to become the ideal citizen he once was.

In this drama of social conformity and personal dissociation Babbitt ceases to be a character per se. He becomes a personifying metaphor of the quite desperation that the mass of men leads in the business culture of the nineteen twenties.

The efficiency of Babbitt as a personifying metaphor withstood the test of time to become a standard technical term in American cultural tradition. The word "babbitt", which derives from Lewis's Babbitt, is defined in ***Webster's*** as: "A person (as a business of professional man) who conforms unthinkingly and complacently to prevailing middle-class

standards of respectability,who makes a cult of material success, and who is contemptuous of/or incapable of appreciating artistic or intellectual values[11].

No wonder that when Lewis, years later, came to idealize the American businessman in ***Dodsworth*** (1929), he was particularly endeavouring to dissociate his businessman-hero Sam Dodsworth from the babbittary of his society. Dodsworth, according to Lewis, " was non of the things which most Europeans and many Americans expect in a leader of American industry. He was not a Babbitt, not a Rotarian, not an Elk, nor a deacon. He rarely shouted, nor slapped people on the back…etc" (p.15). In contrast to the scarcely literate Babbitt, Dodsworth "thought rather well of Deiser, Cabell, and so much of Proust as he had rather laboriously mastered" (p.15). He played a sound game of golf and enjoyed fishing in the Canadian stream. In short, "he was common sense apotheosized, he had the energy and reliability of a dynamo, he liked whisky and poker and pate de foie gras" (p.16).

It is because of his dissociation of Dodsworth from the babbittary of his society that he loses that representative quality quite prominent in George F. Babbitt. Thus, Dodsworth becomes an upper-class Babbitt with his good points left in .to serve the purpose of satire as in ***Babbitt***. The effect of this is the depiction of Dodsworth as a businessman dimly aware of a world he could not really enter. The critic Cliften Fadiman strikes this note in Dodsworth's character when he writes of him as a man who "can neither give himself wholly over to the business of being a businessman nor give himself wholly over to the more difficult business of being a man"[12]. Dodsworth, therefore, lacks the potential for personifying the social milieu. He fails, particularly in his capacity as a businessman, to be, like Babbitt, the ego of the business culture of the 1920s.

Lewis's projection of the businessman as a personifying metaphor of America, however, is restricted in scope. It operates within the confine of the social context of the twenties and, therefore, a period-bound cultural personification. It is with F. Scott Fitzgerald's ***The Great Gatsby***, however, that the businessman as a personifying metaphor acquires its full significance in relation to the totality of American experience. Fitzgerald's portrayal of the businessman is so effective that he is at once immersed in the immediate social milieu of the 1920s and, at the same time, is thoroughly internalized with the larger process of cultural mythography that is relatively absent in Lewis's novels.

3.3 The Businessman in F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby: (1925)*

The Great Gatsby is not a business novel per se nor that its protagonist is fashioned after the businessmen of this tradition. Yet, it preserves a strong lineage with the traditional business novel when viewed in the context of the fictional representation of the businessman-character as a cultural personification of all that is negative in modern American business civilization.

But, even here, ***The Great Gatsby*** is different from its class members; and the difference is one of logic of representation. Traditional business novels, of the line traced in this study, maintain, in David Lodge's terminology, a logic of metonymy which hinges on the inscription of a larger historical consciousness in the character of the businessman by way of personification. But with ***The Great Gatsby***, and slightly earlier with ***Babbitt***, personification becomes a matter of signification, rather than inscription, because of the logic of metaphor that the novel adopts as its representational policy[13].

The businessman is no longer grounded in historicity for a separation is being affected between selfhood and history. The cultural symptoms of this division are manifest in the phenomenal rise of alienation in modern post-industrial society. This division, furthermore, is being affected, in the American context, through the persistence of myth in the American cultural psyche as the "other" of history. This otherness, however, became the signifying realm of selfhood instead of history. The effect of this is the promotion of a dialectics in which myth is the thesis, history is the antithesis, and selfhood is the synthesis[14]. The textual concretization of this dialectics in ***The Great Gatsby*** finds its fulfillment in the business appropriation of the pioneering myth of the self-made man that took place in post-Civil War America. American cultural perspective

finds its outlook in ***The Great Gatsby*** in this transformation of the pioneer into the businessman. This is fully epitomized in the geographical symbolism which culminates in Nick Garraway's statement: "I see now that this has been a story of the west, after all-Tom and Gatsby, Daisy and Jordan and I, were all Westerners, and perhaps we possessed some deficiency in common which made us subtly unadaptable to Eastern life"[15]. The symbols are simple but effective. The west is the traditional cradle of the Frontier myth of the self-made pioneer whereas the east is the seat of American materialism-in the form of finance and industry. Hence the significance of the counter-migration of the westerners to the east as a symbol for this negative transformation of the pioneer into the businessman.

Seen from this perspective, ***The Great Gatsby*** becomes a cultural paradigm in which the pioneering ideal of the self-made man is fashioned as a myth of cultural archetypes that is aliened with all that is ideal and positive. History is presented as an effect of material inscription of this myth and, therefore, is aliened with all that is corrupting and negative. The transformation of the mythical in the materialism of history furnishes a synthetic presence-the Jazz age-which takes James Gatz/Jay Gatsby as a personification of its vicissitudes. The transformation of James Gatz into Jay Gatsby, which lies to the heart of this personifications is no simple matter of name-changing. It is really a kind of cultural cross-dressing of the self-made man archetype into the businessman type for Gatsby starts as a typical Horatio Alger boy and ends as a businessman whose business is crime.

Gatsby boyhood is a faithful incarnation of the precepts of the pioneering ideal of the self-made man. In the last chapter of the novel, Nick describes the "Schedule". It reads:

Rise from bed	6.00 A-M .
Dumbell exercise and wall-scaling	6.15-6.30 A-M .
Study electricity, etc	7.15-8.15 A-M .
Work	8.30-4.30 P-M .
Baseball and sports	4.30-5.00 P-M .

And so on down to "General Resolves" (p.164). The "Schedule" and "General Resolves" are a masterful recreation of the folkloric strains of the myth of the self-made man that haunted the imagination of numerous American generation. Critics have frequently identified the affinities that this "Schedule" evokes between Gatsby and the legendary line of Benjamin Franklin's poor Richard and Horatio Alger's boy-heroes[16]. Each of the items in the "Schedule" is a re-inscription of one or more of the folkloric geneses of this myth. So, behind this simple and touching work "Schedule" and the general resolves there lies, according to M. Thomas Inge, "the childhood dreams of a Franklin or a Thomas Edison, the lectures on self-improvement of a Russell Conwell or a Dale Carnegie, the lessons on bodily development of a Charles Atlas, and the tradition that every American boy could make a million dollars or become a president"[17]. Hence, the idealism of the American dream of success.

Gatsby's adolescence. Which corresponds to that of his nation, also echoes these folkloric sources of this myth of personal success. He takes after the steps of "poor Richard" and the trail of legendary pioneers quite faithfully in search of material success as a means of self-realization. Like them, he is honest and industrious. He journeys upwards to the Great lakes "beating his way along the south shores of Lake Superior as a calm digger and a salmon-fisher on in any other capacity that brought him food and bed" (p.95).

Gatsby's attempt at academic success is another modelling in this pursuit. Having achieved nothing on the level of physical labour, Gatsby tries to take after the pursuit of Thomas Edison in his studies at the small Lutheran college of St. Olaf's in Southern Minnesota. But failure is temperamentally inflicted: "He stayed there two weeks, dismayed at its ferocious indifference to the drums of his destiny, to destiny itself, and despising the janitor's work with which he was to pay his way through" (p.96).

The failure of the precepts of the myth of the self-made man to realize Gatsby's success dreams is symptomatic of a cultural resistance. This resistance is the prelude to the process of cultural cross-dressing of the self-made pioneer into the perverted businessman. Resistance, however, engenders trauma through projection of the illusory to counter the depressive reality of contemporary American society. Thus, each night, Gatsby:

> added to the pattern of his fancies until drowsiness closed down upon some vivid scene with oblivious embrace. For while these reveries provided an outlet for the unreality of reality, a promise that the rock of the world was founded securely on a fairy's wing (pp.95-6)

These fantasies are part of the mechanism of psychic defense that Gatsby promotes as a substitute for regression. But this really an effect of the larger cultural trauma which manifest itself in Gatsby's two surrogate fathers, the buccaneer Dan Cody and the gangester Meyer wolfsheim. These two figures, who lurk in the background of Gatsby's story, are

meant to concretize the subversion of myth by history in the cultural paradigm of Gatsby's trauma.

The fifty-years old business tycoon Don Cody represents the myth of the Frontier West, or rather the energies that sparked the western frontier movement. Cody is a composite character. His name suggests the mythic tradition surrounding Daniel Boone and Buffalo Bill Cody, the former is a famous pioneer in the Frontier history whereas the latter is a plainsman and showman who toured America and Europe with his "Wild West" shows. Hence the irony of Nick's remark that Cody was "the pioneer debauchee, who during one phase of American life brought back to the Eastern seaboard the savage violence of the Frontier brothel and saloon" (p.97). Behind this irony and nominal amalgamation lies the debasement of the mythical tradition of the self-made man pioneer into the drabness of vaudeville shows. These traditions are no longer a way of life for the Frontier that produced Cody, as Frederick Jackson Turner had reminded everyone in 1893, had been closed and no longer carried the significance it once had as the source of sudden wealth and the place of the second chance. Thus, by the time Gatsby met him, Cody had degenerated into a senile old man subject to the advances of opportunists like Ella Kaye.

Gatsby, however, takes him as his ideal refusing to let historic circumstances to stand in his way. So with the death of Cody Gatsby experiences a misdirection of his Franklinesque aspiration and pioneer eastward to conquer, after the fashion of Horatio Alger's heroes, the urban wilderness of modern America. But this America is no longer the land of plenty and romantic possibilities. Gatsby's starvation and suffering in post-World War I American society lead him to realize his dream of success. Fitzgerald figures this re-orientation in the character of Meyer

Wolfshiem who is projected as Cody's successor as Gatsby's business god-father.

Wolfshiem is significantly of the Fagan-type. He is "a small, flat-nosed Jew" (p.68). He has a large head, tiny eyes and "two fine growths of hair which luxuriated in either nostril" (p.68). Fitzgerald succeeds in building up the character of Wolfshiem through the invocation of details that heighten the features of corruption and power as the core of his personality strength. Fitzgerald, here, is working within the mainstream of the American business novel in which the Jew figures as a symbol of corruption and power of the new economic forces that operate in modern American society[19]. Wolfshiem "is quite a character around New York… a denizen of Brodway… he's a gambler" (p.71) states Gatsby to Nick adding boastfully that "he is the man who fixed the world's series back in 1919" (p,71). The tonal and thematic juxtaposition of these two statements adds an ironic effect to the fearful display of corruption and power in Wolfshiem's character.

Seen from this perspective of Wolfshiem as a force, Gatsby's connection with his god-father becomes the ultimate act in the re-mapping of the American cultural psyche as incarnated in Gatsby's dreams and aspirations. The apotheosis of this cultural effacement of the myth of the self-made man comes to a full figuration in Nick's interview with Wolfshiem after Gatsby's death:

> 'Did you start him in business?' I inquired. 'start him. I made him…. I raised him up out of nothing, right out of the gutter, I saw right away he was a fine-appearing, gentleman young man, and when he told me he was an

Oggsford man I know I could use him good'.
(p.162)

This is a testimony of a historical proportion on the death of Adamic America on the hand of the Jew and the eventual rise of Judica Americana whose emblem is the criminal-businessman Jay Gatsby.

This association of Gatsby with the criminal is more or less symbolic in its scope. Fitzgerald's use of the perspective of the Prohibition and bootlegging is as much a source of sudden great fortune as a reflection of the Jazz age. The manipulation of this perspective is actually meant to create a sense of historical continuity with the mode of sudden wealth that was established in the Gilded Age as incarnated in the phenomenon of the Robber Barons. The criminal, therefore, is conceptualized as an effect of bracketing business, in its capacity as a signifier of negative material values, as part of the historical effacement of myth on the context of American experience.

The projection of the illegal business activities of the prohibition era in an historical continuity with that of the Gilded Age as a source of the sudden wealth is also meant to place Gatsby in the line of the great businessmen of the post-Civil War era. This is fulfilled through the image of free-wheeling plunder to which Cody and his successor Wolfshiem give the hegemony of historical continuity from the Gilded Age to that of the Jazz age[20].

While being an emblem of the obsession with money in post-Civil War America, this image of free-wheeling plunder is also well steeped in the sociology of the newly rising business classes. This free-wheeling plunder is essentially what Vablen has termed "conspicuous consumption" which he takes to be the cultural emblem of the moneyed business classes that mushroomed on the spoils of the Gilded Age.

This mode figures starkly in Gatsby's fabulous estate and sumptuous parties. His West Egg mansion is the Gothic castle of one great entrepreneur of the late nineteenth-century: "It was a factual imitation of some Hotel de ville in Normandy, with a tower on one side, spanking new under a thin beard of raw ivy, and more than forty acres of lawn and garden" (p.11).

More fabulous are the parties that Gatsby gives weekly at this estate. While echoing the social elation of the business classes of the Gilded Age, they are also deeply grounded in the gay atmosphere of the Jazz age. "Every Friday", reports Nick,"five grates of oranges and lemons arrived from a fruiterer in New York every Monday these same oranges and lemons left his back door in a pyramid of pulpless halves" (p.41). The preparations are more pretentious: long buffet tables and a huge bar stocked with all the liquors the law had forbidden. At seven in the evening the orchestra for the party makes its appearance, "a whole pitful of oboes and trombones and saxophones and viols and cornets and piccolos, and low and high drums" (p.42).

Fitzgerald masterly creates the hilarious atmosphere of the parties as part of his attempt to convey the psychology of the time through them. Nick's exhaustive listing of the names of some of the guests on the empty spaces of a timetable is a step in this direction. It performs a twofold function: while chronicling the sociology of the Jazz age it is also an ironic reminiscence of Samuel Ward McAllister's "four Hundred", which is a traditional pointer of the great scope of the parties of the Gilded Age businessmen[21].

Although traditionally interpreted as symptomatic of a deep sense of social uprootedness, Fitzgerald puts Gatsby's social ostentation to a further symbolic function. They are an essential part of Gatsby's symbolic

attempt to recapture the mythic past which he perfectly incarnates in his Quixotic Dulcinea, Daisy Fay.

Having conceptualized the decline of American ideals of the past in the transformation of the self-made man pioneer into the businessman, Fitzgerald manipulated Gatsby's quest to regain his former beloved Daisy to show the irrecoverability of these ideal in the present apoclypse of American materialism. Daisy, as such, becomes a symbol rather than a person. Given the traditional artistic significance of Daisy as a flower that adorns the lawns of paradise and always associated with chastity and virginity, Daisy becomes a personification of Gatsby's vision of the virgin land (America)[22] as paradise for the American Adam (the pioneer). This is textually concretized at the moment of Gatsby's incarnation of Daisy as the object of his idealization: "she blossmed for him like a flower and the incarnation was complete" (p.107).

Fitzgerald, therefore, skilfully uses plot and imagery to turn his noble, heart-breaking, and impossible quest into an evocative metaphor for this irrecoverability of the mythic past. Because he lacks the wealth and timing, Gatsby lost the girl on whom he had focused what Nick calls his heightened sensitivity to the promise of life. After obtaining the wealth through corrupt means, he returns five years later to fulfil his "incorruptible dream" by attempting to repeat the one golden moment of his life when he possessed that "elusive rhythm," that "fragment of lost words" (p.07), which modern Americans endeavour in vain to recall in the demise of cultural nostalgia. But such a romantic quest is doomed to failure for Daisy falls short of Gatsby's incarnation "not through her own fault, but because of the collossal vitalitiy of illusion" (p.92).

This illusion is further linked to the dissonance between the ideal and the actual that the Civil War engendered in American cultural experience. The pioneering ideal of the mythic past that Gatsby is

endeavouring to revive, Nick notes , ”already behind, somewhere back in that vast obscurity beyond the city, where the dark fields of the republic rolled on under the night” (p.171). Thus, while reminiscent of Matthew Arnold’s invocation of the night of modern materialism in “Dover Beach”, this conclusion eulogizes, with a sharp elegiac tone, the passing of the old eglatarian America of the frontier days. The invocation of the city as a metaphor of modern American social reality is meant to epitomize the ensuing dissonance between the ideal and the actual which develops into a schism in American cultural identity. The schism figures starkly in Gatsby’s insistence on the possibility of re-living the past through money and the lavish display of wealth[23] “‘can’t repeat the past’ he cried incredulously ‘why of course you can!’”, retorts Gatsby to Nick's remark that he ‘can’t repeat the past’(p.106).

But confidence soon dwindles into disillusionment when he comes to the realization that Daisy/America is caught in the inescapable logos of corruptive materialism. The “deathless song, ”he identified earlier in Daisy’s voice, turns out to be the sound of money:” Her voice is full of money” confesses Gatsby to Nick (p.115).

The material corruption of Daisy is further linked to that of her world. She lives in a thoroughly commercialized world which finds its divinity in the commercial advertisement of Doctor T.J. Eckleberg. It is a world whose reality rest solidly on “the shining secrets that only Medias and Morgan and Maecenas knew” (p.10). Gatsby, therefore, is “betrayed not by wealth or the assumption that money can buy anything but by the belief that anything of value can survive the standards of the market place”[24]. Fitzgerald concretizes this conclusion aesthetically through the changing implications of the green light image in connection with Daisy. It starts as a symbol of the romantic virginity of Daisy/America , then a symbol of Gatsby’s yearning to Daisy/the mythic past, and finally

becomes a symbol of the commercialization of Daisy /America. After all, it becomes the colour of money.

Fitzgerald, quite skilfully, uses this green light to distance the future implications of Gatsby's failure to recover the mythic past: "Gatsby believed in the green light, the orgastic future that year by year receeds before us. It eluded us then, but that no matter-tomorrow we will run faster, stretch out our arms further…and one fine morning__ (pp.171-2). Such were the authenticity of Fitzgerald's vision that this prophecy was soon to find its fulfillment in the stock market crash of (1929) and the Great Depression in the offing.

Notes

1.

In 1931, F.Scott Fitzgerald called the past decade of economic boom and high personality the 'Jazz Age'. This was an era of pootlegging because of Volstead Act of 1919 which made the production and consumption of alcohol illegal. Jacqueline Fair and Helen McNeil, "The Twenties" in Bradbury and Timperley (eds.), p.195 and p.204

2.

Shepard B.Clough, ***The American Way: The Economic Bases of Our Civilization*** (New York:Thomas Y.Crowell,1953),pp.151-4.

3.

Mark Schorer, ***Sinclair Lewis*** (Minneapolis: University of Minneasota Press, 1963), p.12.

4.

Reprinted in Harry E.Maule and Melville H.Cane (eds.), ***The Man from the Main Street: Selected Essays and Other Writings of Sinclair Lewis*** (Melbourne: Willian Heinemann, Ltd., 1954), p.24. At the time of this notebook fragment was written the protagonist's name was G.T. Pumphery, and the place was Monarch City.

5

Sinclair Lewis, ***Babbitt*** (New York: Modern Library, 1960), p.13. Subsequent references to ***Babbett*** are to this edition of the novel.

6

The critic Sheldon Norman Grebstein states that "Veblen's theories of pecuniary emulation , conspicuous consumption, pecuniary standards of living and canon of taste these are developed in the Theory of the Leisure Class, (1899), all have great pertinence to the mode of Babbitt's daily life…[and] the larger structure of Babbitt's society". ***Sinclair Lewis*** (New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1962), p.76.

7.

"Sinclair Lewis," in ***Sinclair Lewis: A Collection of Critical Essays***, ed. Mark Schorer (Englewood Cliffs, NJ.: Prentice-Hal, Inc., 1962), p.75.

8.

Michael Spindler, pp.116-7.

9.

Schorer, p.75.

10.

Babbitt: A Critical Commentary (New York: American RDM Corporation, 1965), p.17.

11.

Webster's Third New International Dictionary of the English Language, 1976 ed., s.v. "babbitt".

12.

Quoted in Shorer, Sinclair Lewis, p.13.

13.

As elaborated in ***Working with Structuralism: Essays and Reviews of Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Literature*** (London: Edward Arnold, 1981), pp.17-34.

14.

F.Scott Fitzgerald, ***The Great Gatsby*** (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, Ltd., 1987), p.167. Subsequent references to ***The Great Gatsby*** are to this edition of the novel.

15.

Alan Trachtenberg observes that the tension between myth and history is central to all Fitzgerald's work; that myth and history project two opposing modes of consciousness, two ways of knowing the world which provide perspective on each other. "The Journey Back : Myth and History in Tender is the Night" in ***Experience in the Novel***, ed. Roy Harvey Pearce (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968), pp.134-5.

16.

The critic Henry Dan Piper, for instance, makes a thorough comparison between this "schedule" and Horatio Alger's success stories as well as Franklin's Poor Richard Almanack. ***F.Scott Fitzgerald: A Critical Portrait*** (London: The Bodly Head, 1966), pp.22-4.

17.

"F.Scott Fitzgerald", in 20th-***Century Fiction***, ed. George Woodcock (London: Macmillan, 1987), p.218.

18.

Encyclopedia Britanica, 2000 ed., S.V. "Buffalo Bill".

19.

This negative representation of the Jew in the business novel started with Howell's ***The Rise of Silas Lapham***. Howells makes many references to the newly rich Jews rising in Boston society. This is part of the rising anti-semitism in American society during the 1880s. It also figures in Norris's The Pit and in Dreiser's The Titan as the controller of American financial life as with Cowperwood's New York backers the house of Haeckelheimer, Gotloab and Co.

20.

Joyce A Rowe, ***Equivocal Endings in Classical American Novels*** (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p.106.

21.

Harvey Wish explains this term thusly: "McAllister apparently the term 'Four Hundred'. According to oft-told story. Mrs. William Astor-whose family had gradually thrown off the public mind the crude association with old John Jacob Astor-found her ballroom too small to accommodate her lengthy list. This predicament was ended by McAllister, who reduced the list skilfully and later asserted at the very fashionable union club that there were 'only about four hundred people in New York society'. Thus, the label of the Four Hundred stuck". P.189.

22.

Dictionary of Symbols and Imageries,1974ed.,s.v. "Daisy".

23.

This tragic strain also colours the character of the businessman who built and owned Gatsby's mansion: "He'd agreed to pay five years' taxes on all the neighbouring cottages if the owners would have their roofs thatched with straw. Perhaps their refusal took the heart out of his plan to Fond a Family-he went an immediate decline". (pp.85-6). In short, he was trying to revive the romantic Middle Ages.

23.

C.W.E. Bigsby, “The Two Identities of F. Scott Fitzgerald,” in ***The American Novel and the Nineteen Twenties*** (London: Edward Arnold, 1971), p.137.

Chapter Four

The Representation of the Businessman in the Novels of the Great Depression

4.1 Introductory Notes:

If the Civil War had brought the businessman on the socio-literary scene as an emblem of the new economic order, the novelists of the Great Depression years found in this emblem the ultimate focus of all that is negative in this system[1].

The 1929 Crash of Wall Street stock-exchange and the subsequent severe economic depression that followed during the 1930s ushered the ultimate crisis of American capitalism ever since its inception in the late nineteenth-century. The Great Crash, in the words of one historian, "had revealed the fundamental business of the country to be unsound. Most harmful was the ability of business to maintain prices and take profits while holding down wages… with the result that about one-third of the personal income went to only 5 percent of the population"[2].

Given the fact that this percentage comprises the business class in American society, it would be natural for the novelists of the thirties to concretize the abuses of the system in the figure of the businessman. No wonder that this character-type figures in the novels of the Great Depression years as a character-type personifying the socio-economic order that produces it. The Great Depression has two bearings on this process of personification operative in the figure of the businessman: First, this process is brought to its culmination where by the businessman becomes the system itself and, secondly, that the character of the

businessman is completely aliened with all that is negative in the socio-economic order in modern America.

Indeed, the businessmen who frequent the novels of John Dos Passos (1896-1970), Thomas Wolef(1900-1938), Natheniel West(1904-1940) and John Steinback (1902-1968) are completely devoid of any redeeming or sympathetic traits. Howells, Lewis and Fitzgerald endowed their businessmen with some redeeming qualities whereas Dreiser and other naturalists elevated their businessmen to the stature of Byronic heroes[3]. But with the novelists of the thirties the businessman lost his individualistic attraction to become an index of all that is negative and corruptive in the economic order of modern American society. This is due to the uneasy place the American writer, and the artist in general, occupies in the society of the times. The severe economic conditions of the Great Depression have resulted in the acute alienation of the writer in the capitalistic society[4]. Those writers in the crisis, as Maxwell Geismar put them, must have found in the figure of the businessman the object of their hatred incarnated, i.e., dehumanizing economic order of modern American[5].

The businessman, however, is never depicted in the novels of the Great Depression as an individual malfactor per se. It is capitalism that occupies the focus of condemnation whereas the figure of the businessman dissolutes to become a frame of reference for this condemnation.

The textual actualization of this strategy requires the establishment of a highly historicist perspective. The novels of the 1930s that tackle the figure of the businessman from the perspective of the Great Depression enjoy a marked historical consciousness. They do not deal only with the economic dimension of the crisis of American society but rather use this dimension as a perspective to uncover the total material

conditioning of life in America. The narrative business lives are, therefore, acts of cultural criticism in their capacity as chronicles of the whole American cultural psyche.

While adopting a retrospective perspective, these narrative chronicles work toward a phenomeno-logical interpretation of the present status quo of affair. Although reminiscent of the naturalistic business novel of the early twentieth-century, the novels of the 1930s put this interpretational retrospection to a different effect, it is used, among other things, to highlight the historicist authenticity of the business narratives that help in the substantiation of the figure of the businessman into cultural type necessary for the critical probing of the cultural atmosphere of modern American Society.

Dos Passos, Wolfe and other major novelists of the period from the Great Crash of 1929 to World War II have manipulated the conventions of the naturalistic novel especially in their treatment of the figure of the businessman. Major among these conventions are the documentary technique and the environmental conditioning of human life. In addition to their traditional naturalistic effects, such as the strong note of pessimistic fatalism and the vivid rendering of concrete social reality, those two conventions in particular are mainly used to highlight the signifying frame of interpretive historicity operative in the business narratives.

This emphasis on the historicist framing on the narrativity requires a panoramic perspective that the naturalistic business novel relatively lacks. The novelists of the Great Depression, therefore, abandoned the restrictions of the business novel genre in order to write epical novels comprising the whole of modern American Society as the cultural frame that is responsible for the negative figuration of the businessman. Indeed, the business romance was relegated during this

period to the realm of pulp fiction. The most genuine portrayal of the American businessman appears in the sociological novel, notably that, of Dos Passon and Wolfe[6].

This, in a sense, is a continuation of the trend towards non-specialized business novel that characterized the fiction of the Jazz Age. Aspects of this continuity can also be traced in the varieties of the businessman character depicted in the novels of the 1930s. The business executive type that made its first appearance in the novels of the 1920s comes to culmination during the 1930s. The novelists of this period depicted, for the first time in the history of the American novel, the technological aspect of the world of business as the latest up-to-date variety of the modern American businessman. The introduction of the type is really an indication of the contemporaranity of these novelists in their concern with the current issues of their society.

Given this tendency in the novels of the Great Depression, it would be natural for the banker to be the most common variety of the businessman in the novels of this period. This is also due, to a large extent, to the far-reaching effect of the Crash and the on-going Depression which would naturally highlight the banker as the best emblem of these crisis times.

The projection of these varieties of the businessman in the fiction of the 1930s to map the zeistgeist of this era in modern American history culminates in the novels of Dos Passon and Wolfe in particular. Dos Passon's triology ***U.S.A*** (1930-6) and Wolfe's later novels, notably ***You Can't Go Home Again*** (1940), are exemplary stances in this respect. They depict all the major varieties of the businessman as cultural types whose making constitutes a negative process of historical production that culminates in the Great Crash of 1929 and the Great Depression that followed.

4.2 The Businessman in John Dos Passos' *U.S.A: (1930-6)*

The most powerful portrayal of the figure of the businessman in the fiction of the Great Depression is, in general constant, that which appears in Dos Passos' ***U.S.A*** trilogy.

U.S.A, in its three parts ***The 42nd Parallel, Nineteen Nineteen***, and ***The Big Money***, is an elaborate commentary on the history of the American people from the turn of the twentieth century to the Great Crash of 1929. This commentary, however, is mostly conducted from the perspective of American economy and business during this period. This is fully epitomized in Dos Passos' description of U.S.A in his preface to the modern library edition of the trilogy in 1937 when he says that:

> U.S.A is the slice of a continent. U.S.A is a group of holding companies, some aggregation of trade unions, a set of laws bound in calf, … a column of stock-quotations rubbed out and written in by a western union boy on a blackboard….[7]

Consequently, it is this economic perspective, that the narrative bulk of the trilogy would fully substantiate, that made ***U.S.A*** the most extensive community on American economy of the war and the boom years that has yet been written. Yet, this community is very passive and almost the most nearly desperate because Dos Passos concentrated exclusively on the economic malpractices. It is not the whole of American business civilization that he sought to depict in U.S.A. He rather infallibly selected what is worse in this civilization. The trilogy, therefore, presents a waste landish picture of the whole of the cruelty,

hypocrisy and waste of contemporary American commercialized culture. No wonder that ***U.S.A*** is frequently dubbed as an index Expurgatorius of economic malpractices.

Because Dos Passos has focalized this negative economic perspective mainly in the fictional characters the ensuing image of the businessman that predominates ***U.S.A*** is quite negative. Unlike the businessmen who crowd the novels of Churchill, Norris and Dreiser, Dos Passos' representatives of Big Business, J.Ward Morehouse and Charley Anderson, have no redeeming qualities. Frank Cowperwood and the other titans of finance and industry are amoral and ruthless, they are never contemptible or obscene. There is a satisfactory philosophical rationalization for the motivation of the ruthlessness and amorality of the early businessmen. Each of them works in his twisted way in the belief that he is serving some larger end of progress. The action of them is justified in the light of the ruthlessness of the socio-economic environment that shapes them.

But the major difference, however between Dos Passos "businessmen and their predecessors lies in the quality of the authorial attitudes they illicit in the works they appear in. While Dreiser and other naturalists can scarcely conceal their admiration for their businessmen characters, Dos Passos never shows any twinge of sympathy for them. Dos Passos, therefore, has come to portray in ***U.S.A*** businessmen far more corrupt than any who crowd the pages of his predecessors. This is due to the fact that " the object of his antipathy is not, as with these earlier critics, the bad man. It is the system, and he is the first major novelist after Upton Sinclair to condemn capitalism itsself"[8].

This, in other words, means that the process of personification operative in the character of the businessman as depicted in the novels of his predecessors has come to a full culmination in ***U.S.A***. All that is

negative in the economic system becomes incarnate in the businessman character. The figure of the businessman in ***U.S.A*** becomes the signifier, rather than the signified, of all that is inhumane and negative in American capitalism.

But the activation of this identification of the businessman as capitalism required bringing history into the text. Dos Passos, however, imposes an historical perspective on his narratives in ***U.S.A*** in order to engender a mode of historicity that acts as an interpretational frame for the narrative proper. This is essentially similar to the functioning of the historical perspective that dominates the novels, say , of Tolstoy and Stendhal. Dos Passos, however, sought to realize this process artistically in ***U.S.A*** through the creation of characters that are caught in the patterning force of historicity. Dos Passos' critical pronouncements during the composition of ***U.S.A*** give a valuable insight into this process of historical conditioning of the cultural climate. In an article entitled "The Business of a Novelist" (1934) Dos Passos wrote that his chief concern as a novelist has been " to create characters first and foremost, and then to set them in the snarl of the human currents of his time, so that there results an accurate permanent record of a phase of history"[9].

While working for interpretational effects, this inscription through individual characters operates mainly to substantiate those characters into cultural types. Dos Passos employed a set of new technical devices to achieve this effect. These devices are the Newsreel, the Biographies, and the Camera Eye. They are used to provide a socio-cultural frame for the narratives proper. Each of these devices is used skillfully to re-shape the cultural atmosphere to understand the making of the cultural types depicted in the interrelated narrative episodes.

These technical devices of the Newsreel, the Biographies, and the Camera Eye come to their culmination collectively in the case of the

narrative episodes dealing with the business-oriented characters, notably J.Ward Moorehouse and Charley Anderson. This is mainly due to the great influence these two characters exercise over the other seven leading characters in the trilogy either as characters whose personal affairs do intersect with those of the other leading characters on the levels of the plot or as the functional symbols of the business culture which inflects its blight of success and identity on the other leading characters such as Mac McGreary, Dick Savage, Margo Dowling and Mary French among other.

Because that this culture is predominantly commercial, and rests securely on the rock of big business the Newsreel, the Biographies, and, to a certain extent, the Camera Eye sections are mostly coloured with this business-like experience. The Newsreels, which are montages of contemporary slogans, snaches of popular songs and newspaper headlines, are markedly reflections of contemporary business and industrial affairs that are presented in such a way as to form "a sort of crude stolkiore of industrialized society"[10]. Along with the Newsreels, and interspersed like them among the narrative episodes, are the brief biographies of actual public figures of the time. These are the representative men of modern America and the emblem of its contemporary cultural consciousness. The twenty-five biographies that frequent the trilogy are carefully selected from the various ways of life in modern America. The largest proportion amongst them, however, is derived from the world of American business and industry. Because the pattern of the biographies suggests that Dos Passos is basically working within the perspective of Carlyle's theory of history as the creation of great men, the significant proportion given to the business and industrial figures of modern America in the biographies and the irony that engulfs their treatment become a key to understand the negative historical picture of contemporary American society invoked in ***U.S.A***. This negative

historicity is further correlated with a deep sense of protest that surfaces in the authorial awareness in some of the autobiographical Camera Eye sections which project the figure of the businessman as the burden of their subjective censure. This tendency which culminates in: Camera Eye (5)", however, works collaboratively with the Newsreels and Biographies to fashion the negative experiential structure of modern American business culture in the image of the businessman.

This process of fashioning is textually concretized in the narratives of J. Ward Moorehouse and Charley Anderson by virtue of their capacity as the fictional representatives of American Big Business and monopoly capitalism. This concretization works through the thematization of the socio-cultural negativism of Big Business and monopoly capitalism in the naturalistic portrayal of these two characters. They, furthermore, cease to be human beings in the course of the process. They, rather, become indexical to the figuration of the economic system they represent.

This figuration, in Moorehouse's case, is based, to a large extent, on the nature of the business activities he practices. The avenue he choose, however, is not entrepreneurial capitalism but public relations and advertising. These two activities give him a Babbitt-like character, but with the good points left out. They are key features of contemporary American consumer's culture. They do not only promote consumption as the basic mode of living but also become narrative means of social orientation in a mass society. Moorehouse's aide, Dick Savage, makes this clear when he states:

> Whether you like it or not, the molding of the public is one of the most important things that goes on in this country.

> If it wasn't for that American business would be in a pretty pickle. (***The Big Money***, p.513).

But Moorehouse is a representative of the negative social force of business because his only product is merely the manipulation of people's thought. This is fully displayed in the business nature of Moorehouse's mentality when he becomes the head of the advertising and promotion in the Bessemer Metallic Furnishings and Products company that handles a big line of byproducts of the Homestead Mills. Dos Passos uses the omniscent-authorial point of view to cast Moorehouse's distorted fancies as an objective correlative for the negative implications of his business of advertising salable "images" for the company's products:

His mind was full of augerbits, cantbooks, mauls, sashweight, axes, hatchets, monkeywrenches …… Shaving while his bath was running in the morning he would see long processions of andirons, grates, furnace fittings, pumps, sausagegrinders, drills, calipers, rises, casters, drawerpulls pass between his face and the mirror and wander how they would be made more attractive to the retail trade ….. why should our cottarpins appeal more than any other cottarpins, he'd ask himself as he stepped on the streetcar. (***The 42nd Parallel***, p.251).

This concept of advertising is based on collective interests rather than traditional individual morality and, therefore, is a corollary of the triumph of monopoly capital in modern American society.

This is fully substantiated in the idea of educating the public to the facts of Labor Relations-as viewed by the Steel Industry. His advocacy of this programme, after the bloody strike at Homestead, leads to his appointment as chief of an " information bureau" for the entire. Pittsburgh Steel Industry. It is at this point in his career that Moorehouse becomes a propagandist for big business and corporate capitalism who

exploits language for profit because it exploits, in a false way, the traditional phraseology of American democracy to combat criticism from liberal press.

Moorehouse, in this respect, is one of those who, in the words of "Camera Eye 50", "turned our fathers spoke and made them slimy and foul". He frequently uses the terminology of Jeffersonian democracy deceptively to cover the corruptive practices of Big Business. Thus, Moorehouse as a spokesman for the Steel Industry, for instance, claims that "the great leaders of American Capital …. are firm believers in fairplay and democracy and only too anxious to give the worker his share of the proceeds of industry….." (Ibid., p.271). Similarly, Moorehouse puts the American democratic ideas to a supversive use in the advertising campaign he organizes in order to promote the spurious medicines of the Bingham and the Rugged Health Corporation: "of course", moorehouse gloats to Savage, "self-ervice, independence, individualism is the word I gave the boys in the beginning. This is going to be more than a publicity campaign, it's going to be a campaign Americanism "(***The Big Money***, p.494)".

Moorehouse's career as a publicity wizard, then, is an embodiment of the commercialization of traditional American value under the impact of Big Business and monopoly capitalism. Dos Passos, however, brings this thematic strand to a full culmination by framing Moorehouse's narrative with the two short biographies of the tycoons Minor C. Keith and Andrew Carrnegi. They are intended to place Moorehouse's publicity career in the historical paradox of American capitalism by pointing the demystifying appearances that such men as Moorehouse were conferring upon the corruptive practices of this demystification is the fashioning of false cultural consciousness. Thus, in spite of the corruption and ruthlessness that mark their success careers,

Keith and Carrnegi are elevated, in the name of the “gosbel of wealth”, as the ultimate cultural types of modern American commercial civilization. Similarly, the insertion of the biography of J.Pierpant Morgan amid the details of Moorehouse's war services works for the same effect as satiric commentary on the corrupt reality of American capitalism as instanced in the Shylock-like image of the war lord Morgan.

Furthermore, Moorehouse’s rise and financial success are also fashioned after the business careers of Keith, Carnegi, and Morgan. Like them, he is concerned only with increasing his material gains regardless of the human costs and the deception of his practices. This is clearly epitomized in the shift of animus in Moorehouse’s publicity conception from the apologist stance for corporate capitalism to a promoting stance of its interests. This ideological shift finds its concrete incarnation in the change that Moorehouse underwent from a “clean cut young executive" (p.206) in ***The 42nd Parallel*** into a businessman per se in ***The Big Money***. Like the first two parts of the trilogy , Moorehouse’s business career in ***The Big Money***, is also framed with a biographical narrative that is meant to add a cultural insight into Moorehouse’s activities. The biography of “the poor little rich boy” William Randlph Hearst substintiates Moorehouse into an authentic cultural type. The deceptive practices of the emperor of newsprint to increase the circulation of his newspapers provide a cultural context for Moorehouse’s similar measures. Like Hearst, he is the founder of the new industry of bamboozlement and legal lying, i.e., public relations. The public relations agency that Moorehouse founds in New York after the war and the expansion of his political and financial contacts align him with the destructive power of the Big Money.

It is at this stage in his career that Moorehouse ceases to function as a human being. Being dead emotionally and sexually, he becomes capitalism incarnate. The final disintegration of Moorehouse into a

mental wreck is not merely a symbol of the moral but also of capitalism itself. Hence, the significance of the final image of Moorehouse which reduces his creative humanity to the mere working of capitalism: "ideas, plans, stock quotations unrolling in endless tickertape in his head" (Ibid., p.388).

This sense of waste and perversion also colours the lives of the other major representatives of American capitalism, Charley Anderson. He is the most recent variety of the figure of the American businessman on the literary scene. He is an inventor in the new field of aero-engineering. The fact that his capital is his technological knowledge, rather than money, makes ***U.S.A*** the first technological novel ever written in American fiction. He is, therefore, like Moorehouse, the latest arrival on the American business scene. This makes him a fit emblem of contemporary America for he strikes in his business pursuits, the two keynotes of contemporary American commercialized civilization which are consummerism and technology. These two staples of the entrepreneur system of modern American Big Business are powerfully displayed in Anderson's character to reveal the internal workings of the business conglomerations and the monopolies through the devastating effects of their growth at the expense of social and human life in modern America.

Although Anderson appears as early as ***The 42nd Parallel*** and much of ***Nineteen Nineteen*** is concerned with his war activities in France, it is only in ***The Big Money*** that his narrative predominates and even comes to a culmination. This novel, which takes Dos Passos' chronicle up to the Great Crash of Wall Street in 1929, shows Anderson caught in the Big Money and, hence, his significance as a cultural type. The narrative of Anderson's gradual immersion in Big Business and monoply capitalism in ***The Big Money*** is historically authenticated through the collective effect of the Newsreels and the Biographies that

frame and frequent the narrative proper. These sections, in fact, add a depth of cultural and sociological consciousness to Anderson's business career. This would ultimately contribute to the positioning of Anderson into the significance of contemporary culturalaradigm.

A typical excerpt in "Newsreel XLIV" at the beginning of this part of the trilogy encapsulates the novel's thematic concern with the disruptive effects of the Big Money on the traditional staples of American culture : "they permited the Steel Trust Government to trample underfoot the democratic rights which they had so often been assured were the heritage of the people of this country" (***The Big Money***, p.10) Later Newsreels present an accurate pathology of the booming monoply capitalism through their invocation of the ominous atmosphere of strikes and political upheavals and the increasing roar of the business boom leading up to the Crash and the Depression of the 1930s.The Steel Trust, for instance, reappears in "Newsreel XLVIII" as the ultimate force in contemporary industrialized America: "truly the Steel Corporation stands forth as a corporate colossus both physically and financially" (Ibid., p.46). "Newsreel LV" shows that the whole of American society is caught in the Big Money: "the desire for profits and more profits kept on increasing and the quest for easy money became well nigh universal" (Ibid., p.195). This welter of the Newsreels does not only confer cultural hegemony on Anderson's character but also re-synthesize the very zeist-geist of the 1920s in it.

The Biographies epitomize this trend even more characteristically. The bulk of the Biographies in The Big Money is devoted to personages concerned with the promotion of monopoly capitalism and Big Business. Dos Passos censures men like Fredrick Wislow Taylor, Henry Ford, and William Randolph Hearst as the ultimate gods of modern American commercial society. The new methods of mass production and the

mammoth monopolies they established had turned Americans into atomistic individuals in competitive society. They are the businessmen-promoters of the consumer's culture that dehumanized life in modern America.

These Biographies ,however, are conducted in a way similar to that in ***The 42nd Parallel***. The personages of the Biographies are chosen to provide a cultural frame for the character of the businessman-inventor Charley Anderson. Ford and Taylor are businessmen-inventors whereas Hearst is a businessman-organizer. These are the major aspects of the business character of Anderson. This clustering of the Biographies in the narrative episode ofAnderson in ***The Big Money*** is, therefore, meant to give a critical insight into the making of his character as a cultural type recognizable in contemporary American society.

Because the pattern of the Biographues, here, suggest that Dos Passos is again beating the same track of Carlyle's theory of history as the creation of Great Men[11], the insertion of the biography of the economist Thorstein Veblen in the middle of Anderson's narrative makes Veblen's socio-economic insights thematically central to the interpretation of Anderson as a cultural type[12]. Veblen's analysis of bourgeois mentality and bourgeois, according to Joseph Warren Beach[13], is the greatest single influence on the work of Dos Passos of anything in print, and that his seminal ***Theory of the Leisure Class*** (1899) offers the most promising clues to the interpretation of the whole trilogy[14]. The choice of Veblen as the one serious thinker in the outfit of the Biographies in the entire trilogy is an indication of the centrality of capitalism and the businessman as the signifier of all that is negative in Dos Passos' aesthetic reconstruction of contemporary American cultural paradigm. Thus, in Dos Passos' portrait, Veblen:

> Established a new diagram of a society dominated by monopoly capital, etched in irony the sabotage of production by business , the sabotage of life by blind need for money profits, pointed out the alternatives: a warlike society strangled by the bureaucracies of the monopolies forced by the law of diminishing returns to grind down more and more the common man for profits …,. (Ibid., p.101)

Veblen's schema of the crisis of capitalistic society is duly orchestrated in Anderson's career in the world of business and technology.

Anderson is an aero-mechnic. He acquired his professional experience during his war service in France as a pilot. After the war he joined an aviation firm in New York as a mechanic. His genius is promising: "I got something about airplane motors that'll make any old Ford agency look like thirty cents" (Ibid., p.43). The quick financial success that ensures brings fundamental changes in Anderson's professional and moral code of ethics. He gradually surrenders to the lure of Big Money and ceases to be a mechanic. He becomes a financier. Dos Passos' insertion of Veblen's Biography at the centre of Anderson's shift from a mechanic to a capitalist is meant to contextualize this shift into the massive drift with the current of pecuniary culture that American society of the time was experiencing.

Anderson used to honour his vocation as a productive mechanic during his term in the Askew-Merritt company. He strongly identifies himself with the world of production. "Good old Bill", Anderson says to

his chief-mechanic, “the pilot nothin’ wiyhout his mechanic, the promoter’s nothin’ without production…. . You and me Bill, We’re in production”. (Ibid., p.237) He even sides with the mechanics against the bosses: ‘ “Hell, I ain’t no boss”, said Charley, “I belong with the mechanics…don’t I, Bill?” ’ (Ibid., p.229)

But Anderson is gradually attracted to the lure of Big Business. He starts to invest in stocks in Wall Street. Anderson’s visit to the stockexchange of Wall Street with his broker Nat Benton masterly reveals the unconscious succumb of Anderson to the pecuniary lure. This grows into an incessant desire for material gain which results in his complete change into a financier. This change is fully activated when Anderson abandons his friend and partner Joe Askew to join another competing firm in Detroit. It is at this point in his career that Anderson loses “the instinct of workmanship” and ceases to be a mechanic on the workers’ side. He becomes, instead, an appropriator fully immersed in the pecuniary culture with its “invidious distinction, competitiveness and property values”[14]. He, therefore, becomes a member of the “leisure class” and becomes more and more involved with the stock market. This negative change is clearly epitomized in the authorial statement on Anderson's immersion in the leisure skills of the middle-class executive: "what he enjoyed outside of playing with the kids was buying and selling stocks and talking to Nat over the long-distance. Nat kept telling him he was getting the feel of the market". (Ibid., 318). The change, by now, is complete. Anderson become an investor and speculator.

This deviation of the productive mechanic, by the lure of wealth and finance, into the passive businessman is intended to show the disintegration of a culture caught in the grip of Big Money. Like that of his social milieu, Anderson's material ambition hardens and coarsens whereas his moral decay and loss of authentic meaning powerfully image

the accelerating dissipation and decline of modern American society. His smash-up in the automobile wreck at the end of narrative episode is neither a bang nor a whimper in T.S. Eliot's sense. The smash-up is not merely a symbol of the inevitable disintegration of the businessman's culture that images its dark fate in its "Hollow men"[15]. The pattern of Anderson's rise and fall, then, is a historical metaphor of America's rise and collapse in the stock market crash in 1929. The critic David L. Vanderwerken, for instance, takes this model of Anderson's rise and fall as the vehicle for warning that "the big money world is quicksand that will finally swallow America"[16]. Indeed, the last Newsreels in the novel that follow Anderson's car accident focus on the news of the impending crash. "Newsreel Lxviii" is the last and bulkiest of the Newreels in the novel. It focuses exclusively on the Great Crash of Wall Street and its crashing effects on American life. This section is inserted as an interval between the wreck of Anderson and Moorehouse. Given the stature of these two characters as representatives of American Big Business, this Newsreel becomes a fit epitaph for the crash of the American pursuit of wealth.

It is at this point that the trilogy comes a full way round. The conclusion of the trilogy with the Crash of 1929 is interpretational in terms of reader's response as it fashions the negative experiential structure of modern American business culture in the image of the wrecked businessman. This manipulation of the Great Crash perspective to negativize the cultural experience as incarnated in the figure of the American businessman attained its perfection in Thomas Wolfe's posthamons novel ***You Can't Go Home Again***.

4.3 The Businessman in Thomas Wolfe's *You Cant Go Home Again(1940)*

You Can't Go Home Again is the second and the last of the Webber novels that were published posthumously and with heavy editorial doctoring. Shortly before his sudden death in 1938 Wolfe delivered a huge manuscript of more than a million words to his new editor Edward Aswell. The manuscript which bears the title "The Web and the Rock" covers the entire history of America from the arrival of the first European migrants right up to the New Deal in the 1930s. Although the manuscript is not yet finished and the narrative lacks a sense of structural, and to a certain extent, thematic wholeness, the epical dimension of the historical scope of the narrative is quite apparent. Edward Aswell, however, worked on his manuscript producing from it two novels, ***The Web and the Rock*** in 1939 and ***You Can't Go Home Again*** in 1940[17].

It is evident that Wolfe is beating the same track of Dos Passos' methodology in ***U.S.A. A part*** from having the character of George Webber as the only leading figure in both novels, Wolfe's aim, like that of Dos Passos in ***U.S.A***, is the mapping of the cultural psyche of modern America. Wolf, moreover, works this aim through the projection of an authentic historical consciousness as the ultimate context of the shaping material, notably, economic forces of modern American cultural psyche.

This narratological strategy attains its culmination in ***You Can't Go Home Again*** where Wolfe registers, for the first, and the last time, in his career an authentic departure from the orgies of selfhood to the sociological consciouness of cultural historicity. The novel significantly reveals his departure in its reflection of the economic consciousness of the booming twenties and depressing thirties as the culmination of the tragic cultural change that America came to experience after the Civil

War. The narrative of the novel takes the artist George Webber through the period of speculation, Crash, and Depression. This provides the reader with a critical tour de force into the conditions of the question of contemporary America because what George "sees makes him question the direction America is taking and ponder the apparent loss of spirit in its people"[18]. This painful discovery of America which forms, the basis of ***You Can't Go Home Again*** is duely epitomized in the title of the novel. Wolfe has explained in a letter to Aswell that the title means that you can't go back to an older America, ie., to the pre-Civil War America of the agrarian republic. "You can't go home again", says Wolfe reticently:

> Back home to the old forms and systems of things which once seemed everlasting but which are changing all the time-back home to the escapes of Time and Memory[19].

This, in other words, encapsulates the negative implications of the change that ensued from the radical material orientation of modern American society. Hence, the significance of the motif of decline and fall that recurs throughout the book. The spirit of weariness and defeat that this motif highlights as the dominant aspect of Webber's America is consistently projected as economic ennui[20].

Although this spirit of economic ennui permeates the novel, it is most powerfully displayed in Webber's home town Libya Hill during the crisis of the Crash. Wolfe's method of spatial and temporal foculaization essentially produces the same effect of Dos Passos' ***U.S.A***. Libya Hill is America in microcosm for it is a manifestation of the older agrarian America in the process of change and its profound consequence on all

aspects of life in it. Wolfe's choice to focus on Libya Hill before and during the Crash of 1929 helps to give an insight into the nature of this change as a material reorientation of social and personal life and the ensuing sense of crisis that belates this orientation. However, Wolfe's abandonment of Dos Passos' panoramic method in favour of the focal method did not belittle the epical authenticity of his narrative introspection because both of these two writers have institutionalized this change in established cultural types. Major among these types is the businessman and its variation. Both conceptualize capitalism in the businessman but with a methodological difference. Dos Passos projected the disintegration of capitalism in the gradual moral and physical disintegration of its representative which culminates in the Crash of 1929. But with Wolfe the Crash becomes a vision of the businessman/ capitalism as Nemesis dooming social and human life to inevitable failure and disintegration. The working of this strategy requires the commercial and business conditioning of the socio-cultural atmosphere in which the figure of the businessman is immersed. This is skilfully implemented through the projection of George Webber as an intelligent centre of consciousness to provide a critical perspective on the commercialization of life in Libya Hill.

This mad spirit of commercialization is vividly revealed through Webber's visit to Libya Hill to attend the funeral of his Aunt Maw in September, 1929. He is shocked with the rapidly rising fever of speculation in the town. Thus, "On all sides he heard talk, talk, talk,__ terrific and incessant. And the tumult of voices was united in variation of a single chorus-speculation and real estate"[21]. The real estate agents are everywhere in the town with their blueprints and shouting enticements. All the citizens are taken in the real estate fever to such an extent that buying real estate becomes the ultimate rule of life in the town: "and there

seemed to be only one rule, universal and infalliable to buy, always to buy, to pay whatever price was asked, and to sell again within two days at any price one chose to fix. It was fantastic" (p.117). Wolfe's choice to concentrate on real estate is essential to his exposition of the cultural temper. It has to do with man's primordial ties with the Earth. The real estate agents have exhausted the surrounding wilderness round the town and sold and resold these tracts for hundreds of thousands of dollars. This unproductive manipulation of the earth is highlighted in Webber's refusal to be part of the misuse of the land for real estate speculation in Libya Hill, for he "conceived of the land as a place on which to live and of living on the land as a way of life" (p.80). It is the sensitive artist George Webber, therefore, who feels the spirit of "drunken waste and wild destructiveness" (p.118) which hunts the town that became a commercialized wasteland.

Wolfe, however, places this negative image of Libya Hill in the historical context of the 1920s. He treats the business fever of Libya Hill in the context of the super-salesmanship that characterized the twenties. This is incarnated in the character of David Merrit, the boss of George's boyhood friend Randy Shepperton who was now the district agent for the Federal weight, Scales and Computing Company. Marrit is the best example of the business executive in the modern business corporation. Like J.Ward Moorehoused, and Babbitt before him, he is a typical embodiment of the collective white-collar business executive. He expounds to Webber the philosophy of "creative salesmanship" that was invented by Paul S.Appleton, III the top-executive of the Federal Weight, Scales, and Computing Company. Selling and the meeting of the market demand is no longer in fashion. Creative salesmanship, instead, utilizes the art of advertisement to create saleable images in the commercial society of the 1920s. Thus, Merrit explains:

> We've gone way beyond that!…why, if we waited nowadays to sell a machine to someone who needs one. If he says he's getting along all right without one, we make him buy one anyhow. We make him see the need … In Other words, we create the need. (p.119)

Seen from this perspective, then, this philosophy gives an insight into the commercialization of society through the channels of advertisement and consumerism.

Webber's reflection, here, help sharpen the reader's critical awareness of the waste landish nature of modern American businessman's civilization, Wolfe's masterful shifting of the narrative perspective from the omniscient to the interior monologue encourages the reader to crystallize his prejudices into a sense of protest. This materialization of the reader's response into censure is seen, at its best, in the projection of Webber's attitude towards "The Week of Play" which the company gives annually to a group of its most thriving salesmen. Here some:

> twelve or fifteen hundred men, Americans, most of them in their middle years, exhausted, over weight their nerves frayed down stretched to the breaking point, met from all quarters of the continent 'at the Companies expense' for one brief, wild, gaudy week of riot. (p.139)

This formal and omniscient narrative is terminated with George's reflection on the actual significance of this situation: "And George thought grimly what this tragic spectacle of businessmen at play means in terms of the entire scheme of things and the plan of life that had produced

it" (Ibid.). this interpretive coda forces the reader to re-evaluate the situation in such a way as to materialize protest and censure as the proper response. Similarly, the reader undergoes the same process of experiential reorientation with George's reflection on Shepperton's frightened sub-submissiveness to Merrit's savagery. George was shocked with the sordid reality of Merrit when he overhead him castigating Shepperton in the privacy of the Company office: "This district ought to deliver thirty per cent more business than you getting from it, and the company is going to have it too-or else! You deliver or you go right out on you can! See? The company doesn't give a damn about you! It's after the business" (p.140). Shepperton was embarrassed to realize that George overhead the conversation. He offered an unplausable explanation: "Dave's a good fellow …. You-you see, he's got to do those things …. He-he's with the Company" (p.141). The narrative perspective suddenly becomes introspective as it shifts its focus on the sudden vision that comes into George's mind at this moment. George has a sudden vision of the thousands of slaves dragging the stones for Pharaoh's Great Pyramid, with each lieutenant in the chain of command being lashed by his superior and applying the lash in turn to his inferiors. The power of symbolism operative in this fantasy sums up the nature of the capitalistic system which enslaves people in the impotant circuit of production and consumption.

This identification of the businessman as capitalism does not only figure in this occasional merging of narrative and thought. It is most fully concertized in the business career of the banker Jarvis Riggs. This banker is a typical Horatio Alger figure. He rises from rags to riches by sheer effort. Riggs is the son of a poor but respectable local family. He had to quit school at the age of fifteen to support his widowed mother. Riggs obtained a menial job in the Merchants Nation Bank in Libya Hill.

Because he was bright and ambitious he was quickly promoted to the position of a teller. He was then offered the position of cashier in a new bank, the Citizens Trust Company which was organized by a group of local businessmen in 1912. Riggs, as the Horatio Alger myth goes, was soon to become the president of the bank due to the business genius he showed throughout the various executive positions he filled. The structure of the bank and its orientation helped his rapid promotion. It was projected as "progressive" and "young man's bank".

But the advent of the boom of the 1920s and the lure of easy money subverted Riggs from a Horatio Alger figure into a greedy and aggressive businessman. Thus, the Citizens Trust Company, under the directorship of Riggs, "began to advertise itself as 'fastest-growing bank in the state'. But it did not advertise what it was growing on" (p.335). The bank rapidly grew into intricate web of financial and political power through fraud and chicanary. It became a subvetive force. It started to manipulate politicians and businessmen to serve its interest such as the services of the Mayor Baxter Kennedy to cover up its illegal activities. The bank used the Mayor and other corrupt politicians to float enormous bond issues to finance new public projects. The issues were deposit in the Citizens Trust Company. They follow out again in the form of easy credit to the politicians and their friends for private speculation and investment. The bank, which was fattening on the paper values, was quickly growing, in a cancer-like manner, into "a vast and complex web that wove through the entire social structure of the town and involved the lives of thousands of people. And all of it centered in the bank" (p.336). This image of the bank as cancer offers a powerful symbolic representation of a society stifling in the grip of capitalism.

It is, however, with the inflation that the victimization becomes complete. The Citizens Trust Company went broke and had to close the

bank on March 12, 1930. As the news spread frantic people crowded in a desolate line past the bank. The crisis of capitalism has reached its culmination: "For their ruin had caught with them. Many of the people in that throng had lost their life savings. But it was not only the bank's depositors who were ruined. Everyone now knew that the boom was over…. Their wealth had vanished, and they were left saddled with debts that they could never pay." (p. 330).

The range of the responses these people show reveals their spiritual hollowness as a consequence of the stifling materialism of capitalism. The hysterical nature of their responses shows their utter despair. Some of them, like Mayor Baxter Kennedy, commit suicide while others sought release in blaming each other and calling for vengeance, especially against Jarvis Riggs, who has become now a capitalist malaise incarnated. Wolfe, at this stage, introduces the sinister figure of Judge Rumford Bland to usurer the evil nature of the economic system. The blind usurer Bland is a blind Thiresias whose presence is prophetic of the "sublime, ironic, and irrevocable justice: (p.341) that befalls the hollow men of Libya Hill waste land[22]. Wolfe speaks to his effect when he affirms that what had happened in Libya Hill:

> Went much deeper than the mere obliteration of bank accounts, the extinction of paper profits, and the loss of property. It was the ruins of men who found out, as soon as these symbol of their outward success had been destroyed, that they had nothingleft-no inner equivalent from which they might draw new strength. It was the ruins of men who, discovering not only that their values were false

> but that they never had any substance whatsoever, now saw at last the emptiness and hollowness of their lives. (p.341).

This accurate pathology of the blight of the individual in modern business civilization conceptualizes the failure of the individual into the larger failure of the cultural values he lives by.

This rationalization of the tragic experience of the Crash into a shock of recognition is also meant to provide a retrospective perspective on Jarvis as the concretization of this impotent cultural identity. As soon as he materializes his success dreams Jarvis ceases to exit physically and is gradually identified with the bank. The corrupt policies and practices of the bank are merely the institutional articulation of his own personality. The cancerous overgrowth of the bank unto a socio-political web is correlative of his personal transformation. With the Crash and the failure of the bank the subversion becomes complete. It provides a socio-cultural context for the impotence of Jarvis' pursuit of wealth. The subsequent disillusionment and the critical sense of rediscovery in the part of the citizens / individuals bring this cultural impotence-as incarnated in Jarvis-to its full figuration as the ultimate experiential structure of the decentered world of the of the Crash. Hence the significance of the frequent image of the arch-villain Jarvis, and the blind usurer Bland, looming over the utter despair of Libya Hill as "hidden pockets of lethal gases" that are produced by "a false, vicious, and putrescent scheme of things" lying beneath the surface of American life (p.336).

This, in short, is the culmination of the aesthetics of personification as it operates in the figure of the businessman in modern American novel. ***You Can't Go Home Again*** has, in many ways, come to provide an epilogue for this personifying process as the businessman-type ceases to

be the focus of interest in post-World War II. American novel due to the changing quality of the literary response to the socio-economic problems of contemporary America[23].

Notes

1.

During the frentic month of the "Stock Market Crash" in October 1929 the value of stocks on the New York Exchange declined catastrophically. This caused a sever economic depression that continued for the next dozen years. The personal income of American declined sharply and unemployment reached frightening percentages with 13 million people out of work. For further information see Ralph Willet and John White, "The Thirties" in ***Introduction to American studies***, pp.220-242.

2.

George B.Tindall, ***America: a narrative history*** (New York: Norton, 1984), p.1052.

3.

The Byronic hero is a character type portrayed by Byron in ***Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*** (1812, 1816, 1818) and other poems. He is a brooding solitary who seeks wild adventures to reflect his superhuman and evil nature.

4.

Kazin, p.369.

5.

Maxwell Geismar. ***Writers in Crisis: the American novel, 1925-1940***. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1961.

6.

Brain Lee, ***American Fiction***, 1865-1940 (London and New York: Longman, 1988), pp.170-71.

7.

John Dos Passos, ***U.S.A*** (New York: the modern library, 1937), p.vii. Subsequent references to the trilogy are to this edition.

8.

Commager, p.271.

9.

Quoted in John H.Wrenn, ***John Dos Passos*** (New York: Twayne publishers, Inc., 1961), pp.164-5.

10.

Arthur Mizener, ***The Sense of Life in the Modern Novel*** (London: Heinemann, 1965), p.130.

11.

As expounded in Thomas Carlyle, ***On Heroes, Hero-Worship and the Heroic in History*** in 1841.

12.

Ian Colly, ***Dos Passos and the Fiction of Despair*** (London and Basingstoke: Macmillian, 1978), p.105.

13.

American Fiction, 1920-1940 (New York: Russell, 1960), p.60.

14.

Veblen, ***The Instinct of Workmanship*** as quoted in Spindler,p.198.

15.

The reference is to T.S. Eliot's poem "The Hollow Men".

16.

David L. Vanderwerken, "U.S.A: Dos Passos and the old words", ***Twentieth Century Literature***, xxiii (February, 1977), p.226.

17.

Lee, p.171.

18.

Richard S. Kennedy, ***The Window of Memory: The Literary Career of Thomas Wolfe*** (Chapel Hill: the university of North Carolina Press, 1962), p.408.

19.

Richard S. Kennedy and Pascal Reeves (eds), ***The Notebook of Thomas Wolfe*** (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press,1970), p.939.

20.

William F. Kennedy speaks to this effect in his argument that the title also means "the world that money built" in "Economic Ideas in Contemporary Literature-The Novels of Thomas Wolfe", ***Southern Economic Journal***, xx (July, 1953), pp.42-43.

21.

Thomas Wolfe, ***You Can't Go Home Again*** (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1940), p.117. Subsequent references to the novel are from this edition.

22.

Tiresias is a mythical figure in T.S. Eliot's ***The Waste Land***. It is a blind bisexual figure who foresees evil.

23.

Daniel Akst, "Novelists used to care about Capital and Commerce; not any more", ***The Wall Street Journal***, 1 Sept. 1998, p.11.

Conclusion

The preceding analysis of the image of the businessman in selected novels written over the half century extending from the 1880s to the 1930s has shown a bias towards personification in the portrayal of this character-type. This tendency is to be linked with the sociology of the literary response to the economic malaise of American life during this period.

Because that this social type is the product of this economic malaise, American novelists found in the character of the businessman a suitable medium to propagate their views and critical reflections on the nature of the economic conditioning of American society. This concentration on the sociological potentials of this character-type in the novels of the period resulted in the projection of this figure as a personification of the socio-economic order that fashions it. The ensuing lack of individualism, here, is compensated by the portrayal of a vividly concrete socio-economic milieu that operates to fashion its spirit in this character type.
This immersion of the businessman in such a realized social setting has closely associated the portrayal of this character-type with the techniques of realistic fiction. The narrational and thematic strategies of this type of fiction help to promote the sociological verisimilitude necessary to intiate this personifying process in the character of the businessman. Hence, the association of this character-type with the rise of realism, and its extreme version of naturalism, in American novel during the late nineteenth century.

But this tendency towards the personification of the businessman-type in the tradition of the realistic fiction is something peculiar to the American novel. This character-type has, for sure, flourished in the British and French realistic novel during the same period but with the

relative absence of this personifying process. On the contrary, the businessman is mostly individualized at the expense of its sociological significance as a social type. This is mainly due to the uniqueness of the American literary and cultural experience.

This personifying tendency is closely associated with the peculiar nature of American literary experience, especially in the context of the novel. The lack of a national tradition and the relative absence of a diversified social experience had forced American novelists in the nineteenth century to concentrate primarily on the symbolic and the allegorical dimensions as means of compensation in their character portrayal. It is for this reason that the great American novels of the nineteenth-century have tended to portray symbolic personifications rather than individualized characters. This tendency ,however, continued in twentieth-century American novel regardless of the far-reaching concreteness and diversity that characterize modern American social experience. The businessman, therefore, was major among the character-types that display this personifying tendency in the modern American novel.

But this might seem paradoxical because the businessman finds its conception in this very concrete diversity of modern American social experience both as a social and literary type. This paradoxical representation is further highlighted in the prominence given to this character-type in the realistic approaches to the nature of this social experience in modern American novel. The character of the businessman, as such, should be logically fully individualize by virtue of this sociological milieu and the literary techniques manipulated to depict this milieu. It, nevertheless, was typified as an effect of personification. This is mainly due to the peculiar nature of American cultural experience.

Culturally, the change of the egalitarian mode of American life into bourgeois capitalism in the post-Civil War era was so sudden and drastic that it resulted in the reduction of the individual to a diminishing stature in a society govern by the impersonal forces of business and industry. This has engendered a hyper-critical literary response that found its culmination in the textual configuration of the businessman character as the social signifier of the new economic order in the fiction of the period. This signification operates mainly through the depiction of the businessman as the outcome of the subversion of the American cultural myth of the dream of success. This subversion crystallizes into a cultural trauma that finds its concretization in the figure of the businessman. Hence, the negative figuration of this character-type in the novels of the period.

This negative figuration, which constitutes the substance of the personifying process, has been variously distanced in modern American novel. The general pattern of this figuration is culminative and temporally proportionate in latitude and intensity. The projection of all that is negative in the economic system in the character of the business man takes a rising curve that culminates in the novels of the 1930s that deal with this figure from the perspective of the Crash and the Great Depression. The businessman, there, becomes the system incarnate and is, therefore, quite devoid of any redeeming qualities.

Although the latitude of this personifying process parallels the rising curve of the economic malaise of modern American society, the variety of the businessman-character depicted in the novels of this period is dictated by the current mode of economy. The entrepreneur flourishes in the novels of the period from the 1980s to World War I as a reflection of the productive mode of industrial capitalism that predominates in this period. The novels of the twenties and thirties, however, focus on the

business executive. This is a reflection of the economic mode of collective consumerism that characterizes the post-Crash of ’29. This, furthermore, has serious bearings on the generic stratification of the novels dealing with this character-type. The self-interest mode of individualism that characterizes the productive mode of industrial capitalism is responsible for the proliferation of “business novels” that centre on the career of an entrepreneurial character. Whereas the collective nature of the consumers’ cultural tends to generate “social novels” that invoke the business executive as an important social signifier among a set of other signifiers of contemporary social reality. These changing generic and representational modes are, in many ways, consequential of the escalating curve of the personifying process operative in the figure of the businessman because the absence of generic focus of the business novel was compensated by the epical quality of the social novel in the twenties and thirties. This epical focalization of the businessman contributes to its sociological authenticity in such a way as to give further prominence to the typifying effect in the portrayal of this character-type.

The culmination of this prominence of the personifying process in the novels of the Great Depression casts these novels as reactions to the crisis of the Great Crash of ’29. They are, therefore, a logical termination of this process because American capitalism has come to a dead-end with this Crash. This interpretation is further consolidated with relative disappearance of this character-type in post-World War II American novel because this disappearance is deeply rooted in the changing sociology of the literary response to the experiential structure of contemporary American social realty.

The resurgence of the interest in the businessman-type in American novel during the last two decades of the twentieth century further

consolidates this thesis on the literary personification of the businessman as part of the sociology of the literary response. This is clearly seen in the treatment of the figure of the businessman in such novels as : Tom Wolfe's ***The Bonfire of the Vanities*** (1987) and ***A Man in Full*** (1998) , Bill Morris's ***Biography of a Buick*** (1992) , Po Bronson's ***Bombarviers*** (1995) , Douglas Coupland's ***Microserfs*** (1995) , Kurt Anderson's ***Turn of the Century*** (1999) , Philip Roth's ***American Pastoral*** (1997) and Richard Powers's ***Gain*** (1998) . Regardless of the changing literary and social perspectives , all these novels show a varying tendency towards personification in their portrayal of the businessman. The investigation of this tendency in these novels is a rewarding search-area for future studies.

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جمهورية العراق
وزارة التعليم العالي والبحث العلمي
جامعة بغداد
كلية الاداب

تمثيل رجل الاعمال في الرواية الامريكية الحديثة
من وليم دين هولز إلى توماس وولف

اطروحة مقدمة الى مجلس كلية الاداب بجامعة بغداد كجزء من متطلبات نيل شهادة
الدكتوراه فلسفة في اللغة الانجليزية وادابها- ادب انجليزي

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اذار 2003 ميلادي ذي الحجة 1423 هجري

مستخلص باللغة العربية

تعد شخصية رجل الأعمال ظاهرة خاصة بالرواية الأمريكية الحديثة وذلك لارتباطها الوثيق بحضارة رجل الأعمال الأمريكية التي أفرزتها. وفي الحقيقية فان هذه الشخصية قد برزت في الرواية الأمريكية الحديثة فيما بين وليم دين هولز (1837-1920)، وثوماس وولف (1900-1938) بوصفها انعكاساً للتحولات الاقتصادية والاجتماعية الكبيرة التي أصابت الولايات المتحدة الأمريكية خلال تلك السنوات .

وبالرغم من أن هولز ليس روائياً محدثاً بالمفهوم الزمني الا إن طريقة تعامله مع شخصية رجل الأعمال هي في جوهرها مشابه لما لدى الروائيين الأمريكيين في القرن العشرين. فهي تشخيص اليجوري للنظام الاجتماعي الاقتصادي الذي افرز هذه الشخصية. ويبلغ هذا التشخيص أقصاه في روايات توماس وولف إذ يصبح رجل الأعمال النظام بحد ذاته.

وعليه فان الدراسة الحالية تهدف إلى تتبع تطور عملية التشخيص الحاصلة في شخصية رجل الأعمال لدى مجموعة منتخبة من الروائيين الأمريكان بين هولز وولف وهم: فرانك نوريس (1870-1902)، ثيودور درايزر(1871-1945)، سنكلير لويس (1885-1951)، ف-سكوت فيتزجيرالد (1896-1940)، وجون دوس باسوس (1896-1970).

تقع الدراسة في خمسة فصول الأول تمهيدي يتتبع اصل شخصية رجل الأعمال وبروزها في الحضارة الأمريكية في مرحلة ما بعد الحرب الأهلية وانعكاساتها في روايات تلك المرحلة وتم التركيز على الحركة الواقعية في الرواية الأمريكية بوصفها قد اولت اهتماماً جدياً بتمثيل تلك الشخصية في الأدب الأمريكي وركز الفصل على رواية هولز **بروز سايلس لافام** (1885) بوصفها أول رواية تناولت هذه الشخصية بجدية في تاريخ الرواية الأمريكية.

ويحلل الفصل الثاني الطريقة التي عالج بها الروائيون الطب يعيون الأمريكان هذه الشخصية في مرحلة ما بعد الحرب العالمية الأولى. وتركز التحليل على رواية **الحفرة** (1903) لنوريس **وثلاثية الرغبة** لدرايزر مع التركيز على روايتي **الممول** (1912)، و**العملاق** (1914).

في حين عالج الفصل الثالث هذه الشخصية في روايات العشرينات مع الاشارة بصورة خاصة إلى روائيي الجيل الضائع واختيرت رواية **بابت** (1922) للويس ورواية **كاتسبي العظيم** (1925) لفيتزجيرالد نماذج للتحليل.

وتناول الفصل الرابع هذه الشخصية في روايات مرحلة الكساد الكبير في ثلاثينيات القرن العشرين مع التركيز على الروايات التي تعاملت مع هذه الشخصية من منظار الانهيار

الاقتصادي في (1929) والكساد الكبير الذي تلاه وقد اختيرت **ثلاثية الولايات المتحدة** (1930-1936) لدوس باسوس ورواية **لن تستطيع الذهاب إلى البيت ثانية** (1940) لوولف.

ولخص الفصل الخامس أهم الاستنتاجات التي خرجت بها الدراسة.