

A HISTORY OF VANITY FAIR: A MODERNIST JOURNAL IN AMERICA

by

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A HISTORY OF VANITY FAIR; A MODERNIST JOURNAL IN AMERICA

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ABSTRACT

Vanity Fair, published in New York by Conde Nast from 1913 to 1936, and edited by Frank Crowninshield, defies easy classification. Dedicated to the pursuit of good taste in all realms of activity, the magazine ranged freely among various levels of culture from "high" to "low."

The period of the magazine's publication marked a shift in literary patronage in America from the genteel Four Hundred to a more explorative and stimulation-seeking audience of the newly-arrived, characterized at the time as the "Smart Set." Furthermore, the horizons of aesthetic concerns were being expanded by an increase in the reading public, and by new media such as radio and film created through technological developments. This led, in addition to an expansion of cultural possibilities, to a crisis in critical standards. A magazine like Vanity Fair, aiming to be an arbiter of taste, was therefore concerned with the problem of levels of taste.

Vanity Fair was directed at a small audience of taste-makers, and was never a commercial success. Its prestige and influence were great, however, and most of the talented writers of the day were staff members or contributors. Among those who started their careers at Vanity Fair were Edmund Wilson, John Peale Bishop, Robert Benchley, and Dorothy Parker, and regular contributors included P. G. Wodehouse, George Jean Nathan, Aldous Huxley, Gilbert Seldes, H. L. Mencken, and Alexander Woollcott.

The range of features covered those concerns, both serious and

diverting, which were of interest to exponents of good taste. Among the chief concerns were literature, theatre, and painting. The magazine was noted for its visual style, including reproductions of modern art and high-quality colour photography. Humour and satire were major components, and literary parodies, satirical cartoons and sketches, and humorous articles were frequent.

Literature was an important concern, and regular book review features appeared from 1910 to 1916, 1921 to 1923, under the editorship of Edmund Wilson and John Peale Bishop, and 1931 to 1936. In addition fiction, poetry, and numerous literary articles were printed. The literary contents fall into three periods. Until 1919, the taste exhibited was essentially genteel, and all literature written in English was considered to form a single tradition. In the twenties, the orientation was modernist, and new developments in literary technique and content were presented and discussed; in addition, American letters were seen as a distinct tradition. By the thirties, the emphasis on modernism abated, and literary concerns and judgments became more traditional.

The magazine's significance, apart from its literary and aesthetic concerns and judgments, resides partly in its overall character. Just as modernism consisted in part of the attempt to range through various aspects of life and achieve a new synthesis, so the magazine represented the same expansion of concern and attempt at critical judgment. Unlike other journals of the time, Vanity Fair did not specialise, but regarded all aspects of taste as its domain.

The synthesis of representation and judgment proved short-lived in magazine publishing, and by the thirties those magazines which focussed on one element, such as literature, intellectual inquiry, or humour, proved successful. Various aspects of Vanity Fair were the models for other magazines like The New Yorker, Esquire, and Life; but the synthesis of cultural levels, a peculiarly modern synthesis, did not survive the magazine's demise.

Chapter I

"Taste" and Levels of Culture

To be in fashion is a bore; to be out of it is a tragedy.

From our dizzy editorial elevation there appears to be only one reform in American life, the need for which has remained unnoticed, one broken plate in our social armor, of the unwelcome presence of which editors have long seemed unaware. Curiously enough, it has nothing to do with bad government, or bad finance, or bad morals. It has solely to do with bad taste. The ravages of bad taste are everywhere to be seen about us -- in public life, in society, and in the work of many of our novelists, playwrights, and artists. We feel that in attacking, in our peculiarly mild and winning way, the questionable taste which we see flaunted about us, we shall not at all exceed the limits of our editorial preserves. . . .

This then must be our one reform. Whenever bad taste shows its horrid head above the troubled surface of our social waters, Vanity Fair will hope, with its furious editorial bludgeon, to have a whack at it.

It is not that showing gum undermines metaphysics, but that it is metaphysics -- this is what must be made clear.

Tolstark on a general description and analysis of Vanity Fair is immediately to encounter fundamental problems of literary standards and critical method. It is easier to describe what Vanity Fair was not, than to formulate clearly what it in fact was. Similarly, it is easier to describe the critical approaches and categories which are inappropriate for a study of this particular magazine, than to define immediately a stance which can deal adequately with the particular cultural function which Vanity Fair performed.

One is presented, in fact, with "a cavalcade of the 1920's and

1930's", incorporating the ephemeral and the profound, the popular and the serious, elements of its time, and providing a panoramic view of the sensibility of the period. As Frederick J. Hoffman, himself a student of the "little magazines" of the time, put it in his book on the twenties, "It is hard to imagine a magazine more appropriate to the decade than Vanity Fair."⁵

While the pages of the magazine, then, can be viewed as a valuable source-book for investigations of the mores and manners of its time, a study remaining content with a mere description of content would miss the unique opportunity of analysing the cultural role which such a magazine played in its environment. Studies of magazines have tended to focus on content, described impressionistically by literary critics or analysed quantitatively by sociologists. Both approaches, while useful and interesting in themselves, fail to come to grips with the essential cultural role which particular magazines perform. Content-oriented studies are based on the assumption that magazines reflect their time; they thus fail to examine the effect those magazines have on their cultural and intellectual milieu. A faithful description of content and tone is necessary, but it is not sufficient. It is important to go one step further, to attempt to discover the cultural force of a magazine, its social and cultural impact as an entity in its own right.

Studies of magazines have tended to assume and define that effect a priori. Thus, "little magazines" are viewed as expressions of the literary and cultural avant-garde, the means

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by which a cultural élite speaks to itself; popular or "mass" magazines are regarded as mere reflectors of the general uncritical consciousness, as indices of the uncultivated sensibility. It is at this point that we encounter our first problem of value: the assumption is that the "little magazines," or the literary magazines, reflect the state of "high" culture, the popular magazines the state of "low."

Vanity Fair fails to fit into either category. Although its reviews and critical articles were often written by serious men of letters like Edmund Wilson and Aldous Huxley, these critical evaluations were interspersed with photos of popular theatre and motion-picture stars and glossy advertisements for high-fashion automobiles and hotels. Conversely, the magazine never attained mass circulation, and its advertising revenue barely covered publishing expenses at the best of times; unlike mass periodicals of the time, notably The Saturday Evening Post, Vanity Fair paid its contributors little more than honoraria, so that the impetus to appear in its pages was never a strictly commercial one.

Vanity Fair appears, at first glance, to have been an anomaly among twentieth-century magazines, with too much love of the frivolous and ephemeral to be considered as a typical "high culture" journal, and too little commercial orientation to be justly regarded as a "low culture" mass publishing venture. In fact, its constant concern with matters of taste and fashion, and its stylistic reliance on parody and satire, make it most strongly comparable with eighteenth-century magazines like Steele's

Tatler, concerned above all to be an arbiter of taste to men and women of breeding; this essential fact of its nature is attested to by the characteristic description of its editor: "Mr. Crowninshield was, of course, a gentleman. . . ."6

A concern with taste, cultivation, and breeding seems unexpected in, and uncharacteristic of, a twentieth-century glossy magazine, eluding classification by the common critical distinction between serious "high culture" and commercial "low culture" publications. Vanity Fair seems to have been a mixture of "high" and "low" in that it "carried forward, into a faster and crasser age, the stately white-tie-and-tailed elegance of a fast by-going Edwardian era. . . . Vanity Fair was America in transition -- America in mid-passage, as it were, between the old Four Hundred and the new Smart Set."7

This transition is more than merely sociological, and it was by no means confined to America alone. While an account of Vanity Fair must include an examination of its peculiarly American character, and consider the changing sociological patterns which any cultural phenomenon of the period reflected, it is necessary as well to investigate the relation between cultural phenomena and their sociological context. The transition from the "Four Hundred," a closed and traditional social and cultural elite, to the "Smart Set," a more socially mobile group, characterised by cultural fads and frequent fluctuations in taste, had profound implications for the state of serious culture at the time. A shift in the nature of the educated public, the social group

concerned with and patronising serious art, implies a change in the general context in which that art was created, and received, and in the standards by which it was judged and even defined.

The task of examining and evaluating Vanity Fair as a cultural force would be greatly simplified if there were general critical agreement on the definitions of "culture," "art," and "value." This is far from being the case; in fact, when used with respect to phenomena which do not fit clearly into the traditional canon of "high" art (such as magazines, films, popular novels, new literary genres or styles), these terms have tended to be used polemically rather than critically. The history of the changing meaning and use of words like "culture" and "art" is as much a record of cultural politics as it is a reflection of increasing critical refinement.⁸

The debate, in full force since the expansion of the reading public with the rise of the middle class in the eighteenth century, has been focused on variously defined dichotomies: "high" culture vs "low," "popular" vs "élite," "mass" vs "minority," "art vs "entertainment," "art" vs "communication." The very formulation of these dichotomies reveals certain assumptions made during the historical progress of the debate; these words, far from being value-free, imply judgment in the very act of distinction. Thus, "high" is better than "low," "élite" superior to "popular," "minority" preferable to "mass."⁹

The presence of prejudicial evaluation in these terms does not, however, automatically discredit them. It is necessary to

examine the issues underlying these dichotomies, before any useful critical distinctions can be made.

No discussion of cultural phenomena in America can proceed without reference to Tocqueville, the earliest and still one of the most lucid proponents of the "high culture" position.¹⁰ Tocqueville gets to the heart of the matter by asserting that culture is determined by patronage; that is, the source of funding and support of the arts determines their distinctive features and values. According to Tocqueville, traditional high culture arises out of the patronage of aristocratic society, whose members possess sufficient leisure to pursue knowledge, beauty, and the refinement of their sensibilities. The corresponding aristocratic culture is therefore subtle, complex, and highly developed aesthetically.

What Tocqueville observed in nineteenth-century America was a democratic society whose members were consumers of culture but had no time for the leisurely pursuit of the aesthetic. Thus he found the distinctive approach to art to be a utilitarian one, with an emphasis on decoration, "prettiness" rather than Beauty, and easy accessibility of theme and form.

The usefulness of Tocqueville's argument lies in his recognition of the importance of patronage in the determination of specific modes of art. He noted, correctly, that no art exists in a vacuum, but is rather dependent on and partly determined by the capabilities and expectations of the group that supports it. His application of this principle to the American situation, with the conclusion that no "high" culture is possible in America

because of the absence of an aristocratic class to appreciate and therefore support it, forms the basis of the related "cultural elite" argument.

The purest enunciation of this position is in T. S. Eliot's Notes towards the Definition of Culture,¹¹ which calls for a restructuring of society to allow for an aristocratic class which could support aristocratic culture, there being no possibility of the perception of aesthetic value without the social incorporation of the principle of value in terms of hierarchy. Other proponents of this view that "high" culture requires an appropriate group of patrons take a somewhat modified approach recognising that, whatever its possible cultural merits, a hierarchical society with an aristocratic class of patrons is probably anachronistic.¹²

This modification takes the form of the "minority culture" argument, presented most forcefully by F. R. Leavis and Dwight Macdonald.¹³ This approach recognises the disappearance of the social aristocracy as the patrons of high art, and seeks to replace it with a kind of cultural aristocracy, patrons of "high art" by virtue of refined taste and sensibility, but no longer necessarily identical with the social elite. This cultural minority can follow two possible courses: a kind of academicism where the cultural elite preserves and maintains the high tradition,¹⁴ which is increasingly beleaguered by the ignorance and lack of standards of democratic society; the avant-garde,¹⁵ which is in opposition to the cultural tradition, and constantly striving for artistic breakthroughs.

The important thing to notice in this "minority culture" argument is that, regardless of the form which it takes, either academicist or avant-garde, it is defined as being opposed to the dominant cultural values, and therefore in a beleaguered position. The appeal of Tocqueville's argument, as of Eliot's, is that it posits a cultural élite which is also a social élite: "high" culture is thus the definitive culture. The "minority culture" position is, on the other hand, one of constant struggle and opposition.

It is necessary at this point to define the nature of the beast against which this cultural minority is assumed to struggle. Again, Tocqueville proves a valuable starting point. We have noted that he defined democratic art as essentially utilitarian: without the time necessary for the leisurely pursuit and refinement of aesthetic sensibility and understanding non-aristocrats must, of necessity, demand easily and quickly accessible forms of art. The aesthetic can play only a marginal and simplistic role in the lives of people scrambling to survive economically; with the major part of their energies devoted to physical and economic survival, "the people" have little time or creative energy left over for the contemplation and appreciation of subtle, complex aesthetic works.

We will encounter this argument, turned on its head, in some of Edmund Wilson's articles in Vanity Fair: like many commentators in the twenties, he would assert that it is precisely in the fields of commerce and technology that Americans express their

creativity. This view of commerce and technology as the quintessential modes of creative expression in America points to a serious defect in the application of Tocqueville's analysis to twentieth-century American life, namely the association of aesthetic value with the time necessary to appreciate and understand it. Since it is precisely technological and commercial developments which freed Americans in the early twentieth century from necessary absorption in purely practical matters, with no concomitant increase in traditional "high culture" creativity, it is clear that other factors must be involved.

The identification of ordinary people with unsophisticated and inferior aesthetic sensibilities forms the basis of the "minority culture" argument. This position assumes that any art form or object which is "popular," either in the sense of having wide appeal or of stemming from "the people," must by definition be aesthetically inferior. It is at this point in the argument that the distinction is made between "art" and "entertainment," the latter term being reserved for those "popular" and therefore inferior aesthetic phenomena which do not fall into the high culture canon. The polemics tend to become confused at this point, when the captains of the entertainment industry turn this argument upside down as a marketing strategy.

The use of the term "popular arts,"¹⁶ however, adds a new dimension to the debate. As Tocqueville set up the terms of the discussion, "popular" is set against and opposite to "aristocratic,"

as signifying the vast run of ordinary people. This might seem to be identical with the Romantic concept of "the folk"; it is clear however that "folk arts" and "popular arts" designate different things. In pinpointing the differences, we may approach a clearer view of the issues involved.

It is evident, first of all, that "folk arts" are indeed utilitarian, tied to ritual (folk dances and songs), work (folk songs), and practical objects (decoration of furniture, clothes, and tools). "Popular arts," like movies, comics and music hall songs, are on the other hand more strictly "entertainment." The next important difference is that folk arts tend to be participatory, whereas popular arts have creators and performers who are distinct from the consuming and appreciative audience.

Popular arts, then, would seem to combine elements of aristocratic and folk cultures. Widely and generally accessible as popular arts are, they also resemble Tocqueville's "aristocratic culture" in the sense that the aesthetic function is more specialised, and no longer tied to the utilitarian nor performed by the audience. If Tocqueville's "aristocrats" may be most appropriately set against the Romantic notion of the "folk," we must determine the nature of the "popular" audience which is posited as the opponent of and threat to the values and standards of the cultural "élite" or "minority."

It is the concept of "the mass" which provides the answer. Tocqueville's analysis, conducted at the beginning of the American experiment, is still rooted in a pre-Industrial, agrarian view of

society, where the aristocracy and the common people represent two different styles of life, mutually dependent economically but opposed in terms of style and aesthetic values. It is the process of industrialization, and the urbanisation which follows in its wake, which changes the terms of the argument and renders Tocqueville's analysis obsolete.

It is, of course, the process of industrialization and urbanisation which creates the distinctive forms of what has incorrectly come to be known as "American culture," although it was indeed in the United States that this process took its most pervasive if not its historically first course. This fact is of importance in a consideration of Vanity Fair, for not only did the magazine appear at the historical moment when this process and its effects were becoming critically evident, but the contributors themselves were highly aware of, and interested in, the social and cultural changes which it was producing. We must recall that this was the era of Mencken, with his New-York based attack on the "booboisie," and of Sinclair Lewis' Babbitt. The conflict between urban sophistication and rural conservatism was strong.¹⁷

The clearest theoretical definition of "the mass" and "mass man" is provided by Ortega y Gasset.¹⁸ With the expansion of industrialization, man's work is reduced to mechanical repetition of a single simple task, one step in a complex pattern of production of which the individual is ignorant. Because the work is mechanical, repetitious, and in itself meaningless, divorced

as it is from knowledge of and participation in all the steps in the complex process of creation, it is unfulfilling and enervating. The sense of creative humanity is lost; what remains is a sort of mechanical task-performance. This same process occurs in the intellectual sphere, claims Ortega, where specialisation can lead to great technological advances, but no understanding of the wider human context in which these discoveries and inventions must be placed. The modern specialist is, in fact, a "learned ignoramus."¹⁹

Urban life, the other aspect of industrialization, reinforces this technocratic, dehumanising process. Men no longer live in organic human communities, but as atomised members of a large urban mass. In the English tradition this mechanising, dehumanising process of industrialization and urbanisation has been a major concern from the nineteenth century on: starting with Blake's denunciation of the "dark Satanic mills," through the Romantics' glorification of Nature and the Victorian obsession with the evils of the city (for example, Dickens' London), to Lawrence's description of the bleakness of the coal-mining towns. Of the twentieth-century English critics, F. R. Leavis has been the most virulent opponent of "mass civilisation."

The theoretical definition of "mass man" is extended by Macdonald,²⁰ who follows the same method of analysis as Tocqueville. Just as Tocqueville linked conditions of life with distinctive aesthetic sensibility -- aristocratic leisure allows for finely-developed and subtle aesthetic appreciation; democratic or

popular concern with economic survival leads to utilitarian notions of art -- so Macdonald is concerned to discover the aesthetic effects of industrial modes of existence. The modern citizen, Macdonald's thesis goes, spends most of his life at repetitive, meaningless tasks in factories or large office complexes. This has two major effects on his aesthetic sensibility: grown accustomed to focusing on narrow, limited tasks, men lose the capacity for apprehending organic unities, for perceiving complex and subtle interrelationships; enervated by work that is mind-destroying, but neither physically exhausted nor spiritually fulfilled by it, they are eager for vulgar spectacle and easily-accessible excitement.

In their leisure time, then, industrial men will look for things that easily excite and please them, rather than for pursuits requiring thought or contemplation. But these will no longer need to be strictly utilitarian; all that is required is something to relieve the boredom of uninspiring work. The stage is thus set for a new kind of patron: unthinking, uncritical, unindividuated, one of a "mass" of bored, thrill-seeking consumers. T. S. Eliot, for example, provided portraits of this new form of urban ennui:

Neither plenitude nor vacancy. Only a flicker
 Over the strained time-ridden faces
 Distracted from distraction by distraction
 Filled with fancies and empty of meaning
 Tumid apathy with no concentration

(Burnt Norton, 99-103)

But
 O O O O that Shakespeherian Rag --
 It's so elegant
 So intelligent
 "What shall I do now? What shall I do?"
 "I shall rush out as I am, and walk the street
 "With my hair down, so. What shall we do to-morrow?
 "What shall we ever do?"
 (The Waste Land, 127-134)

What this kind of patron is looking for, goes the argument, is "entertainment" rather than "art"; but now it is "mass entertainment" which will be the solace. Since this modern man has nothing in his life to connect him to any human community, and thus no differentiating characteristics, it is as a member of "the mass" that he will be entertained, and this entertainment will be of the same quality as his working life: part of the manufacturing process, an industrial product, designed now for consumers rather than patrons.

It is clear that in this argument about the "mass," as in the other theories we have examined, it is still the nature of the receivers, the taste of the audience, that is the critical point. The aristocratic patrons, like the members of the cultural élite or the cultural minority, are assumed to have refined aesthetic tastes. The mass, on the other hand, are presumed to have no taste at all, to lack the individuality necessary for taste; appetite would be a more appropriate word, and it is in fact suggested by the notion of "consumers."

The problems inherent in the theory of the "mass" and "mass culture" are too numerous to engage us here. We might note the chief one, namely the rather arrogant assumption that people can lose all

semblance of individuality, to the point of being reducible to a mere "mass"; this argument is more suited to a defence by entertainment industrialists than to serious critical investigation of new cultural forms.

Vanity Fair was in any case not a mass magazine; it never attained extensive circulation, and was in fact financially self-sufficient only at the best of times. It is necessary to introduce the concept, however, in a discussion of various definitions of "high" and "low" culture, since so much twentieth-century critical defence of "high" culture, such as F. R. Leavis', is in terms of opposition to "mass civilisation," and because this attempt at formulating critical distinctions, like the others we have noted, rests on assumptions about the patrons or consumers rather than on an attempt to define the distinctive characteristics of the various aesthetic objects in question.

The question of "mass culture" introduces another distinction which does, however, bear on Vanity Fair; this is the notion of the so-called "mass media," and the problem of "art" or "entertainment" as against "communication." As we have noted, the notion of mass man and his distinctive mass culture is rooted in an awareness and analysis of the effects of industrialization, and rests on an analogy between the process of mechanical manufacturing and the process of creating and appreciating art: as the nature of work is transformed by the introduction of the machine, goes the argument, so the nature of aesthetic

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appreciation will be transformed in a similar way.

The crucial factor here is, of course, technology itself. Just as the introduction of machine technology changes work from an individual, holistic process into the repetition of simple tasks with no awareness of the entire process, so the introduction of technology into the sphere of art reduces the art works from individually created and aesthetically complex unities to simple, endlessly repeatable manufactured objects.

The technological transformations of art are almost universally regarded as wholly antagonistic to, and destructive of, true aesthetic quality, and the products of the new technologies can barely, by the traditional definitions, be considered as "art" at all; in the minds of the proponents of traditional high culture, the technological media, the "mass" media (newspapers, magazines, film, radio, television), can only convey information or provide simplistic, unsophisticated "entertainment." The realm of the aesthetic is considered utterly beyond their capabilities. It is, of course, interesting to note the presence of mechanical, simplifying criteria in this very argument: art, entertainment, and information are here presented as three separate, distinct, and opposed entities, easily distinguishable and incapable of interaction.

The only critic to have attempted a serious investigation of the aesthetic implications of modern technological change in the arts is Walter Benjamin. In his brilliant article, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,"²¹ he examines

the transforming effects of new technology, without assuming that they must imply the destruction of all aesthetic value. In fact, Benjamin's view is that the new technologies, rather than destroying art, will liberate it. Whatever the merits of his claims (and some of his insights, especially with regard to film, are already out of date), this article is very important for its attempt to deal dispassionately with the aesthetic implications of technology.

This excursus into the details of the "high culture" vs "low culture" debate would seem to have led us far away from an investigation of Vanity Fair. This is far from being the case, for a number of reasons. First, as we noted at the outset, Vanity Fair fails to fit neatly into either the high culture or mass-media slots into which journals and periodicals have traditionally and conveniently been placed. Either Vanity Fair itself was an exotic specimen or, more likely, there is something inadequate in the categories themselves.

Second, the clearly announced prospectus of Vanity Fair was to be an arbiter of taste, no easy task in its time, when the forces of "mass culture," industrialization, urbanisation and technological change were felt in full force. This was, after all, the period of the expansion of film and radio, and the heyday of the glossy magazine. What exactly is "taste," in an era when high culture is being transformed by modernism, and mass culture is increasingly influential? In order to understand and

put into context Vanity Fair's definitions of "taste," it will be necessary to inquire further into the notion of aesthetic standards.

Third, and perhaps most important, Vanity Fair was itself a part of the technological transformations taking place in the aesthetic realm. While never a mass-circulation magazine, it always partook of the latest technological innovations: the first publication in America to print fine colour reproductions of French paintings, renowned for its brilliant photography and later for its colour photography, innovative in its layout and design. And fourth, mass culture phenomena were themselves critical concerns in Vanity Fair: the new Hollywood industry, the comics, radio, were all investigated by the magazine's analysts and critics.

In order to understand the critical program of the magazine itself, then, it will be necessary to make some sense of the critical jumble which the debate about "high culture" and "mass culture" has produced.

The confusions and polemics generated by this debate stem from two major sources: a failure to make close critical distinctions between "art" and "culture," and a reliance on assumptions about the nature of the audience for or patrons of art in place of the more difficult critical task of formulating aesthetic criteria appropriate to new artistic forms and objects. These two factors are in fact related since, as we have noted, the participants in the debate have created and then unthinkingly applied the assumption that certain kinds of culture, for example "democratic"

or "mass," are by definition incapable of generating or appreciating high "art," and that the very notion of "artistic" is appropriate only to the sensibilities and creations of certain kinds of people, embedded in certain kinds of culture.

The notion of "culture" is difficult to pin down precisely; its definition varies, not only among different intellectual disciplines, but even among opposing camps within the same discipline. In the field of literary studies, the greatest confusion arises out of an intermingling of the assumption that culture is an isolated phenomenon, a body of creations, the "best that has been thought and said," a tradition of great works and thoughts from the past, a realm of the beautiful and the profound that transcends the social and historical, with a more social theory of culture that sees it as a basic form of human orientation, the social, political and aesthetic field out of which people act and think.

This latter social or anthropological view of culture is, surprisingly, shared by critics on both sides of the cultural debate:

T. S. Eliot: "all those habitual actions, habits and customs, from the most significant religious rite to the conventional way of greeting a stranger, which represents the blood kinship of the same people living in the same place"²²

Lionel Trilling: "the locus of the meeting of literature with social actions and attitudes and manners"²³

Raymond Williams: "not only a body of intellectual and imaginative work; it is also and essentially a whole way of life"²⁴

Eliot's is the most limiting of these three definitions, relating culture to family and geographic as well as social and religious ties, while Williams' is the loosest, incorporating the entire range of "a whole way of life." What the three attempts have in common, though, is the view that "culture" is an all-pervasive orienting perspective, a general context and tradition out of which specific acts are performed, ideas held, and objects, including aesthetic objects, created and received.

It is a special application of this notion of culture that is the basis of the "high culture" position. As we have seen, Tocqueville argued that only certain kinds of cultures, in the broader sense that we have noted, namely aristocratic cultures, could produce true art, because only the members of an aristocratic culture could understand or appreciate it.

A problem arises, however, from the fact that the word "culture" is often used synonymously with "high culture," to represent the kind of "way of life" implied by Eliot's use of the word "élite" and Tocqueville's use of the word "aristocratic." Thus, while "culture" may be a whole way of life, only certain ways of life are considered to be capable of generating "culture" in the sense of high art. As we have seen, words like "entertainment" or "mass media" are used for the aesthetic

creations of democratic or "mass" culture. Although this blurring of the two senses of culture is common to all participants in the debate on popular culture, and is present within the pages of Vanity Fair itself, it will be necessary for our analysis to separate the two notions.

We propose, then, to follow the definition of culture as Eliot and Williams have understood it, as the general field of attitudes, opinions, rituals, and manners within which a group of people live; in short, as a "whole way of life." In this sense it will be possible to speak of "industrial culture" or "technological culture" or "modern culture" or "American culture," although each of these specific groupings must be examined as to its validity as a true culture, as an appropriate description of a unique way of life, of a human community.²⁵

We will use the term "art" to designate the aesthetic forms and objects of any given culture. Thus the distinctive art of "high culture" consists of phenomena like paintings, ballet, poetry, and classical music. We have not yet solved our problem, however, for the word "art" has traditionally been reserved only for the aesthetic phenomena of aristocratic or high culture. In fact, terms like "mass entertainment" have been devised partly as a means of excluding certain kinds of aesthetic phenomena from the category of "art."

Our modern notion of art as a specific kind of aesthetic object is partly the result of general cultural changes which have

occurred since the Industrial Revolution,²⁶ and, as we have noted, of an historical change in the type of concern which cultivated and educated men have had with the state of high culture in general. This concern has manifested itself partly in a focusing of attention on the environment of literature and art, the reciprocal relation between artistic works and their environment.²⁷

The eighteenth century exhibited the beginnings of that kind of concern, evidenced by serious and widespread consideration of the notion and standards of artistic "taste." With the rise of the middle class, and the expansion of the literate public to include new audiences unfamiliar with the traditional values of high culture, men of letters focused their attention for the first time on popular works, and the potential "debasement" of taste which popular values prophesized.

It is not that popular art appeared for the first time in the eighteenth century; on the contrary, as we have seen, there had always existed a popular or folk culture alongside the high culture of the social élite. But it was in the eighteenth century that the possibility first arose of a blending of the two cultures, and a blurring of the distinctions between them. As the sociological audience for literary art expanded to include newly-rich patrons who might have little history or knowledge of traditional literary values, men of letters were faced with the possibility of changes in literary taste, and saw the necessity for educating the new portions of their public. This function of education, as arbiter of taste, is clearly evident in

a journal like The Tatler.

This concern with the possible debasement of taste, through widespread popular works being in competition with high art for the same audience or, more precisely, an ever-expanding portion of that audience, continued through the nineteenth century, and was exacerbated by the introduction of industrial technology to the realm of art itself. We have seen how the notion of "mass" was introduced to describe the phenomenon of cheaply-produced and mechanically-reproduced books and magazines, and later the so-called "mass media" of film, radio and television. We have also noted that the characteristic response to these developments has been a defensive fear of the engulfment of high culture taste by these mass-produced objects, and the formulation of a Gresham's Law of sensibility and art corresponding to the one for economics: bad works drive out good.²⁸

With this ever-increasing consciousness of the beleaguered and essentially defensive position of high art, it was inevitable that some critics would turn to the question of the sociology of literature, to the investigation of the social role of literary art, the reciprocal relation between the particular literary artist and his society.

This critical phenomenon is in itself an indicator of the precarious position of high art in society, and is fundamentally an apologetics for that art: the attempt to understand the role or function of art in society is an indication that that role is

no longer assumed or taken for granted; a consciousness of art as a distinct facet of society reveals a self-consciousness bred of alienation, that same alienation which we have seen evident in the "minority culture" position. The doctrine of l'art pour l'art, for example, implies a belief in "artistic" values as distinct from and opposed to historical social values, and reflects the most severe disjunction between art and its environment.

The critical attempt to understand the relation of literature to society has developed along several lines.²⁹ The most simplistic approach is that of dogmatic Marxist criticism, which assumes that literature is a direct reflection of the social values of its particular culture, or more precisely, of the particular class to which writers belong. In this view, art has no value-system of its own, but is completely dependent on and reflective of its particular historical environment.

So positivist a position, while rare in the criticism of high art, forms the basic assumption underlying most investigations of popular or "mass" art. The art of high culture has been in a critically-privileged position, accorded the courtesy of investigation in its own right. The products of popular or "mass" culture have been extended no such courtesy, but have tended to be regarded as simple reflectors of the supposedly debased standards and attitudes of the cultural groups out of which they come, in the case of popular arts, or to which they are addressed, in the case of "mass" phenomena.

A far more useful method of investigation is to examine the

aesthetic objects of popular or mass culture in terms of their own forms or structures; that is, to analyse the mode of perception and aesthetic organisation which specific works embody, to examine the aesthetic capabilities and implications of the new technologies.³⁰ This method resembles the New Criticism in the literary tradition in its concern with the structure and internal organisations of the works themselves, rather than with a ferreting out of content.

This does not, however, fully exhaust the problem of the value of these aesthetic objects, but merely proposes an appropriate method of investigation. It is still necessary to support our refusal to limit the use of the word "art" only to designate the aesthetic objects of high culture.

It is useful in this regard to turn to the writings of the Prague school, whose members were much concerned with the problem of the relation of literature to society. Mukařovský's distinction between aesthetic function, norm, and value, for example, while imprecise because of its degree of abstraction, does point to the important fact that what is deemed "aesthetic" is partly dependent on social context. He notes that an aesthetic function may be perceived in many phenomena which are not strictly art, for example, the decorative aspects of furniture, clothes, etc. Moreover, the perception of aesthetic function is partly a "social fact" in that it is determined by social variables such as space (food performs a greater aesthetic function in France than in Germany), time (in the seventeenth century men's clothes had a greater aesthetic

function than at present), social context (formal dress has greater function than work clothes), and so on.³²

This insight has important and useful implications for our argument: "art" is any object or phenomenon in which the predominant purpose or intention is aesthetic. And since the perception of aesthetic intent is partly a social phenomenon, objects may cross boundaries: for example, medieval church paintings, while their religious function may have disappeared, remain as art. Thus the realm of "art" is not merely an isolated, transcendent realm, but also partly connected to social and historical conditions.

It is Mukařovský's definition of the aesthetic "norm" which is most germane to our investigation: he defines it as "the unit of measure of aesthetic value."³³ Furthermore, and most importantly, aesthetic norms are socially bound, defined by the particular "culture" in which they are embedded and the values of that culture. It is only with reference, however implicitly or even unconsciously, to some aesthetic norm that something may be considered "ugly"; and since these "norms" or standards vary among different cultures, one man's beauty may be another man's ugliness.

Vanity Fair did not concern itself with ugliness, however, but with "bad taste," and while it might be maintained that all bad taste is ugly, we must still explore what is implied in a judgment of "bad taste." In Mukařovský's view, "bad taste" has something to do with the inability to achieve a desired end, some disjunction between the perception of an aesthetic standard and the ability

to meet it:

We only speak of bad taste when we evaluate an object produced by human hands and in which we observe a tendency to fulfill a certain aesthetic norm and which at the same time lacks the ability to fulfill that norm. Natural phenomena may be ugly but not tasteless. . . . The displeasure which a tasteless object arouses is not based solely on the sensation of incongruence with an aesthetic norm, but is strengthened by an aversion to the helplessness of its creator. Thus bad taste seems to be the most acute antithesis to art. Art, by its very name, implies the ability completely to attain a projected goal.³⁴

The matter is complicated, however, by the fact that mere conformity to an established aesthetic norm or standard is not in itself sufficient to guarantee "good" art. One thinks, for example, of academic poetry, which by its very adherence solely to traditional standards becomes derivative and unexciting. Great art, as Eliot pointed out in "Tradition and the Individual Talent,"³⁵ is always a combination of the accepted tradition and some new departure from it; or, as Mukařovský puts it, "The work of art always disturbs (sometimes slightly, sometimes considerably) an aesthetic norm. . . . But even in extreme cases it must also adhere to the norm."³⁶ Art proceeds, therefore, by simultaneously adhering to and also violating some aspects of aesthetic standards, and the history of any art, such as literature, is the history of successive "violations" becoming in turn "traditions." Free verse and naturalism, for example, developed along such lines.

A particular judgment of something as being in "bad taste" therefore has two components: there is the assumption of some particular norm or standard which has been adhered to but not adequately met; but there is also a decision as to which norm or

standard is applicable. In a period like the one in which Vanity Fair appeared, when so many conventions were being violated, judgments of taste reveal as much about the critic as the thing criticised: is the sexuality of Sons and Lovers, for example, to be judged an instance of "bad taste" or innovative art?

Since the editors of Vanity Fair had the self-proclaimed aim of commenting on matters of taste, of pointing out "bad taste" wherever they found evidence of it, they were exhibiting nothing less than a concern with the changing cultural norms of the patrons of the arts in their time, and a desire to expand and make more flexible the standards of their readers. In a period when radical attacks were being made on conventions, or "norms," in all the arts, the question of taste became connected with the capacity for perceiving and appreciating new aesthetic norms.

It is clear that shifts in the sociological composition of the audience for literature and art in general make possible the reception of new forms of artistic creations. Ian Watt, for example, in his book The Rise of the Novel,³⁷ took into account the new elements of the reading public which were susceptible to the innovative elements of form and perception attested to in the burgeoning genre, and made reception of the novel possible.

Studies have been done of the historical shifts in literary patronage, from individual members of a social and economic élite representing and therefore supporting static, traditional and hierarchical values, through a homogeneous upper-middle-class

"educated public" promoting humanistic and liberal values, to a variety of contemporaneous but diverse publics representing different cultural values and therefore eliciting different kinds of literature.³⁸

The matter is more complicated, however, than a mere enumeration of heterogeneous publics would seem to imply. It has, in fact, been pointed out that literary taste is partly a sociological matter, in that different sociological groups not only represent varied cultural norms and therefore elicit and promote different kinds of aesthetic objects, but also gain ascendancy at different times.³⁹

It is therefore not sufficient to acknowledge that different social groups, different "cultures," represent different norms or standards, and therefore patronise and promote different kinds of art. One must also acknowledge that power can shift among these various groups, with far-reaching implications for the general aesthetic tone of a period, and of a "culture."

In effect, then, a shift in America from the "Four Hundred" to the "Smart Set" represented a shift in cultural power, with important effect on the reception of "high art" at the time. In a period when serious literature seemed barricaded in the avant-garde periodicals, and the popular sensibility was catered to by mass art, Vanity Fair was a cultural mediator, attempting to bridge the gap between high and low culture, and to effect the kind of cultural compromise first attempted by Steele in his Tatler.

It is in this light that Vanity Fair's concern with the

fashionable and the seemingly frivolous must be viewed; literary taste is but one element in a general sensibility, and "the brighter side of life is by no means the lesser side of life."⁴⁰ If culture is to be viewed as "a whole way of life," then particular aspects of the culture of the "Smart Set," such as games or fashions in clothing, and distinctive methods of presenting information, such as advertising or magazine layout style, are aspects of that culture's taste. It is this insight which the Horkheimer epigram at the head of this chapter, like the work of the Frankfurt School and other media analysts like McLuhan and Schramm, offers: apparently frivolous phenomena are particular elements of a more general cultural context, and governed by that culture's standards of taste. The lighter side of Vanity Fair then, the ads, layout, colour photos and games, were as much a part of its taste as the serious reviews and articles.

The dominant mode of the magazine was satire, and the characteristic tone ironic. Most of all, the intent was to amuse. This, too, was appropriate to a magazine concerned with taste: "To patronise the faculty of taste is to patronise oneself. For taste governs every free -- as opposed to rote -- human response."⁴¹ If, as we have seen, a sense of "good taste" rests on a knowledge of appropriate cultural norms, then an investigation of taste must involve a ranging among norms, the liberation from one set of automatic cultural responses into a free play among varied norms,

disparate cultures.

The fundamental insight concerning good taste which the ironic arbiter, Vanity Fair no less than the Tatler, recognised is that it is, above all, enjoyable. Vanity Fair's appropriate condemnation of bad taste was that it was dull; significantly, it incessantly poked fun at the pompous and stuffy patrons of high art, who had no appreciation of its quality or higher pleasure, but only of its snob-appeal, a recognition of the social and commercial value of high culture norms, but no sense of their aesthetic force.

An investigation of the effect of Vanity Fair, then, must always bear in mind the tone and method of the magazine as well as the cultural standards evidenced in its reviews and articles. For if "style makes the man," then the standards of taste propagated by Vanity Fair were no less evident in its frivolous diversions than in its serious reviews. The epistemological assumption underlying the format of the magazine, and clearly evident in its ironic reversal of Bunyan's view of Vanity Fair in its choice of name, was that good taste and cultivated sensibility are indivisible.

The taste exhibited in the choice of light entertainment and diversion, is congruent with that for serious artifacts; the same sensibility, the same cultural norms, govern the continuum of an individual's activity. The realm of "vanity," of the "brighter side of life," is not in direct opposition to the more serious and-spiritual aspects of life and culture. Rather, all facets of life; the ephemeral and lighthearted no less than the serious and

profound, are in dialectical relation, they influence each other.

The task facing the critic, then, is to determine the sensibility and taste underlying and represented by the magazine as a whole, as an indicator of and propagandist for the cultural norms of the educated reading public of the day. Did Vanity Fair truly represent the most highly developed cultural standards of its time, in the diverting and entertaining as well as the serious, or was there a tension between the two aspects?

The critical program of Vanity Fair was a radical and difficult one: to be an arbiter of taste in all aspects of the culture of the time. Whether this was possible, or doomed to failure because of an inherent contradiction and tension between "high culture" and "popular entertainment," is the question posed by the magazine.

We have seen that questions of taste are connected to aesthetic standards or "norms," and that these standards are determined by specific cultures: what is in "good taste" according to the standards of one culture is in "bad taste" according to the conventions of another. In order to determine, therefore, the criteria by means of which Vanity Fair set out to be an arbiter of taste, it will be necessary to identify the implied standards by means of which judgments were made, and, by extension, the various "cultures" with which the magazine allied itself and from which it derived those normative standards.

This is no simple task when dealing with so widely-ranging a

magazine as Vanity Fair, a "cavalcade of the 20's and 30's."⁴² Vanity Fair appeared from 1913 to 1936, and thus encompassed three distinct and very different historical periods: the period just before and during the First World War, the immediate post-War era and the Roaring Twenties, and more than half of the Hungry Thirties of the Depression.

Each of these periods produced and witnessed intense changes in the social and political as well as artistic realms, and the life-span of Vanity Fair included the period which has been called America's Coming of Age.⁴³ The predominant feature, then, of the world which Vanity Fair examined and attempted to judge was change. We have already noted that matters of taste and critical judgment become conscious and important precisely when traditional value-systems are in transition, or called into question (as in eighteenth-century England); American culture from 1913 to 1936 exhibited not so much an immediate transition from one set of standards to another, as a prolonged and constant conflict between various and often opposed sets of standards.

⁴In order then to determine and understand the judgments of taste promulgated by Vanity Fair, it is necessary to identify the various conflicting "cultures" or world-views which provided possible norms in the period. It is significant that the words "arbiter" and "arbitrator" are etymologically linked, for Vanity Fair as arbiter of taste was indeed in many ways an arbitrator between opposing and opposed cultures throughout its publication life.

Since as we have seen aesthetic standards, which are the basis of taste, are culturally bound, an entire political and social context is implied in any specific judgment of taste. And since the period 1913-36 was one of intense political and social change, it is necessary to bear in mind the various areas of life in which conflicting world-views, and therefore conflicting standards, existed. In order to understand specific judgments made or positions taken in the pages of Vanity Fair, the range of possible choices must be remembered -- often the factors excluded or neglected will be as meaningful as those which are explicitly mentioned or advocated.⁴⁴

Our starting point, then, must be the political history of the period. Two definitive events stand out, World War I and the Stock Market crash, with the Jazz Age in between. Of greater importance, however, is the underlying conflict of political norms, between the traditionalist or conservative position and the Progressive movement, and between an individualistic or essentially apolitical orientation and an activist and later collectivist approach. In the political sphere, then, there was intense conflict regarding America's proper role in world affairs, and the individual's appropriate involvement in political affairs.

In terms of social structure, we have already seen the period characterised as one of transition from the "Four Hundred" to the "Smart Set."⁴⁵ It is important to note that this designation, while significant enough in itself, refers to the social and economic élite and is only, as it were, the tip of the

iceberg. Underlying this transition, and in many ways intensifying it, is an increasing shift from an essentially agrarian to a predominantly industrial economy, and an intensifying transfer of values from rural to urban contexts. Again, it is the conflict of standards which will concern us, as the context within which Vanity Fair commented on glittering New York.

In the intellectual sphere, the period encompasses the end of the rise of modernism and its establishment as the predominant intellectual orientation. While modernism was essentially a European phenomenon, the movement did influence American intellectual life.

The literary history of the period was, of course, one of intense experimentation and change, and will be our major concern. Here too modernism was essentially European, and many major "modern" American writers not only did much of their work in Europe but were influenced by European writing. Vanity Fair was instrumental in introducing literary modernism to America, serving as a kind of mediator between European and native developments, and ranging broadly among the various literary conventions.

The period, too, witnessed an acceptance of a distinctive, self-consciously native American literature, and intense critical and popular preoccupation with rediscovering and extending a uniquely American literary tradition. The British tradition of letters was perceived as foreign, and many young writers and critics were self-consciously and militantly American in their themes and forms, even, if not especially, those who chose to live and write in

Europe. Here too New York as centre and symbol played an important role, for the literary nationalism was parallel to and in some ways made possible by the self-confidence of a growing urban financial élite. Again, the co-existence of an earlier "genteel" literary tradition with new movements of literary modernism and nationalism provided opposed aesthetic standards.

Finally, as might be expected, there were conflicting standards with respect to aesthetic phenomena themselves, an exploration of and controversy over what constitutes a work of art. With so much change and conflict in the political, social, intellectual, and literary realms, new kinds of aesthetic phenomena were created and evaluated, and aspects of "popular" culture were either passionately defended or thoroughly criticised as to their truly "artistic" nature.

The pages of Vanity Fair were filled with exploration and defence of new artistic forms previously relegated to the realms of vulgarity or "entertainment," and the magazine's reactions to phenomena like films, jazz, comics, and vaudeville were often opposed to the prevailing judgments of these new "lively arts," as Seldes called them. More importantly, the magazine itself, in its use of photos, ads, layout, and sketches, was part of a more general extension and even transformation of the idea of a magazine concerned with culture and taste.

The study will proceed, then, on the overall assumption of underlying conflicting standards. This was not only the context

of the purely aesthetic judgments made within the pages of Vanity Fair, but also the background for the extra-literary elements in the magazine for, like Isaac Bickerstaff in the eighteenth century, the staff of Vanity Fair concerned themselves with all elements of life.

The literary concerns of Vanity Fair will be placed within the context of the magazine as a whole, according to the degree of importance which literary matters played at various points in the magazine's history. The conflict between increasingly influential "popular" and still important "high" cultural standards will be examined within the pages of Vanity Fair itself, and as an important development of which the magazine itself was an example and contributing factor. This will include representative accounts of specific numbers and pages of the magazine, to illustrate the interrelation of various parts of the magazine, its underlying significance, and its possible influence as a general arbiter of taste.

The major portion of the study will, of course, be concerned with the literary pages of the magazine. In order to discern the particular standards underlying the literary judgments propounded in Vanity Fair, some account will be taken of the wider literary context in which Vanity Fair's reviewers and critics functioned. There will be a description of those literary works, both serious and popular, which appeared from 1913 to 1936, and of the critical developments in the period; by comparing the actual literary texts and critical approaches in

existence at the time with those which Vanity Fair chose to review or recommend, we will have some idea of the particular norms which constituted the "taste" of the magazine.

Detailed attention will, of course, be paid to the literary articles and reviews themselves. The contents of the reviews and literary articles will be examined, to determine the reception of and attitude towards serious and more ephemeral literature; this will provide some indication of the taste and historical significance of the reviews and literary articles, and a basis for evaluation of the magazine's self-proclaimed role as arbiter of literary taste. The criteria of judgment will be taken into account, according to differences at various historical points and among individual reviewers; these critical norms will be related to the literary evaluations which they produced.

Finally, an attempt will be made to characterise Vanity Fair as an "arbiter of taste," and to determine the sensibility underlying the magazine in its various periods. Was the periodical a true mediator among the various possible standards of its time? This question will be related to that of Vanity Fair's influence, especially on other magazines of the period: was it feasible to be an "arbiter of taste" in the modern period, and could such an attempt have any lasting significance?

Chapter II

History of Publication and Staff

Vanity Fair is a decidedly cultural magazine. It is very refined and perhaps more a magazine for the rich and exotic than for everyday people. . . .¹

. . . Vanity Fair was, to use a social phrase, in the swim -- not ahead of its time.²

The Dial . . . regretted that its [the Freeman's] demise had left America with only five readable magazines, "five gems" on the "five digits" of Columbia's "patriotically mottled hand": The Dial, "lambent on the index fingure," the Nation and the New Republic "in the safe middle (as usual)," the Yale Review "on the thumb" which never points, and "on the little finger Vanity Fair."³

In September, 1913 a new magazine appeared in New York.

Called Dress and Vanity Fair, the periodical was a pot-pourri of men's fashions, theatre reviews, sports features, and society photos. Published by Condé Nast, the magazine also listed Nast as editor, art director, and contributing writer.

The name Vanity Fair was not a new one in magazine publishing history, and in addition to various British magazines by that name, the most famous of which appeared in London in the nineteenth century and published caricatures of political and literary personages, earlier American magazines had also borne that name. According to Mott's definitive history, the first American Vanity Fair was a weekly which appeared from December 31, 1859 to July 4, 1863.⁴ A magazine with that name reappeared in 1896, after a series of transformations of the Weekly Sports (1889) into Sports, Music, Drama (1892), the Saturday Standard (1895), and a

supplement to the Standard called the Standard Quarterly. The magazine existed as Vanity Fair from 1896 until January, 1902, when it was reincorporated into the Standard.⁵ Mott notes in his history, which ends at 1905, that after "various changes" the magazine became the "distinguished Vanity Fair of 1913-36."⁶

These "various changes" to which Mott refers are connected to the publishing career of Condé Nast. In 1909 Nast, who had been the advertising and business manager of Collier's,⁷ purchased Vogue magazine, which had been founded in New York in 1892.⁸ He also purchased House and Garden and Le Costume Royal and, in 1913, acquired Dress magazine. In September, 1913, the first number of the new magazine Dress and Vanity Fair appeared on the newsstands.

Before it was purchased by Nast and renamed Dress and Vanity Fair, Dress magazine had been primarily concerned with men's fashions. The first few issues of the new Dress and Vanity Fair continued this interest in the latest men's apparel, while gradually introducing more features concerned with literature and the arts. By the fifth issue of January, 1914, the name was changed to Vanity Fair, still with Nast as the sole member of the masthead.

In that issue a new feature, which would prove permanent, appeared: "In Vanity Fair," an editorial commentary page. Nast used this page in the first issue of Vanity Fair under its new name to announce a new direction for the magazine: "There will be an emphasis on art, literature and the stage; there will be an

increased emphasis on feminine fashion; and a new section, designed to appeal to male readers, will cover sports such as football and golf."⁹ Nast added that the format and emphasis of the magazine were still undecided, and he appealed to his readership for direction. This lack of clear definition was evident in the masthead of the issue for January, 1914, which listed no editor, but only Nast as publisher, a Business Manager, and an Advertising Manager.

The February, 1914 issue had the same format, but in that number's "In Vanity Fair" Nast announced the appointment of a new editor, Frank Crowninshield, who would assume editorial duties to begin with the following issue. Crowninshield, who had been publisher of The Bookman and The Metropolitan Magazine, an editor of Munsey's, art critic for The Century, and a literary agent in London,¹⁰ did indeed assume editorship with the March, 1914 issue of Vanity Fair, and the magazine appeared with Nast as publisher and Crowninshield as editor until its incorporation into Vogue magazine in March, 1936.

In all, 264 issues of Vanity Fair and Dress and Vanity Fair appeared, with a circulation peak in 1931 of c. 100,000/month, and its cultural and critical peak in the 1920's, when staff members included Edmund Wilson, Gilbert Seldes, and Aldous Huxley. There apparently existed a British edition of Vanity Fair, also edited by Crowninshield,¹¹ called The Patrician, which appeared from 1919 to 1946, but nothing is known of its history or contents other than the mere fact of its existence.¹²

A) Business Matters

One of Bickerstaff's first correspondents, Ephraim Bedstaff, commented in No. 21 on the moral effects of the already encroaching advertisements [which appeared on the bottom of the pages of The Tatler]: "The lower Part of you, that is the Advertisements, is dead; and these have risen for these Ten Days last past, so that they now take up almost a whole Paragraph. Pray, Sir, do you Endeavour to drive this Distemper as much as possible to the extreme Parts, and keep it there, as wise Folks do the gout; for if it once gets into your Stomach, it will soon fly up into your Head, and you are a dead Man." The first number of the Restorer (17 August 1711) remarked that "the Publick Papers are apt to Mortify from their Posteriors upwards thro' Advertisements."¹³

In order to define the nature and orientation of any magazine, two separate factors must be taken into account: the business or commercial aspect, and the editorial and features policy. The business aspect clearly affects the editorial policy, and it is in fact the degree of importance of the commercial aspect which defines the nature of the editorial and critical component.

Theodore Peterson, in his excellent study of twentieth-century American magazines, designed to continue Mott's history into the modern period, states that "the low-priced popular magazine of national circulation was born in the nineteenth century as America made the transition from an agrarian to an industrial economy."¹⁴ With changes in the methods of distribution of consumer goods, and an increasing dependence on advertising, magazines were joined with the system of marketing, and "as the volume of advertising increased, magazines grew in numbers and in circulation."¹⁵ The twenties marked the inception of the truly mass magazines, for "magazines of mammoth circulation became commonplace after World

War I as a result of the expanding market, technological advances, and improvements in the logistics of magazine publishing."¹⁶

Peterson points out, however, that mass circulation magazines were often hampered editorially by their financial dependence on large amounts of advertising revenues, and smaller magazines were often in a freer position to experiment and change with less financial risk:

Although a few magazines of large circulation carried the bulk of advertising, they were by no means invulnerable to competition. The magazine industry was relatively hospitable to those with talent and fresh ideas, and the new publisher often could experiment with less financial risk than the publisher of an established magazine. As new publishers introduced new magazines reflecting the changes in American life, many of the magazines which had once led in circulation and prestige were driven out of business. . . .¹⁷

Circulation figures and volume of advertising alone do not, therefore, indicate the degree of commercialization of a magazine; as Peterson points out, smaller more experimental magazines, less dependent on large advertising commitments, were often in a position to compete effectively in the commercial magazine market.

It is important to bear in mind that, in the history of magazine publishing, advertising has always played a crucial role. Although it is outside the boundaries of our particular concern, the history of the eighteenth-century British Tatler exhibits the same connection with the commercial taint of advertising, and the letter to its editor quoted above reveals an early concern with the effects of advertising. What must be remembered is that

magazines have always relied partly on advertising revenues for their existence; James Playsted Wood, in his study of American magazines, points out that it is advertising which has supported American magazines from the beginning of the nineteenth century, and even some literary magazines depended on advertising revenues for their existence.¹⁸

Wood also points out that in some magazines, especially those aimed at specific audiences, the ads are more important than the copy.¹⁹ Wood cites as example, significantly for our purposes, Vogue magazine, the financial mainstay of the Condé Nast publishing house, where the fashion ads were often the major attraction for the readers, specifically perceived to be women concerned with fashion. In a magazine like Vogue, aimed directly and consciously at a female fashion market, the distinction between advertising and copy becomes meaningless, and the market for fashion news and advice created by the editorial policies of the magazine becomes synonymous with the market for its advertisers, manufacturers of clothes and cosmetics for women.

With Nast's other publication Vanity Fair, however, we find a more complex situation. For what exactly is the link between a magazine which purports to be an arbiter of taste in all realms of life, including the literary and artistic, and its advertising? This is an important question, for the potential advertising market may, in fact, determine editorial stance, as Peterson points out is the case with mass circulation magazines.

Nicholas Joost, in his history of The Dial, characterised

Vanity Fair as "candidly, a business venture," a popularising rather than avant-garde magazine, reprinting things which had already appeared in progressive and avant-garde journals like The Dial;²⁰ in short, a magazine which contributed to the embourgeoisement of the avant-garde.

It is certainly true that the reason given by the publisher for the demise of Vanity Fair and its incorporation into Vogue was decline in advertising revenue.²¹ It is also true however that advertising and circulation figures throughout Vanity Fair's history were never high, in no way ever achieving mass circulation proportions; and, in fact, "according to one report [Newsweek, 7 (January 4, 1936) 31], the magazine had shown a profit in only one year of its existence."²² What are we to make of these conflicting facts? Loss of advertising revenue was the official reason given for the discontinuation of the magazine; but the magazine was published for almost twenty-three years although it showed a profit in only one. Can Joost be correct in his assessment of Vanity Fair as a "business venture"?

So far, we have considered Vanity Fair from the point of view of commercial magazines, noting that extent of circulation is not necessarily an index of commercial viability. There is, however, another way to conduct a magazine, as a so-called "little magazine," and these too were very prevalent in the early part of the twentieth century.

In their definitive study of the "little magazines," Hoffman and his colleagues provide the following definition of the genre:

A little magazine is a magazine designed to print artistic work which for reasons of commercial expediency is not acceptable to the money-minded periodicals or presses. . . . Such periodicals are, therefore, noncommercial by intent, for their altruistic ideal usually rules out the hope of financial profit.²³

They point out, however, that a non-commercial intent alone is not sufficient to ensure a "little magazine," for some commercially unviable, or privately-subsidised, magazines may represent conventional or traditional literary taste; a true "little magazine," therefore, must also exhibit the "freedom to experiment or to seek out unknown writers,"²⁴ and "a spirit of conscientious revolt against the guardians of public taste."²⁵ For Hoffman and his colleagues, then, the true "little magazine" represents an "advance guard"²⁶ of literary taste; they also point out, and we may note this as a confirmation of Peterson's comment about the flexibility of commercial magazine publishers, that commercial magazines will indeed publish avant-garde works once these works have proven themselves to be commercially feasible.²⁷

Thus neither commercial motive or lack of it, nor avant-garde experimentalism, alone define a "little magazine" or a commercial market-oriented magazine. Rather, both aspects must be taken into account. The actual "taste" of Vanity Fair, its position with respect to the most avant-garde writing and theory, will of course comprise a major portion of this study. At this point it is necessary, however, to determine to what extent the

"taste," as evidenced by editorial policy and literary judgments, was influenced by commercial concerns.

According to Jeanne Ballot Winham, who was personal secretary to Crowninshield throughout the twenties and thirties, the "advertising department was totally separate from the editorial department."²⁸ A form letter of 1935 sent by the magazine in response to enquiries bears this out: "The business and advertising departments are entirely separate from the editorial department."²⁹ This form letter, dated only four months before the end of the magazine's history, also contains information about circulation:

Vanity Fair's present circulation is well over 90,000 — paid. We have never in the past gone after a large circulation, particularly as the magazine has been edited to appeal to a rather limited class, but now we are trying to make it a little more popular, and hope to build up an even larger circulation.³⁰

From these statements it is clear that commercial considerations were not a part of editorial thinking. In fact, Jeanne Ballot Winham partly attributes the magazine's demise specifically to the fact that the advertising and editorial departments were totally separate;³¹ since no conscious efforts were made to provide a magazine suitable for large-volume advertising, less advertising revenue was available towards the end of Vanity Fair's history. As Winham put it, Vanity Fair "had nothing to offer the advertisers"³² in the thirties, as opposed to magazines aimed at a specific market, like Vogue with its preoccupation with women's fashions.

According to another Condé Nast employee, Paul Bonner, Jr.,

advertising revenues in general declined during the Depression. General interest magazines were the hardest hit; those linked to an industry, as Vogue was linked to the fashion industry, and thus offering more direct benefit to advertisers, fared better.³³

Vanity Fair was not, then, a specifically commercially-oriented magazine. In fact, according to Bonner, "Condé Nast gave Crowninshield Vanity Fair to play with, as his special project, in gratitude for having introduced him to New York society, and eased his entry into the Social Register."³⁴ The orientation of the magazine with respect to commercial concerns is best summed up by comparison with its chief imitator and competitor: "Vanity Fair was edited by a talented amateur (namely, Crownie), while the New Yorker was edited by a talented professional."³⁵

It is certainly true that, albeit an amateur, Crowninshield was extremely talented. In his first year as editor, the circulation of the magazine nearly doubled, from 13,856/month average circulation in 1913 to 23,833/month average circulation in 1914.³⁶

It is interesting to note that the masthead of the magazine did not even list non-editorial executive staff for most of its history: a Business Manager appeared from 1913 to 1922, and an Advertising Manager from 1913 to May, 1917. For the rest of the issues, only an editorial staff, and Art Director, appeared. This fact too suggests a lack of importance of commercial considerations in the editorial functioning of the magazine, or

at least an unwillingness to present any such commercial orientation as part of the public image of the magazine.

It is certainly true that Vanity Fair did offer commercial services to its readers; when we examine the features of the magazine in detail we will find abundant concern with consumer goods and services, and this is in fact appropriate for a magazine concerned with good taste; the crucial question at this point, however, is not whether Vanity Fair was concerned with the products and services of commerce, but to what extent its judgments were directed or controlled by this concern.

There is, in fact, only one instance of editorial pressure exerted by someone not on the staff of the magazine, and that was in the celebrated departure from the magazine of Dorothy Parker, Robert Benchley, and Robert Sherwood in 1920 because of the intervention of Flo Ziegfeld. Even this incident, however, had to do with the general concern of the magazine as a whole with the world of theatre (Ziegfeld threatened to prevent all his actresses and writers from any contact with the magazine -- interviews or photos -- unless an unfavourable review by Parker of his wife, Billie Burke, was retracted) rather than with advertising revenues, and it has even been suggested that the unfavourable review was little more than an available pretext for removing Dorothy Parker from the staff of the magazine.³⁷

It is clear that, while advertising certainly played its part in the magazine, and was one source of financial backing,³⁸ it in no way directed or even, for that matter, supported the

magazine, which only showed a profit in one year of its existence. While the ultimate death of the magazine may have been finally and directly caused by loss of advertising revenues, the motive for publishing the magazine throughout its history was never, as Joost wrongly asserts, primarily commercial, and editorial decisions were not made from the perspective of pleasing advertisers.

There is another way to please advertisers, however, aside from direct editorial comment or promotion of goods, as in magazines tied to a specific market or industry. That is by attaining wide circulation; the usual means by which commercial considerations influence a magazine's editorial policy is through the desire to achieve widespread readership, thus offering potential advertisers a large audience for their advertisements.

It is important to note that, in purely financial or commercial terms, it is advertising revenue and not circulation that determines the fate of a magazine. Large circulation figures do not ensure financial success, as sales alone do not cover the costs of production. But large circulation usually attracts advertising, so that financial considerations are most often the motive for attempts to increase circulation. As has been noted, however, smaller-circulation magazines are often in a freer position to experiment.

In terms of circulation, Vanity Fair was never hugely successful. A comparison of its circulation figures³⁹ with those of other general-interest magazines of the period (see Table 1)

TABLE 1
COMPARISON OF MAGAZINE CIRCULATIONS

	VANITY FAIR	SATURDAY EVENING POST	McCALL'S	LADIES' HOME JOURNAL	TIME	NEW YORKER	VOGUE
1917	69,322						119,676
1919	68,273	2,037,018	1,182,588	1,873,823			
1920	81,628	2,062,335	1,345,550	1,915,922			113,296
1924	77,301				43,743		128,366
1925	80,644	2,443,542	2,112,377	2,329,477			
1926	82,121				111,026	42,861	137,677
1930	79,505	2,890,988	2,522,738	2,574,145	305,551	101,984	130,933
1935	88,868	2,808,331	2,400,374	2,604,927	553,577	127,959	155,476

Source: Audit Bureau of Circulation figures provided by Harold Meyer, Vice-President, Condé Nast, 1976.

effectively demolishes the charge of "commercialism."

With a peak circulation of under 100,000/month, Vanity Fair was clearly far behind the "mass" magazines like the Saturday Evening Post and the Ladies' Home Journal, which averaged 2 million/month in the same years. Even magazines which carried a great deal of fiction at the time, like McCall's, had between 1 and 2 million readers/month. The New Yorker was Vanity Fair's closest competitor: starting in 1926 with much the same appeal as Vanity Fair, it made its strides in the thirties, when Vanity Fair declined. An interesting comparison is with Vogue, the money-making staple of the Condé Nast house: while its circulation was not all that much larger than Vanity Fair's, it had great success with the advertisers, thus bearing out the dictum stated earlier that it is advertising rather than circulation which determines the financial success of a magazine.

The magazine which best made the transition from the twenties to the thirties was Time, which increased readership steadily from its inception in 1924, and achieved a million readers by 1942; Time evidently established a more successful format than Vanity Fair for a magazine which attempted to deal with a full range of subjects, and its success is instructive.⁴⁰ Vanity Fair's circulation was, in fact, closest to that of Mencken's American Mercury, which had an average of 77,000 readers/month at its peak in 1927;⁴¹ a typical "little magazine," The Freeman, never acquired more than 10,000 subscribers.⁴²

While its circulation record was better than most "little

magazines," then, and certainly respectable enough, Vanity Fair never even approached the extent of readership of a typical, commercially-oriented "mass" magazine of its period.

One further fact suggests that Vanity Fair's main orientation was not a commercial one: contributors to the magazine were paid very low rates. The Condé Nast offices in New York maintain a file of marked copies of Vanity Fair, with rates paid to contributors written in the margin of the articles. It is instructive to examine some of these payments, while remembering that this was the era when F. Scott Fitzgerald was turning out quick stories for the Saturday Evening Post at the rate of one to two thousand dollars per story.

In the July issue of 1925, Alexander Woollcott received \$125 for a drama review (page 32); Gilbert Seldes was paid \$110 for an article on Ring Lardner (page 45); Carl Van Vechten received \$125 for a piece on Negro folk-songs (page 52). In the issue of November, 1925 Sherwood Anderson received \$100 for an article on painting (page 57), and e.e. cummings \$100 for a satire on American poetry (published under a pseudonym, on page 64). Virgil Thomson received \$100 for a piece on orchestra conducting (August, 1925, page 37), Walter Lippmann \$125 for an article on the governor of New York (December, 1925, page 37), and Theodore Dreiser \$150 for an essay on painting (December, 1925, page 55).

In the mid-twenties, the average rate was \$75-100, with major writers getting \$100-150. By the early thirties, these

rates had increased to \$100-150 for most contributions, with "star" writers getting \$250-300 (for rates in the thirties, see Table 2).

In a time when the commercial mass magazines were paying \$1000-2000 for a contribution, Vanity Fair was clearly never a magazine which attracted writers by its high rates of payment. The motive for appearing in the pages of the magazine was never financial; it was the editorial policy of the magazine, its tone, its "taste," which attracted contributors. To understand what that "taste" was, it will be necessary to consider the staff of editors and feature writers.

Table 2

PAYMENTS TO CONTRIBUTORS

AUTHOR	ISSUE	PAYMENT
Aldous Huxley	January 1930, page 54	£35 (\$169.53)
Sherwood Anderson	January 1930, page 44	300
G. J. Nathan	January 1930, page 36	300
Walter Lipmann	February 1930, page 27	200
Djuna Barnes	March 1930, page 69	100
D. H. Lawrence (poems)	March 1930, page 38	no payment
Douglas Fairbanks, Jr.	June 1930, page 53	100
Harold Nicholson	July 1933, page 12	250
Robert Sherwood (a poem)	July 1933, page 37	150
Paul Gallico	August 1933, page 40	225
André Maurois	November 1933, page 15	250
Antoine de St-Exupéry	November 1933, page 33	150
Erskine Caldwell	November 1933, page 37	150

Source: Marked copies of Vanity Fair in Condé Nast offices

B). Staff and Contributors

1) Life at Vanity Fair

Life on Vanity Fair was as smooth and chic as a Noel Coward drawing-room comedy, and with its own undercurrent of passion. If it had ever been written as a play, it could have been called Anna Karenina on the Riviera, or A Streetcar Named the Ritz.⁴³

The rebels of the Twenties . . . had always seemed strange to me: without charity I thought most of them were no more than a classy lot of brilliant comics, performing at low fees for the society rich.⁴⁴

Attempting to discover the exact history of Vanity Fair's staff, even the mere dates of their stay with the magazine, is like trying to pin down the moral of one of its own satirical pieces; one is never sure what is truth and what exaggeration, or even intentionally misleading. Since the magazine's files were destroyed by the publisher sometime before the fifties,⁴⁵ one is dependent on the information contained in the pages of Vanity Fair itself, and whatever accounts by former staff members can be found.

The magazine itself is often misleading: contributors were prone to using pseudonyms, and names were left off the masthead during internal office rivalries. Edna St. Vincent Millay, for example, did a series of short stories under the name of Nancy Boyd,⁴⁶ and Helen Lawrenson's name did not appear for the first ten months she was Managing Editor.⁴⁷

Brief glimpses of life at the magazine or information about one or another staff member appear in memoirs, especially of the twenties, but the particular editorial position attributed is often wrong or chronologically incorrect; this is perhaps

inevitable in memoirs, where the author often relies solely on memory of a conversation or brief meeting. Conflicting versions of certain controversial episodes, like the departure of Dorothy Parker, Robert Benchley, and Robert Sherwood, exist, while entire portions of the magazine's history remain unrecorded.

Neither the editor nor the publisher left collections of papers, and the biographies of various contributors often provide little information about the magazine short of an amusing anecdote or two. To date, only two former Vanity Fair staff members have published substantial accounts of their time with the magazine: Helen Lawrenson, then Helen Brown Norden,⁴⁸ and Margaret Case Harriman, then Margaret Case Morgan.⁴⁹ Clare Boothe Luce, an instrumental figure during the magazine's development in the thirties, is saving her material for a projected book of memoirs.⁵⁰

The accounts of both Harriman and Lawrenson emphasise the personalities of Frank Crowninshield and Condé Nast who, they claim, set the tone of the magazine. Although they were associated with Vanity Fair at different times Harriman starting in the ~~twenties~~ and Lawrenson in the thirties, they both cast Crowninshield as the pivotal figure.

Margaret Case Harriman, who would later write for the New Yorker, was the daughter of Frank Case, the owner of the Algonquin Hotel famous for its "Round Table" of New York wits. She started out as drama editor at Vanity Fair sometime in the twenties (she does not record the exact year),⁵¹ and stayed with the magazine for six years. Her account of her duties is interesting: "As

drama editor . . . I assembled the theatre pages, wrote the captions, and escorted actors and actresses to Edward Steichen's studio to be photographed for the magazine."⁵²

Vanity Fair's editorial offices were then at 19 W 44th Street, close to the Algonquin at 59,⁵³ and Crowninshield was one of the "supporting players"⁵⁴ at the famous daily luncheons in the Rose Room. One of the "male leads"⁵⁵ at the Algonquin Round Table, Robert Benchley, characterised Crowninshield as "Mr. Vanity Fair"⁵⁶ when, as managing editor of the magazine, he wrote a profile of his editor. The profile contained an interesting description of Crowninshield's editorial policy and style:

He believes that the hope of a revival of Good Taste lies in those men and women who are college graduates, have some money . . . who do not consider it high-brow to be able to understand other languages than American -- and baseball. . . . He makes up in some degree for this adherence to the old form by his willingness for any writer who writes entertainingly, to say practically anything he wants to say in "Vanity Fair" -- so long as he says it in evening clothes.⁵⁷

Benchley's mention of evening clothes, and of Crowninshield's willingness to allow "entertaining" writers free rein, is characteristic of most accounts of the man. As Harriman put it, "Frank Crowninshield was Vanity Fair,"⁵⁸ and the magazine, like "Crowny," as he was known, was an amalgam of high-society snobbishness and eclectic interest.

Crowninshield himself once explained his attraction to high society:

My interest in society -- at times so pronounced that the word 'snob' comes a little to mind -- derives from the fact that I like an immense number of things which society, money, and position bring in their train: painting, tapestries, rare books, smart dresses, dances, gardens, country houses, correct cuisine, and pretty women.⁵⁹

This interest in society was reflected in his club activities; not content with membership in several exclusive New York clubs, including the Knickerbocker, Crowninshield "the born clubman"⁶⁰ also helped found others like the Cavendish, Atlantic Beach, Coffee House, Dutch Treat, and West Side Tennis Clubs.⁶¹ According to Harriman, he "knew so many people, and was in such demand as toastmaster at dinners that someone once said, 'Frank Crowninshield has introduced everybody who has ever been introduced, and in most cases he introduced them to each other.'⁶²

This "man about town" existence had its benefits for Vanity Fair, of course, as Crowninshield was able to draw on his wide circle of well-placed or famous friends for the pages of the magazine:

It was always, for example, easy for him to persuade Joseph H. Coate to write for us, or Irene Castle to pose for photographs, or John Sargent to permit our use of his sketches, or Aldous Huxley to work on our staff or Joe Louis to pass an hour or two before the cameras in our studio . . . or Isadora Duncan to help in a benefit dance recital. . . .⁶³

But Crowninshield was by no means a social gadfly. He was, for example, "shrewd"⁶⁴ in his dealings with writers, and would charm with his tales of life among the Four Hundred "some celebrated author whom Crownay was anxious to entrap, such as André Maurois, Michael Arlen, or Thomas Wolfe."⁶⁵ After including

the sought-after contributor as guest of honour at the weekly office luncheon, he would regale him with anecdotes about the latest dinner party or ball. "Nearly always the celebrated author was so dazzled by these glimpses into high life that he found himself agreeing to work for Vanity Fair at a lower rate than he had planned."⁶⁶

The quality possessed by Crowninshield which is most often mentioned in various accounts was his innate ability to spot quality, in painting, in writing, in people. It was this unerring "good taste" which was singled out for tribute, for example, in the New York Herald Tribune's obituary when he died:

But there was a greater quality in him than any external gift. For lack of a better word, let us say that it was taste -- but taste in a broader sense than it is commonly used. His sense of what was true and right and beautiful stood at the base of his character. Because of it, he knew instinctively a real human being from a fake -- wherever he met him. His taste in writing came through antennae not less sensitive. It must have been the same confident, relaxed approach which led him so unerringly through the maze of modern art that ultimately paid off in solid dollars to the delight of his friends and the consternation of his critics.⁶⁷

Crowninshield was in fact a noted exponent of modern art. He was one of the seven founders of the New York Museum of Modern Art,⁶⁸ and himself a great collector. It was in fact his collection of modern art which allowed him to weather the crash of 1929 when others, including Condé Nast, were almost ruined financially.⁶⁹

Crowninshield and Nast disagreed about the merits of modern art, and the editor spent a good part of his time arguing with his publisher over the desirability of including full-page colour

reproductions of the modern masters in Vanity Fair. Crowny finally won, and from 1921 to 1936 this became a famous feature of the magazine.⁷⁰

Nast never understood Crowny's championing of modern art although, ironically, as the publisher of Vanity Fair it was he who ultimately achieved recognition for the magazine's influential role in introducing the new French painting to America:

Condé was proud of Vanity Fair but he never quite understood it. He thought Crowny was insane to publish what was then called "modern art": Picasso, Rouault, Van Gogh, etc. "The advertisers think it distorted and decadent," he said. It was ironic and unfair that he was awarded the Légion d'honneur for introducing modern French art in America, when it was Crowny who was solely responsible but never received the credit.⁷¹

Crowninshield's great talent, as has already been mentioned, was his ability to discover new talent. In addition to his instrumental role, especially through the pages of Vanity Fair, in introducing modern art to America, he also had an instinct for writing talent. Among the writers whose first jobs were with Vanity Fair were Edmund Wilson, Edna St. Vincent Millay, John Peale Bishop, Robert S. Sherwood, Robert Benchley, and Dorothy Parker. The contributions of these and other regular writers for Vanity Fair will be examined in greater detail. For now, it is important to note that it was Crowninshield's enlightened editorship, and Nast's enlightened publishing, which consisted mainly in allowing his editor a free hand, which permitted such an array of talent. As Helen Lawrenson puts it, Vanity Fair

was undeniably a beautiful and amusing magazine. Its virtues stemmed primarily from Crowninshield. He set the tone. He had an unerring eye for recognizing new and unknown talent. (Noel Coward told me a few years ago that when he was first in New York in 1921, young and broke, it was Crowninshield who encouraged him and bought short stories from him, "thereby probably saving me from starvation.") . . . In many cases he didn't wait until people became famous. By putting them in Vanity Fair he made them famous. . . .⁷²

The business of putting out Vanity Fair was apparently as light-hearted as the pages of the magazine, and reminiscences by former staff members suggest a slightly madcap party, so prone to high-jinks that the Vanity Fair offices were finally moved to another floor after complaints by a neighbouring magazine's staff:⁷³

I am reasonably sure there has never been another office like the Vanity Fair one. It certainly spoiled me for ever working in any normal place. The informality was due to Crowny's personality. It is impossible to imagine him ever cracking the whip or talking about a "chain of command" or maintaining any semblance of the authoritarian discipline to which magazine editors were, and still are, addicted. He was too much the humorous dilettante. Dorothy Parker, Robert Benchley, and Robert Sherwood all left the magazine before my time. According to Crowny they were an obstreperous lot who sat around making wisecracks and never did anything on time. He told one story about Benchley, whose arrival at work became later and later, until Crowny felt obliged to suggest that he mend his ways. The next morning, he came in even tardier than usual and when Crowny mildly inquired the reason, Benchley said, "I'm going to tell you the truth. I set the alarm and got up early, but on my way here I was attacked by five lions."⁷⁴

Before proceeding to a detailed account of Vanity Fair's managing staff and regular contributors through its various periods, some mention must be made of the last years at the magazine, before it was merged with another of Nast's publications,

Vogue, in 1936.

From the time that Nast hired Crowninshield's editor of Vanity Fair, the publisher had given his editor a free hand, and Crowninshield's personal interests and taste had made the magazine, especially in the twenties, an exponent of whatever was new and interesting in Society and the arts. Crowninshield, as his "man about town" nature would suggest, had little interest in political matters, and events in the world around him were intriguing only insofar as they exhibited breeding or aesthetic innovation, or foibles fit for mild satire. Although Vanity Fair was never a resounding commercial success, its style and taste made it as much the "toast of the town" as its editor, and Nast was content to use some of the profits from his other publications, especially Vogue, to help support this rather more exotic plant.

To use a phrase then current, Vanity Fair was "in the swim" of the aesthetic concerns which were so central in the twenties, and if it was not the financial mainstay of Nast's enterprises, it could at least afford him some measure of cultural prestige. As long as his other publications were successful enough to allow for Vanity Fair's existence, Nast was willing to indulge in a break-even publication which was in the midst of the aesthetic concerns of its time.

By the early thirties, however, the situation had changed. For one thing, Vanity Fair was no longer the only magazine of its kind. Although a more detailed account of other magazines of the period will be provided later, we should note at this point

that the New Yorker had been founded in 1926, and by the thirties was a formidable rival, acquiring not only readers but also staff from Vanity Fair. In addition, in 1930 Randolph Hearst, Nast's perennial competitor (Harper's Bazaar vs Vogue; Home and Field, later House Beautiful vs House and Garden; Town and Country vs Vanity Fair), purchased The Smart Set "with the intention of converting it into a smart competitor of Vanity Fair."⁷⁵ Although this project eventually fell through, it would presumably have concerned Nast at the time.

More importantly, Nast's fortunes in the thirties were not what they had been in the twenties. As has already been noted, he suffered greatly from the Crash of '29, and his publication enterprises, too, encountered problems:

During the depression, just about the time he was planning to retire, Nast lost much of his personal fortune on the stock market, and his company suffered financial difficulties as well. Gross revenues of the company dropped from \$10,251,000 in 1929 to \$5,558,000 in 1933, net income from \$320,000 to a deficit of \$501,000. Lord Camrose, a British press lord, invested in the company to help put it on its feet. Nast spent the thirties rebuilding his personal and corporate fortunes.⁷⁶

Added to these changes in the personal and professional fortunes of Nast, and thus of Vanity Fair's immediate economic context, was the fact that the world around the magazine had changed as well. With the depression, aesthetic and cultural concerns no longer held the centrality they had enjoyed in the twenties; political and economic concerns began to receive more intellectual and even artistic attention. Crowninshield continued to be interested in matters of art and taste; but Nast

could no longer afford to allow him full control over the contents of Vanity Fair.

In 1933, Nast decided that Vanity Fair was "too frivolous,"⁷⁷ and hired John Franklin Carter, Jr., a Washington State Department official, to act as part-time editorial advisor, and to write on politics under the name of "Jay Franklin." Among Franklin's many pieces for Vanity Fair was an article called "Wanted: A New Party," in which he coined the phrase "New Deal" to describe Roosevelt's policies.

This change in direction was utterly foreign to Crowninshield, and Clare Boothe Luce (then Brokaw), managing editor of Vanity Fair during that period, has described Crowninshield's relation to the new political emphasis:

'Twixt card tricks and African sculpture, Mr. Crowninshield laid glibly before the editors, for their distracted consideration, the serious articles on labor, politics, and science which Mr. Nast was then ordering from Jay Franklin, Walter Lippmann, and Matthew Woll, in the days when not only Vanity Fair was dying, but the very world it stood for. Mr. Crowninshield, alas, was not the man to outflank the world of Mrs. Astor and Mrs. Van Rensselaer, even with the help of Matthew Woll. He was spiritually, if not⁷⁸ intellectually, too much a part of that world.

Mrs. Luce was by no means a neutral observer, for she was herself instrumental in the magazine's shift towards greater political content. Not surprisingly, the question of the degree of political content appropriate for Vanity Fair was a controversial issue, and the lines seem to have been drawn between two camps -- Nast as publisher and Luce as managing editor favouring increased political emphasis, Crowninshield as editor and various members

of his staff, including Lawrenson, Harriman, and Winham, favouring a continuation of the old aesthetic emphasis. The magazine's increased political concerns, and the nature of those concerns, altered the tone of the magazine and life in its editorial offices. And Clare Boothe Brokaw (later Luce) seems to have been a central figure in the conflict.

Clare Boothe Brokaw joined the Condé Nast offices in 1930 as a writer for Vogue, and quickly moved across the hall as a writer for Vanity Fair.⁷⁹ Among her numerous pieces for Vanity Fair were satirical sketches about Park Avenue Society and the nouveaux riches who aspired to join it, which were later published under the title Stuffed Shirts. The rubric introducing the volume could stand as well for Vanity Fair's attitude towards social climbers, and might have been applied to Brokaw herself by some of her opponents:

"Things are seldom as they seem,
Skim milk masquerades as cream."⁸⁰

Accounts of Brokaw's exploits abound, partly because she later acquired fame as a playwright, wife of Henry Luce, and eventually Congresswoman and U.S. ambassador to Italy, but also because her tactics were interesting and amusing in themselves. She acquired her job at Condé Nast, for example, by dropping into the Vogue offices when both Nast and Edna Woolman Chase, the editor, were absent, and announcing that she was a new member of the staff. The publisher and editor each assumed that the other had hired her, and Brokaw was already installed before the ruse

was discovered.⁸¹

One of her first tasks on Vanity Fair was to write the caption for Henry Luce's nomination to the "Hall of Fame" in 1930,⁸² and by 1935 she was married to him.⁸³ With her marriage to Luce, Brokaw created an interesting link between the Nast and Luce publishing enterprises.

In 1933, Brokaw had suggested in a memo to Condé Nast that he purchase the American Life, then a magazine of humour, and convert it to a glossy picture magazine patterned after the Parisian Vu.⁸⁴ Although Condé did not pursue this scheme, in November, 1936 Luce's corporation, Time, Inc., published the first number of a remodelled Life, "which within a few weeks was selling a million copies."⁸⁵ It is difficult to ascertain with certainty, despite Kobler's assurance,⁸⁶ that Clare was responsible for this new publishing venture, for "Luce had had the idea of publishing a picture magazine . . . as early as 1932."⁸⁷ We may, however, suspect that the wife influenced her husband to pursue a scheme which both had thought of independently. And it is certainly true that the techniques of photo reproduction for which Vanity Fair was famous, and with which Clare was familiar through her experience with Vanity Fair, helped to create the cultural context in which Life would flourish.

Although Clare Brokaw was with Vanity Fair for only three years, 1930-1933, she exerted a great deal of influence. In

her profile of Mrs. Luce,⁸⁸ Helen Lawrenson described her various techniques for gaining the support of influential men. Condé Nast was certainly on that list, and Brokaw was soon able to shape the emphasis of Vanity Fair by enlisting the publisher's aid in her conflicts with the editor. By January, 1932 Brokaw was associate editor of Vanity Fair,⁸⁹ and when Donald Freeman died in a car crash she succeeded him as Managing Editor.⁹⁰ Although Lawrenson describes Brokaw as "an excellent managing editor, alert, industrious, resourceful, brimming with ideas, easy to work for, always serene and cheerful,"⁹¹ she also quotes Crowninshield's description of her as "a creature combining the various capacities of a superfortress, a battleship and a tank."⁹²

It is not surprising that Crowninshield was sensitive to the more forceful aspects of Brokaw's personality, for he was on the losing side of their conflict over the appropriate concerns for Vanity Fair. Crowny was essentially a man of taste, concerned with aesthetic and cultural matters, and oriented towards the pursuits and pastimes of Society; Brokaw, younger and extremely ambitious, took an active interest in political and economic matters.

While many intellectuals, and New York periodicals, were staunchly left-wing in the early thirties, both Condé Nast and Clare Brokaw, like most of Society at the time, were conservative:

Condé hated Roosevelt and the New Deal. . . . If Crowny was a political innocent (he always skipped the front pages of newspapers), Condé at least knew where he stood and why. He had no social conscience and I doubt if he ever gave a thought to the poor, beyond

believing that it was their own fault. As for Crownny, if he ever thought of the poor, it was to regard them on the level of India's Untouchables.⁹³

Whereas in the twenties Condé was content to allow Crownny to do with Vanity Fair as he wished, by the thirties he became more involved in editorial matters. We have already seen that he hired John Franklin Carter to write political articles under the name "Jay Franklin." In addition, he instigated the commissioning of George Sokolsky, "an arch-reactionary," to write articles attacking the Boulder Dam project and other "government interference in private enterprise," and the hiring of Joseph Alsop to do political pieces.⁹⁴

The battle lines were sharply drawn on the issue of political content in Vanity Fair. On one side were Crownny, with most of the editorial staff, including Lawrenson and Harriman, committed to the old Vanity Fair concerns of taste and culture; on the other were Condé Nast and Clare Brokaw. Lawrenson recalls that at one stage Nast wanted to have as a cover a caricature of "The Forgotten Man," F. D. R.'s phrase for the unemployed. Lawrenson recalls the inter-office conflict that followed:

I wrote an angry memo that began, "There is nothing remotely funny about hunger," and Nast agreed to forget the cover, although he okayed a picture of a scruffy-looking tramp, labelled The Forgotten Man, for our We Nominate for Oblivion feature, and Mrs. Brokaw wrote the caption.⁹⁵

This intrusion by the publisher in the editorial affairs of Vanity Fair was a marked departure from the situation in the twenties, and several staff members attribute this change to Clare Brokaw's influence. According to Jeanne Ballot (Winham),

it was Clare who turned the magazine towards political matters,⁹⁶ and she enlisted Condé's power in her campaign. Margaret Harriman, too, credits Brokaw with the change:

Clare . . . was the force that changed Vanity Fair from a magazine of style and entertainment into a political instrument, and thereby (I think) destroyed it. To be sure, she had Condé Nast on her side, although it was partly out of desperation. Vanity Fair had been losing money steadily since 1929. . . . Crownyn's attitude about this was . . . that Vanity Fair was addressed to cultivated people. . . .

When Nast and Clare Boothe descended on Crownyn with the demand that he publish political articles in Vanity Fair, it was as though they had handed him a baseball bat and required him to beat to death the nearest small stenographer. He couldn't do it. He worried visibly. . . .

"What do you think of this idea of political articles, Margaret?" he asked me.

"I don't know," I told him. "I don't know a thing about politics and besides, I'm not allowed to see any of the articles until they're in final proof."

"You and I are in the same boat," sighed Crownyn. And then he suddenly brightened, and said, "You and I, dear Margaret, have the quality Vanity Fair needs -- the quality of gaiety. Let us strive to keep it in the magazine, shall we?"

We strove, Crownyn and I, but Condé and Clare were too much for us. . . .⁹⁷

Clare Brokaw did not rest with increasing the political content of Vanity Fair; she also founded a new political party, housed in one of Vanity Fair's offices, called the New Nationalist Party. The party sent delegates to both the Democratic and Republican Presidential Conventions in 1932, Clare going to the Democrats to attempt to recruit members, and disappeared after its failure to muster support among the established parties.⁹⁸

With the abortive death of her new party, Brokaw increased her attempts to politicise the pages of Vanity Fair, with the full

support of the publisher. Harriman recalls a conversation on the subject with Nast:

"Look," said Condé, "I agree that the light, satirical side of Vanity Fair is important, and I rely on Crownly . . . to keep up that side. But there must also be an important side to the magazine, a heavier side, and I must supply that with the help of Clare Boothe. Isn't that fair enough?"

I remember my answer. . . . "Yes, of course . . . except -- have you ever seen a seesaw with a heavy child on one end and a slim child on the other? The slim child hasn't got a chance."⁹⁹

Although Clare Boothe left Vanity Fair in 1933, succeeded by Helen Brown Norden as Managing Editor, the magazine continued its new political emphasis after her departure. Despite Nast's confidence in the "importance" of political articles, Vanity Fair's circulation and advertising continued to fall, and by 1936 he was no longer in a financial position to underwrite Vanity Fair's losses through his other publishing successes. The issue for February, 1936 was the last independent number of Vanity Fair, and the Vogue for March 1, 1936 was subtitled "incorporating Vanity Fair."

Ironically, it was the "heavier" Vanity Fair which was submerged in the "lighter" Vogue, and Nast learned too late that there was a wider audience in the thirties for "the lighter side of life" than for conservative political commentary. The editorial for the new "Vogue incorporating Vanity Fair" (March, 1936, page 51), signed by Nast, outlined the form which the merger of the two magazines would take:

With its February issue, Vanity Fair was discontinued as an independent magazine. Beginning with this issue -- which marks Vogue's incorporation of Vanity Fair -- the editorial pages of Vogue will be materially increased. This will allow Vogue to

present to its readers a selection of appropriate features by a number of the notable writers, artists, and photographers who formerly were contributors to Vanity Fair.

At the same time, the pages of Vogue devoted to Fashions, Beauty and the Hostess will be neither decreased nor changed in any way. Vogue merely will be developed more vitally by the use of its inheritance from Vanity Fair. We feel confident that this richer Vogue will please Vogue's readers. And though it may not completely fill the place of Vanity Fair, we hope that this larger and more varied Vogue will give Vanity Fair's readers a sense of being at home in its pages. . . .

Nast continued with a list of those features in the March Vogue which were "in the genre of Vanity Fair": George Jean Nathan on the New York theatre season, a reproduction of Renoir's "Rose et Bleue," an article by Paul Gallico on women fencers, a piece by Marya Mannes on New York night-life, a parody by Corey Ford, and an "Impossible Interview" (this had been a regular caricature feature in Vanity Fair during the thirties, providing light satiric comment on contemporary intellectual and aesthetic figures).

This particular "Impossible Interview (?)" (pages 70-71) was between Vogue and Vanity Fair. The full-page sketch by the Mexican artist Covarrubias pictured a fashionable woman (Vogue) and an intellectual-looking man (Vanity Fair) etched in the sky over a cottage, and the accompanying caption parodied the contrasting images of the frivolous women's fashion magazine and the intellectual magazine of culture:

VOGUE: Darling, come a little closer. I've admired you for so long, but you've been so cold to me!

VANITY FAIR: We're in a different class, my dear. You're just a fashion-plate. VOGUE: I know, I know,

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But, after all, we both do the same sort of thing.
VANITY FAIR: What do you mean? VOGUE: Well, it's
all a matter of taste. You dress people's minds,
and I dress people's bodies. VANITY FAIR: That's
just it. You're such a commercial hussy. VOGUE:
Where would you be if I weren't, darling? VANITY
FAIR: In the red, I guess. VOGUE: Wouldn't you rather
be in my arms? VANITY FAIR: I'm afraid I'd lose my
head! VOGUE: No, only your independence! What's mine
will be yours, what's yours will be mine, now and
forever, amen. VANITY FAIR: Is this a proposal?
VOGUE: Naturally. Isn't it leap-year?

Crowninshield became an advisory editor of Vogue,¹⁰⁰ and
Vanity Fair's regular concern with theatre, literature, and art
were indeed incorporated into Vogue, which prior to 1936 had
been concerned mainly with women's fashions and debutantes' photos.
After World War II, the Nast corporation considered starting
Vanity Fair again, but that idea never came to fruition.¹⁰¹ As
Harriman put it, once Vanity Fair was merged with Vogue
"gradually the famous combination of Frank Crowninshield-and-
Vanity Fair disappeared, along with the gay and easy world it had
served for over twenty years to illustrate and entertain."¹⁰²

2) Staff and Regular Contributors

According to the masthead in the individual volumes of
Vanity Fair, the executive staff was always small, usually
consisting of Frank Crowninshield as Editor, assisted by a
Managing Editor and an Art Director. Crowninshield was of
course editor from March, 1914 until Vanity Fair's incorporation
with Vogue in March, 1936. Of non-editorial executive staff, a
Business Manager appeared on the masthead from 1913 to 1922, an

Advertising Manager from 1913 to May, 1917, and an Art Director from October, 1917 to May, 1927 and from March 1931 to February, 1936.

The major editorial responsibility was therefore Crowninshield's, with the assistance of various Managing Editors. No Managing Editor appeared on the masthead until October, 1917, when Albert Lee was named in that capacity. Lee remained for two years, until July, 1919. For the August, 1919 issue he was succeeded by Robert Benchley, who was Managing Editor until March, 1920.

Benchley had contributed numerous articles to Vanity Fair before becoming Managing Editor in October, 1914, and continued to write humorous pieces until his celebrated departure, with Robert Sherwood, over the Dorothy Parker-Billie Burke affair in early 1920. The most famous of his Vanity Fair articles was "The Social Life of the Newt," appearing in the December, 1919 issue, which occasioned one of the few instances of Crowninshield's censorship. Crowninshield, something of a Puritan, considered the innuendo of the original version to be in bad taste, and the entire piece was rewritten before he would allow it to appear in the pages of Vanity Fair.¹⁰³

This was but one example of the numerous clashes between Crowninshield and Benchley, and we have already noted one commentator's view that the editor picked the Billie Burke review as a convenient pretext for instigating the departure of the rambunctious trio of Benchley, Dorothy Parker, and Robert Sherwood as staff members. It has even been said that Benchley provoked

Crowny's anger by consistently refusing to take him seriously.¹⁰⁴

After Benchley's departure, no Managing Editor appeared from April, 1920 until the end of 1921. John Peale Bishop, who had been writing for the magazine since 1920, became Managing Editor with the January, 1922 issue, and remained in that position for eight months, the same amount of time as Benchley, succeeded in September, 1922 by Edmund Wilson. Wilson had contributed articles to Vanity Fair since March, 1920, and was Managing Editor for ten months, until June, 1923.

Life at Vanity Fair was no less madcap during the Bishop-Wilson era than it had been a few years earlier with Parker, Benchley, and Sherwood. P. G. Wodehouse ("Plum" to Crowninshield¹⁰⁵) had succeeded Dorothy Parker as drama critic, and was given to practical jokes. Wilson and Bishop, just out of Princeton, were fond of teasing the Brooklyn-bred secretary and the editor:

We had a game that we played: "The Rape of the Sabines" . . . Mr. Bishop would pick me up and dash across the room, and Mr. Wilson would pick up another girl and dash madly at us. The word rape was taboo in those days and I never told my family about this.

Mr. Bishop and Mr. Wilson used to write notes to one another in Latin. I remember one note about "Illa Lesbia," which I didn't understand in the least.¹⁰⁶

Wilson and Bishop also collaborated on a book while they were at Vanity Fair, called The Undertaker's Garland, and Winham speculates that the title may have been inspired by their experiences at the office: J

For some reason -- I think it was a custom left over from Mr. Benchley's time -- Vanity Fair subscribed to an undertaker's magazine. I don't know whether

that inspired Mr. W. and Mr. B. or not. . . .¹⁰⁷

After Wilson left the Managing Editor position in July, 1923, no replacement appeared on the masthead for almost three years. Finally in January, 1926 Donald Freeman, who had been a staff writer since August, appeared in the masthead as the new Managing Editor. He remained in this capacity until his untimely death in an auto accident in November, 1932, when he was succeeded by Clare Boothe Brokaw.

From the time of Boothe's arrival at Vanity Fair in 1930, the masthead is an unreliable index of editorial responsibilities partly, as we have noted, because inter-office rivalries sometimes led to names' being omitted.¹⁰⁸ The October, 1930 issue announced (page 33) that Clare Boothe Brokaw was the new associate editor, but nothing appeared on the masthead until March, 1931, when both Brokaw and Margaret Case Morgan were listed as Associate Editors.

We have already seen that Brokaw was instrumental in politicising the pages of Vanity Fair, and went over Crowninshield's head to Nast for his approval of all political articles.¹⁰⁹ Because of this increased political content, and some loss of his power to control the magazine, Crowninshield became bored with Vanity Fair and "gave over the reins of the magazine to Clare Boothe Brokaw."¹¹⁰

Brokaw and Morgan appeared on the masthead as Associate Editors until July, 1931; from August, 1931 to November, 1932, only Clare was listed, with Freeman still as Managing Editor.

After Freeman's death, Clare appeared as Managing Editor from December, 1932 to February, 1934. The issue for March, 1934 listed no Managing Editor, but Brokaw appeared as "Advisory Editor"; this was her last appearance on the masthead.

Helen Brown Norden appeared as Associate Editor from October, 1934 until January, 1936; and the final issue of Vanity Fair, for February, 1936, listed only Frank Crowninshield as editor.

According to Helen Lawrenson (then Norden), the masthead for the last few years is unreliable.¹¹¹ Jeanne Ballot was so upset when Norden was named as Brokaw's successor as Managing Editor in 1933, that she kept Norden's name off the masthead for ten months, and retained Brokaw's. No one on staff bothered to look at the Contents page, which included the masthead, until Nast finally noticed the discrepancy and complained. Norden's name then appeared (she had herself chosen the designation "Associate Editor" as preferable to "managing"). Lawrenson also claims that, when she left Vanity Fair in late December, 1935, she had worked on the January and February issues. Although she had planned the February issue, and written much of the copy, her name was again left off the masthead.

Lawrenson's anecdote demonstrates the fallibility of gauging the magazine's editorial control from what appeared on the masthead. Much more important was what appeared in the pages of Vanity Fair, and how it got there..

Lawrenson is again informative, especially in her comments regarding the relative freedom which Vanity Fair staff and writers

enjoyed.¹¹² Plans for each issue of the magazine were discussed at weekly office editorial meetings, those same meetings where celebrity writers were charmed by Crowninshield into receiving less pay than they had expected. Except for political matters, Crowninshield as editor was final arbiter of what finally appeared in the magazine. Staff and writers were given very free rein, however, and the various sub-editors (books, theatre, film, etc.) decided what particular works they would review. Writers were allowed creative freedom (except for noted exceptions like Benchley's "Sex Life of the Newt"), and articles were not rewritten.

Lawrenson has provided an extensive description:

As for how feature articles, etc. were chosen: Many of the ideas came out of our weekly luncheon meetings. Others were suggested in memos to me or to Clare, when she was managing editor, or to Crowny. . . . When I hired George Dangerfield, with Crowny's consent, he decided what books he would review. Neither one of us ever consulted with anyone else. Also, I decided what films I would review. Crowny never changed or "edited" anything of mine, and neither did Clare when I was working under her. . . .

. . . . We never rewrote anything. If we didn't like something, we didn't print it. I think this is one reason it was such a good magazine. We had respect for writers. . . .

. . . . It was a happy ship. It was democratic -- we all made suggestions and discussed ideas for features, but we left alone the book reviewers, the film critics, etc. We didn't tell George Jean Nathan what to review. And we certainly never changed a word!

. . . . What made Vanity Fair interesting . . . was the variety of writing styles and ideas. Good writers wanted to write for us. It had enormous prestige, not only with writers, but with artists, caricaturists, photographers, on both sides of the Atlantic. It was a showcase for talent. . . . We had a gift for picking people who would become famous before they were. And often we made people famous simply by putting them in the magazine.¹¹³

Vanity Fair certainly did attract the talented writers and

reviewers of its time. The list of its various staff writers and contributors is a who's who of the era, and in many cases later-famous persons got their start with Vanity Fair. Those features and articles dealing with literature will be considered in detail in a later chapter. At present we will attempt to outline the various contributors and staff writers for the magazine as a whole.

1. Writers and contributors

a) 1913-20

Theatre was a major concern in Vanity Fair throughout its history, and a number of famous writers and critics did theatre reviews for the magazine. George Jean Nathan would be drama editor from 1930 to 1935, but he was a contributor to the magazine from the beginning. His first piece for Vanity Fair appeared in April, 1914 (page 50), and was a satirical look at the world of magazines entitled "If I were a Magazine Writer." He contributed articles on a variety of subjects, including European theatre, trends in prose writing, acting, and criticism, almost continuously from then on, and most prolifically in 1917, 1926, 1927 and 1930. He had at least three articles a year in Vanity Fair, except for 1916, 1919 and 1925, and was one of the few contributors associated with the magazine throughout its existence.

P. G. Wodehouse was another prolific drama critic for Vanity Fair, writing monthly theatre reviews from 1916 to 1920. His first article appeared in May, 1914, and he contributed numerous articles under his own name, on a variety of subjects in 1914 and 1915, including musical comedy, magazines, and parodies (e. g. of

Franklin P. Adams in October, 1915).

Wodehouse was one of those Vanity Fair contributors much given to pen-names, and he published in the magazine under a number of names including J. Plum, P. Brooke-Haven, Pelham Grenville, C. P. West, and J. William Walker.¹¹⁴ As "Pelham Grenville" he wrote satirical pieces in 1915 and 1916, including a discourse on Hamlet (June, 1915), advice on breaking into society (May, 1916), and ruminations on "the alarming spread of poetry" (June, 1916).

James T. Ford, while not the official drama critic, also contributed regular theatre reviews from 1914 to 1920, including articles on the Washington Square Players (April, 1915), G. B. Shaw and G. J. Nathan (October, 1915), and "Brains vs Money in the Theatre" (June, 1920).

Robert Benchley succeeded P. G. Wodehouse as the official drama critic in 1917,¹¹⁵ although he had contributed articles on a variety of subjects since 1914. Many of the pieces were satirical treatments of literary or quasi-literary subjects, such as "Hints on Writing a Book" (his first article in October, 1914), "Writing Down to Editors" (November, 1915), "The Art of Being a Bohemian" (May, 1916), and "The Police Gazette as it would be Edited by the New Republic" (September, 1917). Despite his rather stormy departure with Parker and Sherwood in 1920, he nevertheless contributed a few articles in 1923, 1924, and 1926.

Benchley, Parker and Sherwood were of course star performers at the Algonquin Round Table, and Harriman remembers the prestige which their association with Vanity Fair gave them:

The three glossiest members of the group [the Round Table in 1919 and 1920], were Bob Benchley, Bob Sherwood, and Dorothy Parker, not because they were any more prosperous than the others, but because they all worked for Vanity Fair, as managing editor, drama editor and drama critic respectively: There was a great prestige in working for Vanity Fair in those days, if not much money.¹¹⁶

If Harriman is correct in her memory of Sherwood as drama editor, then it was a behind-the-scenes responsibility only, for only four articles by him appeared in Vanity Fair, in 1919 and 1920. Surprisingly, he had the same number of pieces in the magazine after his departure, as while he was a staff member. While concerned with theatre or film, his articles were not reviews, but general considerations of the characteristics of the genres.

Like Edmund Wilson, Dorothy Parker found her first employment at Vanity Fair, and some of her first contributions to the magazine bore her maiden name, Dorothy Rothschild. After her first appearance in Vanity Fair in March, 1918, she had at least one article in every issue until her departure in 1920, (most of them theatre reviews. Like Benchley and Sherwood, she contributed several pieces after she had left the staff, including "The Paris That Keeps Out of the Papers" in January, 1927, and "A Valentine for Mr. Woolcott" in February, 1934.

Vanity Fair lived up to its aim of being an arbiter of taste, and many of the regular contributors, even in the early years, were concerned with literary and artistic matters. In addition to the regular theatre reviews by the staff writers already mentioned,

and regular book reviews (described in Chapter IV), the pages of Vanity Fair were filled with regular contributions on aesthetic matters. Arthur Symons contributed articles on writing, painting, dance and music regularly from 1915 to 1923. Although sometimes especially concerned with fin-de-siècle artists, his articles ranged quite broadly through the aesthetic world, and the subjects of his pieces included Beaudelaire (September, 1915 and November, 1917), Rodin (April, 1916), Verlaine (July, 1916 and September, 1919), Augustus John (September, 1916), Wilde (November, 1916), Degas (May, 1918), the Ballet Russe (February, 1919), the Rossettis (May, 1919), Toulouse-Lautrec (February, 1920), Renoir (April, 1920), and Pater (April, 1923).

Hugh Walpole wrote articles on literature and theatre from 1914 to 1927, including a series of "pen portraits," entitled "Literary Close-Ups," of Arnold Bennett, Joseph Conrad, H. G. Wells, and May Sinclair, in 1919 and 1920. Aside from several reviews of current London theatre (September, 1920; May, 1921; May, 1922), his articles were often general treatments of literary subjects, such as "Novel Reading and the Critics" (October, 1920), "Art and the New Democracy" (December, 1920), "Criticism and Contemporary Literature (June, 1921), "New Romance in the English Novel" (October, 1922), and "New American Mythology" (April, 1927).

G. K. Chesterton was a periodic contributor to Vanity Fair from 1914 to 1930, with most of his pieces appearing in 1920 and 1929. These were, on the whole, light articles of humour and satire, part of Vanity Fair's continual effort to entertain its

readers.

Another gentle humorist who was a much more frequent contributor to Vanity Fair was Stephen Leacock. Beginning with a series of satiric sketches called "Afternoon Adventures at my Club" which appeared in 1914, Leacock continued to provide an article every month until the end of 1923. These were on a variety of subjects, including the war in 1915 and 1916, satires on current literature (for example in September, 1918, February, 1921, and December, 1922), and various humorous sketches which would later be published in collections like Moonbeams From a Larger Lunacy.

Critics of literature and the arts who were associated with other American magazines also contributed pieces for Vanity Fair. In addition to George Jean Nathan, other American critics appearing in the magazine included the New Humanist James Huneker (1914, 1915, 1920; including an article on "modernist art" in August, 1916); Floyd Dell (1915, 1916, 1921, 1922; including articles on psychoanalysis in December, 1915, on Greenwich Village in March, 1916, and on Knut Hamsun in May, 1921).

Critics from Europe were also enticed to contribute to Vanity Fair: Georg Brandes, for example, wrote on his impressions of America in September, 1914, on Strindberg in October, 1914, on "the real causes of the war" in February, 1915, and on a variety of other subjects in 1917 and 1924.

Vanity Fair also featured articles by famous artists and performers, American and European, on features of their artistic careers. In February, 1915, for example, Anna Pavlova contributed

a piece on "a Russian ballet-girl's education."

All facets of the arts interested Vanity Fair, and the newer modes no less than the more traditional and established. We shall examine the magazine's treatment of popular culture at a later point, in Chapter III; at this stage we might merely note that Hollywood, too, benefitted from Vanity Fair's ability to spot and encourage emerging talent. Frank Tuttle, for example, whose position as assistant editor at Vanity Fair from 1915 to 1917 was his first job, later became a prolific film director, and one of the founders of the Screen Directors' Guild.

Before proceeding to the regular contributors in the twenties, we should mention three other regular writers in the magazine's first phase, before and immediately after the war. Frank Moore Colby wrote regularly on cultural matters, including theatre, fiction, criticism, and magazine style, from 1914 to 1922. John Jay Chapman contributed numerous articles from 1918 to 1925, on subjects including painting, recent fiction, and education.

George S. Chappell was a regular writer of light, and often satiric, pieces for Vanity Fair throughout its history, from 1917 to 1934. Many of his satires were concerned with literary or social trends, and he was one of the magazine's regular debunkers of the follies of the idle rich. Among his satires were "Social Training for the Recently Rich" (July, 1919), "Advertising Etiquette" (September, 1922), "Why Don't You Write a Play?" (September, 1924), and "The Craze for Creeds in America" (May, 1926).

b) 1920-30

Vanity Fair in the twenties continued to have a distinguished series of staff writers and regular contributors. Theatre continued as a major concern in the pages of the magazine, and Heywood Broun began his periodic theatre reviews with the issue of June, 1919. Continuing as a regular contributor with an article every month until the last issue of Vanity Fair, Broun wrote on a number of subjects including theatre, censorship, prohibition, recent writing trends, golf, and the races.

Alexander Woollcott, whose first piece for Vanity Fair appeared in January, 1915, began his theatre reviews in March, 1923. He contributed an article each month from then on, usually on theatre, until 1929, with several articles appearing in the thirties as well. Donald Freeman, who was Managing Editor in the late twenties and the early thirties, contributed numerous articles on theatre from August, 1925 until November, 1932.

Literature was a major concern in Vanity Fair in the twenties. While we will consider the book reviews, under the editorship of John Peale Bishop and Edmund Wilson, and major literary articles in Chapter IV, some account of regular contributions by or about literary figures is necessary to illustrate the importance of literature in the magazine.

Corey Ford, who contributed articles, usually humorous, each month from December, 1925 until December, 1935 on a variety of subjects including prohibition, sports, women's role in society, and games, also wrote on literature under the pseudonym John Riddell.

These contributions by "John Riddell" appeared monthly from September, 1927 until January, 1936, and included parodies of the style of H. G. Wells (October, 1927), Ernest Hemingway (January, 1928); Thornton Wilder (June, 1928), and Edna Ferber (October, 1930). A sampling of the titles of his articles indicates the tone of much of his writing for Vanity Fair: "All Quiet on the Middle-Western Front" (August, 1929), "Ave Atque Vallee" (June, 1930), "The Hyndsytte Saga" (April, 1932), "While Woolcott Burns" (August, 1934).

Vanity Fair continued to recognize and encourage emerging young talent, and a number of people who first worked at Vanity Fair in the twenties later distinguished themselves. In addition to the notable case of Edmund Wilson, whose first job was at Vanity Fair, other staff members went on to later accomplishments. George Davis, for example, who started as an assistant to Crowninshield,

developed into the unique editor of the entire expatriate crew in Paris . . . as fiction editor of Harper's Bazaar . . . where he was the first to put serious fiction into a fashion magazine and helped develop two new amazing young American writers, Carson McCullers and Truman Capote.¹¹⁷

Edna St. Vincent Millay, as "Nancy Boyd," wrote on art and literature each month from January, 1921 to March, 1923, and published poetry and articles under her own name from July, 1922 to April, 1932.

Elinor Wylie, who was poetry editor at Vanity Fair in the early twenties,¹¹⁸ also contributed stories and articles in 1923 and 1928.

Theodore Dreiser, who was himself noted by Vanity Fair in the "Hall of Fame" (June, 1925), with a parody by John Riddell (August, 1931),

and by caricatures (October, 1931; January, 1932), also wrote articles for Vanity Fair on a number of subjects, including Florida's social scene (May and June, 1926), Paris (December, 1926), and Russia (June and October, 1928).

Sherwood Anderson was another American writer who was both noted by the magazine, in January and July, 1921, and with a parody entitled "Love in Lettuce, Ohio" in August, 1924, and used as a contributor. After publishing a story in Vanity Fair, "Pages from a New Testament" in October, 1922, Anderson contributed a piece almost every month from November, 1925 until September, 1931. Anderson's articles ranged in subject matter from descriptions of various cities (New Orleans in August, 1926; Chicago in October, 1926; New York in July, 1927) and accounts of small-town life (February, June, September, November, 1928; April, May, July, August, September, 1929) to painting (November, 1925) and prohibition (February, 1927).

He also contributed several articles on the art of writing. In May, 1927 he wrote a piece on "Educating an Author" (pages 47-8) where he expressed in ironic fashion his contempt for "fashionable" writing, and his belief that writing should be simple and honest, and expressive of real life as it is lived by ordinary people:

In the first place, and as I am addressing an American audience there is one thing I must tell you which will shock you a little. If you really want to succeed as an author in America, you should be born an Englishman. Very likely you were born poor. It may even be that your own people did not have many opportunities to associate with cultural people. . . .

How are you to know about that great world of which you must necessarily write -- if you are to succeed as

an author? -- that is to say, of the great world of fashion!

Well, my dear man, I have promised to tell you how to succeed as an author in spite of these handicaps, and I will do it. You can read, of course, and that is what you must do. As soon as you can you must cut yourself off, as much as you can, from the life immediately about you and sink yourself into the life of books. . . .

Oh, the conversations of English aristocrats and American millionaires! It is wonderful to hear.

And what lives these people live. We ought to be very grateful to our popular authors who have given us such exact and glowing pictures of these men and women into whose presence we cannot go, and who, in doing so, have besprinkled their books with such marvelous words.

Well, there you are, you see. . . . If you are to succeed as an author in America all you have to do is to read the books of successful authors. . . .

I might, to be sure, be very old-fashioned and tell you to write, as simply and clearly as you can, of the life immediately about you. But that would be a betrayal. In the first place, who cares for such writing? And in the second place who cares for such lives?

This criticism by Anderson of the American reading public's taste for depictions of the lives of the idle rich is yet another example of the double-vision inherent in Vanity Fair, for the magazine was, of course, itself an exponent of the pastimes of precisely those "British aristocrats and American millionaires" whom Anderson bemoans as a subject worthy of attention.

Anderson would return to his defense of simplicity in literature in an article entitled "The Writer's Trade" (January, 1929, pages 59 and 78). For him, the writer's primary taste must be the simple and effective rendering of the world around him, without any intermediaries of complex artifice or doctrinaire ideology:

As for writing -- I do try constantly for a kind of simplification. There must be a great deal in style. I

am working for it all the time. I am pretty sure it is not what most of the critics declare it to be when they speak of style.

By "style" I mean a kind of dance, an overtone. I mean colour and life in prose. . . .

And . . . what have I to do with causes? How am I to know a good cause from a bad one? Who am I, a scribbler, a teller of tales, to be fooling with causes? I should have the dignity of my own trade. . . .

E. E. Cummings was also a contributor to Vanity Fair, and his first two initials sometimes appeared in capitals, and sometimes in lower case. He wrote an article every second month or so in 1925 to 1927, on diverse subjects such as dramatic criticism (May, 1925), the tabloid newspaper (December, 1926), and "Why I Like America" (May, 1927). Cummings, like P. G. Wodehouse, was much given to pseudonyms. Like "Lucien Blushocks" on, for example, Freud, food and Palm Beach, and "Sir Arthur Catchpole" on the movies.

H. L. Mencken's first appearance in Vanity Fair was in February, 1921, and he continued to contribute iconoclastic pieces until November, 1934; the article for that issue was entitled "Why Not an American Monarch?" In April, 1934 he wrote a piece called "America's Hostility to Art" (pages 21-2), where he stated his belief that "if there is anything that plain Americans hate even more than they hate liberty it is the vague collections of malaises and affectations called art." Mencken was a confirmed elitist, and he used this piece to berate the "booboisie" whom he believed bereft of any aesthetic impulse or desire:

The plain man, I repeat, is not merely indifferent to

beauty; he is positively hostile to it. He turns from it to ugliness as he turns from his metallic Sunday clothes to the easy slops of everyday, with a great feeling of relief. He prefers the hideous when he has any choice. . . . The great majority of human beings . . . apprehend beauty as a spookish and sinister enemy to the serious business of living, and they avoid it instinctively, and with all the earnest watchfulness they give to the avoidance of truth.

We should perhaps note that this particular article by Mencken appeared in 1934, when Vanity Fair, as we have seen, was already well-oriented towards political conservatism. Mencken's views as they appeared in his articles in the twenties, while no less severe, tended to be expressed in more satiric form, like the debunking of "The Ten Dullest Authors" in August, 1923. Vanity Fair in the twenties tended more towards gentle satire; it was not until the thirties that the magazine carried some of his more polemical and direct criticisms.

Gilbert Seldes was a regular contributor from 1922 to 1925, with one final article in June, 1934. Many of his pieces were concerned with aspects of popular culture, including the comic strip (May, 1922), the revue (January, 1923), newspaper columnists (September, 1923), the comedy of W. C. Fields (April, 1924), and the phenomenon of the movies (April, 1925). Some of these were published as The Seven Lively Arts in 1924. Seldes also wrote on literary figures, including Ring Lardner in December, 1922 and July, 1925. Seldes' articles on the effects of popular culture will be discussed in Chapter III.

Another regular contributor much concerned with popular culture was Carl Van Vechten, who wrote articles for Vanity Fair

from 1917 to 1928. He wrote primarily on music, on Negro culture and Harlem, and on Hollywood, including pieces on Satie (March, 1918), Gershwin (March, 1925), Negro folksongs (July, 1925), the blues (August, 1925 and March, 1926), Negro theatre (October, 1925), Langston Hughes (May, 1926), and a series on Hollywood (May to August, 1927).

Other American writers and critics wrote for Vanity Fair in the twenties: Ring Lardner from 1922 to 1927, including an article on "The Ideal Woman" in August, 1926; Gertrude Stein with articles and stories from 1922 to 1935; Djuna Barnes from 1922 to 1930, including an appreciation of James Joyce in April, 1922, and a poem in October, 1922; Kenneth Burke on art in December, 1922. Mabel Dodge Luhan, one of the great literary patrons of the period, wrote on Katherine Cornell in July, 1925.

Popular American writers also contributed to Vanity Fair: Edna Ferber, author of the bestseller So Big, contributed articles from 1923 to 1933; and Anita Loos, author of the successful Gentlemen Prefer Blondes, wrote pieces from 1915 to 1928.

Culture was Vanity Fair's major concern in the twenties, and it was not until the thirties that the magazine exhibited a significant interest in political and economic affairs. Nevertheless, as was fitting for a magazine devoted to "good taste" in all realms of life, political and social comment did appear from time to time. Walter Lippmann was the chief contributor on political matters, and he wrote articles from 1919 to 1935, almost every month in 1921, 1923, 1927, 1929, 1930 and 1931. Among his contributions were

accounts of H. G. Wells' social thought (December, 1922), "What Is Wrong With the Newspapers?" (February, 1921), "Education and the White-Collar Class" (May, 1923), "Puritanism Deluxe in the Coolidge Era" (May, 1926), "America as an Empire" (April, 1927), and "The Bogey of Public Opinion" (December, 1931). He also reported on European politics for Vanity Fair.

The noted lawyer Clarence Darrow also contributed articles of political and social comment from 1926 to 1931, including pieces on America's foreign debt (February, 1927), prohibition (March, 1927 and September, 1928), and divorce (August, 1927).

Another regular contributor who wrote on politics was Philip Guedella, who had a monthly piece from 1923 to 1926. He was concerned with British politics, and also with the literature of England, including articles on Kipling (May, 1923), Conrad (July, 1923), Arnold Bennett (November, 1923), Hardy (December, 1923), H. G. Wells (January, 1924), Shaw (June, 1924), and Galsworthy (July, 1924).

A number of other British writers were also contributors to Vanity Fair. The most frequent British contributor to the magazine was Aldous Huxley, who in fact worked for Condé Nast in London from October, 1920 until January, 1923 helping to put out the British Vogue and House and Garden.¹¹⁹ Huxley had one or two articles in every issue of Vanity Fair from January, 1922 until September, 1930, on a variety of subjects serious and frothy. He displayed frequent interest in popular culture (to be discussed in Chapter III), as well as writing on painting, music, theatre

education, and social mores.

His articles on the state of culture in England included "The Cry for a Messiah in the Arts" (January, 1922, page 57), where he concluded that "London decays slowly. That, at least is my impression," and decried the lack of a great figure to point the way to new directions; an account of Lytton Strachey (September, 1922, page 41), where he saw the author of Eminent Victorians as possessing an essentially eighteenth-century sensibility, "like a Voltaire who has outlived his second century."

Huxley also wrote numerous articles on various theoretical aspects of art, including politics and literature (March, 1923), knowledge and art (April, 1924), art and life (February, 1925), dogmatic theory and art (April, 1925), the meaning of "modern" (May, 1925), sincerity in art (June, 1926), art and the critic (August, 1929), and "art and the obvious" (April, 1930).

D. H. Lawrence wrote a number of articles for Vanity Fair, beginning in 1921 until 1929, with monthly contributions from March to December, 1929. Many of these were on sexuality and the roles of men and women, including "On Being a Man" (June, 1929), "Do Women Change?" (April, 1929), "Woman in Man's Image" (May, 1929), "Sex Appeal" (July, 1929), and "The Manufacture of Good Little Boys" (September, 1929). He also wrote on "Art and Morality" in February, 1926.

Compton Mackenzie was a frequent contributor in 1928 and 1929, including articles on various aspects of women in society: "Ladies of the Demi-Monde" (June, 1928), "Adam's Rib in the Arts"

(July, 1929), "Strong Men and Refined Women" (October, 1923). Arnold Bennett contributed a few articles in 1923 and 1929, including one piece on modern life (September, 1929). Somerset Maugham wrote articles in the early twenties, as did Siegfried Sassoon, including an article on war poetry in April, 1920, and on Hardy as poet in May, 1920.

Dorothy Richardson wrote on "talent and genius" in May and October, 1923, on "women and the future" in April, 1924, and on "women in the arts" in May, 1925. She also wrote on George Antheil in November, 1925, and on the relation of film, theatre and literature in August, 1929. Wyndham Lewis contributed an article in 1924, and Max Beerbohm in 1928. St. John Ervine was a regular contributor in the early twenties, writing on theatre, literature, and the relationships between British and American writing. Bertrand Russell appeared in the pages of Vanity Fair in 1923 and 1924, including articles on behaviourism (October, 1923), psychology and politics (March, 1924), and "machines and the emotions" (April, 1924).

Given Vanity Fair's interest in painting, it is not surprising that Clive Bell and Roger Fry both contributed to the magazine. Bell wrote on literature and painting from 1922 to 1924, including articles on cubism (February, 1923), Augustus John (December, 1923), and "modern art" (April, 1924), and on Proust (June, 1923), Strachey (August, 1923), Eliot (September, 1923), and Cocteau (January, 1924). Roger Fry published two articles in Vanity Fair, on Logan Pearsall

Smith in January, 1923, and on Sargent in December, 1927.

Various continental European artists and critics also contributed to Vanity Fair in the twenties. Jean Cocteau, for example, wrote on artistic developments in 1922, 1923, and 1925, including a piece on "The Public and the Artist" in October, 1922. André Gide contributed articles in 1927 and 1928, including "Art and Artifice" in August, 1928. A French writer who made numerous appearances in the pages of Vanity Fair was Colette, who was in every issue from November, 1924 until June, 1926; most of these contributions were stories, often published in the original French.

Maxim Gorky made several contributions to Vanity Fair, including a story called, "The Man with Another Man's Soul" in February, 1924. Tristan Tzara contributed five articles from 1922 to 1924, including "Memoirs of Dadaism" in July, 1922. Ferenc Molnar made an appearance in almost every issue from 1925 to 1929; many of these contributions were stories, but he also wrote on acting (December, 1925) and "the art of life" (September, 1928), and provided "chapters" from his diaries and "memories" (July and August, 1928; December, 1929; January, 1930).

All the arts were represented in Vanity Fair, and often people famous in their own sphere would write about their particular medium. Gordon Craig, for example, wrote on "Businessmen and the Theatre" (December, 1929), Max Jacob on Picasso (May, 1923), and Erik Satie on music (May and October, 1922) and on Stravinsky (February, 1923). The Italian aesthetician Benedetto Croce also

contributed pieces in 1923 and 1927.

c) 1930-36

The roster of regular writers and contributors to Vanity Fair's last period is not nearly so distinguished as in its earlier days, although some notables did appear in its pages. Theatre continued to be a major concern, and George Jean Nathan, who had been writing regularly for the magazine since 1914, did a monthly theatre review from June, 1930 until June, 1934. He continued to contribute articles in 1934 and 1935, alternating between the theatre and the movies.

Film became a major concern in the thirties, and Helen Brown Norden wrote a regular monthly article on cinema from February, 1934 until January, 1936. The earlier Managing Editor, Clare Boothe Luce, was more concerned in 1930 and 1931 with satires of the fashionable set, but in 1932 and 1933 also contributed periodic articles on film and photography.

We have already seen that political matters played a much larger role in the thirties. John Franklin Carter wrote a monthly article from March, 1930 until January, 1936, on political topics such as inflation, taxes, and foreign policy. He was a conservative much given to denunciations of the reformers in articles like "The Political Thunder on the Left" (February, 1935) and "What's Wrong With Our Radicals" (April, 1935). European politics also appeared in the pages of Vanity Fair, and

John Gunther, for example, reported on developments in Europe from December, 1933 to June, 1935.

John Maynard Keynes contributed several economic analyses, including "Banks and the Collapse of Money Values" in January, 1932 and a report on the World Economic Conference of 1933 in January of that year. Vanity Fair in the thirties was a curious mixture of the serious and the silly, with Julian Huxley, for example, contributing articles on science in 1931 and 1932, and Paul Gallico writing a monthly sports feature from August, 1930 until the last issue.

The magazine did continue to be interested in artistic matters, and André Maurois, for example, contributed articles on various cultural matters from 1930 to 1934. Although not as frequently as in the twenties, the magazine continued to publish short stories, including John O'Hara's "Hotel Kid" in September, 1933. And glamour continued to be of interest: Cecil Beaton, for example, wrote on "Shooting the Stars" in May, 1922, and on the Monte Carlo Ballet Russe in December, 1935.

It is clear that Vanity Fair was, indeed, noteworthy in attracting talented writers and contributors, especially in the twenties. Gifted unknown writers got their start on the magazine, and established talents contributed articles and stories. A magazine is something more than just the sum of its feature-article parts, however, and Vanity Fair's special character resided partly in its regular features and prevalent concerns. Before proceeding

to a detailed discussion of literary matters in Vanity Fair,
therefore, some account is needed of the context in which literature
was discussed, the particular character of the magazine as a whole.

Chapter III

The Character of Vanity Fair

Among monthlies, Vanity Fair and the Smart Set led in combining learning with liveliness.

The 1920's more or less invented . . . the celebrity business. . . .

Culture follows money . . .

We have seen that Vanity Fair numbered among its writers and contributors many of the notable talents of the day. The articles and stories which they contributed were but one aspect of the magazine, and it was as a total entity that the magazine acquired its renown. Before proceeding to the details of the literary portion of Vanity Fair, then, a brief description of Vanity Fair in its entirety is needed.

A) "In Vanity Fair" -- Regular Features

Of the many regular features which appeared in the magazine at various times, only a few spanned the entire life of Vanity Fair. Of these, the most characteristic and revealing was "In Vanity Fair," reserved for editorial comment. This feature appeared in every issue, sometimes as a letter from the editor, sometimes as a literary parody, often as a satiric comment on some current social foible, always as an advertisement for the magazine itself.

In the early days, "In Vanity Fair" was often concerned with the intent or direction of the magazine, and with its changing

self-image. The first "In Vanity Fair," for example, in September, 1913, had asked for letters from its readers, in order to gain some sense of what the readership wanted to see and read about. The second "In Vanity Fair," in October, printed some of those letters, and elicited further response to its editorial plans. The models for the new magazine were announced: Dress and Vanity Fair intended to become the New York counterpart of the great London pictorial magazines:

In time, we feel confident that Dress and Vanity Fair will come very close to being as good, as lively, as pictorially attractive, and as breezy as "The Sketch," "The Tatler," and similar London publications. In London alone there are 17 papers like "The Sketch" and "The Tatler." In America there is not one, -- yet.

January, 1914 was the first issue of the new Vanity Fair ("formerly Dress and Vanity Fair"), and "In Vanity Fair" for that month, after quoting the description of Vanity Fair from Pilgrim's Progress, described some of the magazine's major interests:

. . . The theatre is, of course, the great gathering place of those who dwell in Vanity Fair. For the stage is, after all, only the reflection of the customs, the humors, the foibles of the audience itself.

Let none suppose, however, that the dropping of "Dress" from the title denotes the dropping from the magazine of any fashion interest. Quite the contrary! Instead of weakening our Fashion staff as we develop along other lines, we have strengthened it and propose continually to strengthen it so that Dame Fashion may always be counted to hold her own place in Vanity Fair no matter what may be the Rival Attractions.

According to the editor, as he expressed himself in his feature, the magazine's concern with the theatre and the other arts had a "utilitarian" purpose; in the April, 1914 "In Vanity Fair,"

written in the form of a conversation with a reader, he asked:

Why, when you were in full cry on the subject, did you not mention that Vanity Fair's book reviews and dramatic criticisms will save many a wasted evening and many a misspent five dollar bill? We have here not only a cheerful, but a utilitarian magazine -- helpful all the way from its news of the Opera to the scores of advertisements that make a trip through its pages singularly like a promenade on the Avenue.

Vanity Fair's concept of the "utilitarian" is here perfectly explicit: to advise on the "consumption" of books and plays, to act as a "shopping guide" to the arts. In this sense, the distinction between advertising and features blurs, and the magazine as a whole comes to act as a kind of advertisement for a particular style of life. While this is certainly within the boundaries of an intent to be an "arbiter of taste," it is also an interesting bridge into the world of advertising-supported mass magazines.

"In Vanity Fair" for May, 1914, attempted to respond to the "catalogue of sins" which readers' letters claimed were being committed by the magazine. The editor listed the first two "sins" without comment: "We Are A Snob!" and "We Are Frivolous." The third "sin," however, that "We Are Obsessed With Culture," provoked substantive comment:

We are informed that book-reviews, and essays, and pictures, and sculpture, and music, and opera, are all things which appeal to but a limited class of people. Well, what if they do? As we pointed out before, these are the very people for whom Vanity Fair is being edited. Because the Muses have fewer votaries than the baser Gods, is that a reason for neglecting them? But, fortunately all the evidence points to a widespread and constantly increasing appreciation of the nine Muses among American readers.

This theme reappeared in August, 1919, where the editor stated again on the "In Vanity Fair" page that the magazine had

no intention of "catering to the masses":

Vanity Fair . . . is edited for a select few. If this be snobbery -- make the most of it!

Yes, the sober fact remains that we have no ambition to please the great public of magazine readers, and shall lift no finger in an effort to do so. We admit that there are bound to be myriads of people who by no possible chance can ever be interested in us. . . .

This was the essential paradox of Vanity Fair: while reviews of literature and the other arts were regarded as a "service," that service was directed at an élite; it was an élite of money and fashion which Vanity Fair addressed, but one which the magazine attempted to educate in the best standards of taste. This paradox was perhaps epitomised by a toast offered to the magazine, on the occasion of its first anniversary, in the "In Vanity Fair" of September, 1914: "As Vanity Fair has already made fashions literary, so may it in time make literature fashionable."

The editorial staff of the magazine were conscious of the fragmentation of consciousness inherent in a magazine format, the fact that each issue was a collage of articles on various subjects, photos, ads, sketches. This subject too was touched on in "In Vanity Fair," and attributed to the increase in communications media in the modern world ("In Vanity Fair," October, 1914):

. . . Conversation among cultivated people is always a trifle fragmentary and leaping.

There are signs that this fragmentary tendency is on the increase, not only in American conversation, but in American life; for our modern existence, especially in the cities, is becoming more and more a matter without sequence. A hundred interests must be crowded -- because of telephones, taxis, telegrams, subways, newspapers, letter carriers, and motor cars -- into every day, and if our magazine a little reflects this growing tendency we can only hope that it will be forgiven us.

The "In Vanity Fair" feature often took the form of literary parodies. Among those so parodied were Hawthorne (January, 1919), probably The Blithedale Romance; Poe (February, 1919), The Pit and the Pendulum; Thackeray, Wilde, Chaucer, and Dr. Johnson (June, 1919); Wilde (October, 1919), in a piece titled "Lady Windymer's Plan"; Lord Dunsany (April, 1920), by Edmund Wilson; G. K. Chesterton (May, 1920), by John Peale Bishop; Paul Verlaine (July, 1920); and Arnold, Bennett, Maeterlinck, and Robert Service (August, 1920), in a piece titled "A Thesaurus of Purple Patches from Modern Masters."

In addition to "In Vanity Fair," the editor had one other page reserved for himself; a feature called "The Editor's Uneasy Chair" appeared periodically from 1930 to 1933, and usually included letters from readers. This feature, and a few of the early numbers of "In Vanity Fair," was the only place where letters to the editor appeared; for most of its history, Vanity Fair did not print its readers' comments.

As we have already seen in considering the writers and contributors of Vanity Fair, the arts were a major part of the magazine. Literature was a constant concern, both in articles and regular book review features. While these will be discussed more fully in Chapter IV, we might note here that, in addition to serious consideration in articles and reviews, books also formed part of Vanity Fair's "utilitarian" intent. By 1922 there was a "Vanity Fair Book Department," which provided information on

current books, and served as a book-buying service.

Some features concerned with literature elude classification, being both serious and light-hearted at the same time. An example of this type of feature was "The New Order of Critical Values," which appeared in April, 1922 (pages 40-41). Subtitled "In Which Ten of the Modern Critics of America Are Allowed to Substitute New Laurels for Old," the feature took the form of a table listing the result of a poll where ten critics were asked to rate intellectual and artistic figures from the past and present on a scale from -25 to +25. Among the ten critics polled were Edmund Wilson ("upholds the classical tradition of symmetry and form"); Gilbert Seldes ("subjects modern literary experiment to an uncompromising comparison with the accomplishments of the great"); George Jean Nathan ("the arch-enemy of all that is sentimental, provincial and pretentious in American drama"); Heywood Brown ("discourses wittily and humanly on books and plays"); H. L. Mencken ("the most vigorous opponent of the Puritan tradition in American letters").

The results of the table were summarised, with those receiving the top and bottom fifteen ratings listed. Among those at the top were Shakespeare (22.4); Bach (22); Goethe (19.3); Anatole France (19.1); Charlie Chaplin (17.2); Flaubert (16.8); and Whitman (15.8). Among those at the bottom were Theodore Roosevelt (-9.5); New York Tribune (-11.5); and Henry Cabot Lodge (-16.1). The feature also noted some interesting tie scores, both high and low: Dr. Johnson and Crazy Kat; Martin Luther and Floyd Dell; St. Augustine, Lenin and Douglas Fairbanks; Flo Ziegfeld and

Frederick the Great; Cézanne and Homer.

This feature is a good example of the characteristic style of Vanity Fair; both a satire of contemporary quantitative methods, and an irreverent mingling of "high" and "low" culture, the piece also did provide an account of the critical preferences and even orientations of some of the most influential critics of the day.

This pastime of "ranking" authors was a favourite one in magazines of the time, and Vanity Fair often debunked the process. In August, 1923, for example, the magazine printed the results of a symposium designed to reverse the usual tendency: where most magazines asked critics to name the "Ten Greatest Books," Vanity Fair had asked its "eminent literary specialists" to name "The Ten Dullest Authors" (pages 58, 86 and 90). As interesting as the answers is the list of "specialists" consulted: H. L. Mencken (whose list included Dostoievski, George Eliot, D. H. Lawrence, Gertrude Stein); James Branch Cabell (Jane Austen, Cervantes, Nietzsche); Elinor Wylie (Whitman, George Eliot, Pater, Gertrude Stein); Carl Van Vechten (Freud, Pater, Joyce, Lawrence); George Jean Nathan (Dostoievski, Dickens, Scott, Hawthorne); Burton Rascoe (Milton, Lawrence, Proust).

Theatre reviews appeared throughout the magazine's history, with reviewers like P. G. Wodehouse and George Jean Nathan providing monthly accounts of the New York and London stage. These regular review features bore various names, like "Playgoer's Guide" (1913), "Plays Worthwhile" (1913 and 1914), and "Current Plays" (1933 to 1935).

This interest in theatre was also reflected in numerous photos of stage actors and actresses, often done by Steichen, or of plays in rehearsal.

As the film industry developed in Hollywood, regular reviews of films also appeared, and by the thirties the "Cinema Check-list" appeared every month. Gradually photos of movie stars took their place beside, and by the thirties even began to supplant, photos of stage actors and actresses.

Photography played an important role in Vanity Fair's make-up from the very beginning, and was but a part of the magazine's emphasis on visual as well as written forms of art and criticism. Reviews and feature articles on books, plays, music, dance, and film were always accompanied by a photograph, and many features consisted of photographs with small captions. A photo-feature which ran from 1913 to 1935 was the "Hall of Fame," where photos of those whom Vanity Fair considered worthy of tribute were accompanied by brief captions. People nominated to the "Hall of Fame" represented the worlds of literature, theatre, music, dance, painting and sculpture, science, and politics. In the thirties, a complementary feature called "We Nominate for Oblivion" appeared, where Vanity Fair debunked those it felt were over-rated or pretentious.

Line drawings and sketches also graced the pages of Vanity Fair, and many artists and illustrators contributed to the magazine, including "Fish" (an Englishwoman), Adolph Dehn, Alajalov, Steig, and Covargubias. The covers of the magazine were among the best

commercial art of the day, and Warren Davis and Covarrubias especially were noted contributors of covers. The front and back covers were always in colour, but the pages of the magazine were in black and white until the thirties, when Vanity Fair became one of the first magazines in the U.S. to produce first quality drawings and sketches in colour within its pages. At first these were often in duotone (brown and beige), but soon multicoloured drawing, sketches, and photographs appeared throughout the magazine.

Vanity Fair also took a keen interest in painting, and we have already seen how Crowninshield's personal interest in modern art led to the magazine's reproducing the best of modern French painting in its pages. Crowninshield himself produced a "tree of modern art" for the magazine (May, 1933, page 36) where he outlined the various traditions of modern painting, and this too was illustrated with a graphic rendering of the various roots and branches of contemporary art. Vanity Fair also provided a survey of art and the art world, including "Art at Home and Abroad" (1913 to 1914), and "Art Lover's Almanac" (1913 to 1914).

We have noted that humour and satire were an important part of the magazine, including literary parodies, humorous articles, and satires of modern life. Much of the humour and satire was visual, and Vanity Fair ran a great number of satirical sketches, especially by "Fish," and caricatures poking fun at the idle rich.

and the bohemians of Greenwich Village. This visual humour extended to the covers; the cover for May, 1934, for example, illustrated the problem of currency fluctuation by picturing various national currencies on a Ferris wheel.

Caricature extended to Vanity Fair's staff, and the illustration over the Table of Contents for May, 1920 (page 41), for example, was a satirical rendering of various Vanity Fair contributors: Stephen Leacock as a jester, P. G. Wodehouse as a Pierrot, and G. K. Chesterton as a clown, with the "Well-Dressed Man", a regular fashion feature, pictured with cloven hooves. One of the most famous of the regular sketch-features was the "Imaginary Interview," where two mismatched notables were caricatured and provided with imaginary dialogue. The "interviews" included one between Freud and Stalin, for example, and the last one, marking the incorporation of Vanity Fair by Vogue, was as we have noted between the two magazines.

Vanity Fair was always concerned with the favourite pastimes of the rich and fashionable, and games and sports formed a regular part of the magazine. Paul Gallico wrote a monthly article on sports in the thirties, and other regular features included bridge (1924 to 1935), mah-jong (January to November, 1924), and backgammon (1930 to 1932). Dogs were also a fashionable pastime, and Vanity Fair provided a "Dog Mart" (1913 to 1919) and a "Dog Directory" (1927 to 1936).

Many of the "services" provided by Vanity Fair were frankly

commercial, and provided a kind of editorial commentary to the advertising in the magazine. Fashion was of course the magazine's original background, when it was Dress and Vanity Fair, and continued to be a concern: features included "The Well-Dressed Man" (1913 to 1935), and "What They Wear in Vanity Fair" for the ladies (1914 to 1919).

Other shopping guides included the "Shopping List" (1913 to 1916), "Shops of Vanity Fair" (1914 to 1932), "Shopper's and Buyer's Guide" (1922 to 1932), "Apartments" (1925 to 1935), "Real Estate Register" (1916 to 1918), "Vanity Fair's Observer" (about cars, 1919 to 1923), "Schools and Camps" (1922 to 1932), "Travel Directory" (1920 to 1936), "Where New York Dines" (1914 to 1915), and "Table Delicacies" (1928 to 1929).

Two other service features took the form of analyses of the financial and political situation: "Foreign Matter" (1918 to 1919), and "The Financial Situation" (1920 to 1923).

B) Advertising

With all these service features which were essentially guides to "tasteful" shopping, the distinction between the editorial portion of the magazine and the paid advertising, while clear in the production of the magazine, was not so evident in the reading. Crowninshield himself addressed this question in the "In Vanity Fair" for November, 1913 (page 19):

But, after all, isn't the real test of a magazine -- new or old -- the amount of advertising within its covers? "Of course," shout the Cynics, "without advertising you

couldn't afford to get out your magazine!" Granted, but we mean more than that. "Of course," admits the Thinker, "advertisers are naturally the shrewdest judges; their use of a magazine is expert endorsement of its value." Granted, but we mean more than that. You remember Kipling's letter to the American friend who to save postage had torn the advertisements out of a batch of magazines, "Next time", ran the message, "tear out the rest and send me the advertisements. I can write the stories myself." What Kipling meant is exactly what we mean! The advertisements in the modern magazine furnish an independent and entirely different element of interest -- an element that no editorial department can either duplicate or replace.

Particularly is this true in a magazine like Dress and Vanity Fair where the advertising pages are filled almost entirely with timely announcements from a dozen great department stores, a hundred little shops and a score of dealers in the unusual. About these advertisements you will find no savor of stereotyped "publicity" of the sort that must needs be used in a great popular magazine with a tremendous miscellaneous circulation; on the contrary, each advertisement in Dress and Vanity Fair is a special message definitely planned to interest the small and homogeneous circle of which you, gentle reader, form a part; and as carefully as any page of letter press, each page of advertising is attuned exactly to those standards of individuality, refinement and distinction we conceive the most marked characteristics in common of those who do us the honor regularly to read this publication.

. . . and frankly, we ask you to make this advertising a regular part of your reading -- not on our account, not on the advertisers' account, but because these pages are worthy of it in their own right.

The history of advertising in Vanity Fair is worthy of a study in itself, for the changes in advertising style during the life of the magazine are an index of the increasing visual sophistication, and increasing importance, of commercial art in twentieth-century America. Certainly, by the twenties, the advertising in Vanity Fair was one of the interesting and aesthetically-pleasing features of the magazine. The kinds of products advertised were those bought by an economic élite: custom-made cars, expensive clothes and

furnishings; this reiterates the fact that Vanity Fair's readership was the élite of the country.

The most numerous ads by far in the magazine were those for automobiles, and over the years over 4000 ads for cars and car products appeared.⁴ The cars advertised were not the Model T's of the mass-market, but the beautiful custom-designed classics of those early years. Men's clothing and accessories were the second most common products advertised, with about 3700 ads over the years, and again the manufacturers were those like Brooks Brothers and Cluett, Peabody, the makers of Arrow shirts, patronised by the rich and fashionable.

Toiletries and drugs came next, with about 1750 ads in all, and the products tended to be luxuries like perfumes by Guerlain and Houbigant. Women's clothes and accessories were the next most frequent, with about 1350 ads, and it was purveyors like Bergdorf Goodman and Franklin Simon who advertised in the magazine. Shoes were the next most numerous product advertised (about 1100 ads), and the products which appeared with almost the same frequency were all related to self-indulgence: jewellery (about 950 ads), cigarettes (about 850), hats (about 770), gifts and novelties (about 730), and hotels (about 725, including the Biltmore, the Waldorf-Astoria, and hotels in resorts like Glen Springs and White Sulphur Springs).

One other source of advertising which was as frequent as these elements of conspicuous consumption, but different in character, was publishing. Books and magazines were frequently advertised in

Vanity Fair (books, about 400 ads; periodicals, about 600 ads), and testify to the fact that Vanity Fair did indeed "make literature fashionable." Among the most frequent book publishers who advertised in Vanity Fair were Century, Harper, Dutton, and Scribner, as well as Condé Nast itself, and the magazines most frequently advertised were Life, then a humour magazine; Collier's, Metropolitan, McLure's, and Scribner's, which published fiction; the Smart Set; International Studio; Architectural Record, Arts and Decoration, House Beautiful, and the Nast publications like House and Garden and Vogue.

Vanity Fair itself advertised within its own pages; in the early years the magazine solicited yearly subscriptions from its readers, for three dollars, and appealed to its readers' desire to be fashionable and knowledgeable. An ad for Vanity Fair in the January, 1916 issue (page 11), for example, was illustrated with black and white drawings by "Fish," and asked its readers to "Try a Little Dollar Diplomacy!" and take out a subscription. "Don't be a Social Back Number," the ad warned, "Six months of Vanity Fair will enable you to ignite a dinner party at fifty yards."

This frank appeal to the upward mobility of its readers, to the desire of the nouveaux riches to acquire the social, intellectual, and "cultural" graces of the group which they had just entered, was often the subject of the "In Vanity Fair" feature as well. Thus, for example, "In Vanity Fair" for November, 1920 (page 39) recounted the humorous exploits of a man who won the hand of a Debutante through the cultural knowledge he had gained by reading Vanity Fair, and

"In Vanity Fair" for December, 1920 (page 35) described an Oklahoma heiress' acquisition of sophistication through her reading of Vanity Fair.

These "In Vanity Fair" features were self-mocking at the same time that they advertised the "benefits" of the magazine, and were of a piece with the satires on the upwardly-mobile contained within the magazine.

C) Popular Culture

As long past as 1930, I had a hunch that the talkies would make even the best-selling novelist as archaic as silent pictures.

F. Scott Fitzgerald⁵

The period when Vanity Fair appeared saw tremendous changes in the relative proportions of "high" to "popular" art. As noted in Chapter I, the increase in population and in literacy, the development of new technologies like radio and film, and the improvements in book and magazine publishing technologies, all resulted in a tremendous expansion of the audience for various kinds of art, and even the development of new aesthetic media like film.

Vanity Fair, far from regarding these developments as threatening, embraced them as an increase in the variety and fascination of the Vanity Fair which it strove to examine. There was a kind of critical poise about the magazine, a sense of confidence in the abilities of a "man of taste" to deal with all aspects of life and to attain critical judgments of all phenomena. The image of the editor as gentlemanly man-about-town extended

to the magazine itself, which regarded the elements of popular culture with interest and even fascination, but also with equanimity and a certain wry distance.

In fact, aside from the occasional derisive comment about "women's fiction" or "magazine writing" or "mere journalism," the magazine tended to make no very strong distinctions between "high" and "low" art. Vanity Fair was more concerned, rather, to examine the new arts on their own terms, and to applaud their most gifted exponents. Photos of film stars were thus printed beside photos of literary masters or concert pianists; music hall songs were accorded the same kind of attention as classical music, and photographs were considered in the same way as paintings. The pages of every issue contained a mixture of "high" and "low" art, judged according to their intrinsic value rather than by hierarchical standards or artistic levels. At the same time, however, Vanity Fair also published articles which attempted to explore the significance of these new arts, and to determine the relations between the traditional and newer art forms.

Gilbert Seldes was one of Vanity Fair's contributors who was much concerned with these questions. He wrote a number of articles for Vanity Fair exploring the various new aesthetic media, some of which were published as The Seven Lively Arts in 1924. In his acknowledgements to that volume, he first expressed his gratitude.

Above all to two managing editors, John Peale Bishop and Edmund Wilson, Jr., of Vanity Fair and to their editor Frank Crowninshield; they published several essays

which later served as the raw material for chapters here, published portions of other chapters written expressly for this book. . . . 6

Seldes was convinced that the new "lively arts," as he called them, such as film and comics, had merit. In a chapter of the book called "The Great God Bogus,"⁷ he expressed the view which could easily stand for Vanity Fair's attitude to the question. "High art," claimed Seldes, is universal; the "lively" or "popular arts" are of high quality, but ephemeral, limited to their own time. The real danger, continued Seldes, lies in "bogus" art, or "pseudo-serious art," a thinned-out, bloodless version of "high art."

The bogus arts are corrupting the lively ones -- because an essential defect of the bogus is that they pretend to be better than the popular arts, yet they want desperately to be popular. They borrow and spoil what is good; they persuade people by appealing to their snobbery that they are the real thing.⁸

This attitude marked the various discussions of popular culture in Vanity Fair, as well as its tributes to the popular arts' celebrities. The intention was never to dismiss out of hand various aesthetic phenomena because they did not conform to traditional forms or expectations; rather, attempts were made to understand the characteristics, and even the influence, of the newer forms.

In our account of the contributors to Vanity Fair we have already seen that many articles in the magazine were concerned with the new media and elements of popular culture. Writers as varied as Thomas Mann and George Jean Nathan wrote on film, Walter Lippmann and H. L. Mencken on newspapers, Jean Cocteau and P. G. Wodehouse on the revue. Since it is not the major

concern of this study, the sheer volume of material on the popular arts and "mass" media in Vanity Fair precludes an exhaustive account. The reviews of popular fiction will be considered in Chapter IV, along with the other literary articles. For the present, we must limit ourselves to a few representative examples of articles concerned with the "lively arts."

Gilbert Seldes contributed numerous articles on various aspects of popular culture and the mass media. Film was one of his major concerns, and in April, 1925 (pages 57 and 104) he wrote an article called "Again We View-With-Alarm: The Moving Picture" where he attempted to define those characteristics of film which were not being exploited to their full potential. Subtitled, "Imported Producers and Soul Problems are Destroying Its Virtues," the article began with an account of the danger facing contemporary cinema:

Most of us remember the pre-war "menace of the movies": the poor struggling art was considered vulgar, it kept people away from good books, it threatened the stage. Today there is another scapegoat; it is radio which plays jazz all the time and is accused of ruining literature and drama. The moving picture is virtually assured of a good social standing. Yet I suggest that there is a menace, not of the movies, but to the movies. . . . The moving picture is being diverted from its natural path, it is no longer the moving picture of ten years ago. It is working with unsuitable material and trying to do things it ought to leave alone. . . . The best thing the moving picture can do is to turn to its old material and re-animate it, with new methods of production and a higher intelligence in directing.

According to Seldes, the two things which film was best at were fantasy and thrill, since these made the most use of moving

pictures' special qualities. The melodrama and action films of the early days of film-making were being supplanted by "problem plays in pictures," the attempt to inject social ideas and concerns into film. The problem, continued Seldes,

. . . is that the stage presents problems as well as the movie and . . . fiction and sociology present them better than either stage or screen. That is, the movie is working with material not primarily and exclusively suitable to the screen; whereas the old romantic and spectacular melodrama was better done on the screen than anywhere else, used the screen's capacity to the utmost, and was, therefore, its peculiar property.

In addition, continued Seldes, the original genres of thriller and fantasy had been abandoned before film technique had become very sophisticated, so that, for example, "the thriller movie was left in the dime-novel stage and never progressed as far even as the Sherlock Holmes stage."

Film would only reach its full potential by developing those forms which were most appropriate to it; by exploiting its own unique characteristics. What was needed, claimed Seldes, was for film to

. . . fall back a step in order to leap farther ahead. It can apply all it has learned, all the intelligence and taste it has acquired, to the old (I should say eternal) elements.

Seldes was also concerned with the effects of film on other art forms, and in June, 1922, he contributed an article titled, "The Cinema Novel" (pages 73 and 110) where he contrasted the use of cinematic effects in American and French literature. He began by stating that

. . . the cinema influence in literature in France is almost exactly the opposite to what it is here. There it seems to make for brevity, hardness, clarity,

brilliance. You will find it in the extraordinary stories of Paul Morand and Louis Aragon; and you will find in neither of these those characteristic sloppinesses which American authors are beginning to blame on the movies. If they would take the trouble to study the pictures, instead of trying to make money out of them, and discover the elements in the cinema-technique which are capable of making their own work fruitful, we might have better novels, and we certainly would have a few less bad pictures.

The remainder of the article was concerned with the description of two French writers, Blaise Cendrars and Jules Romains, who had recently "used the scenario as a method of fiction." Cendrars' La Fin du Monde and La Perle Fiévreuse, and Romains' Donogoo-Tonka were discussed in terms of their successful adoption of cinematic form and technique for literary fiction, and Seldes claimed that Romains had achieved something truly "remarkable,"

. . . for he has pushed the method of the cinema forward a long and significant step, and, while using everything it can give, he has produced a first class work of fiction.

Seldes' other articles on popular and mass culture included "The Menace of the Un-Kept Press" (July, 1924, page 28), an analysis of the declining numbers of newspapers in New York, and the distinctive features of those remaining; and "The Cult of the Second-Rate" (October, 1924, page 68), an investigation of the reasons for the deliberate pursuit of the less-than-excellent among certain American intellectuals.

Aldous Huxley, who wrote for Vanity Fair on a variety of subjects, frequently considered aspects of popular or "mass" culture. Like Seldes, he was often concerned with the potential of the film

medium, and like Seldes he believed that one of its greatest attractions lay in the realm of fantasy. In July, 1925, in an article called "Where are the Movies Moving?" (pages 39 and 78), he stated that, "cinematography differs from literature and the spoken drama and . . . may be developed into something entirely new. What the cinema can do better than literature is to be fantastic." He then proceeded to compare the French school of literary "super-realism" with the potentials of film animation; according to Huxley, film as a medium was far superior to words when attempting to render the modes of dream and fantasy, as the super-realists attempted to do.

For Huxley, film could proceed by one of two main methods: the "Behaviourist," where psychological detail is conveyed through close-up of expression or movement; and the "Expressionist" or "Pictorial," where mood is rendered through the pictorial effect of the total shot as an "expressive, symbolic composition." The two methods should be fused, Huxley felt, so that an element of fantasy and "a certain picturesque super-realism" would enliven the realistic portrayal of action. Then, Huxley believed, film would achieve its true potential, and its own distinctive aesthetic quality.

Huxley could also be critical of films, and in an article entitled "Our Debt to Hollywood" (August, 1926, pages 34 and 38), he bemoaned the fact that movie-goers all over the world knew of America only what they saw in her movies, and the movies presented

"a world of silliness and criminality."

Carl Van Vechten, too, wrote often on aspects of popular culture. Since he was much concerned with Harlem and the Negro culture of the time, he often wrote on jazz and blues. The movies were another of his favorite concerns, and in 1927 he contributed a number of articles on Hollywood. The first appeared in May (pages 54 and 68), and was called, "Fabulous Hollywood." Although this was essentially a privileged-tourist's account, with anecdotes about Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald and the director King Vidor, he did note that Hollywood was a place of hard work as well as glamour:

Committed to no purpose, I was, it must be admitted, an idler in Hollywood and an idler in Hollywood is so strange a phenomenon, especially an idle writer, as to be almost an object of suspicion. Everybody connected with the films -- and this was the group to which I entrusted my social fortunes -- works in Hollywood, works hard.

D) Representative Issues

The character of Vanity Fair resided, not only in the variety of subjects treated and the mixture of media and voices employed, but also in the fact that these various kinds and styles of features appeared in juxtaposition to each other. The magazine did indeed present many different aspects of "Vanity Fair," and like a visitor to a fairground the reader of the magazine could browse among various lectures, entertainments, and services.

A brief account of the contents of representative issues will

provide some sense of the mixture of concerns and styles which animated Vanity Fair.

The second issue, Dress and Vanity Fair of October, 1913, opened with various advertisements interspersed with brief columns on the latest women's fashions. "The Shopping List," a classified ad section listing shops, also appeared in these first pages. The Table of Contents page was followed by "In Vanity Fair," which contained Nast's prospectus for the new magazine, to be modelled on the London pictorial magazines like The Sketch and The Tatler.

The lead article, entitled "Personality in Bookplates," was well illustrated with examples, and the frontispiece facing it was a full-page photograph of Sir Johnston Forbes Robertson in the role of Othello. The next two pages consisted of a photo-feature on the kings and queens of Russia, Germany, and Roumania, with ironic captions; the next article was on social consciousness in the theatre, with photos of Forbes Robertson in various roles as illustration. This was followed by pieces on Russian set-design and the London musical revues, and by photos of current stars of the London revues. Edgar Saltus' "Fifth Avenue," a kind of society gossip page, came next, and then "Art at Home and Abroad," which was illustrated by reproductions of the art works discussed. Henry Brinsley's "Views and Reviews" of books came next.

The back of the magazine contained photos of society ladies at the Deauville races and playing tennis at Newport. Then came reports on tennis and baseball, and service features on boats,

dogs, and cars. "The Well-Dressed Man," a guide to men's fashions, followed, and a report on furniture for bachelors' quarters. The magazine closed with the "Art Lover's Almanac," a listing of exhibits, the "Playgoer's Guide," and the "Sportsman's Calendar." At this stage, the magazine was clearly addressed to the members of Society, and entertaining diversion was the primary concern.

Aesthetic matters gradually became more important, especially with the appointment of Crowninshield as editor, and by April, 1914 the magazine's serious content was much less thin. After the ads at the beginning, "In Vanity Fair," and the Table of Contents, the magazine opened with "Some Higher Aspects of the Modern Dance Movement," by Alys E. Bentley, the leading exponent of American modern dance at the time. An article on Lucrezia Bori, the prima donna of the Metropolitan Opera, followed, and then an account by Clayton Hamilton of the "Play of the Month." These three articles were amply illustrated with photographs.

The "Hall of Fame" came next, and then parodies by Louis Untermeyer of the literary styles of Thomas Hardy, Arnold Bennett, Theodore Dreiser, and James Oppenheim. Anne O'Hogan's satire on feminism came next, and then Acton Davies' "Stage Stories." F. S. Thomas then reported on "Drama in London," with photographs, and an article on "Modernists" considered the decorations of Robert W. Chanter and the sculpture of Henry Clews, Jr., with reproductions of their work.

Henry Brinsley's "Views and Reviews," sub-titled "Literary Patent Medicine," considered the novels of several popular writers,

including Mrs. Humphrey Ward. George Jean Nathan's "If I Were a Magazine Editor" came next, including an account of what he would ban, and his comparison of regular contemporary magazine features with Flaubert's "Dictionary of Commonplaces."

The regular back-page features closed the magazine; these included sports (ice hockey and golf), dogs, cars, "The Well-Dressed Man," and women's fashions. Included among these service features and ads was a satire by Mary K. Ford entitled "Before the Curtain Rises" (page 96), which was a humorous fictional account of two society girls attending a performance of A Doll's House.

By 1915 the magazine was frankly concerned with the arts, and the October issue included articles by Arthur Symons on the ballet, James Huneker on the Italian futurist painters, P. G. Wodehouse on the London theatre, and an article on George Bernard Shaw and George Jean Nathan. Brinsley's book-review feature was concerned with popular women writers, and P. G. Wodehouse contributed a parody of F. P. A.'s regular column in the New York World. The war in Europe was beginning to concern Vanity Fair, and Stephen Leacock reported on the war effort in Canada, the U.S. having not yet entered the conflict.

Humour was a major element, and Robert Benchley contributed a satirical article on education. The magazine also offered a "statistical analysis of affection," a series of very amusing graphs purportedly recording the progress of affection through marriage.

The juxtaposition of articles with photographs and illustrations was often very interesting. In the July, 1916 issue, for example,

the lead article by F. J. Gregg on feminism, a serious account of women's entry into the working world, appeared opposite a full-page photograph of the actress Ina Claire. A personal account of the war by a French aviator bombardier appeared opposite satirical sketches of life in the trenches; and an article on Rajput (Hindu) painting was printed opposite a reproduction of John Sargent's "Portrait of Mme X," which had just been acquired by the Metropolitan Museum.

A satire by "P. Brooke-Haven" (P. G. Wodehouse) on the "star" aspect of writing, entitled "Authors' Understudies' Bureau," was illustrated with photos; and an article by Arthur Lee Cabot on the recently-published autobiography of Charles Francis Adams appeared opposite the "Hall of Fame," which paid tribute, among others, to Lord Dunsany and David Lloyd George.

The literary and aesthetic content of Vanity Fair continued to increase as the magazine approached its golden age of the twenties. The issue for June, 1919, for example, included Arthur Symons on Balzac, Huysmans, and Shaw, and on the Memoirs of Casanova; P. G. Wodehouse on the novel; Dorothy Parker on the theatre; Oliver M. Sayler on Russian literature; Oliver Wakefield on French theatre in New York; John Jay Chapman on the decline of culture and the classics in the universities; an article on George Meredith as a publisher's reader; a parody of Harper's magazine; and a poem by Amy Lowell.

Humour was always an important part of Vanity Fair, and often took its cue from the arts. In February, 1920, for example, a feature called "All Seriousness Aside," found among the ads at the

front of the magazine, consisted of two parodies: "The Bells: As Poe Might Have Arranged Them for a Jazz Band" and "Shakespeare's Lost Chance: What the Bard Might Have Done with the Telephone." Robert Benchley described a mythical "Film Version of 'The Education of Henry Adams' for Culture's Sake," and Robert E. Sherwood parodied "The Higher Education on the Screen: The Movies as the Nation's Mental Stimulant." An article called "The Non-Professional Critics" provided theatre reviews as they might be written by a Debutante and a man from Greenwich Village, and "Vanity Fair's Book Reviewer" provided "An Extremely Literary Review" of "The Most Popular Book of the Month," the New York City Telephone Directory.

By the early twenties, the Table of Contents page was subdivided by subject matter, and an example, such as that for January, 1924, provides ample illustration of the range and quality of Vanity Fair in the twenties:

- In and about the Theatre
- The World of Art
- The World of Ideas
 - (including D. H. Lawrence, "The Proper Study of Mankind"; Clive Bell, "Jean Cocteau"; a review of H. G. Wells; Edmund Wilson on cynicism in literature)
- Poetry and Verse
 - (including poetry by Sherwood Anderson, Stephen Leacock, Edgar Lee Masters, and Babette Deutsch)
- Literary Hors d'Oeuvres
 - (including Huxley on political leadership)

The issue for February, 1924, included:

- The World of Ideas
 - (including T. S. Eliot on James, Frazer, and F. H. Bradley)
- Literary Hors d'Oeuvres
 - (including articles by Wyndham Lewis, Huxley, Chesterton, and a story by Maxim Gorky)

The "World of Ideas" for April, 1924 included Bertrand Russell on "Machines and the Emotions," Huxley on "Knowledge and Art,"

Dorothy Richardson on "Women and the Future," and Gertrude Stein's "Portrait of Picasso."

This fine quality continued throughout the twenties. The issue for February, 1927, for example, included reviews by George Jean Nathan and Alexander Woollcott; Clarence Darrow on "The Foreign Debt and America"; Walter Lippmann on "Coolidge and 1928"; Huxley on "The Truth about the Universities"; Sherwood Anderson on prohibition; poetry by Theodore Dreiser; a literary parody by Corey Ford; and a story by Ferenc Molnar.

In June, 1928, John Dos Passos wrote on "A Machine Age Theatre"; Dreiser wrote on the political experiment in Russia; Huxley wrote on "The Decline of the Family"; Alexander Woollcott wrote on changing morality; John Riddell (Corey Ford) did a parody of Thornton Wilder; Sherwood Anderson contributed "Small Town Notes"; Compton Mackenzie wrote on "Ladies of the Demi-Monde"; and satirical sketches were provided by Covarrubias, on musical comedy, Frans Masereel, on Paris, and Erma Paul Allen, on "Classified Husbands."

In January, 1936, Vanity Fair provided its readers with a preview of the coming year's contents. Among those slated to appear in 1936 were: fiction writers Thomas Wolfe, Erskine Caldwell, Heywood Brown, Dorothy Thomas, Nancy Hale, Richard Sherman, Tess Slesinger; photographers Edward Steichen (using the "new Duplex Process in printing") and Anton Bruehl in colour, and Cecil Beaton, Horst, Lusha Nelson, and Remi Lohse in black-and-white; cartoonists Miguel Covarrubias, to continue the "Impossible Interviews," Steig, Garretto, Verlès, and Groppen, who

had sparked an international incident with his caricature of the Japanese emperor; sports: Paul Gallico; Paris: Janet Flanner. And the magazine promised to continue to print colour reproductions of modern paintings.

The magazine would soon be incorporated by Vogue, of course, and the preview of those already committed to appearing in Vanity Fair makes one regret the demise of the magazine which did, as this brief sample indicates, live up to its aim to present all that was most exciting and stimulating in Vanity Fair.

Chapter IV
Literature in Vanity Fair

Although literature and literary concerns played a major role in Vanity Fair throughout its history, actual reviews of the new books formed a separate, easily-identified feature during only three major periods. The earliest issues of the magazine, when it still appeared as Dress and Vanity Fair, started the tradition of book-reviewing with a feature called "Views and Reviews," written by Henry Brinsley. Brinsley, whose literary taste tended towards typical examples of the "genteel tradition" and included many British writers, contributed a "Views and Reviews" for the three issues of Dress and Vanity Fair from September to December, 1913.

When the magazine changed its name to Vanity Fair with the January, 1914 issue, Brinsley's feature continued under various names, each related to the particular books under review, such as "Books Pleasant and Unpleasant," "When Lovely Woman Stoops to Letters," and so on; the review feature appeared regularly each month under Brinsley's name for all of 1914 and 1915, and occasionally throughout 1916. Brinsley contributed his last three review features in June, July and September of 1917.

For the next three years there was no regular reviewing of new books, and the magazine instead carried occasional articles on literary matters commissioned from various contributors.

A regular monthly review of new writing, now called "Books of the Month," resumed in October, 1921; this feature appeared at the front of each issue, usually before page 15. The first literary editor responsible for this feature was John Peale Bishop, who carried out his responsibilities regularly for 11 issues. Vanity Fair entered its most distinguished period of literary reviewing when Bishop relinquished his duties as literary editor to his close Princeton friend Edmund Wilson. Wilson, who had already contributed a number of articles to Vanity Fair in 1920 and 1921, assumed literary editorship in September, 1922, and produced the "Books of the Month" feature until November, 1923.

This was Wilson's first job of any importance in the New York literary world, and marked his entry into the milieu where he would subsequently establish his distinguished career. It was in the offices of Vanity Fair that Wilson and Bishop both met Edna St. Vincent Millay, and it was in quest of Millay that Wilson embarked on a trip to Paris in the fall of 1921; Millay had already been sent to Europe on assignment for Vanity Fair.¹ On his return to New York, Wilson assumed literary editorship at Vanity Fair; when he abandoned this position in 1923 and moved to the New Republic, Vanity Fair ceased its regular concern with new writing until the thirties.

Aside from an obviously commercial "Reviews of the New Books" contributed by Burton Rascoe from December, 1923 to January, 1925, which usually appeared at the back of the magazine

among the clothing and furniture advertisements, no regular book review feature again appeared in Vanity Fair until 1934, although feature articles throughout the twenties dealt with literary and critical matters and a review feature called "The Dust Jacket" appeared in the issues for November, 1932 and February, 1933, signed by "The Duster."

Regular reviewing resumed in January, 1934, with "New Books on the Literary Checklist." This feature, which appeared each month, consisted of capsule reviews with the reviewers identified only by their initials. The reviewers tended to be members of the Vanity Fair staff, like Donald Freeman, Helen Brown Norden, George S. Chappell, and Clare Boothe Brokaw. In July, 1934, the "Literary Checklist" was combined with a new feature called "Praise and Prejudice: The new books in review," and this feature continued as "Praise and Prejudice" until the demise of the magazine in 1936; it consisted generally of long literary essays, with the occasional addition of capsule reviews. "Praise and Prejudice" was produced under the literary editorship of George Dangerfield, an English-born historian who came to the U.S. in 1930 and eventually won a Pulitzer Prize in 1952.

A cursory glance at the literary chronology for the period of Vanity Fair's publication (see Appendix A) would seem to indicate that the magazine's reviews were not directly involved in the most avant-garde literary and critical debates of the

period. Years which marked the publication of large numbers of the most influential or enduring classics of literary modernism -- 1920: Women in Love, Hugh Selwyn Mauberley, The Sacred Wood, This Side of Paradise, Main Street; 1925: Eliot's Collected Poems, The Great Gatsby, In Our Time, An American Tragedy; 1926: The Sun Also Rises, the English translation of Spengler's Decline of the West, Soldier's Pay; 1929: A Farewell to Arms, The Sound and the Fury, Look Homeward, Angel, Lady Chatterley's Lover (in Paris) -- were years in which Vanity Fair carried no regular literary review feature.

There is, too, a certain circularity of pattern in the quality of the regular literary reviews which did appear in the magazine: the first and last major periods of regular book reviews, from 1913-1916 and from 1934-1936, were written by minor figures in the literary world, important more as indicators of Vanity Fair's taste during those periods than as literary arbiters in their own right. It was only the middle period of regular reviews, from 1921 to 1923, that exhibited sophisticated literary modernism, under the literary editorship of John Peale Bishop and especially Edmund Wilson. In this, as in so much else throughout its history, the magazine paralleled more general characteristics of its time: the great surge of literary activity and quality which marked the early twenties in America also marked the best period of book-reviewing in Vanity Fair; the eras before and after the twenties reflected a greater conservatism and literary complacency, a removal of literature from the very

centre of intellectual and social importance.

It would be a mistake, however, to give too much credence to this superficial correspondence between the literary activity in Vanity Fair and in the world of letters in general. While new writings, and the debates surrounding them, rose to remarkable prominence in the twenties, and successful writers were elevated by the new public relations industry to the status of "stars," literary innovation and quality was by no means restricted to the decade of the twenties. Many of the so-called advances in American writing in that decade had their roots in earlier developments, and affected significant departures in the decade following. What is indicated in various accounts of the literary activity during the period of Vanity Fair's publication, however, is that the literary world exhibited different emphases during the pre-War era, the twenties, and the thirties; this held true for popular writing as well as for serious literature.

If we can make any generalisations at this point, before a detailed analysis of each period, it is that the literary concerns of Vanity Fair exhibited a similar demarcation into three general periods, with different styles, reviewers, format, and concerns exhibited in each.

A) The Literary Context

1. 1913-1916

The period from 1913 to 1916 was one of intense conflict

among literary conventions and standards. While the traditional periodicals like Harper's and the Atlantic were still committed to printing fiction and reviews grounded in the genteel style, the new doctrinaire little magazines like the Dial, still in Chicago at this time, and The Little Review were militantly publishing and proclaiming literary experiments which would influence a generation and form the basis of new standards of literary taste and expectations. As Kazin has shown,² the literary modernism which would dominate serious literature after the war had its roots in the pre-war period, and was already a subject of much debate in the years just before the outbreak of war. 1913 marked the appearance of Lawrence's Sons and Lovers in England, and Cather's O Pioneers! in America; it also was the year that the first English translation of Freud's Interpretation of Dreams, a book which would have profound influence on writers and critics, was printed by the Woolfs' press in England. Dubliners appeared in 1914, as well as Dreiser's The Titan and Stein's Tender Buttons. The Egoist published Joyce's Portrait in 1915, and that year saw the appearance in England of The Rainbow and Woolf's The Voyage Out, as well as Lowell's and Aldington's influential collection, Some Imagist Poets; that same year marked the publication of Dreiser's The Genius, Masters' Spoon River Anthology, and the book that would define a generation to itself, Van Wyck Brook's America's Coming of Age. In 1916 the Portrait was published in New York, as well as Anderson's Windy

McPherson's Son and Sandburg's Chicago Poems.

In popular taste, the period was marked by innocence and romanticism, a nostalgia for the rapidly vanishing past of what one commentator has called "The Simple Life."³ The bestsellers were Gene Stratton-Porter and Mary Roberts Rinehart with their idealised rustic innocents, Both Tarkington's sentimental evocations of adolescence, Eleanor Porter's Pollyanna books, and the Tarzan series. Even the war did little to change the popular audience's desire for moral uplift, and the bestsellers which dealt with the war, Wells' Mr. Britling Sees It Through and Harold Bell Wright's When a Man's a Man evidenced, as their very titles imply, courage and nobility under duress.

An account of the noteworthy literature and popular fiction which appeared from 1913-1916 is one indicator of the literary milieu, but hardly gives the whole picture. This was an era of marked contrast between various styles and traditions, and more importantly, of changes in the composition of the reading public itself. Perhaps the most significant extra-literary fact was the spread of literacy in the period (see Table 3). Whereas in 1890 only 86.7 per cent of the American population was literate, by 1910 this had risen to 92.3 per cent, and by 1920 to 94 per cent. Coupled with the increase in total population, from 47 million in 1890 to 83 million in 1920, this meant not only a doubling of the number of people able to read, but a spreading of reading

TABLE 3
THE GROWTH OF LITERACY IN AMERICA
PERCENTAGE OF LITERACY AMONG AMERICANS 10 OR OLDER

YEAR	POPULATION 10 OR OLDER	PER CENT LITERATE
1890	47,413,559	86.7
1900	57,949,824	89.3
1910	71,580,270	92.3
1920	82,739,315	94.0
1930	98,723,047	95.7
1940	110,442,000	96.5

Source: Wilbur S. Schramm, Mass Communications (Urbana, 1960),
p. 112.

capability to a wider segment of the population. Writers and publishers faced, then, not only a much larger reading public, but one increasingly without traditional notions of literature. This would affect not only the increasing importance of the "popular" writers, those able to make the bestseller lists, but also the self-conception of the writers who viewed themselves as part of a literary tradition.

The question of literary tradition was in fact one of the most debated literary issues of the period. The revolt against the "genteel tradition" is by now a critical commonplace; what is

not as widely commented upon is the fact that two very distinct and opposed reactions to that tradition occurred simultaneously.

Homburger has defined these two responses as those of the "literary nationalists" and the "avant-garde Modernists," and believes that their inherent opposition was "latent in the early years: their enemy, the genteel, gave them a shared but insecurely based sense of cohesion."⁴

Once the opposition to the genteel tradition had been defined, however, it was necessary to name some new past with which to identify, and it was at this point that the new forces parted company. The Modernists took an international approach: Pound, in the introduction to The Spirit of Romance (1910), aligned himself with all of European literature; Eliot was to elaborate and sophisticate this position in his "Tradition and the Individual Talent" (1919). The other response found its spokesman in Van Wyck Brooks, whose America's Coming of Age, while concerned primarily with analysing the negative aspects of American history which must be overcome for a true flowering of American arts, was essentially important for its looking to native developments for the appropriate "usable past," an orientation which Brooks would maintain throughout his career.

Whereas the writers in the "genteel tradition" had taken their models and terms of decorum from those British colleagues who did not challenge convention, those who rejected the genteel were faced with the problem of redefining the tradition in which they worked. The Modernists like Pound and Eliot chose all of the European

literary tradition and set out to "make it new," and even to expand it to include Oriental and African elements; the literary nationalists looked to their native soil, rediscovered the American Renaissance, and set out to define their own distinctive "usable past." The difference was a fundamental one in theory; in practice, of course, the lines were hardly clear-cut. The matter was even more confused by the fact that young writers of both persuasions were influenced by French writers like the Symbolistes, who had learned much from American writers like Poe. In addition, many of the writers attempting to work in a native American tradition did much of their living and writing in Europe; Cowley has pointed out the important fact, however, that while the generation of Pound and Eliot had claimed the European tradition as their own to renovate, his generation went to Europe to define themselves in contrast to it.⁵

The American literary exodus to Paris is really the story of the twenties and will concern us more when we deal with that period. At this point it is important to keep in mind, however, that the pre-War period already manifested the literary conflicts and problems which would concern the post-War generation. Those issues, in sum, had to do with a tension between the past and the present: the coexistence of the genteel tradition and its opponents; the reaction against the genteel tradition, looking primarily towards an American past or a more international cultural tradition; and changes in the reading public.

If we ask why the reaction against gentility in letters occurred at all, we will find the social forces underlying many of these

conflicts more clearly evident in the popular taste of the time. James Hart, in his study The Popular Book,⁶ identifies the roots of the popular taste for romance and innocence in the late nineteenth century. "By 1896," he writes, "seven-eighths of the nation's wealth was in the hands of one-eighth of its people, of whom one per cent owned more than the other ninety-nine. . . . Behind these figures lay . . . the reasons for rigid economic and social controls imposed by a ruling class."⁷ This concentration of wealth and power led, not only to a rigidity of social structure and mores, but more importantly to an inflexibility and caution in matters literary and artistic, a desire to possess and exhibit what was already deemed to be of merit.

There was no room in this situation for literary experiment or innovation; rather, the drive was towards examples of already-established and easily-recognized "breeding" and "culture"; Hart attributes this situation to ". . . the typical inferiority complex of the nouveaux riches: the desire to possess foreign culture through wealth. Once, it was said, admission to society depended on two questions, 'Who was your grandfather?' and 'How much do you know?' Now both were replaced by 'How much are you worth?'"⁸ Literature for the newly-rich, then, was less a value in itself than one of a number of indices of wealth and social status. This would mean, of course, that styles and themes would have to be culturally "safe," non-disruptive, and already accredited. The roots of the popular taste for "safe" reading are to be found in this social situation; in the same way that newly-rich matrons would

cover their piano legs in imitation of British "gentility," so they would also follow the dictates of polite taste and decorum in their choice of reading material.

Nothing is safer than romance; removed from the immediate present and whatever social unrest may exist, bathed in a glow of idealised heroism and innocence, able to transmit standards of purity and nobility without the tarnishing intrusion of reality or exigency, romance was the perfect form for the period. And in fact, Hart states, "Towards the end of the century the romance became almost synonymous with the novel in the public mind and was the most popular form of reading matter."⁹ In 1894 about 700 new works of fiction appeared; by 1901 this number had risen to 2,200, with fiction accounting for over 27 per cent of all publishing, followed by biography and history, and then by theology.

By the turn of the century, however, the simple pattern of life formerly established and enjoyed by a small group of the wealthy had already been attacked from many sides. Populism had grown in the West, and taken a Marxist form in the cities with the large waves of immigration that marked the beginning of the twentieth century. The frontier was gone, and with it the opportunity to explore new territory and to escape the rigidities of the civilised East. The response to these pressures in popular fiction was to maintain the spirit of romance, to retreat from the conflicts and doubts of the present into fictional accounts of an idealised Old West and Romantic South, or the supposed innocence of "simple, decent country folk of simple America."

Suzanne Greene, in her study of popular American fiction, has designated the writing that was popular in 1914-16 as describing "The Simple Life."¹⁰ She notes that in the bestsellers of the period, international affairs and politics were ignored, as were foreigners; characters were whites of Northern European descent, and when others did appear they were ethnic stereotypes without individuality; heroes and heroines were from the middle-classes, and the wealthy were presented either as stereotypes improved by contact with the "real" world or as crude nouveaux riches; the lower classes also appeared as stereotypes lacking individuality, either ignorant servants or poor children striving to better themselves; the family was presented as the sacred unit, and children played an important role, especially for their quality of innocence; women were presented as pure and to be honoured, staying in the home and taking their direction from men; sex was never described or dealt with as a human motivation, although a first-kiss might provide romantic interest; religion played a strong role, especially as it applied to everyday life. The popular writing was middle-class, pure, moral, decent; settings might be romantic, but the themes remained familiar: the value of hard work and decency, the sacredness of the family, the purity and honour of women and children.

What is clearly evident in the popular fiction of the time, then, is a retreat from the real changes and pressures then current in American life, a retreat to a simpler and more orderly form of existence, a glorification of the values of simple hard-working middle-class people.

The "genteel tradition" against which so many would struggle was, of course, somewhat different. William Van O'Connor, in his excellent study, notes that "the term 'genteel tradition' resists easy and neat definition."¹¹ Only defined as a distinct tradition when it was already beginning to lose ground, by Santayana in "The Genteel Tradition in American Philosophy," given as a lecture in 1911 and then incorporated into Winds of Doctrine in 1913,¹² the term "was taken up quickly by critics and novelists interested in loosening the American mores," and "In the period before and after World War I, it became a term of opprobrium."¹³ O'Connor goes on to say that "One begins to suspect that there are two genteel traditions: the one that might exist for the disinterested historian and the one that was mythologised by [Sinclair] Lewis and his contemporaries." O'Connor mentions that the group who might be considered exponents of the "genteel tradition" saw themselves as "part of an aristocracy of culture and intellect," and as the "representatives and arbiters of culture."¹⁵

Many of the presumed standard-bearers of the "genteel tradition" were, as the role of arbiter would suggest, themselves university professors or literary editors. Among those singled out for attack, whether rightly or wrongly, by the young rebels were Richard Watson Gilder, an editor at Scribner's and later Century, and Barrett Wendell, a Harvard professor of literature whose book entitled A Literary History of America (1900) was deemed to exhibit "genteel" taste. Among the writers attacked as genteel were Brander Matthews and Henry Van Dyke. William Dean Howells, who had in his own day

been a champion of literary realism and a defender of Zola's reputation in America, was proclaimed "genteel" by the later generation for his prudery regarding the depiction of sex in literature, and singled out for criticism by Sinclair Lewis in his Nobel acceptance speech of 1930.

Since the role of cultural arbiter was also what Vanity Fair proclaimed, the attitude of those presumed to represent genteel standards is very important; as O'Connor puts it, "if there is one characteristic that can be said to pervade all others, it is their moral sense."¹⁶ Thus attempts to describe the genteel tradition, both by critics and by disinterested parties, tend to focus on what was left out of these writings: they "did not encourage the expression in literature of the bristling vigor, the commercialization, the scheming and plodding in American life, or of the realist and pragmatist forms of idealism. . . .";¹⁷ they "generally ignored environmental factors and instead abstracted literature from life, associating it with genteel forms of idealism";¹⁸ they "had a respect for tradition that precluded acceptance of the new or experimental";¹⁹ finally, "Such terms as 'discipline,' 'restraint,' and 'idealism' occur commonly in the literature of the period."²⁰

While the literary merit and sophistication of the so-called "genteel" writers far exceeded that of their popular counterparts, it is nevertheless clear that many of the themes and moral precepts were similar: conservatism, idealism, a focusing on the nobler and inspirational rather than the seamier aspects of life, a denial of that which was novel or potentially disruptive of traditional moral

standards. There is one major difference, however, and in this respect the popular writers proved more progressive and innovative than their more literary genteel colleagues.

O'Connor points out that the genteel tradition "implied a provincialism that assumed American culture was British and was transmitted to the rest of the country through the good offices of New England,"²¹ and while this was not true of Howells, it does apply to others. Popular writing until after World War I, while it conveyed moral standards similar to those proclaimed by the genteel writers and critics, was nevertheless definitely rooted in the American situation. Perhaps because so many of their readers were middle-class Americans who had little access to the imported British or the genteel New England forms of "cultivation," the popular writers grounded their stories in native, albeit sentimentalized settings. The world of the popular novels, whether the idealised past of the West or the South or the sentimentalized present of the farm or the small town, was nevertheless a thoroughly American world, albeit a narrow and exclusive one. Perhaps because their own readers lacked the "culture" of Britain as transmitted through its genteel American arbiters, the writers of popular fiction were able to write of their own country and people, however idealised those accounts may have been. What was left out, of course, was all those elements of America which did not fit the definition of "traditional" or "moral" America.

We have already seen that the revolt against the "genteel tradition," which in many ways invented that "tradition" as

something to rebel against, took two characteristic forms, one pointedly American and the other more internationally oriented. Daniel Aaron, in his study of Writers on the Left,²² has broadly categorised these two dominant strains of rebellion in the pre-War years as the "Priests of Young America" and the "Priests of Art."²³ The former group, centred around Van Wyck Brooks and Randolph Bourne, agitated for a new America freed from the culture of business and its attendant materialism. This belief in the potential of American civilisation, coupled with an opposition to literary expatriation, did not however preclude their sense that European culture could provide models of greatness to act as what Aaron calls a "leavening agent."²³

The other reaction, which was more individualistic, centred on the technical rigours of Art, and tended to regard Europe as a "spiritual homeland," with writers like Pound, Eliot, and Gertrude Stein in fact conducting their careers in Europe. While the "Young America" movement around Brooks was profoundly social, regarding radical change in America as a prerequisite to a truly creative native literary tradition, and seeing itself as the inheritor of Whitman's vision of a new art expressing a new world, those more oriented towards technical innovation and experiment were committed to the idea of literature as a separate and autonomous activity. There were magazines associated with both forms of reaction: The Seven Arts, The Nation, The New Republic, The Dial, with the first, Poetry and The Little Review with the second.

It is interesting to note the indirect resemblances each form

bore, however unwittingly and unconsciously, to specific elements of the tradition that it opposed. The similarity of the aesthetic reaction is more obvious: the belief that the literary tradition transcended national boundaries, while different in its source and emphasis, echoed the trans-Atlantic orientation of the genteel tradition. The profound social sense of the nationalist group, their belief that literature was both an agent and a beneficiary of social progress, was analogous to that aspect of the genteel tradition which had emphasized the moral aspects of literature and criticism.

Both reactions were profoundly innovative, and individual writers of course embraced aspects of both. At the time what was most important was the reaction against tradition; in the quest for a "usable past" of America, or the program to take all of Western culture and "make it new," there was a deep sense that the old traditions had outlived any usefulness they might at one time have had. The sense that radical departures were required was widespread, and the ferocity with which various factions attacked the past and each other attests to the sense of urgency, as well as the energy and optimism, which they shared. It is important to note that this sense of urgent need for radical change was already evident before the outbreak of war; the respectable dominance of the genteel tradition in letters, and the idealism and innocence of popular writings, was more a symptom of conservatism and desperate reaction than an accurate reflection of the contemporary situation.

The literary situation in America before the war, then, was

one of profound change and conflicting standards; the old traditions still held dominance, as did the class which they represented. Innovation and response, whether in technique or in social theory, were still limited to small coteries and their magazines, and popular writing avoided the entire issue by a retreat to romance and idealised renderings of the American past.

One other group of pre-war rebels needs mention here, although their influence would not be truly felt until after the war. These were the ones whom Aaron has called the "Journalistic Shockers,"²⁵ the iconoclasts like H. L. Mencken and George Jean Nathan whose main target was the "genteel" and the "Puritanical" in all its manifestations. While never specifically concerned with literature per se, they were to be very important in shaping the general taste of the post-war period, and their Smart Set and American Mercury would be required reading for anyone who professed to be modern after the war. They deserve mention here for two reasons: their pose of unattached iconoclasm was closest to the stance adopted by Vanity Fair, seeking out stupidity and the narrow-minded wherever it could be found; and more than any other writers, they represented the assertion of urban values as defined in the early twentieth century by New York "sophistication," over more traditional values of moderation and restraint, repression of desires and maintenance of God-fearing morality. If anything comes closest to the values which these "shockers" opposed, it would have to be the world-view of the popular writers of the period.

2. 1921-1923

The years 1921-1923 fall within one of the most remarkable literary decades of the twentieth century, a decade noted not only for its great number of enduring works of literary art and its profound influence on later generations of writers, but almost as importantly for the centrality which literature and literary figures enjoyed in those ten years. For a glorious ten years book publishing flourished to an unprecedented extent, works of fiction had enormous social impact, and writers were accorded public acclaim and attention normally reserved for statesmen or the "stars" of stage and screen. Writing, especially in America, was bathed in an aura of glamour, and literature was generally perceived to be a calling and universe higher than and preferable to more normal worlds of commerce and professionalism. In a decade hungry for heroes, writers were imbued with heroic qualities, and in the ten years that Scott Fitzgerald once called the longest spree in history it was sometimes difficult to separate the writer from his writings. It is even more remarkable that amidst all this enthusiasm and public adoration, a substantial body of important and enduring literary work was produced, and the spirit of literary modernism which had begun before the War was consolidated and brought to fruition.

After the wealth of writing which ushered in the decade, Women in Love, Hugh Selwyn Mauberley, The Sacred Wood, This Side

of Paradise, The Age of Innocence, Main Street, The Ordeal of Mark Twain, Character and Opinion in the United States, 1921 was almost an anti-climax. That year, however, saw the publication in England of Chrome Yellow and Back to Methuselah, of Pound's Poems, 1918-21, of Strachey's Queen Victoria and Lawrence's Sea and Sardinia, and in America of Dos Passos' Three Soldiers and Sherwood Anderson's Triumph of the Egg, as well as O'Neill's Anna Christie.

The following year, 1922, saw the publication of two of the classics of modernism, Ulysses in Paris and The Waste Land in The Dial. That year also saw the appearance of Jacob's Room, of Aaron's Rod, of the English translation of Swann's Way, and of Fantasia of the Unconscious. Publishing in New York was no less distinguished, with the appearance of The Beautiful and Damned, Tales of the Jazz Age, Babbitt, e.e. cummings' The Enormous Room, and the collection of essays edited by Harold Stearns, Civilization in the United States.

The fiction appearing in 1923 was again something of an anti-climax, Antic Hay and Kangaroo being the most noteworthy appearances of the year, but the offerings in other genres were more distinguished -- Lawrence's Studies in Classic American Literature, Wallace Stevens' Harmonium, Frost's New Hampshire, and Elmer Rice's The Adding Machine.

Popular writing in the period replaced sentimental romance with novels of adventure and the exotic, including Edith Hull's

The Sheik, Sabatini's Scaramouche and Captain Blood, and the first American edition of Maria Chapdelaine. Babbitt and The Age of Innocence were bestsellers, as were Queen Victoria and The Forsyte Saga. Popular renderings of science made the bestseller lists, as did Emily Post's book of Etiquette.

Perhaps nothing expresses the confusion and conflict of ideals in the period better than the co-existence on the best-seller lists for 1923 of Papini's Life of Christ and Warner Fabian's exposé, Flaming Youth.

No decade of American history has been more analysed, nor literary generation more chronicled, than that of the 1920's. Even the terms used to describe it, like "The Jazz Age," have become popular clichés or even, as in the case of "The Lost Generation," taken on a popular meaning different from the original sense. A decade of Prohibition and bathtub gin, of cafés in Paris and speakeasies in New York, of all-out attacks on the "Booboisie" and the execution of Sacco and Vanzetti, of Lindbergh's solo trans-Atlantic flight and the first motion picture with sound. The mythology surrounding this decade and its writers is so great, and so reinforced by a seemingly endless stream of memoirs and studies, that merely to mention "The Twenties" is to set off a chain of associations and images.

Such is the force of the myth of this decade, that even accounts and analyses of it change according to changes in

social orientation and perception. Seen by themselves as rebels and innovators, the generation of the twenties was seen by their immediate successors as spoiled children and adolescents out on a spree. This change in perception even occurred among the members of the twenties generation themselves, and the early years of the thirties saw a spate of disillusioned mea culpa's, like Fitzgerald's The Crack Up, written by the very same people who had proclaimed themselves the harbingers of the New Order a few short years earlier.

As is the case with any mythology, the "meaning" of the decade appears in revised form from time to time. Recent social and cultural historians have begun to revise the popular image of the twenties as an era of cynical frivolity, and the title of one such recent study belies the pose of confident rebellion attributed to the period: Roderick Nash has designated the decade as belonging to The Nervous Generation,²⁶ and offers well-documented evidence that the era was not so much one of outright rebellion as of intense change and consequent insecurity.

The Preface to Nash's book notes that by 1920, for the first time in the nation's history, rural Americans made up less than half the population of the country.²⁷ While American letters had been linked to urban centres from the beginning, by the twenties American society as a whole had definitively shifted to a more urban orientation. This development helps to explain, for example, the popularity of Lewis' Main Street, which ushered in the decade, and of the attacks by Mencken and his cohorts

on the so-called Booboisie. With the increased urbanisation of American society, the stage was set for a more widespread acceptance of those values which in the twenties came to be epitomized by "sophisticated" New York.

American life in the twenties had one special and unprecedented aspect, moreover, which did much to account for the "nervousness" which Nash has described as its major characteristic. For the first time in the twenties, cars, radios, and movie screens were part of normal life. Existence was no longer bounded by tradition and local mores; the phenomenal growth of the newspaper and radio industries in the period (see Tables 4 and 5), and the spread of automobiles to a majority of homes, meant that ordinary citizens had a mobility and access to instant news coverage that undermined the forces of conservatism, or at the very least posed them a threat of newly-acquired strength.

It was perhaps not so much that rebellion was rife in the period, as that everyone heard about it and read about it, immediately and constantly. In a review article in the TLS entitled "The challenge of the Twenties," Neil Harris has pointed out that "The thrust of the new celebrity cults and electronic entertainments was to blend private lives with public experiences. . . . 28

Regardless of an individual's personal location and philosophy, "the voracious capacities of the era's artifacts and consumer culture were lessening the capacity for withdrawal and

TABLE 4
NUMBER OF DAILY AND WEEKLY NEWSPAPERS

YEAR	NO. OF DAILIES	TOTAL DAILY CIRCULATION* (millions)	NO. OF WEEKLIES
1790	8		83
1800	24		210
1850	387	1.5	2,048
1900	2,190	15.1	16,387
1910	2,433	24.2	16,899
1920	2,042	27.8	14,405
1930	1,942	39.6	11,407
1940 ^a	1,878	41.1	11,108

Source: Wilbur S. Schramm, Mass Communications (Urbana, Ill., 1960), p. 195.

^a From 1940ff, the number of dailies and weeklies continue to decline, and circulation to increase.

TABLE 5
SIZE OF THE RADIO INDUSTRY IN THE U.S.

YEAR	AM STATIONS ON THE AIR	SETS IN USE (millions)	HOMES WITH RADIO (millions)
1922	30	.4	.3
1925	571	4.0	3.5
1930	612	13.0	12.0
1935	585	30.5	22.9
1940	765	51.0	29.2

Source: Wilbur S. Schramm, Mass Communications (Urbaña, 1960),
p. 196.

bringing to the fore a cultural life based upon simultaneous and instantaneous collective experience."²⁹ Although these words are written from the standpoint of the most recent incarnation of the "mass culture" position, they do point to the important fact that the twenties in America marked the consolidation of electronic consumer culture. Those in revolt against their time would no longer rail against a genteel tradition transmitted through books and university professors, but would set themselves in opposition to an entire culture, where art and entertainment were inextricably fused with commerce and profit, and where advertising and its handmaiden the celebrity business were a part of all endeavours, including the literary.

Writing in the twenties was, of course, marked by innovation and experiment, by the consolidation of modernism in American letters. The spirit of change and rejuvenation which was already nascent in the pre-War period, the programs for new directions which were set out in the little magazines of Chicago and New York, became the accepted credos of the post-War generation of writers.

It has been noted by students of the period, including Aaron and Kazin, that the generation of writers who came of age during the war and wrote in the years following it had a different conception of their role and attitude of revolt from those who set the stage for them. This difference lies in the attitude towards the social role which the writer performed, and in a curious way the popular myth of the cynical party-going Roaring Twenties carries the truth of the essential difference in social function

which the young generation held.

Where the pre-War generation, especially those oriented towards American traditions, had an optimism about the possibility of social change and the importance of literature in effecting it, the post-War generation of writers viewed themselves as exiles from the mainstream of American culture, not opposed to it for the sake of progress as their predecessors had felt, but actually estranged from its dominant patterns and directions. Profound disillusion with the ideals for which World War I had been fought, and the assumptions underlying those ideals, added to this sense of fundamental alienation from the American social mainstream.

In this rejection of the simplistically optimistic business culture of their native ground, the literary generation of the twenties was close to the feelings of those earlier writers like Pound, Eliot and Stein who had already chosen Europe as their place of work, and the early years of the decade in fact saw most aspiring young writers bound on ships to Paris. Probably the best account of this process of self-imposed alienation is Cowley's Exile's Return, where he recounts the various stages of the "literary odyssey" which the young writers experienced.³⁰ Cowley points out that, while they set out on their trans-Atlantic voyages with Pound and Eliot as their models, the actual process of the European sojourn had the ironic effect of bringing the young adventurers back to a sense of their American roots. It is certainly true that the best writing of the period, while it may have been written in Paris or in Spain, was set in America or

concerned with American characters and themes. The reasons for this are complex, and we can only hint at them here.

Certainly sheer affluence played its part; although the self-exiled writers lived and worked in Europe, many enjoyed considerable acclaim and financial success back home. The European culture which they set out to find was in many ways tired and pessimistic, and it must have been difficult for these young citizens of a young and prosperous, albeit predominantly materialistic country to identify fully with a lament for the passing of an order which was never completely theirs. The influence of Gertrude Stein was immense; and while she chose to live out her years in Europe, her writings were profoundly concerned with American history and the American psyche. Finally, the greatest irony of all, the French modernists whom they set out to emulate were enamoured of the very machine-and-jazz culture from which they had fled.

By the end of the decade, the exiles had all returned, and their literary legacy, whether composed in Paris or New York, was profoundly American in spirit and concerns. One very important feature which they did, however, share with the earlier generation that looked to Europe for inspiration was the belief in the autonomy of art and individual creativity. In this, whatever similarities to the pre-War Young America movement they may have exhibited in their American subject-matter, they carried on the spirit of aesthetic modernism begun by Pound and Eliot.

One other very obvious, but nevertheless fundamental characteristic of the literary generation needs to be mentioned, and that is their youth. The important contributors to British modernism in the decade -- Woolf, Lawrence, Frost, Joyce, Eliot (by adoption) -- were more mature in age and wisdom than their American counterparts. This had some effect in the greater exuberance, self-dramatisation, and even a sort of energy if not veiled optimism, which some American writers exhibited. It also had something to do, of course, with the nervous energy and somewhat shallow or facile "disillusion" which many of them displayed.

The young writers of the decade worked under enormous pressures beyond the normal and universal pressures of literary creation: a feeling of having to re-define themselves and their culture as they went along which, regardless of its sources or historical truth, infused many; extraordinary fame and celebrity, with all the attendant machinery of the mass media, at early stages in their careers; the public status of "stars" and exemplars as much as creators of imaginative works. If there was sometimes a rawness and an adolescent quality to their writings, it surely had something to do with these other forces at work in conjunction with their literary attempts to create distinctly American forms of modernism.

There were, of course, other writers of the period in addition to the young modernist Turks in Paris. Edith Wharton carried the elegance and restraint of an earlier era into the

decade, and even on to the bestseller lists. Sinclair Lewis forged an amalgam of journalistic muck-raking with iconoclastic bombast to create works which had immense influence, and gave names to the forces of Main Street and Babbittry which the young writers opposed.

Back in New York there was a legion of critics-cum-tastemakers to interpret, or misinterpret, the writings of the young rebels in Paris and spread a gospel of freedom and individual rebellion. Men like Mencken and Nathan did much to popularise and vulgarise a creed of aesthetic and social liberation, and the proliferation of magazines in the period did much to popularise a notion of "liberation through art" which often had nothing at all to do with the serious positions of contemporary writers. The decade was "nervous," looking for direction and models, and the young writers were as fair game as the socialites, European aristocrats, statesmen, pilots, and movie stars.

This spirit of quest and new stimuli was evident in the popular fiction of the period as well. Where bestsellers before the war extolled the virtues of a sentimentalised simple life, popular writing from 1918 to 1927 was marked by "Exoticism, Rebellion, and Search."³¹ Suzanne Greene notes that the bestsellers of the period, while they avoided political matters, did have many international and cosmopolitan characters, with Europeans sometimes presented as superior to Americans; wealth was no longer condemned in popular writing but seen as a

necessary prerequisite to adventure, and social status was ignored; the family was no longer sacred, and popular fiction often concerned itself with rebellious children, divorce, and sexual affairs; women were portrayed in a variety of roles and professions, and men were no longer the central figures they had been; religion and morality were presented in relative terms, and formal Christianity was often criticised for its hypocrisy and repressive tendencies.

Where the literary struggles before the war had been against gentility and provincialism, a struggle to introduce greater areas of reality into literature, by the twenties those battles had been won, not only for serious literature, but even in popular fiction and journalism. "Realism" and rebellion, in fact, had become a kind of instant tradition in themselves; what characterised the serious writing of the period, then, was no longer a question of theme or content, but had much more to do with technique and form.

The literary advances in the decade had to do much more with new modes of expression, and therefore also of perception, than with new areas to be surveyed. One of the supreme ironies of the decade was the vigour and excitement with which these new advances were often acclaimed and misunderstood at the same time; what Fitzgerald called the capability of "double vision," the ability to simultaneously represent and criticise, was often lacking in the acclamation; the representation of new areas of experience

and perception was recognised and rewarded, while the implied critique remained too often unperceived.

3. 1934-36

After the intensity and productivity of the first two decades of the twentieth century, the strictly literary output of the years 1934-36, and the decade in which they fall, seems somewhat anti-climactic. While a number of enduring and important works appeared, there was neither the discovery nor the innovation that marked the previous decades. The overriding characteristic of literary developments in the thirties was the social engagement of writers and their creations, and perhaps the most noteworthy developments lay in the attempts of those writers who, out of their socially-oriented or even committedly-Marxist perspectives, attempted to create a new voice in literature, the voice of the common man or of the collective struggle for social change.

The spirit of modernism in aesthetics and literary technique was by no means abandoned, and individuals continued to consolidate and extend the developments of earlier years: these later modernist achievements were no longer in the public eye, however, and the excitement of the period centred around the new tendencies towards social engagement and leftist politics. In an era dominated by economic collapse and widespread suffering, the achievements of individual artists no longer carried the promise of salvation; it was clear that the "revolution of the word" was no longer sufficient.

British writing in 1934 was a mélange of the various tendencies in operation: A Handful of Dust continued the twenties' urban sophistication and ennui, Graves' I, Claudius and Claudius the God portrayed political corruption in ancient garb, and Orwell published his very human critique of colonialism, Burmese Days. The quality of American writing in that year was somewhat better, but the mix of concerns was similar: Tender is the Night was virtually ignored as a left-over from the self-indulgent twenties, although it was one of Fitzgerald's best works; Nathaniel West published his parodic denunciation of materialism, A Cool Million; and the rags-to-riches myth was explored in The Young Manhood of Studs Lonigan.

The next year saw the publication of Murder in the Cathedral, Mr. Norris Changes Trains, and the Seven Pillars of Wisdom in England, and Of Time and the River, Tortilla Flat, and It Can't Happen Here in America, while Clifford Odets brought the proletarian and kitchen-sink drama to new heights with Waiting for Lefty and Awake and Sing. The publishers' lists of 1936 were more impressive, with Ulysses finally appearing in London, as well as the Collected Poems of Eliot, and Forster's Abinger Harvest. In America, Faulkner published his masterpiece, Absalom! Absalom!, and Dos Passos concluded his USA trilogy with The Big Money.

The co-existence of despair and uncertainty with simple doctrinaire optimism that marked literary debate in these years, also appears in the bestseller lists for the period. Alexander Woollcott enjoyed great popularity, as did Sinclair Lewis. The

sentimentality and innocence of the pre-War bestsellers returned with James Hilton's Good-bye Mr. Chips and Clarence Day's Life With Father. There was a revival of romance set in the nation's past, and the popular success of Stars Fell on Alabama and Drums Along the Mohawk only set the stage for the remarkable publishing success of Gone With the Wind in 1936.

Books of inspirational self-help were popular: You Must Relax, Take It Easy!, Wake Up and Live!, How to Win Friends and Influence People; and the early thirties saw a return to popularity of religious books: the posthumous edition of Dickens' The Life of Our Lord, and Henry Link's Return to Religion, were but two examples. The thirties marked the beginning of a new type of bestseller, the detective or mystery novel, and in the years 1934-36 it was the violent crime novels of Ellery Queen and Erle Stanley Gardner that were most popular, with Rex Stout making an appearance on the bestseller lists in 1936.

James Hart called his chapter on popular writing from 1930 to 1945 "Little Man, What Now?"³², after the title of the best-selling 1933 American version of a German novel by Hans Fallada. This title aptly sums up the spirit of the thirties. Man was no longer perceived as great, young, and capable of all things. The social or aesthetic optimism of the pre-War years, the sense of adventure and gaiety, however desperate, of the twenties, seemed like a half-forgotten dream in the years of the Depression, and literary thinking took two major directions: many

Modernists intensified their individual quests for meaning, sometimes through the consolations of religion, and the New Humanists called for a return to old values of restraint and ethical discipline; the activists turned to social and economic theory, especially Marxism, to explain the causes of the crisis and the path of recovery.

While this socialist activity produced much polemic and great theorising about the social function of the artist and his art, it produced very little literature that rose above the level of proletarian cliché. What is important about this Marxist activity, however, is that it was an index of the crisis in literature itself in the period: the autonomy of art was once again called into question, and many young writers believed that literature should be the servant of political activity. The primary contribution of this movement was towards an opening up of the domain of literature.

Where the modernist advances had democratised the language of literature by waging a successful battle against the older concept of literary decorum, the movement of the thirties was an extension of this democratising process to the realm of literature itself. The old distinctions between "high" and "low" became increasingly more difficult to make, as literature adopted not only the rhythms and speech, but even the settings and concerns, the very world and episteme, of ordinary people.

There was, of course, a counter-movement. The New Humanists,

after a brief flurry of excitement at the beginning of the decade, never really gained substantial following. It was, appropriately enough, a group of young Southerners who provided the strongest case for a retention of aristocratic values in literature, and the group centred around Allan Tate and Cleanth Brooks and their periodicals would make the New Criticism the dominant tradition in the academic teaching and appreciation of literature.

It is significant however that this New Criticism, based on thorough knowledge of the literary past and focusing on close textual analysis, remained within the walls of the Academy. It was an almost deliberate turning of the back on the social realities of the period, a renunciation far more fundamental than that of those Modernists like Dos Passos who, opposed as they may have been to the materialistic culture around them, still attempted to incorporate its energies and voices within the discipline of art. The New Criticism was precisely that, a criticism, and no longer a creation. The tensions and fluidity of social reality were abandoned for the rigour and discipline of the study; literature gained brilliant young explicators, but few new works.

This is rather too harsh a judgment, of course, for literature gained few new works of enduring merit from the Marxist, socially-engaged school either. Kazin has suggested that the decade contained too much crisis for the creative writer to comprehend and transcend, that there was too much change and desperation to allow for the necessary working through of the creative intelligence of any one person.³³ He may be right; certainly

neither the traditionalist New Critics nor the revolutionary Marxists excelled at imaginative creation.

The situation of popular writing in the period bears Kazin's conclusion: whereas 214 million new books were published in 1929, that number dropped to 111 million in 1933, and the sale of fiction in those years dropped 9 per cent below the general market while the sale of economics and sociology doubled.³⁴ At the same time another index of popular entertainment, the movies, showed a similar decline: where there were 177 million admissions in 1929, there were only 60 million in 1933. These figures have much to do, of course, with simple economic factors; people in the Depression could not afford to buy books or attend movies. On the other hand, the drop in fiction sales, and the rise in the sale of books on economics and sociology, would suggest that reality was overwhelming the imagination, and people no longer had the strength or the optimism to imagine themselves out of their situation. Certainly the extraordinary popularity of documentary photography in the period, upon which Life magazine built its phenomenal success, would support this position.

The characteristics of popular fiction at the time bore marked similarities to that of the pre-War period, although there were significant differences. Suzanne Greene has called the popular fiction that appeared from 1928 to 1937 "Retreat to Absolutism",³⁵ and this designation implies the fear and desperation implicit in popular reading choices. Too much had

happened in twenty years to make any depiction of "The Simple Life" seem credible, and the popular novels of the thirties were more worldly and sophisticated, but without the optimism and adventure expressed in the twenties.

Characters were now international, but there was a marked distrust of world politics, and a strong sense that governments were to blame for social ills; for the first time in popular writing in the twentieth century, there was much description of involvement in political reform, but the popular writing stressed a return to self-reliance in opposition to the collectivism of New Deal policies; racial stereotypes returned, as did class stereotypes: the rich were exploiters, the middle class were hard-working and self-reliant, and poverty was the cause of much tragedy; the family unit was no longer idealised, and family friction was presented as normal; while there was now considerable description of sexual activity, men returned to their positions of centrality and dominance over women, although women continued to be portrayed in a variety of occupations; there was a strong return to religious concerns and the affirmation of religious beliefs, with condemnation of Christianity for its emphasis on the afterlife as opposed to life on earth.

The dominant strain, then, was one of intense realism and self-reliance; in fact, these qualities were transformed into a new mythology in the "hard-boiled" school of violent detective novels so popular in the period, and whose style was modelled after the writers like Hemingway, Farrell, and Hammett who

extolled the virtues of tough, self-reliant virility.

The purely aesthetic, in fact, seems to have been suspect in the period. Beauty, sensuousness, the revelling in the aesthetic for its own sake, was seen as a form of self-indulgence. In the popular writing, hard work, self-reliance, and religious faith were paramount. For the Marxists, art was a servant of social change. For the New Critics, beauty could be perceived only after rigorous and well-informed analysis, a function more of sophisticated intellect than of the senses. It was perhaps only in the crass excesses of Hollywood "glamour" that the quality of purely sensual enjoyment remained.

B) Book Reviews in Vanity Fair

1. 1913-16

The first number of Dress and Vanity Fair, which appeared in September, 1913, began Henry Brinsley's regular book-review feature called "Views and Reviews." Appearing on page 57 of the issue, Brinsley's article was concerned with seven books, of which only two have stood the test of time: Willa Cather's O Pioneers and George Santayana's Winds of Doctrine.

In his discussion of Cather's novel, Brinsley stated his critical doctrine that there are two kinds of writers, "mere storytellers" and "artists," the difference between them being a difference in "style." He then went on to judge Cather's book as lacking in both "style" and "art"; nevertheless, he concluded that the book had impact and was moving. He attributed this to

one quality exhibited by the work, namely "sincerity." This judgment failed to account for any stylistic basis to an effect of "sincerity"; Brinsley, despite his emphasis on "style" as the distinguishing characteristic of "art," nevertheless seemed to be reacting more to content than to method or form.

The treatment of Santayana's work was even more significant. The work was not accorded a review in its own right, but merely mentioned in passing during a discussion of "recent philosophical works which deal with religious thought, as do the later writings of William James and Professor Royce." Winds of Doctrine was called "the most brilliant book of essays of the year," and then ignored in favour of an account of Winston Churchill's The Inside of the Cup.

Churchill had enjoyed a reputation as a distinguished American novelist from the time of the appearance of The Crisis in 1901, and it was perhaps reasonable for Brinsley to devote much of the article to his latest novel. Characteristically, Brinsley dealt with the matter of the book, its so-called "philosophical" aspect, rather than with matters of style or art. The novel was concerned with the need for organised religion to adapt itself to modern conditions, and Brinsley praised the philosophy expressed in the book.

Many of Churchill's earlier novels had been in essence historical romances, with a patina of "serious" philosophic concern with ideals and philosophy; in this respect he was a fine example of the genteel tradition, and The Inside of the Cup

could enjoy success as a "serious" consideration of moral questions without offending traditionalists.

The rest of Brinsley's article displayed the same essentially genteel taste. The Weaker Vessel, by the British novelist E. F. Benson, was considered because of its theme of the changing role of women, together with Richard Pryce's Jezebel and James Oliver Curwood's Isobel. Benson, Pryce and Curwood were all popular writers of the time; Benson's Dodo (1893) had created a sensation because of its alleged basis on the adventures of Margot Tennant, later Lady Oxford; Curwood had a series of bestsellers in the "wildlife adventure" mould set in what he called "God's Country" in the Michigan North Woods. The final work considered by Brinsley was Running Sands, by the minor writer Reginald Wright Kauffman.

It was not an auspicious beginning for a periodical which set out to be an arbiter of taste. Of seven books mentioned, only two achieved lasting importance; of these, one was praised for the critically-naive characteristic of "sincerity," while its stylistic innovations went unperceived; the other, while highly praised, received only passing mention.

The greatest consideration was given to works of immediate popularity; even in this respect, however, Brinsley's judgment was not astute. Neither Pryce nor Kauffman was enormously successful, while Benson's earlier and later works achieved greater popularity than did The Weaker Vessel. Churchill enjoyed recognition as a serious writer at the time, but his stature waned with the decline.

of the genteel tradition within which he wrote. Curwood was the only truly "popular" writer dealt with in this first review: Isobel was not one of his most successful books, however, and Vanity Fair would fail to deal with his bestsellers in 1920 and 1922.

It is perhaps inevitable that a monthly reviewer will deal with a mixture of chaff and wheat, ranging from the ephemeral through the mildly-successful to the enormously-popular and the enduringly-significant. What is more important is the quality of judgment displayed; the tendency towards the genteel, and lack of recognition of the aesthetically-significant, in evidence in the first review, tended to mark Brinsley's career with Vanity Fair. The basis on which he made his judgments will therefore reveal more than the judgments themselves.

In the first review of September, 1913, the choice of books dealt with seems based on current popularity, a success more with the conventional, educated, traditional public, than with the popular bestseller market, or with the audience for the literary avant-garde. Brinsley's judgments of these works seemed to be based on the literary standards of this genteel reading public as well, and to stem more from consideration of subject matter and moral content than from aesthetic criteria. Thus three novels were dealt with together because of their similar subject, Willa Cather praised for her "sincerity," and Winston Churchill considered for his philosophic theme.

The "Views and Reviews" of October, 1913, which appeared on page 49, was concerned with a range of works similar to the first review. Two of the works dealt with were historical romance: Love of Proserpine by the British historical novelist Maurice Hewlitt, and The Port of Adventure by C. N. and A. M. Williamson. The American-born Anne Douglas Sedgwick, who lived and wrote in England in the tradition of Henry James, was represented by a collection of short stories, The Nest. The major portion of the review, as was the case in September, was concerned with theme, and considered two American works, Ellen Glasgow's Virginia and Henry Sydnor Harrison's V. V.'s Blue Eyes.

Harrison was a journalist who had turned to fiction, and his novels tended to depict social problems and the Progressivist reforms needed to alleviate them. V. V.'s Blue Eyes concerned a young doctor's attempts to reform the daughter of a factory owner, and was a plea for improved factory conditions, women's rights, and child-labour laws. Brinsley's account of the book took note of the themes, and praised the social-reformist approach represented.

The theme of women's role in society was the link to the second book reviewed in the article, Glasgow's Virginia, which Brinsley described as the account of a woman without education who becomes a boring wife because she knows nothing other than motherhood and domestic economy. The bulk of the review thus concerned Brinsley's response to the work's concern with the question of the proper social role of women.

The aesthetic account of Glasgow's novel was limited to the judgment that the work exhibited a "lack of literary distinction" because of its clichéd style; Brinsley noted rather sardonically that the book deserved its popularity because of the presence of these clichés.

"Views and Reviews" of the November, 1913 issue appeared on page 51, and was concerned with popular writing. Again, these were primarily conventional works, and none of them would become bestsellers. The detective and murder-mystery form, which was already gaining prominence and would become the most popular form of writing in the thirties, was well represented in the November review: Winthrop Alden's The Lost Million, Arthur B. Reeve's The Poisoned Pen, and Murder in any Degree by Owen Johnson, an American who was better known for his popular novels about boys, especially Stover at Yale (1911). The popular genres were also represented by adventure: George K. Styles' The Dragoman; show business: Frederick S. Isham's Aladdin from Broadway; and romance: Geraldine Bonner's The Book of Evelyn. Since all these works were essentially designed for entertainment, Brinsley's account of them was concerned to alert the reader to the degree of pleasure which they afforded; the judgments expressed were therefore based on his own perception of which ones were a "good read."

There was one novel of note appearing in the review, and to Brinsley's credit it was the first book considered, and the one dealt with in most detail.

Jack London had already acquired considerable success and acclaim with The Son of the Wolf (1900), The Call of the Wild (1903), and numerous other novels and journalistic reports. His John Barleycorn, an autobiographical account of his grim childhood and later struggles with alcoholism, appeared in 1913, and Brinsley praised his "clarity, convincingness, and literary skill." The focus of the review was, once more, on the style and matter of the work. Brinsley concentrated on the temperance views expressed, and on the account of the sordid conditions of London's life.

The treatment of style, as well, had an autobiographical emphasis: Brinsley discussed London's prolific output, and compared his method of writing 2000 words a day without revision to the consistent and even procedures of Stevenson, Flaubert, and Trollope. Brinsley then concluded that these latter writers' style "has what painters call a 'texture', it is a well knit, even cloth, brocaded or plain. . . . Mr. London, writing as he does, produces a very uneven fabric; when he is good he is astonishingly so, and when he is bad -- well even then he is a good journalist." The judgment was thus again based on content, and what Brinsley uncritically called "style," in this case having something to do with the evenness of texture. Brinsley was astute enough to recognise quality; that recognition was however based on sensibility rather than theoretical aesthetic doctrine.

December's "Views and Reviews," which appeared on page 45, was concerned with what Brinsley termed the new "progressive

realists." The books considered, such as Justus Miles Forman's The Opening Door, have all faded into oblivion, aside from the notable exception of D. H. Lawrence's Sons and Lovers.

Brinsley began his account with the observation that, in the past few months, there had been "an exceptional activity on the part of the conservative idealists against the progressive realists," a reaction which Brinsley characterised as the battle of "the Bishops vs the artists." From the public debate, according to Brinsley,

We learn . . . that among Anglo-Saxons (such a fantastic word now for our cis-Atlantic [sic] nation!) our public, "official" morality and our private, actual conduct of life have for a long time, since the end of the eighteenth century, in fact, been on two quite different planes. We have had one kind of theory and another kind of practice, and we have long seemed, in public at least, to enjoy the more or less solemn farce of asserting that the two are really identical. Of late years, however, some of our "Anglo-Saxon" artists have begun to feel the restrictions of this dualism, and we have been more and more rapidly developing a school of "realists" that will soon rival in everything but skill their French colleagues; and we have gradually, only half suspecting it, grown into a tolerance of forms of art that would have made our grandmothers frantically memorialize Queen Victoria or Mr. Comstock.

Having thus stated the terms of the battle, between public decency and artistic honesty, Brinsley proceeded to face the problem posed for the critic:

Now what is the impartial student of manners (and by this I mean the ideal critic) to do? Is he to side with the Bishops or with the Artists? As he is professionally neither the one nor the other . . . I think he is bound to hedge, taking refuge in an appeal to common humanity - another phrase, for common sense, and to consider simply the motive underlying each work of art and then treat it on its own peculiar merits. . . .

Brinsley then referred to Dr. Johnson for guidance. When

asked whether, in his opinion, a certain naked statue was indecent, Johnson had replied, "No, sir, but your question is." Brinsley quoted this anecdote, and applied the same criterion for his contemporary situation:

. . . the difference between realism and pornography . . . is often not an affair of the artist's but hinges on the mind of the observer. But the converse is equally often true today; and we are getting so much of both that it is just as well to face the fact and attempt to distinguish between them.

Brinsley then praised, as examples of works of realism exhibiting true literary merit, Hardy's Tess of the d'Urbervilles and George Moore's Esther Waters. Having established these two novels as critical benchmarks, he continued to elaborate the problems inherent in the form:

Since then, lesser artists have essayed the same types of problem in the path momentarily cleared anew by Mr. Hardy and Mr. Moore. But it is a path that tends quickly to become overgrown with noxious weeds and fungous growths, and many of the lesser men might well keep in the sunnier byways, for in this more difficult, grim adventure the only quality of the artist that will carry him to a success worthy of the name is dignity of aim coupled with unswerving sincerity.

In this account Brinsley again revealed his essentially moral criticism; it was "dignity of aim" and "unswerving sincerity" which for him marked the difference between realistic art and mere pornography. These moral criteria certainly have a place in a discussion of what constitutes art as opposed to pornography; what is revealing, however, is that that particular problem should have been the one chosen for the discussion of Sons and Lovers. Brinsley's approach was essentially motivated by concerns with subject-matter and moral tone.

Brinsley went on to discuss the degree of realism evidenced by Lawrence, concluding that he had the gift of evoking reality with an "almost startling painfulness. . . ." The reader was offered a summary of plot and character development, and Brinsley's final judgment that Sons and Lovers

. . . is not a great book in the genre I have been discussing, but it is certainly one to be taken seriously, for the author is imbued with sincerity and endowed with an unusual gift of patient observation of significant details. . . . Whether or not the author's sincerity of treatment was coupled with a sufficient dignity of aim throughout I could not quite feel sure while reading certain chapters; but now that the book is laid aside, the total effect is one of fineness. . . .

There are several interesting and revealing assumptions underlying this account of Lawrence's first major publication. Brinsley's sensibility led him to praise the work, despite its explicitness; he was thus evidently capable of a higher moral criticism, and not bound by any mere conventions of "gentility." His concern with moral effect led him to a rather superficial praise of the work's "sincerity" and "dignity of aim," however, without any consideration of the particular psycho-sexual philosophy presented by Lawrence. More importantly, it also led to an absence of any consideration of the technical art of the book, based as it was on an equation of artistry with moral intention.

This moral emphasis of criticism was stated quite explicitly by Brinsley in his rendering of the "ideal critic" as "the impartial student of manners"; with this definition Brinsley placed his own literary criticism squarely within the wider aim of Vanity Fair to be an arbiter of taste, and we see here that

taste was defined as essentially social, rooted in the manners of society in the Victorian sense. Literature for Brinsley was clearly not an isolated aesthetic phenomenon, but an integral part of society, and technique important only as a factor of intent and moral effect.

We find in evidence as well an assumption that the social mores, and therefore by extension the literature, of America were coextensive with the larger English-speaking world, or what Brinsley termed "our cis-Atlantic nation." It was assumed that Lawrence was writing in a tradition that belonged as much to Americans as to the British, and the literary community was assumed to be even larger: the realists worked in common with their French "colleagues" in purpose, even if not yet in "skill." This commonality of Western European literature was also evident in the discussion of Jack London, where Flaubert and Stevenson were both cited with reference to their procedures of creation. Brinsley thus made no distinction between American and other, European, writers, as he made no distinction between literary and other social endeavours. Literature for him was a part of society, and that society was a large one.

The December "News and Reviews" also considered Arthur Conan Doyle's science fiction work, The Poison Belt, at the end of the review. Brinsley dismissed the work as "thin." After comparing it with Defoe's Journal of a Plague Year, he concluded that . . . Defoe was a genius and Sir Arthur, of late, is simply a journalist." This critical scorn for journalism would recur in

Brinsley's writing, and was another instance of his critical emphasis on "style."

The issue for January, 1914 marked the first appearance of the new Vanity Fair, subtitled "Formerly Dress and Vanity Fair," and the Table of Contents for that first issue under the new name contained a new distinct section called "Literature and the Fine Arts" (page 15). Brinsley's feature remained essentially the same, and his "Views and Reviews" appeared on page 43.

No works of lasting impact were considered in this review, either from the standpoint of literary merit, or popularity as evidenced in bestseller achievement. Three novels of what might be termed "philosophy of life" were reviewed: Robert W. Chambers' The Business of Life, Robert Hitchens' The Way of Ambition, and George Barr McCutcheon's A Fool and His Money; Brinsley also considered Meredith Nicholson's romance Otherwise Phyllis, and J. A. Chaloner's Scorpio. Nicholson was perhaps representative of the type of writer considered in this review: an Indiana novelist, he served as minister to Paraguay, Venezuela, and Nicaragua; his writing, while respectable and fairly popular at the time, was highly conventional.

"View and Reviews" for February, 1914, which appeared on page 47, considered, with one notable exception, works of no literary or popular significance. Brinsley dealt with two novels concerned with the role of women: Charles Marriott's The

Wondrous Wife and Cyril Harcourt's The World's Daughter; one romance: Helen Huntington's Marsh Lights; and one work of moral fiction: The Hand of the Mighty by Vaughan Kester.

The largest part of the review, however, considered a writer, Edith Wharton, who had both literary significance and popular esteem; her Age of Innocence would be a bestseller in 1920 and 1921. The Custom of the Country appeared in 1914, and Brinsley began his review with an account of Walter Pater's reason for valuing Henry Esmond above the other Thackeray novels, namely that that work had "dignity of interest." Brinsley then stated his opinion that The Custom of the Country "has no discernable dignity of interest whatsoever."

Brinsley then provided an essentially reductio ad absurdum account of the plot, stating that the novel "can be reduced to nothing else." He proceeded to a comparison of Wharton with Henry James, since "Mrs. Wharton has so often modelled . . . her literary point of view on that of Mr. Henry James." He found that James "always has humor . . . a kind of pitying, half tender indulgence, not for the frailties but for the victims of them whom he is exposing"; Edith Wharton he judged to be without humour, like George Eliot, in his estimation.

Brinsley concluded that "Mr. James in his writing uses both his head and his heart, whereas Mrs. Wharton uses her head only." This is an interesting assessment for the insight it gives into Brinsley's criteria of judgment; although he noted Wharton's Jamesian approach with respect to "literary point of view," he

chose to focus on attitude rather than technique. Once again, it was the moral impact of the work which was his concern, rather than the means by which this impact was achieved. Thus, for him the work had no "dignity of interest" because it stemmed from "her head only." For Brinsley, the merit of a work resided above all on its expressed attitude; once more we note the essentially social nature of his criticism and view of literature, and social not in a merely doctrinal or ideological, but in a broadly-humanistic, sense. This is literature as primarily humane belles lettres.

The March, 1914 issue was the first one to appear under the new editorship of Frank Crowninshield, who would retain that position until the magazine's demise in 1936. The editor's page, "In Vanity Fair," for the February issue contained notice of Crowninshield's arrival with the next issue, as well as a description of his intended direction:

Under Mr. Crowninshield's editorship, Vanity Fair will strive to record truthfully and entertainingly the progress of American life; to pay adequate attention to what is worthiest and most stimulating in the literature and art of our day; to deal authoritatively with music, opera, and the drama . . . to encourage all forms of good writing, especially what it deems best in American humor and satire. . . . Reform is no part of our programme. To the newspapers we will leave woman suffrage and the high cost of living; to the magazines the problem story, the popular article and the passionate poem. Vanity Fair covets the field of no other publication; already it has found a niche of its own. To entertain truthfully and truthfully to entertain: this is Mission enough for any publication.

Leaving aside the disingenuous disclaimer that the magazine

was not concerned with reform, after having stated that satire was one of its aims, this statement of intent is significant in its mention, high on the list, of a concern with "what is worthiest and most stimulating in the literature . . . of our day." The editorial continued with an account of the nature of the concern with literary and artistic matters: ". . . And so it appears that Vanity Fair will have its serious side after all. Whether you are looking for a book to entertain you, a play to see or a concert to hear, Vanity Fair has just the kind of information that you expect a person of finished taste and rather progressive proclivities to have."

The notion of "taste" again makes an appearance, linked this time with "progressive proclivities." The editorial then listed the kinds of features which the newly-edited Vanity Fair would offer as "strictly utilitarian departments" reflecting this "serious" side. The list was both characteristic and highly suggestive: Playgoer's Guide; Sportsman's Calendar; Dog Mart; Shopping List; Plays of the Month; Shops of Vanity Fair; Art Lover's Almanac; Vanity Fair Shoppers; Vogue Pattern Service; Views and Reviews.

This mingling of theatre and book reviews with shopping guides and sports calendars suggests a fundamental characteristic of the place of literary concerns within the pages of Vanity Fair. True to Thackeray's depiction of Vanity Fair, the magazine regarded literature and the performing arts as one aspect of the life of Fashion, and Society. This is Society as rather narrowly, and

quite specifically, defined: in 1913, it is the Society of the old Four Hundred, those appearing in the Social Register. Vanity Fair would be an arbiter of literary taste to those already in, or aspiring to, that Society, which was also the world of Fashion.

The prevalence of shopping guides in the list of "utilitarian departments" reveals another important feature, that of consumption. For the world of Society, as composed of the Four Hundred, was already in a process of transformation. Still determined primarily by birth, membership in Society was however beginning to be possible by wealth alone; conspicuous display of "taste" was thus becoming an important social index, and "good" taste could mean the difference between acceptance and exclusion. Taste in literature would have as much to do, then, with indication of newly-acquired "breeding," with membership in a particular social group, as with literary acumen or even interest. It is in this sense that Brinsley's "View and Reviews" was a "utilitarian" department, a guide to good, or "tasteful" shopping.

The editors were not unaware, however, of the foolishness of all this. The description of Vanity Fair quoted from Thackeray which appeared at the head of the editorial was there in all its resonance; for the satiric tone of the magazine as a whole carried the same gentle, but nonetheless well-honed, critique of Fashion as did Thackeray's novel. While the literary judgments of "Views and Reviews" provide, among other things, an index of fashionable "taste" in the period, the satires of literature and literary judgments provide a critique of that "taste."

Vanity Fair, like any magazine of satire, or even satiric novel, contained within itself an essentially double-edged thrust: dependent for its survival on advertising and on sales to people concerned with fashionable taste, it would provide lessons in "taste" while at the same time poking fun at the very world to which it appealed, and of which it was a part.

Crowninshield's inaugural issue as editor began this practice of duality: Brinsley's "Views and Reviews" on page 49 was clearly little more than a "shopper's guide," while the more interesting literary comment appeared as satire. Brinsley reviewed three books: neither Arthur Davison Ficke's Mr. Faust nor Gertrude Hall's popular The Truth About Camille had literary or bestseller significance; the third book was more significant, but not literary at all: Elsie de Wolfe's The House in Good Taste, which was instrumental in the period for marking the shift in furnishing style away from the clutter of Victorian object-accumulation and towards the clean lines and open spaces of the "modern" style.

The satirical pages offered more substantial fare: Louis Untermeyer provided four parodies of ways of beginning novels, in the styles of G. K. Chesterton, H. G. Wells, Edith Wharton, and Jack London; a photo-essay described the imaginary trial surrounding the murder of Edwin Drood, with G. K. Chesterton cast as judge, and G. B. Shaw as foreman of the jury. The issue also included a satiric account of Shaw, with an accompanying caricature of the dramatist.

Crowninshield's inaugural editorial, "In Vanity Fair," again began with the quote from Thackeray, and stated that, "Vanity Fair has but two major articles in its editorial creed: first to believe in the progress and promise of American life, and, second, to chronicle that progress cheerfully, truthfully, and entertainingly." He noted that the major emphases would be change, especially in the arts, focussing on innovation and the tremendous activity then in force; and humour, including satire.

The combination of literary-review feature, and separate, often satirical, articles on literature, would continue through various periods of Vanity Fair's existence under the editorship of Crowninshield. Except for the zenith of reviewing under Edmund Wilson and John Peale Bishop, the literary review feature would include the mixture of wheat and chaff already in evidence in Brinsley's "View and Reviews" for 1913 and early 1914.

Rather than deal with all the works treated, then, this account will continue with an emphasis on those works which had importance, either as significant literature or as popular bestsellers. A full list of all works considered in the book-review features of Vanity Fair may be found in Appendix B. There will be an account of the book-review section first, and then of other articles dealing with literature.

The "Views and Reviews" submitted by Brinsley until 1917 continued to include the same mixture of the genteel, the popular, and the literarily significant already seen in the feature in

1913 and 1914. Nothing of note was considered until June, 1914, when Brinsley dealt, among others, with works by Frank Norris and Sinclair Lewis. In this "Views and Reviews" Brinsley considered seven works in all, under the heading "Three books by and about Harvard men, and four others." Of these, he considered Norris' Vandover and the Brute to be the "most important." Norris was by this time already dead, and Vandover had in fact been written twenty years previously, but published posthumously only in 1914. Brinsley characterised the work as "the story of the degradation of a man," and concluded that "Its most salient moral trait is its artistic sincerity; its most striking literary merit its pungently descriptive realism. The style if at times inflexible is muscular, wellknit and clean-cut, often to the point of distinction." Once more we encounter Brinsley's emphasis on the moral qualities of a work, characteristically identified with what he termed "artistic sincerity." Again, this was defined in terms of "style."

Sinclair Lewis would not achieve acclaim until the publication in 1920 of Main Street, and of Babbitt in 1922. His Our Mr. Wrenn of 1914 was considered towards the end of Brinsley's review; while it received only cursory attention, the work was judged by Brinsley to be "fresh, wholesome fooling of an unimportant but decidedly agreeable kind." Brinsley's judgment here displays a certain acumen, for it would be Lewis' "freshness," and even in an indirect way his "agreeableness," which would lead to his later popularity. Although Main Street and Babbitt would attain notoriety for their criticism of small-town life, there is an

essential sentimentality about Lewis' most popular works which stems from the very forces which he criticises, and which Brinsley quite rightly identified as "wholesome." The June article also dismissed Simeon Strunsky's Post Impressions as an "ephemeral series of newspaper jottings . . . worth perhaps a six-months' preservation," and dismissed Kathleen Norris' sentimental The Treasure in a short sentence.

"View and Reviews" of July, 1914 (page 55), included consideration of Joseph Conrad's Chance and H. G. Wells' Social Forces in England and America. Although the accompanying illustration was a photograph of Conrad, the review of Conrad's book was cursory. Brinsley praised the work's characterisation, and noted a "grave, classical undercurrent," but concluded that the plot contained "too much apparatus." Wells' book was the first one reviewed, but it too received only cursory treatment, Brinsley concluding that "if his truths are not eternal ones, they are sufficiently workable for current purposes."

Although two works by major writers appeared in this review, the article itself was a series of brief jottings, more a "shopper's guide" than a truly literary assessment. The only feature of note was Brinsley's reference to classical structure, for he would later employ similar critical comparisons with the Greek tradition.

Brinsley's review feature for August, 1914, which appeared on page 49. Included accounts of works by Hugh Walpole and Theodore Dreiser. Walpole, who was very popular among well-educated readers at the time, had just published The Duchesse of Wrexhe. Brinsley's review of the book was fourth among five works considered, and was therefore quite brief. His opinion was that the work was a "good novel of manners," and "sure in its workmanship." Despite this praise, Brinsley felt that the novel was lacking one "vital quality," namely humour. This workmanlike review displayed Brinsley's usual emphasis on style and matter.

The major portion of the August review article was devoted to the second volume of Dreiser's Trilogy of Desire, called The Titan, which chronicles Cowperwood's rise in the financial and sexual spheres. Brinsley's verdict was that Dreiser was "uncreative"; he believed that, although Dreiser exhibits an "exceptional gift of external portraiture . . . you have not the inner, spiritual or mental portrait of a single personage."

Brinsley explained this verdict by resorting, once again, to essentially moral criticism:

The result is that although you may be interested in what these people do -- if you are interested in the technique of vast political-commercial 'deals' and in the, fortunately, superficial conduct of gross amorous indulgences -- you are not at all fundamentally interested in the personages themselves. . . . the book contributes nothing to the philosophy or understanding of life, the only justification of a book of this kind. Herein is its failure, and if this failure be called a "splendid" one, that will be because of the size of the canvas and the superb scope of the artist's ambition, not the quality of his workmanship. But -- when everything is given with equal emphasis the effect in

the long run is one of over-orchestration, and one finally becomes aware of the deadly fact that mere dynamic force is not 'significant' in any real sense of the term.

Brinsley's criticism was thus on two major fronts, the moral and the technical. We are by this time accustomed to the tenor of his moral argument, as presented most fully in his account of Lawrence's Sons and Lovers: realism as a novelistic technique is justified by its contribution to a better and more philosophically-complete picture of life, and never as a mere end in itself. In this respect, The Titan failed for Brinsley because the characters presented are all types, not individuals, and no psychological enhancement is achieved.

From the point of view of technique, Brinsley was disturbed by Dreiser's "over-orchestration," by his inability to "see the wood for the trees": The Titan for him was "a mass of details, without meaning." While this criticism, too, stemmed from the essentially moral perspective with which Brinsley approached literature, in this instance it moved beyond the moral, and essentially content-oriented, to a consideration of technique. While Brinsley praised the forcefulness of Dreiser's approach, he recognised its limitations in terms of emphasis and selection. The review ended with a paradoxical judgment: "Well, Mr. Dreiser is in his forceful way, a genius. . . . Whether or not he is yet an artist, in the best sense of the word, is quite another matter."

This is, despite the imprecise presentation, a position not too different from that set out by Eliot in "Tradition and the

Individual Talent"; while "genius" may reside in the ability to move beyond the traditional and conventional in literature, the "artist" is able to transform that new perception or presentation of reality into a coherent and meaningful whole. In Brinsley's judgment, Dreiser had that spark of "genius," but the ability to make moral and artistic sense of the new reality towards which he had moved was lacking.

Minor works by two writers of note were dealt with in the "Views and Reviews" of September, 1914, appearing on page 49. Since the review considered seven books, each received only slight mention; the judgments were not, therefore, supported by any lengthy or comprehensive argument. Brinsley prefaced his discussion of Arnold Bennett's The Price of Love with a comparison of British and American writing, and claimed that the "average" British novel was better than its American counterpart. Despite this, according to Brinsley, Bennett, as an example of a skilful British writer, was no "genius." The Price of Love, he claimed, was the "work of a clear-eyed, intelligent reporter whom the divine fire has briskly passed by."

Another 'reporter' came under Brinsley's fire in this article; Jack London's collection of short stories, The Strength of the Strong, was dismissed as mere pyrotechnics. "They are all 'stunts,' good, acceptable magazine 'stunts,' but to me they show some definite signs that Mr. London is working his vein out."

Brinsley's critical canon was expressed quite explicitly in

the article of October, 1914, which he entitled "Books Pleasant and Unpleasant" (page 45). The review was concerned with five books of passing popularity, including works by Robert Herrick and Joseph Hergesheimer. Brinsley began by defining the characteristics of entertaining novels, and, to him, their redeeming features:

With most of us, all we ask of a "pleasant" book is that it shall ward off ennui; and this seems to be the function of most of our current writers, who cultivate this legitimate minor art with a success that is measured by their ephemeral popularity. A few of us, however, ask more: that in addition to beguiling our tedium, a pleasant book shall enlarge our mental horizon and refine our philosophy of life.

The case of "unpleasant" books is somewhat more difficult, claimed Brinsley, and he went on to state explicitly the moral criteria which had already appeared in consideration of, for example, D. H. Lawrence and Theodore Dreiser: "We may sanely beguile our tedium by the contemplation of evil only if the vehicle that presents it to us has dignity and beauty: even then our ultimate satisfaction becomes one of either scientific or moral value."

The criteria are quite clear: a minor work is redeemed by its ability to inform, to enlarge the given body of knowledge and experience; this broadening of "mental horizons," especially in the case of "unpleasant" material, must be redeemed by moral or philosophic development, by the incorporation of the new phenomena into a coherent and ethical world-view. Brinsley cited, as an example of a work that failed to accomplish this, Robert Herrick's Clark's Field: Brinsley believed that this novel was really about degradation, with a "tacked on" pleasant ending that was

not internally logical. This inner inconsistency was a mark of the work's failure, and its "pleasant" and thus not only internally dishonest, but morally reprehensible.

Brinsley's account of Hergesheimer's first novel, The Lay Anthony, was a quite witty denunciation. He began by quoting the claim of another critic, whom he did not name, that Hergesheimer's novel "has in some measure the great qualities of Richard Feverel." Brinsley proceeded to play on the word "measure," by stating that this reference "opens a new line of comparison"; for example, "Mary Had a Little Lamb" has some of the great qualities of Rossetti's "Blessed Damozel" -- although not in the same meter, the two tunes have almost the same metrical beat. In a comparison of the two, continued Brinsley, "tested by Coleridge's canon of rhythmic focus, each shares, although in differing degree, whatever beauty accrues from this variety of dynamic tone-wave."

Beyond the witty reductio ad absurdum used to denounce the unnamed critic's defense, Brinsley's sport here reveals the astute principle that every work must be considered on its own merits, within the constraints of its internal organization and logic. It is not enough to say that one work "shares the qualities of another"; one must also consider the internal uses to which those qualities are put, and the overall effect of a work.

The review for January, 1915 (page 41), contained undistinguished accounts of two interesting writers. Brinsley's

review of The Three Sisters, by May Sinclair, began with his opinion that women write better about women, and men about men. He claimed that Sinclair's novel demonstrates that women "have a very special kind of authentic information which a man can only guess at," and the novel's "plot, constantly interesting and developed with the naturalness of an organic growth, is less seizing than the portraiture." Brinsley went on to praise the insight and "skill" of the work; clearly this was one novel deemed significant by him through the criterion of expansion of knowledge, in this case of women's perceptions.

The account of Beasts and Super-Beasts by "Saki" was a typical example of "belles-lettrestic" criticism; the book was described as "irrational amusement . . . of the most agreeable sort," and Brinsley praised the "amazing little tales, whimsical, fantastic, trifling, witty - anything you like, each too delicate for detailed analysis but all irresponsibly gay and couched in the colloquial elegance of an impudently tranquil good breeding." "Elegance" and "breeding" are the genteel criteria at work here, even if "colloquial" and "impudently tranquil"!

In the "Views and Reviews" for February, 1915 (page 47), one of the five works considered was H. G. Wells' The Wife of Sir Isaac Harman, which Brinsley judged to be "freshly humorous, intellectually stimulating, and agreeably easy to read." The work was not, however, considered by him to be "important" or "great," as was being claimed by Wells' "partisans," as Brinsley

called them. Brinsley then presented, and concurred with, the views expressed by Wells himself in his "The Contemporaneous Novel," that works dealing with important social issues have merit: Brinsley noted, however, that as the particular issues and problems fade, the novels dealing with them become "jejune," and he cited Disraeli's Endymion as an example.

To be truly great, continued Brinsley, a novel must touch on the eternal problems of "human nature," such as love and hate, humour and grief. To deserve the epithets of "importance" and "greatness," he went on, a novel must deal with "some permanent, individual problem, some emotional denominator common to the majority of humankind."

We find here a qualification and particularisation of the general moral position from which Brinsley judged literary works: his review had already stated the criterion of moral or philosophical value: here this essentially social view of literature was particularised as the permanent, individual dilemmas faced by everyman. The social element in literature, for Brinsley, did not lie in the immediately-relevant issues of the moment, but rather in the perennial moral issues of man in society, more a broadly humanistic than a narrowly progressivist position.

These criteria were then applied specifically to Wells' novel:

. . . he is a rapid 'improvisatore' rather than a deliberate artist. He gains by this an engaging effect of spontaneity, but he also does not escape

a frequent effect of flimsiness, sometimes even of slovenliness. His book, stripped of the momentary importance of his socialistic problem, is simply light comedy -- very good light comedy, often stooping to bouffe.

Brinsley was not, then, criticising the book; he was merely concerned that the reader heed his warning of over-enthusiasm -- "But don't throw the wrong epithets at it [that is, "important" or "great"] ."

The March, 1915 "Views and Reviews" (page 43), was concerned with a number of currently popular writers. The first book considered was Sinister Street by Compton Mackenzie, whose photograph appeared at the head of the page. This work had been published in two parts, Youth's Encounter in 1913 and Sinister Street in 1914, and it was only the second volume which concerned Brinsley here. In his view, the book becomes "bogged down in detail," since it leaves out plot and dwells on character. According to Brinsley, Mackenzie attempts to effect a gradual build-up through the accumulation of detail; in this case, Brinsley felt the author is defeated by his method: there is an overabundance of detail, with no clear picture of character.

Brinsley praised this "sincere . . . attempt at a really important literary accomplishment," namely, when done well, the "cumulative effect of reality," as achieved for example by Pepys. Brinsley noted however that "the trouble is that Mr. Mackenzie wasn't up to his method and has fallen a victim to it; you almost literally can't see the wood for the trees!"

This focus on method was continued in the reviews of the next books, where the two authors' methods were contrasted. Harvey C. O'Higgins, in his The Adventures of Detective Barney, ". . . has a keen eye for the dramatic possibilities of the commonplace, and makes his points with a quiet deftness. . . ." The very popular E. Phillips Oppenheim, who would make the bestseller lists in 1920, exhibits in Mr. Grex of Monte Carlo ". . . a keen eye for the melodramatic possibilities of the un-commonplace, and makes his points by a heavy underscoring."

Brinsley's consideration of the method and style of currently-popular writers continued with an account of Fannie Hurst's Just Around the Corner; in his view, she was

. . . one of the increasingly large group of ladies who, in Mr. Henry James' dazed phrase, go "romping through the ruins of the Language, in the monthly magazines." Indeed, Miss Hurst writes quite frankly in rag-time, and if anyone has the courage to republish her twenty years hence it will have to be done with endless philological footnotes. Meanwhile we may legitimately revel among her ruins, for what is back of the rag-time is something astonishingly like genius; and when once you get her pictures and her people they startle you with their truth and vitality. Furthermore, while Miss Hurst's sense of language (under the encouragement of some magazine editors who wallow in this kind of thing) may be deliberately maniacal, her sense of form, in the larger meaning, is that of an exceptionally well-trained artist.

Despite the well-aimed attacks on the popular magazine-writing of the time, this account was clearly able to distinguish between literary level and literary value; although Brinsley deplored the kind of writing which Fannie Hurst exemplified, he nevertheless discerned merit in her execution of it. More importantly, there

is an assumption of universal standards of style ("vitality") and method ("sense of form") underlying his praise.

Similar criteria of judgment were used in the rest of this article. Berta Ruck's His Official Fiancée was discussed in terms of characterisation and verisimilitude, and judged to be a "light comedy." John Helston's Thracian Sea was dismissed after the reading of only one chapter, and Brinsley quoted a passage which he claimed could speak for the whole, in his view execrable, work: "a slight sample of its style may do for the moment ex pede Herculem."

The most striking feature of this review article as a whole is Brinsley's assurance regarding common standards of style and language. Although by 1915 serious writers had already begun to challenge conventional notions of literary language and novelistic form, Brinsley nevertheless was able to appeal to canons of "artistic" genius and form without feeling any need to define or specify them. He was thus able to find value in works disparaged by "high" critics of the period, without in any way calling into question the criteria of that "high" criticism. His belief in universal, and universally-accepted, standards of value could thus provide him with a paradoxical critical freedom.

Brinsley's assurance of well-defined and universal standards of "style" and portrayal of "character" is evident in the review of April, 1915 (page 51) as well. This article, considering five books popular at the time, dealt among others with Booth Tarkington and G. K. Chesterton. Although neither of Tarkington's

bestsellers (Penrod in 1914 and Seventeen in 1915) would be considered in the pages of Vanity Fair, his tremendous popularity did ensure that at least some of his works would be reviewed.

In his account of Tarkington's The Turmoil in the April, 1915 review, Brinsley singled out Tarkington's "sympathy, a sympathy that is based on a shrewd insight into character. . . ." Brinsley noted, however, that the work was essentially a "sketch," because "it is all very lightly brushed in; the pigment is thin. . . ."

The account, in the same article, of G. K. Chesterton's collection of detective stories, The Wisdom of Father Brown, also focused on character and style. Because he was here dealing with detective stories, Brinsley was also concerned with plot, and the review ended with his judgment that: "some of the stories are very ingenious, some are far-fetched, some are merely mechanical and some mildly dull; none is inspired, and all are of a pleasantly readable 'magazine' quality written in Mr. Chesterton's slightly heavy style."

"Style" was for Brinsley a term with common signification; he was able to use it often with no qualification or elaboration. The April piece opened with an account of The Second Blooming by W. L. George; although the work itself is of little note, Brinsley's account of its "style" is instructive: "Mr. George's style is full of movement and color, abounding in detail yet nervously brisk: an exceptionally competent, flexible medium. . . . Mr. George is undisputably a sincere artist. . . ." It is evident that Brinsley's judgment of style was essentially impressionistic, and

closely linked to his other critical standby, "sincerity."

Brinsley's critical arsenal was not entirely naive, however; in his account of the "reality" of George's characters, he noted that, even if the various figures portrayed might not be true, "he has made them at least seem vitally real, and, after all in art that is the same thing. . . ."

The "Views and Reviews" of September, 1915 (page 49) exhibited some of Brinsley's more precious prose. He considered Lord Dunsany's Fifty-One Tales as ". . . just little iridescent soap-bubbles which Lord Dunsany tosses off at random. . . . They gleam with faint colors for a moment and then break, leaving sometimes a speck of froth behind, sometimes nothing at all. Lord Dunsany blows them with much charm."

The same review considered H. G. Wells' Boon: The Mind of the Race, a series of satiric pieces on contemporary authors, including a parody of Henry James. Brinsley objected to Wells' attack, claiming that he was essentially faulting James for not conforming to his own (i. e. Wells') literary theory: "Art, thank heaven, is a jewel of many more facets than Mr. Wells, or any of us, can see in the single eye-wink his impatience allows him." Despite the somewhat cloying metaphor, this judgment displays not only an admirable literary eclecticism, but more importantly the significant critical insight that a literary work must be judged by the criteria appropriate to its own aims and methods.

The "Views and Reviews" for October, 1915 (page 53), subtitled "When Lovely Woman Stoops to Letters," constituted Brinsley's attack on a specific school of bestseller writing, the sentimental women's novel. He began the review with an ode to Gene Stratton-Porter, the author of the first novel he dealt with, Michael O'Halloran:

STRATTON-PORTER
(with apologies to Rossetti)

Oh have you read the Stratton flood
That bursts the press today?
You musn't call it prose, Lord Sands,
It's simply new mown hay.

Stratton-Porter had achieved tremendous sales with her first book, Laddie (1913), so that her style was already well-known. Brinsley therefore proceeded to damn her with her own methods; he wrote his review in the style of Stratton-Porter, with the inclusion in brackets of quotes from Michael O'Halloran [the square brackets are Brinsley's]:

. . . a new flower in the field of letters has sprung up in a night and twined its exquisitely scented tendrils round my critical ["gorge"] with so thrilling a ["clutch"] that I sit ["helpless with blurred eyes and cease to struggle. . . ."]

Brinsley felt that the book

. . . will gladden the heart of the Great American People, will denude whole forests in its manufacture. . . . Thoughts like these fill me with awe . . . and, oh, it's a Nature-Book, full of the love of flowers which Mrs. Stratton-Porter caresses with such loving fingers that poor Thoreau must turn nightly in his lonely Walden grave, grieving that he did not live to see Nature handled ["with this reverent, vibrant care"].

. . . I cannot criticise the book, for criticism is an impertinence in the face of a novel that will sell in the millions; I can only try to give you some idea of its flavor, a flavor that has hung round me for several days now, like a benediction. . . .

Brinsley defined this "flavor" as that of a "glad-book," a "joy-book," a style attempted by Stratton-Porter "although another lady-writer has made these terms her trademark." He noted that Michael O'Halloran, like its forerunner Laddie, was concerned with nature, and with evoking pathos for the plight of small children. It had, therefore, all the earmarks of a "tender novel," and brought to mind Paul Dombey, Little Nell, Little Eva, and "all the children one has hitherto so loved."

It is clear from Brinsley's parody of the style, however, that he considered Stratton-Porter, like the other "lady writers," guilty of a debasement of the sentimental form. His attack focussed on those elements which he normally isolated, namely style and content (Nature, Sentiment). There was also an underlying assumption that popularity, achieving bestseller status, was in itself damning, and that the popular taste involved some element of debasement, especially as evidenced by women; the title of the review did, after all, imply that it is "folly" for women to engage in "letters."

The second "lady writer" considered was Mary Roberts Rinehart, whose novel K. appeared in 1915; she too would reach the bestseller lists, in 1919. Brinsley stated that she was,

. . . perhaps a shade easier to deal with [than Stratton-Porter] for her style as such has no flavor at all with which to deaden one's critical faculties: She depends more on the soundness of her plot and the saliency of her characters and reduces mere style to a medium that would not detain the swiftest reader nor the dullest mind. . . .

This damning by means of ironic praise continued with Brinsley's approval of the "soundness" of the book's plot:

. . . all the ingredients have long stood the test of time and are guaranteed to produce their required effect. Nothing satisfies the Great American Public more than melodrama, for it requires little mental effort and repays that little with the expected thrill at the right moment: and Mrs. Rinehart observes the rules of all the old conventions.

The ironic praise went on with respect to the propriety of the work:

Better still, it is not raw, crude melodrama, but just delicately near it, so that the feminine part of her audience will not have to stuff fingers in ears at undesired pistol-shots, shrieks and piercing cries. And while a few of the characters . . . stray to the edge of the debatable lands of sex-proprity, nothing is printed that should not enter the home. . . .

After criticising the work's stock plot and narrow propriety, Brinsley proceeded to attack one of the consequences of the use of the melodramatic form, namely stock characterisation with no development: "The characters I have called salient, because each springs into the book at once sharply delineated; you know which one has a secret trouble . . . from the very start, -- there are none of the tedious subtleties of character development to worry you. . . ."

Brinsley concluded with a damnation of the lack of realism, and of the sentimentality and false propriety of the work. This he related to popular taste, especially as evidenced in magazine fiction; and the entire criticism finally culminated with an attack on the concretisation of these shortcomings in the fake "artistry" of the book's design:

. . . You can revel in a well-tested plot, a great deal of sentimentality, and a high moral tone to your heart's content. A novel like this has its source not at all in observation of life but in the writer's inner consciousness. If it has in it nothing in the remotest

degree resembling what artists call "distinction," it still has nearly all of the qualities so eagerly sought for by most magazine editors, by all up-to-date publishers, and, subsequently, by the great, and very wonderful, American reading public. (The singularly ugly page headings of the book make me feel that of late some strangely 'artistic' soul has been playing pranks with the publishers).

This piece was one of Brinsley's most extensive considerations of bestseller fiction; he left no doubt about his criticism of the genre. What is perhaps most noteworthy is his reliance, for the attack, on the same critical criteria he usually employed: style, moral tone, in this case too high because therefore unrealistic, character development, and verisimilitude.

In his review of the third work considered in the same piece (October, 1915), Somerset Maugham's Of Human Bondage, Brinsley used the same criteria to reach a positive conclusion: in his view, Maugham's work exhibits "a quiet mastery, a steadiness and sureness of touch. . . ." Not only the style, but also the verisimilitude, was praised: "rarely . . . does one get . . . so vivid an effect of things keenly 'observed' in their three dimensions. . . ."

Brinsley concluded that "although in reading so large a book it is difficult to apperceive an underlying beauty of design, in retrospect the pattern grows clearer and its success more and more cumulative." One suspects that Brinsley was less concerned in this article to deal adequately with Maugham, than to cite him as an example of what popular fiction was not, for the rest of the review continued the attack on popular writing begun with the accounts of Stratton-Porter and Rinehart, an attack reiterating the popular

reliance on melodrama and sentimentality at the expense of realism and character development.

Brinsley's "Views and Reviews" for December, 1915 (page 41), was sub-titled "The Genius of Mr. Theodore Dreiser, and Some Other Geniuses." The major portion of the review was concerned with the third part of the "Trilogy of Desire," The Genius, but Brinsley also noted works by H. G. Wells, Edna Ferber and Hugh Walpole. This review of contemporary literary "geniuses" contained little of significance, and was a typical example of Brinsley's reviewing criteria.

In his account of The Genius, Brinsley noted that the work had two major characteristics: its size ("more Teutonic than tonic"), and its frequent concern with sex. Brinsley was of the opinion that Dreiser's sexual scenes in the novel, while numerous, were nevertheless significant and contributed to the effect of the work. This criterion of significance was then, however, applied by Brinsley to the work as a whole, with negative effect: "Herein, I think, lies the failure of Mr. Dreiser's art: its lack of significance . . . its [i. e. The Genius's] significance, from the point of view of ethics, philosophy, or art, is about that of alertly pedestrian journalism. Mr. Dreiser's books impress me less as novels than as immensely documented 'cases'."

This judgment of The Genius is virtually the same as Brinsley's earlier opinion of The Titan ("Views and Reviews," August, 1914, page 49). The remainder of the December, 1915 review also

repeated earlier critical judgments and criteria: Brinsley stated that H. G. Wells, in The Research Magnificent, "of course, bristles with stimulating discussion that, constructively, gets us nowhere at all . . .", repeating the criticism that Wells' interesting and well-constructed works nevertheless lack lasting importance, already expressed in the reviews of Social Forces in England and America (reviewed July, 1914, page 55), The Wife of Sir Isaac Harman (reviewed February, 1915, page 47), and Bealby (May, 1915, page 49).

Hugh Walpole's The Golden Calf was judged in the December review to be ". . . a study in child-psychology, where he has made a conscientious and somewhat heavy-handed grasp at a delicately imaginative theme . . .", and Edna Ferber's Emma McChesney and Company dismissed as "the exact literary equivalent of Miss May Turin's acting." Ferber would become a bestseller in 1924 and 1930, and this dismissal by Brinsley in 1915 corresponds to the critique of women's popular fiction contained in the article for the previous month (October, 1915).

The review of the second work considered, Maurice Hewlitt's The Little Iliad, also contains some of Brinsley's characteristic criteria of judgment: ". . . art carried to Mr. Hewlitt's length may create an illusion of genius," and is "charming. . . . If the effect . . . is one of high artificiality, the artifice is none the less delightfully high-bred. . . . You may strip his people of the rhetorical furtherances with which he clothes them, and find real muscle beneath." The work, that is, exhibits Brinsley's cardinal virtue, namely "sincerity."

The critical standards employed by Brinsley in his feature for January, 1916 (page 45), although directed at at least two works of reasonable significance, were among his less penetrating. Stephen Leacock, in the collection titled Moonbeam From the Larger Lunacy, was praised because "his humour at its best has a charm and distinction above the average."

Compton Mackenzie's Plasher's Mead, which had appeared in England as Guy and Pauline, was described by Brinsley as an "idyll . . . really a rather charming one of young love. . . . The underlying psychology, which, fortunately, doesn't creep specifically into the text, is unusually subtle, the sympathetic insight of the author is delicate and penetrating. . . . [The work exhibits] . . . very flexible, clear cut, and often distinguished style. . . ." We find here, once more, Brinsley's reliance on style, "insight," and character as criteria for judgment. Significance, too, plays an implicit role: "However, no one except Mr. Mackenzie would have the temerity to write 400 pages upon a theme so essentially fragile and so little fraught with dramatic incident."

Brinsley's awareness of the commercialisation of literature, which had already been evident in such reviews as his account of popular women's fiction (October, 1915), and his periodic denigration of works as "mere journalism" (e. g. in the account of Jack London, in November, 1913), was evident in the subtitle "The Art of Literary Advertisement" for the February, 1916 article

(page 53). Brinsley in this piece dealt with writers whom he considered to be over-rated, including Arnold Bennett, whose recent work These Twain exhibited, according to Brinsley, considerable technical skill, but whose content were mere "gossip."

Jack London's The Star Rover, which Brinsley outlined as a collection of pieces linked together as a series of "past lives" of the protagonist, was judged to be "vivid" and "interesting." Ultimately, however, Brinsley considered the work unpolished, and its success based more on the author's renown than on any intrinsic merit: "On the whole, the book lacks freshness and spontaneity, and is too loosely thrown together to be effective. It's just good routine office-work."

The review feature for March 1916 (page 67) included a consideration of Joseph Conrad's Within the Tides, a collection of four short stories which had appeared in England the previous year, and had just been released in the U.S. Brinsley's earlier accounts of Conrad's work had used classical references: Chance, reviewed in July, 1914 (page 55), was described as having "a grave classical undercurrent"; Victory, reviewed in June, 1915 (page 55), was deemed to have the "high inevitability of Greek Tragedy." The account of Within the Tides continued this pattern, with praise for the "classic fatalism" of the stories and their "constant richness of . . . implications. . . ." Brinsley's use of Greek drama as a critical comparison is somewhat indecipherable: "As in Greek drama, most of his tragedies happen 'off stage' and if they

are purely subjective ones and thus may happen 'on,' you get a minimum of external struggle."

This seems to have something to do, in Brinsley's mind, with indirect narration and a focus on the effects of actions rather than the actions themselves, although Brinsley does not say so explicitly. This account is more impressionistic than technical, especially in his praise of Conrad's ". . . genius for verbal repression and for intense emotional implication." While Brinsley seems to be on the right track, he achieves his judgment more by sensibility than by critical analysis.

The last review article by Brinsley of any note appeared in June, 1916 (page 65), and considered then-popular writers including W. H. Hudson and Berta Ruck. In both cases, Brinsley was concerned less with the technique of the works, than with their "spirit." Hudson's Green Mansions was praised for its ". . . singular conviction of reality, although of a reality on a higher lyrical plane which the average reader may not be willing to accept. . . ." Brinsley's account of Green Mansions began and ended with quotes from Galsworthy's introduction to the book, which had praised the work's "spirit" and its evocation of a "free, natural world." This led Brinsley to a comparison of contemporary British and American reviewers, and to the conclusion that ". . . as for reviewers in this country, we are a sorry fraternity (or sorority), as a whole ill trained and ill-balanced. . . ." Since no records remain of Brinsley's relations

with the Vanity Fair editorial staff, we may only speculate on a possible bitterness engendered by Brinsley's forthcoming departure from the book-review post at the magazine.

Critical inadequacy was expressed by Brinsley in somewhat different terms when he considered The Boy With Wings, by the then-popular Berta Ruck, in the same June, 1916 review:

Probably three-quarters of the novels published today -- and, consequently, three-quarters of those sent to reviewers -- are written by women, largely about women, and chiefly, I presume, for women to read, because in any community the proportion of said readers of fiction is, I daresay, about three parts feminine to one masculine. All this may be quite right and as it should be, but it is at times very puzzling to the mere male reviewer just how to take certain kinds of writing. . . .

Brinsley then quoted from the novel a passage describing a woman washing herself, and pleaded incompetence to judge this material, and a sense that he was somehow intruding on private female ground. It is important to remember that Vanity Fair was never a "women's magazine," and was at this point in 1916 only a few years past the orientation towards men and male fashions which had characterised its beginnings as Dress and Vanity Fair. This account of women's fiction, then, had nothing to do with the readership of the magazine, but was rather an attempt to deal with an important aspect of fiction in general at the time.

Brinsley ultimately rendered a positive judgment of Berta Ruck's potential as a writer, fearing only that her increasing popularity would debase her talents to the mediocrity of a certain kind of women's fiction:

I also feel, however, that back of all this chiffonnerie

and back of a cloying sentimentality of treatment, Mrs. Onions (Berta Ruck was married to the writer Oliver Onions) has an idea . . . that is essentially poetic and, therefore, essentially beautiful, which is a good deal more than can be said of most novels of the chiffonesque school (sic). A more developed taste and a more active discretion would bring out the finer traits in Mrs. Onions's real talent which a rapidly growing popularity bids fair to smother. . . .

It is interesting that Brinsley never identifies this "idea" which he feels is at the back of the "chiffonesque" writing. He was more concerned, it seems, to criticise a particular kind of writing, and its current popularity, than to deal specifically with the book itself.

The top half of the same page (June, 1916, page 65) consisted of a photograph of P. G. Wodehouse, and a brief review, anonymous, of his Uneasy Money. Wodehouse was then on the staff of Vanity Fair as a theatre critic, and the review was written in the persona of an upper-class British gentleman, mentally playing golf while waiting for his lady-friend. The tone was light and pseudo-aristocratic, and the entire piece more a bit of light entertainment than a consideration of Wodehouse's book, which was perhaps appropriate to Wodehouse himself. The piece did conclude, however, that in the book ". . . a gift of humour and a gift of story-telling fight on every page with a swift and certain gift for character drawing."

With the departure of Henry Brinsley from the staff of Vanity Fair the regular book-review feature ceased until its reappearance in the early twenties. Reviews of books did continue

to appear, however, written by various people. These were as often springboards to general essays or commentary, often satiric, of some kind, as considerations of the works themselves. We will describe three representative examples.

Lord Dunsany's The Gods of Pegana was reviewed by Aleister Crowley in October, 1917 (page 134). Subtitled "A New Heaven and a New Earth: As Foreshadowed in Lord Dunsany's 'The Gods of Pegana'," the two-page article was less an account of the work itself than an essay on truth perceived as "Spirit." While the article is effusive in its praise of this theophany, which was Dunsany's first book, its mystico-religious paeans render it virtually incomprehensible. This article was, of course, written during the War, and its efforts towards transcendence may perhaps be explained as an attempt to move beyond pressing contemporary reality towards more eternal certainties. Crowley is searching for leadership, and he finds it more in transcendent thought than in practical analysis of reality:

Whether it is the War or -- "Progress!" -- the big men [sic] are coming into their own. Lord Dunsany . . . is the coming man. The more he is understood, the greater he will appear. . . . His ideas are colossal; they surpass the so-called 'realists' as heaven surpasses earth.

The influence of the war on writing, and specifically on literature, came into effect again in the review of Booth Tarkington's The Magnificent Ambersons, which appeared in the issue for April, 1919 (page 57). Subtitled "A New Novel by Booth Tarkington: An Evaluation of It by John Jay Chapman," the article described The Magnificent Ambersons, which had in fact

appeared in the previous year, 1918, as "one of the most powerful novels ever written in this country. . . ." Chapman favourably compared this new work with Tarkington's earlier novel Penrod, which had been a bestseller in 1914, describing Penrod's thinness in much the same terms with which Brinsley had criticised the "sketchiness" of Tarkington's The Turmoil in 1915 (April, page 51). Chapman felt that The Magnificent Ambersons, by contrast, exhibited a new and more profound element, a depth which he suspected had entered American writing through the experience of war:

. . . Penrod was a creation. But not a weighty creation; the book showed that intellectual thinness and lack of *avoirduois* [sic] which characterises most of our fiction, and which has given rise to some question as to the power of the American brain where fiction is concerned. . . . There is a new element in the book [i.e. The Magnificent Ambersons], which perhaps is part of the newer age.

The waters of the Great War are beginning to rush in and clear out the sands and shallow places in the minds of our novelists. American letters will perhaps hereafter show a weight and gravity which will unite them with the older literatures.

For Chapman, the strength and profundity of the work resided in its depiction of the dark side of American life, the evil effects of that prosperity which was the dominant feature of American society in the period, what he referred to as the "seamy side of prosperity." It was precisely the depiction of the seemingly-positive as an inherently negative force which was the artistic triumph, and Chapman stated that ". . . prosperity seen as a monster who slowly crawls out of his lair, crushing, dominating, triumphant, and glares upon the hero in the hour of his fall, - - is a mighty stroke of invention."

This account of The Magnificent Ambersons is representative of the transition in literary taste and concerns that marked the immediately post-war period in Vanity Fair's history. There is a movement away from the broadly-based but nevertheless essentially traditional gentility of a reviewer like Brinsley, towards a greater concern with exploration of the more hidden and destructive elements in American life. There is also a growing awareness of American literature's relation to what Chapman calls "the older literatures," an awareness based on the perception of American letters as distinct from British or Continental literature, and just beginning to achieve its own truths and complexities. Most of all, there is the burgeoning celebration of America's "coming of age," the conviction that the literature, and its society, was important in its own right, and in need of profound analysis. These various factors would, by the time the regular book-review feature resumed in the early twenties, form the critical assumptions on which accounts of literature were based.

Lest we go too far, however, in attributing to the pages of Vanity Fair an over-riding seriousness of purpose and ponderousness of tone, it may be instructive to consider another representative review from the post-war period, Robert Benchley's account of The Theory of The Leisure Class, which appeared in the same issue (April, 1919, page 39). Subtitled "The Dullest Book of the Month: Dr. Thorstein Veblen Gets the Crown of Deadly Nightshade," this review was a humorous attack on the academic style of the work.

Benchley began by quoting the more convoluted examples of Veblen's sociological prose, followed by comments like "we find the native genius of Dr. Veblen creating something in the way of humour that is entirely his own," or "one must admit that the plot had been advanced ~~no~~ whit."

Benchley was by no means unaware of the nice irony inherent in reviewing Veblen's theory of "conspicuous consumption" in a magazine like Vanity Fair, which was so dominated by a concern with the fashionable and the entertaining. He used his awareness of this very irony to poke fun at Veblen, and simultaneously at the magazine, by quoting a lengthy passage which he claimed would make a good "In Vanity Fair" ad:

'In order to avoid stultification he [i.e., the member of the leisure class] must also cultivate his tastes, for it now becomes incumbent upon him to discriminate with nicety between the noble and the ignoble in consumable goods. . . . This cultivation of the aesthetic faculty requires time and application, and the demands made upon the gentleman in this direction therefore tend to change his life of leisure into a more or less arduous application to the business of learning how to live a life of ostensible leisure in a becoming way.'

To underscore his irony, Benchley then noted that "'A copy of Vanity Fair each month will do all this, and more, for you,' is the logical ending to that paragraph." Despite the implied criticism of Vanity Fair's frivolity inherent in Benchley's account, he nevertheless concluded that Veblen's book is marred by an overly-ponderous style. He ended with a criticism written as a parody of that same overly-academic voice:

On the whole, "The Theory of The Leisure Class" is good work, hastily done. In the hands of a more serious-minded student it might have been developed to greater lengths.

The Doctor has made one big mistake, however. He has presupposed, in writing this book, the existence of a class with much more leisure than any class in the world ever possessed -- for, has he not counted on a certain number of readers?

Before proceeding to consider the literary reviews that appeared in the twenties, we may underscore the inherently satiric context in which those reviews appeared by noting that, in February, 1920 (page 69), Vanity Fair carried a review of the Telephone Directory of New York (including all Boroughs). We may also note in passing that this piece is included in the Index to the photoreproduction edition of Vanity Fair, under the heading of "Books Reviewed"!

2. 1921-23

Regular book-reviewing in the pages of Vanity Fair began again in October, 1921, with a new feature called "Books of the Month." The first book-review editor responsible for this feature was John Peale Bishop, replaced in September, 1922, by his Princeton friend Edmund Wilson. Wilson had, however, begun to contribute literary articles and reviews to Vanity Fair in 1920. Rather than maintain a strict chronological approach, therefore, we will consider Bishop's reviews first, and then all of Wilson's pieces together.

Just before the regular "Books of the Month" began in October, under John Peale Bishop's editorship, the new era in literature had

been marked by a review, in July, 1921 (page 29), of Lytton Strachey's Queen Victoria. Although the review itself was undistinguished, the very fact that the book was considered is a sign that by the early twenties Vanity Fair was concerned with the innovative and "revolutionary" in letters; Strachey's Eminent Victorians, for example, which appeared in 1918, was not reviewed in the pages of Vanity Fair.

This emphasis on innovation and youth marked Bishop's inaugural "Books of the Month" for October, 1921 (pages 8 and 9), which bore the subtitle "Three Brilliant Young Novelists None of Whom is Over 25." The new importance which Vanity Fair gave to literature in the early twenties is evident from the fact that these "Books of the Month" features appeared right at the beginning of the issues, whereas the "Views and Reviews" features by Brinsley had always appeared somewhere in the midst of various articles and photographs.

The young Bishop, fresh from Princeton and the War, began his first review by stating that American letters in the post-war period "represent a revolt against the silliness and complacency of commercialized literature. . . ." The magazine reviewers, according to Bishop, had just discovered the so-called "young novelists," of whom the youngest, as Bishop pointed out, was Floyd Dell, then 35. Bishop's intention, then, was to discuss three novelists who truly were young, and "who cannot be overlooked by anyone interested in delivering the American novel from the

Philistines. . . ." Since the focus of the review was the youth of the writers, Bishop listed their alma maters:

F. Scott Fitzgerald: Princeton; Stephen Vincent B  net: Yale '19; John Dos Passos: Harvard '17; he then noted that "Being myself a graduate of Princeton . . . I will first consider Mr. Fitzgerald."

Fitzgerald had achieved overnight success with the publication of This Side of Paradise, his account of Princeton life and the new collegian's search for meaning. The Beautiful and Damned had first appeared serially in the Metropolitan magazine, and then been published by Scribner's. Bishop's account of The Beautiful and Damned, as might have been predicted given Fitzgerald's renown as a symbol of the "young generation," was primarily concerned with Fitzgerald himself, and with the book's depiction of character development; it was the mind of Fitzgerald, especially as representative of his generation, which concerned Bishop:

. . . as with This Side of Paradise, the most interesting thing about Mr. Fitzgerald's book is Mr. Fitzgerald. . . . The true stories about Fitzgerald are always published under his own name [a reference to the large number of contemporary accounts of the Fitzgeralds' riotous life]. He has the faculty of being able to experience romantic and ingenious emotions and a half-hour later regard them with satiric detachment. . . . It [i.e. The Beautiful and Damned] is an honest record of one of the most interesting minds of his generation. . . .

We already seen Fitzgerald in his role of spokesman, read and regarded as exponent of the lives and perceptions of his generation. This is the beginning, not only of the cult of

Fitzgerald, but also of the cult of the "Young Generation" which so marked the twenties. Bishop is able to penetrate this glorification, at least to the extent of recognising Fitzgerald's critical side, his ability to provide "satiric detachment" as well as engaged representation.

Bishop, in next considering Stephen Vincent Benét's The Beginning of Wisdom, found this account of Yale life unsatisfying. Although Benét, too, is concerned with chronicling the style and quest of his generation, to Bishop his rendering lacked sufficient power: "Mr. Benét has visualised Yale, he has not dramatised it."

For Bishop, the most successful of these new young novelists was Dos Passos, whose Three Soldiers he regarded as a masterpiece: ". . . it is difficult to speak calmly of John Dos Passos' Three Soldiers. However viewed, whether as a novel or as a document, it is so good that I am tempted to topple from my perch and go up and down the street with banners and drums." The reasons for this praise were numerous, and Bishop lauded the powerful characterisation, the strong structure, and the realistic portrayal of the speech, feeling, and action of the American army during 1917-19:

He has evoked the American soldier, alive and individual for all the effort to press him into a mould, a young man with the helpless, lovable charm of a child and the uncontrolled viciousness of an animal. . . .
 . . . Despite the technical difficulties of carrying three major characters, the book has the firm structure of steel. . . . [Three Soldiers is] not only a superb portrayal of the American Army, but also more than that, for, in Mr. Dos Passos' hands, the army becomes a symbol of all the systems by which men attempt to crush their fellows and add to the already

unbearable agony of life. . . . [The novel ends with] the beautiful proud gesture of a man going down in defeat before life. And this is why I say that John Dos Passos is a genius.

Although the common thread of this entire review (October, 1921) had been the emergence of new young writers, Bishop's account of Three Soldiers was based on judgments entirely unrelated to the youth of Dos Passos. The youth of Bishop himself is, however, somewhat evident in his talk of the "unbearable agony of life" and "the beautiful proud gesture of a man going down in defeat before life." We find here already in evidence that self-dramatising romanticism which was endemic to the "Lost Generation."

Bishop again considered Dos Passos in the "Books of the Month" for May, 1922 (page 18), subtitled "Poets in Prose." Although concerned in this piece with Rosinante to the Road Again, Bishop began by noting that he had recently seen the manuscript of a collection of poems, The Pushcart at the Curb, to be published the following year. He then stated that, although Rosinante to the Road Again is a book of prose, it is "in manner and mood more akin to these poems than to Three Soldiers, on which his reputation was made. . . ."

Bishop then attempted to find the heart of the book, which he took to be a quest for alternatives to the American way of life; the book is

. . . on the surface, a volume of sketches on Spanish life and letters; actually, it is a record of mental adventurings . . . the search is after all for that Spain which, shut off by the Pyrenees from modern civilization, presents the most complete contrast to

industrial America, where, it is said, men work and rest only that they may work again.

While Bishop did devote some attention to the "craftsmanship" displayed in the prose, his primary concern was the content of the work, especially as an antidote to American society.

This implied revulsion at American life is present in the account of Walter de la Mare's Memoirs of a Midget in the same review (May, 1922). Bishop called de la Mare a "Romantic," presenting his reader with a vision from a dream or recollection of early childhood, not the "present cult of naiveté," but bringing "all the resources of a mature art to the bringing forth of the remembered impressions of his first years. . . . Childhood is the only refuge left in a world so gross and so scientifically explored."

This desire to escape the levelling-down effects of a scientific society led Bishop to praise de la Mare's qualities as a "magician" with words, able to transcend the limits of rational sense and produce a kind of irrational truth: ". . . The senses are troubled, and it seems that a statement has been made, obscure but of vast and terrible import. There is . . . power to enchant the intellect and steep it in a vinic drowsiness. . . ."

Bishop's emphasis on the "enchancing" potential of literature, especially as portending a reality different from the rational industrial reality of American life, a theme which would often recur in literary discussions in the twenties, did not blind him to perceptions of the technique underlying this power of enchantment. His reaction in the same piece (May, 1922) to

Thomas Seltzer's You, published under the nom de plume of Magdeleine Marx, was that the work "produces no reaction in me except to confirm my suspicion that emotion cannot be communicated directly, but only by building up a set of objective symbols. . . ."

This realisation that emotion can only be rendered in literary form through the creation of concrete or objective representation is evidence of Bishop's focus on literary technique. While concerned that literature present those aspects of reality, such as emotion, imagination, dream, and fantasy, left out of what he considered to be the increasingly technological and materialistic culture around him, Bishop was nevertheless keenly aware that it was only by the skilful use of literary form and symbol to embody the irrational that literature could transcend the purely rational.

The conviction that "style" must be the result of a combination of intellect plus emotion was the basis of Bishop's review of e.e. cummings' The Enormous Room in the "Books of the Month" for July, 1922 (page 20). Bishop began by emphasizing that style is the evidence of a writer's "intelligence," the combination of intellect and emotion fully realised. Thus, while the review of cummings' book was on the whole favourable, Bishop nevertheless concluded that "so far as I am concerned, the trouble with The Enormous Room is exactly that which is to be found in practically all the experimental prose in America, which is simply that not enough time has been taken to

bring the form to completion. . . ."

We have come very far indeed from the naive assumption of universal standards of "style" employed by Brinsley in the early years of Vanity Fair. Perhaps because of the intense literary experimentation occasioned by the attempt to render in literary form aspects of reality hitherto unexplored, like the unconscious, patterns of thought, interior monologue, a reviewer in the period like Bishop had of necessity to develop a notion of "style" which took into account the technical means by which that style operated, and the intellectual process underlying it.

Edmund Wilson assumed responsibility for the "Books of the Month" feature from September, 1922 until November, 1923. He had already begun to contribute articles to Vanity Fair in 1920 and 1921, however; while the "Books of the Month" pieces were of necessity more focussed on purely literary matters, including discussions of technique, there is a commonality of theme and orientation running through all of Wilson's pieces that appeared in Vanity Fair.


True to the spirit of the magazine in that era, Wilson sought out the new and innovative in literature and thought, and attempted to elucidate its meaning and significance. Underlying the various commentaries and judgments, and even the technical analyses, were several related and constant themes: the materialism of American society and the resulting problems of its artists; the emergence of American letters; American artists'

pilgrimages to Europe, and especially France; and the mutual relations of American and European, especially French, literature and art.

These concerns placed Wilson at the heart of the literary movements of the time, for most of the best young writers were exploring the deficiencies of the materialistic America around them, and looking to Europe, and especially France, for inspiration. Even at the start of his career, for the editorship of "Views and Reviews" was his first job, Wilson exhibited his characteristic strengths: a profound sensitivity to good writing; a knowledge of history and the historical context out of which literary innovations developed; the desire and ability to place a specific book within its larger social context.

The essential conflict inherent in Vanity Fair, between attempts to educate "taste" and attempts to be "in the swim" of fashion, was nowhere more evident than in those issues where Wilson's pieces appeared. His lucid and penetrating remarks on the difficulties for artistic endeavour posed by the essential materialism of American society, appeared on pages filled with ads for the latest consumer goods, and opposite photos of stage and screen stars.

This irony was never explicitly confronted by Wilson, and he seemed at ease with the various and disparate levels of taste which coexisted in the pages of the magazine. While his critical pieces maintained the highest standards, he was by no means limited to the self-imposed confines of "high culture" concerns,



and from time to time himself indulged in the frivolous antics of Vanity Fair's lighter pages. Wilson, at this stage, seems himself to have adhered to Vanity Fair's doctrine that the lighter side of life was by no means the lesser, and the standards and judgments displayed in his more serious writings was as fully in evidence in his light-hearted contributions.

A full list of Wilson's contributions to Vanity Fair appears as Appendix C; we will consider only those of significance. Wilson's first two contributions were rather undistinguished: the review of Gilbert Muirhead's Life of Edward Moore Gresham, the fin de siècle poet, appeared in March, 1920 (page 49), under the title "The Inevitable Literary Biography," and was a pedestrian account of Gresham's life and work.

Wilson's second article was a review of Brieux's play Les Américains chez nous, which had been produced at the Paris Odéon in January; the review appeared in the May, 1920 issue (page 50). Wilson's account, while merely adequate, does introduce a theme to which he would return, that of Americans in France:

It is M. Brieux's function in life to clear up misunderstandings. He is, in fact, a kind of Bernard Shaw, without the wit and colour. . . . Almost the only problems he is interested in are the soluble ones. . . . He is burdened with too heavy a consciousness of his tremendous responsibility in attempting to deal with so grave a matter as Franco-American relations. He cannot do his duty by the subject as a comic artist. . . .

Wilson then proceeded to outline some of the comic possibilities, not explored by Brieux, inherent in the American

presence in France. Already in May of 1920, Vanity Fair was chronicling and commenting on the phenomenon, in existence since the end of the war but to be intensified in the twenties, of a major influx of Americans into Paris.

If Wilson's second contribution illustrated his often-to-be repeated concern with the social context of literature, his third article for Vanity Fair was exemplary of his constant concern with ideas as the basis of art. Out of his profound belief (as stated e.g. in the account of Gertrude Stein, September, 1923) that all art was rooted in ideas, a belief similar to Bishop's doctrine that creative "intelligence" was a combination of imagination and intellect, Wilson ranged widely through the intellectual developments of his time. One of the most important of these developments was of course the exploration of the unconscious, and Wilson's third article in Vanity Fair, appearing in August, 1920 (page 4), was an account of Freud's theories titled "The Progress of Psychoanalysis."

The article, which was very favourable towards psychoanalysis, opened with the claim that "no idea has made more extraordinary advances in the last few years than the Freudian theory of the indestructibility of spiritual energy." Wilson stressed this positive aspect of psychoanalytic doctrine, contrasting Freud's lecture room, where he delivered the papers which formed the basis for his Introduction to Psychoanalysis, with all of Europe "organized for slaughter and destruction."

After providing a brief history of the development of

psychoanalysis by men like Breuer, and noting that Freud's Interpretation of Dreams described the technique for probing the subconscious mind, Wilson then stated that Freud himself recognised the limitations of psychoanalysis: "His explicit statement of its limitations will surprise those persons who were under the impression that psychoanalysis was a magical panacea like Christian Science."

Despite its limitations, however, psychoanalysis remained for Wilson one of the great adventures of his time, and he accepted Freud's own contention that the discovery of the unconscious was the third major development, with the discoveries of Copernicus and Darwin, against man's ego.

. . . The Introduction to Psychoanalysis keeps much of its thrill, a thrill which seems to the present reviewer to make Conan Doyle and Rider Haggard and the "scientific" spiritualists seem no more hair-raising than little boys dressed up in sheets. One feels oneself on the brink of an abyss, looking down into infinite grey space. In that abyss are still floating all the mysterious parts of one's childhood and of the childhood of the world. . . . And it is, after all, probably the discovery of the abyss which will make Freud's name a great one.

Wilson considered another influential thinker, Einstein, in an article which appeared in October, 1923 (page 20). The Meaning of Relativity was in fact reviewed as one of the "Books of the Month," and Wilson declared it to be "almost completely incomprehensible to a non-mathematical reader." Wilson was convinced that this was but a temporary problem:

Yet in another fifty years Einstein's abstruse physics and his non-Euclidean geometry will no doubt be taught in the schools; all ideas become common property, provided someone has had the intellectual energy to

conceive them: it is not that ideas are difficult to grasp, but that men will not think for themselves; the people we call intellectuals are usually people who are merely familiar with other people's ideas and the one thing that man is most reluctant to do is reason beyond the exigencies of his environment. I am told by the philosophers that it is less a question of Einstein's theories being difficult in themselves to follow than of the scholastic world being untrained in the physics which enables him to arrive at them.

Wilson's ultimate end was not, however, to rail against intellectual laziness; his primary concern even in this review was with the writing of his time:

In any case, mathematics and physics seem to have become by far the most exciting of the forms of creative activity which find their expression in printed books. Poetry has practically expired (since the modern world no longer inspires the emotions which are proper to poetry); history and criticism are not going very strong; and I have even of late been having disquieting doubts about the great modern literary form of the novel.

Wilson then turned to a recent novel, Holiday by Waldo Frank, to illustrate his point:

Mr. Frank seems to have arrived on the literary scene at an unfortunate period for a novelist. Looking about him, he sees that the novel is tending to become a more or less stereotyped species of journalism and, being of a rather serious turn of mind, Mr. Frank is naturally reluctant to write an ordinary novel. On the other hand, he has a curiosity about character and a taste for telling a story. So what does he do? He tries to transmogrify the old-fashioned fiction by presenting it in a novel manner -- by ornamenting it with all the jagged graces of the painting of Picasso and Braque. . . .

Wilson would return to this comparison of literary innovation with experimentation in painting, when considering Gertrude Stein. At this point, however, he dropped the visual analogy and turned instead to a comparison with a literary experimenter whom he considers to have been successful. Unlike Frank, James Joyce in Ulysses had achieved success, according to Wilson, through his

constant effort . . . to make the manner fit the matter; his eccentricities arise in the attempt to meet some emergency; he is not straining à tout propos like Mr. Frank; in a word, he is not precious. . . . [Joyce has a] magnificent grasp of his characters; they are never sentimentalized or simplified. . . .

This ranging from intellectual theory to technical analysis was characteristic of Wilson's reviews in Vanity Fair, and stemmed from his conviction that there was a continuum from ideas to art, from theory to aesthetic practice; his reviews of literature therefore included forays into the related worlds of painting and abstract thought.

Wilson's belief in the unity of the various elements of modernism led him, for example, in the review of October, 1922 (page 26), to praise what he called "the New Encyclopaedists" in England -- Bertrand Russell, John Maynard Keynes, Lytton Strachey, Clive Bell, -- who were "far more interesting than either its [i.e. Britain's] contemporary novelists or its contemporary poets. . . . Though I have never seen it publicly stated, these men really do constitute a group. . . ."

That same article contained praise for Clive Bell's Since Cézanne, which Wilson considered to be an exposition of "the aesthetic ideals at the base of modern art." Interestingly enough, although Wilson praised Bell, and recognised common concerns among the members of what would come to be known as the Bloomsbury group, he had little sympathy with Virginia Woolf. In his review article of May, 1923 (page 8), he judged Jacob's Room to be "another promising novel spoiled by sentimentality." He attributed this failure to Mrs. Woolf's sex, stating that women cannot write about

men, their attempts producing "mere watercolors of a noble sex."

Wilson's tendency towards comparing modern literature to modern painting was used most explicitly in his "Guide to Gertrude Stein" which appeared in September, 1923 (page 60), and was subtitled "The Evolution of a Master of Fiction into a Painter of Cubist Still-Life in Prose." Wilson had but a few months earlier (June, 1923, page 18) found Stein's Geography and Plays impenetrable: "She seems to have spun herself away into a cocoon and left us no clue to unravel it. . . . There seems to be no key to Gertrude Stein. That she manages to remain impressive in spite of this fact is a strange triumph of her sincerity and distinction."

By September of 1923, Wilson had discovered that "clue" to unravelling the "cocoon," and in his "Guide to Gertrude Stein" (page 60), he stated that the key to her work is her own interest in modern painting:

It is not surprising that she should have come to wonder whether analogous effects might not be produced in literature. We are all more or less familiar by this time with the theory of cubism and its sister genres -- that violent reaction from naturalism, which holds that by splitting up or distorting an object you can give a far truer impression of its effect on the beholder than by any literal representation -- and it is not difficult to see how Miss Stein's later work attempts the same fresh rendering in prose.

. . . It is not the object which we see but the vibrations caused by the object -- not a focussing on something outside the artist, but the consciousness of the artist herself.

. . . objects and experiences are all splintered up and reduced to their essentials, a queer selective stenography of life. . . .

In this passage, Wilson does indeed provide the "key" to Stein's prose, a "key" suggested by her own interest in and

collecting of modern painting, and in perfect harmony with Vanity Fair's interest, perhaps stimulated by its editor, in and colour reproductions of modern painting.

Although Wilson provided this analysis as a "guide" to comprehending Stein's literary experiments, he was nevertheless dissatisfied with the writer's approach. He viewed her attempts to transfer modern techniques of painting to literary prose as fundamentally inappropriate to that medium:

. . . all is tantalizing with the suggestion of a fine artist just out of reach. For the chief strength of Miss Stein's genius still appears to be her grasp of character. In spite of her excursions with still-life, she has always been preoccupied with portraits.

. . . I believe her complete literary success has been prevented by her unfortunate analogy with the plastic arts. . . . It would seem that Miss Stein has cut herself off so completely from the tradition and experience of other writers that she has ceased not only to recognize the limitations of literature but even to understand its aim. I will admit as much as you please that in the plastic arts one need not be representational, that one should avoid especially being 'literary', as the modern painters say; but, though painting ought not to be literary, I do not see why literature should not. In painting, though you may have eliminated everything else, you have at least a shape or a pattern and this is no doubt all you need; but it seems to me that literature is inevitably founded on ideas. Human speech is a tissue of ideas -- however forms and colors may not be -- and it seems more or less impossible for a work of literature to be anything but an arrangement of ideas.

We find here expressed Wilson's conviction that literature is based on ideas, and the basis for his writing reviews and articles which considered the social context of the particular works considered, in addition to the purely technical or aesthetic aspects of those works. For Wilson, literature could never be a matter of technique alone; like a much more sophisticated version

of his Vanity Fair predecessor Henry Brinsley, he considered literature to consist of matter as well as manner.

For this reason, for example, Wilson was ultimately unable to react positively to Huysman's Against the Grain, the English translation of which he reviewed in June, 1923 (page 18). For Wilson, the "spiritual aridity" of the work was never sufficiently relieved:

. . . We are made uncomfortable by the vacuum of the soul which the author himself feels so acutely. . . . His Cathedral is a cathedral without a religion -- an edifice as barren as a lecture hall. . . . So in A rebours, though the eye is constructed of profane instead of sacred objets d'art, it catches not the real soul of the decadence but only his own perplexed empty heart.

The "empty heart" of his own time was a theme to which Wilson often returned. He was convinced that modern society, and especially modern American society, had lost touch with "the ideal" in all realms. Pragmatism, "reality," and economic progress had become the dominant concerns, and all matters of the spirit slowly removed from consideration.

While this criticism was most regularly levelled by Wilson against the materialism of American society, it also came forth in his discussions of other matters. In an article, for example, in October, 1923 (page 63) called "The Real Religion of the Witches," Wilson considered Margaret Murray's theory of the witch cult in Western Europe. Murray's thesis was that the witches were the remnants of the ancient religions described by Frazer in The Golden Bough, and that the testimony they provided at their trials during the persecutions of the 16th and 17th centuries were not forged or

forced by torture, but rather true accounts of their practice of surviving ancient phallic rites: "The witches had a religion of their own, which they were propagating in opposition to Christianity and which the Christians were under the necessity of stamping out like any other heresy."

Rather than discuss the scholarly merits of Murray's thesis, Wilson instead lamented her demonstration of the trend in modern anthropology to explain everything, and thereby reduce the power of myth, and the force of fairy stories: "So much worse for the ideal! We are getting closer and closer every day to the real man. And perhaps nothing in history will ever have required greater courage than to face it and then go on!"

Wilson was fundamentally opposed to a narrow and utilitarian definition of the "real man," and it was the lack of ideals which he perceived in America to which he constantly returned in his articles for Vanity Fair. In January, 1924 (page 63), he contributed an article called "Wanted: A City of the Spirit," concerned with the loss of ideals in America -- "The United States is not a political ideal; it is the battleground of Business." This article described the situation, but offered no solutions. The greatest problem, according to Wilson, was the cynicism engendered by this lack of ideals, a cynicism evidenced by the popularity of writers like Sinclair Lewis and H. L. Mencken.

It is noteworthy that, while many of Wilson's contemporaries blamed the recent war for the rootlessness of American society in the twenties, claiming that it was that cataclysm which had

destroyed the "old ideals," Wilson never viewed the problem as caused by the moral aftermath of the war. For him, the roots were deeper, having more to do with American history and social organisation, and the place of art in American life. It was in the various book reviews and literary articles that the details of this lack of ideals were explored.

For Wilson, one of the major difficulties had to do with the results of American history itself, its identity as a New World which was nevertheless the inheritor of the culture of the Old. This contrast between the "cultivation" of Europe, a refinement which native Americans could only appropriate but never really live, and the vulgar democratic energy of America, resulted, Wilson believed, in a fundamental conflict for American writers.

He first approached this matter in September, 1920 (page 65), in an article called "The Gulf in American Literature: A Discussion of the Irreconcilable Breach Between the Illiterates and the Illuminati." Starting out to review a recent edition of the letters of Henry James, Wilson describes James' life as representative of "the tragedy of the artist in the America of the last half-century":

. . . in this aspect he stands almost as a type of the superior American of his generation, the cultivated American who was never quite happy in America and yet never quite at home anywhere else. . . . These men were all born too old in a world too young. The educated American found himself the offspring of an ancient European stock, from which he had been cut off, the heir to a magnificent inheritance, which lay on the other side of the Atlantic. He could do nothing but turn back to Europe for the storehouse of that inheritance. America offered him almost nothing wherewith to feed his soul.

Although Wilson was here concerned with the spiritual aridity of late nineteenth-century America, he nevertheless added that the situation remained much the same in his own time, even in "these days of Huneker and Mencken and a deeper appreciation of foreign culture," for this culture was "gleaned from libraries" rather than from life. The attempt to drink at the river of European culture was futile, continued Wilson; "We Americans may wander through our racial past, but we have been too sharply divorced from it: we can never quite possess it."

Wilson found testimony of this fact in James' letters; his very concern with "refinement" was to Wilson the last element of his essential alienation from Europe:

. . . James had never quite learned that the continual fear of the vulgar was a confession of provinciality and really nothing more, in essence, than the fear of life itself. . . . It is true that almost everyone else of his class and profession in America was much worse than he. They were isolated on a barren peak, practising 'refinement' for all they were worth, while the flood of democracy below them rose higher and higher. . . .

This conflict between isolated "refinement" and the "flood of democracy" was, to Wilson, the defining characteristic of American letters: "This gulf has hitherto been -- and too frequently still remains -- one of the most important facts to be recognized in American literature. It has split the literary activity of the country into two parties so widely separated that they scarcely speak the same language." Wilson had no doubts about the outcome of the conflict; because the "illuminati" could never fully appropriate European culture, they were doomed to increasingly false positions, while at the same time becoming farther and

farther removed from the reality of the American life around them. The take-over by the "giants struggling out of the earth," illiterate but real, was inevitable, and Wilson cited as an example the force of Dreiser's use of newspaper cliché.

This analysis is not too different from that of Tocqueville in a much earlier period (see discussion in Chapter I), and Wilson was drawn towards a similar conclusion: "There is no abatement of the industrialization and materialism of the century: it is difficult to see why the arts should not perish completely. . . ."

Reality would seem to be otherwise, however, and Wilson saw the possibility for optimism in the situation around him:

. . . and yet, perhaps because the cheapness and oppressiveness of American life have gone so far that humanity can endure no more and reaction has become inevitable, there does seem to have been in the last few years something like a more vigorous demand for ideas and beauty.

Wilson cited the tremendous flowering of the "New Poetry" and the "little" theatres, and the increased volume of political discussion in liberal and radical reviews, as examples, and concluded that the vulgarity of the "illiterates" had provided a much-needed vitality to American culture: ". . . one cannot help feeling that both art and intelligence have more life in them today than they had in the unleavened half-century which drove Henry James to England and Henry Adams to France."

The impossibility of Americans' assimilating totally into European culture, appropriating fully the artistic traditions of the European past, was the theme of the April, 1921 article

(page 44) called "The New Englander Abroad," a review of Hawthorne's account of a trip to France and Italy, including the entry describing his shocked reaction to the Venus de Medici. To Wilson, this incident typified an essential dichotomy between America and Europe, as evidenced in Hawthorne's inability to perceive the beauty of the work because of his obsession with its "immorality." Hawthorne found himself unable to appreciate the very things which he was seeking in Europe: "He was hungry for all that Europe could give him; but he found he could not eat at its feast. . . . He who had figured as an aesthete at home found himself a Puritan in Europe."

Puritanism was not the only aspect of American culture which Wilson criticised. In 1920 and 1921 he contributed a series of light pieces called "Things I Consider Overrated" and "Things I Consider Underrated"; while these were essentially mild satires, the underlying unity was an attack on cliché'd conventions hiding stupidity, dullness, mechanicism, and lack of imagination or creativity or wit. In October, 1920 (page 65), he considered to be overrated Afternoon Tea, The Sea, Eddie Cantor, Youth, The Artistic Possibilities of the Movies, and Summer. In December, 1920 (page 59), the list consisted of Weddings, Motoring, Crocheted Ties, Kipling, and the Country: "Since Nature has no ideas, why should I trouble about her?" His defense of things underrated, in March, 1921 (page 38), was more explicit: as well as Ruffs and Satin Breeches, and the Human Body, he listed Edith Wharton, especially her Age of Innocence, because it was a "just criticism

of the 'old tradition', which is still the dominant one," namely the "commercial civilization" of America.

The attack against the materialism of America, presented lightly in these features, was more direct in an article concerned with the relation of French and American culture, which appeared in February, 1922 (page 49). Where earlier Wilson had dealt only with the Americans' search for beauty and culture in Europe, here he also considered the attempt by young French artists to find inspiration in American culture.

The title of the piece was descriptive: "The Aesthetic Upheaval in France: The Influence of Jazz in Paris and Americanization of French Literature and Art." Wilson pointed out that young Americans were turning for aesthetic guidance to a period of French culture, the 1890's, which young French artists were themselves in rebellion against, and Wilson himself, of course, would deal with that rebellion in Axel's Castle: "I simply want to point out that, in our anti-nineteenth century reaction, we flee for liberty to an asylum which has long since been abandoned as a jail, and even as a home for imbeciles."

The French, on the other hand, were turning against standards of refinement and order, and looking for the vitality and force of popular art and vulgarity. This led them to admire, and incorporate into their own works, characteristic elements of American culture such as movies, posters, jazz, and skyscrapers. Wilson sounds a warning however, which contains within it an

attack on the "barbarian" element of American culture, but also displays a certain perverse sense of ownership:

But the American who sees all this is tempted to cry out a warning: ". . . and do not try to be too barbarous; it is impossible for you to succeed. . . . Our monstrosities are at least created by people who know no better. But yours are like risqué stories, told by well-bred young girls to show off their sophistication; they sadden even the ribald; they make even the barbarian wince!"

That Wilson was himself not immune to the charms and aesthetic possibilities of popular culture was evident in his review, the following month, of the ballets of Jean Cocteau (March, 1922, page 48). After praising Cocteau for having introduced the element of nonsense into French art, and for his serious aesthetic theorising about his comic ballets, Wilson then noted that Cocteau could improve American theatre: ". . . he would bring to our comic stage something which it sadly lacks: a serious artistic interest in the possibilities of burlesque and a daring imagination to deal with the rich materials of the review."

Wilson's interest in popular culture was again evident in his review, in March, 1923 (page 11), of Louis Pound's American Ballads and Songs. After praising this "American Child's," he then stated that it "makes one eager for" a collection of American popular songs, including vaudeville and Negro blues. We might also note in passing that Burton Roscoe's review in the same issue of The Undertaker's Garland by Wilson and John Peale Bishop, which included sketches of various Vanity Fair staff, was titled "A Literary Vaudeville Team."

Wilson's interest in American culture was of course not

confined to popular elements, and he was always interested in the literary creations of his fellow young countrymen. In November, 1922 (page 24), he reviewed Fitzgerald's Tales of the Jazz Age. Fitzgerald was later, in "The Crack-up," to call Wilson his "literary conscience," and Wilson's judgment of the Tales of the Jazz Age is indicative of his desire to push Fitzgerald beyond the temptation of easy fame: ". . . it is the Fitzgerald harlequinade with a minimum of magazine hokum. . . . Though he still suffers from the weakness of not focussing his material sufficiently."

The tone of this review by Wilson is ambiguous, and there are moments when the reader suspects him of having his tongue in his cheek: "Yes, Fitzgerald is the most incalculable of our novelists; you never can tell what he is going to do next. He always has some surprise: just when you think the joke is going to be on you, it may turn out to be on him." Referring to one of the stories in the collection, called "The Lees of Happiness," Wilson says that "I read it with ever increasing admiration at Fitzgerald's mastery of the nuances of the ridiculous. I had never before realized that he was capable of such restrained and ingenious satire."

Wilson, unlike many of Fitzgerald's contemporaries, was acutely aware of the writer's ambiguous attitude towards the characters and worlds he described. This ambiguity, a combination of admiration and criticism, led to a diffusion of focus; one was too seldom able to tell whether Fitzgerald was ultimately for or against his characters. Wilson adopts the same

ambiguity: is it the world of "The Lees of Happiness," or the story itself, which Wilson finds "ridiculous"? Reading the account in the pages of Vanity Fair, itself not averse to satire, one is ultimately uncertain. Wilson was less ambiguous in his judgment of Fitzgerald's play The Vegetable (June, 1923, page 18); he considered it ". . . one of the best things he has done."

In the review for November, 1922 (page 24), Wilson considered a volume of Eugene O'Neill's plays. While impressed with the dramatic power of O'Neill's plays, Wilson believed that much of his work was marred by over-writing. It was only when O'Neill created characters who were unsophisticated, and essentially inarticulate, that the true genius of his literary ability emerged. It was this kind of play, according to Wilson, and especially The Hairy Ape, which was the

only thing O'Neill has written which has much value as literature apart from its effectiveness as drama. . . . as soon as Mr. O'Neill gets a character who can talk no language but the vernacular he sometimes becomes a poet. . . . Mr. O'Neill has his artistic habitation on an upland where there is almost no one else but Mr. Sherwood Anderson for neighbour.

The attempt to express in literature the lives and emotions of the inarticulate, of those who had previously been considered to be inappropriate literary protagonists, was one of the major concerns of modern writing: Gertrude Stein in her portraits, and in The Making of Americans; Sherwood Anderson in Winesburg, Ohio; James Joyce in Dubliners and Ulysses; John Dos-Passos in the USA trilogy. Advertising was a form of expression which began to

receive attention from serious writers, as one realm where "l'homme moyen sensuel" found his desires and dreams articulated; it was significant, for example, that Joyce made his modern Ulysses a writer of advertising.

It was inevitable that Wilson, writing reviews for a magazine that carried some of the glossiest ads of its time, would deal with this subject at some point. In his review of Sinclair Lewis' Babbitt (December, 1922, page 25), Wilson focussed his attention on Lewis' depiction of the Babbitts' extreme gullibility to advertising. The novel was soon to become a symbol of the materialistic culture criticised by young American intellectuals, and the name "Babbitt" itself to represent the type of person against whom they struggled. Wilson, however, took exception to Lewis' portrait, claiming that the susceptibility to advertising exhibited by Lewis' character was unrealistic.

This is to assume that people actually exist like the people in the advertisements -- the people who are always represented as joyfully buying the products advertised. I have never seen any people like this and I do not believe there are any. The romantic race depicted in the backs of magazines and on the colored cards in the subway do undoubtedly correspond to some debauchable element in the American mind but I never knew anyone in my life who was completely made up of this element -- who had nothing but the bumpkin imagination which is seduced by advertisements and boosting campaigns.

Despite this criticism of Lewis' heavy-handed and ultimately unfair satire, Wilson nevertheless defended his methods, claiming that Lewis, like H.-L. Mencken, was condemned by the nature of American society to using crude weapons. Despite Wilson's own standards of literary sophistication, he too was willing to

compromise aesthetic ideals for social ends.

In any case, his satire, like Mencken's, is the satire which is proper to the subject. You may protest that in assaulting the barbarians they behave like barbarians themselves, but the fencing skill of Voltaire or the barbed persiflage of Aristophanes would serve no purpose in America. When we have a more civilized public it may be that we shall have more graceful satirists. But the enemy have clubs -- let us not complain if the critics carry blackjacks.

H. L. Mencken, on the other hand, had according to Wilson a command of the language which Lewis lacked. Lewis might be an effective, if rather crude, satirist, but Mencken was capable of good prose. In his review of Mencken's last book of Prejudices in the same article (December, 1922, page 25), Wilson praised Mencken's skill:

. . . he writes good English, which Mr. Lewis never does . . . he has a kind of poetry and imaginative fire. It seems to me that it is upon these, rather than upon his critical ideas -- good service as some of them have done -- that his claim to distinction chiefly rests.

One more critic of American culture, the "New Humanist" James Huneker, received attention in this review of December, 1922. In considering a volume of Huneker's letters, Wilson focussed on the sobriety and distinction of Huneker's ideas, claiming that Mencken, for example, had distorted Huneker into "a great warrior against American philistinism," more a reflection of Mencken's own self-image than of Huneker's. While Wilson was ever ready to criticise the failings of his society, he was unwilling to distort reality in order to do so.

The crudeness and vehemence of much contemporary American criticism was something which concerned Wilson. In a review of a re-issue of Lytton Strachey's Landmarks of French Literature

(August, 1923, page 6), Wilson noted sadly that Strachey was often disparaged in America because his critical judgments were "quietly and carefully formulated," whereas Americans liked "critical sensationalism." For this reason, continued Wilson, T. S. Eliot's The Sacred Wood had been ignored in America, and H. L. Mencken and Burton Rascoe, "those two masters of the megaphone," had both denounced Strachey.

The self-assertion of American letters as distinct from its British roots was not, according to Wilson, always an entirely good thing. As he had noted that a certain critical subtlety was often lost, so he also found ("Books of the Month" for February, 1923, page 22) that the "divorce" of American poetry from the British tradition had been unfortunate. The review considered two books of poetry by Americans, John Dos Passos' A Pushcart at the Curb and Raymond Holden's Granite and Alabaster, and was subtitled "Songs Without Music." Wilson noted that Dos Passos, like the Imagist poet Amy Lowell, was attempting to render in his poetry things as they were seen. In Dos Passos' case, as in Lowell's, Wilson claimed that the poetry evinced things seen, but not set to music: ". . . it is a series, not of songs, but of sketches. . . ."

Wilson had considered modern tendencies in poetry in a long essay (November, 1920, page 65) called "The Anarchists of Taste." This article constituted a defense of new poetic modes, especially free verse, against contemporary charges that they were a form of artistic "anarchy." Wilson did not agree with the verdict, believing rather that free verse was the form most appropriate to

the kinds of things which modern poetry expressed. It was modern life which was "anarchic"; in order to express adequately this condition, modern poetry could not use the forms of a more ordered and stable age:

. . . it is pretty safe to assume, when a certain form of art becomes popular, not only among the fools and impostors, but also among the genuine artists, that this form is one that satisfies peculiarly the need for expression of the time and has been invented by the voice of the time as the accent proper to it. Vers libre is as much the proper form of expression for XXth (sic) century America as the classic heroic couplet was for XVIIIth century England. . . .

Wilson continued that for Carl Sandburg, for example, who was nurtured on modern Chicago, vers libre was the form appropriate to an evocation of the rhythms of that city. Amy Lowell and the other American Imagists, to take another example, wrote a poetry which perfectly reflected American sensibilities: "She practices a hard objectivity, without either ideas or emotions. . . . Americans do not feel; they can only see." Poets, concluded Wilson, only respond to their environment; the real "anarchists of taste" were the industrialists and shopkeepers, the advertisers and tradesmen.

Wilson considered one of the greatest examples of vers libre, Eliot's The Waste Land, in January, 1923 (page 17). He judged it to be ". . . the most considerable poem of any length yet produced by an American poet," and believed that ". . . There is only one poet now writing English who is unmistakably Mr. Eliot's superior, and that is W. B. Yeats."

Not surprisingly, this review dealt with Eliot's technique;

in one of the few pieces he contributed to Vanity Fair that had nothing to say about the social context of the works under discussion, Wilson here concentrated solely on the artistry of the poem and the poet.

Mr. Eliot is a strange literary case. He is saturated with other people's poetry; he not only deliberately parodies and quotes it but he seems also to echo it unconsciously . . . yet, strangely enough, his personality remains one of the most distinctive in contemporary letters; you could not possibly mistake him for anyone else -- even one of his imitators. . . .

Wilson's conclusion was that The Waste Land was a great work: ". . . there will be few people susceptible to poetry who will not feel the strange power of the poem and acknowledge the high distinction of the art which transforms its sore distress into beauty."

3. 1934-36

A feature called "The Dust-Jacket" appeared in the issues of November, 1932 and February, 1933. These both consisted of a series of short notes on recent books, and were signed by "The Duster," a nom de plume for William Harlan Hale.³⁶ Two works of significance were considered in "The Dust-Jacket" for November, 1932 (page 4d), D. H. Lawrence's Lady Chatterley's Lover and H. L. Mencken's Making a President.

The review of Lady Chatterley's Lover, while brief and undistinguished, is reminiscent of Henry Brinsley's account of Sons and Lovers in December, 1913 (page 45), in that both focussed on the sexual content of the works. The edition of Lady

Chatterley's Lover considered in 1932 was the "authorized abridged edition" published in the U.S., and most of "The Duster"'s comments concerned the abridgement, which he considered unfortunate. The tone of the notes was more clever than edifying, and the criticism of the abridgement was presented humorously; would Lawrence have "authorized" the "abridgement," asked "The Duster" rhetorically? No, "he would have died first. He did die first."

Of Mencken's Making 'a President, "The Duster" concluded that these articles on the Chicago presidential convention, first written for the Baltimore Evening Sun, were "quickly-paced, unvarnished, direct." The review was, however, ultimately critical of Mencken, claiming that he was more interested in the superficial appearance of phenomena than in uncovering their real significance.

Always Mencken stays on the outside of things, looking on like a visitor at the zoo. He does not get at the inner workings. He does not really perceive what makes the wheels of politics go round; the mere fact that he saw Prohibition as the only thing in the minds of politicians in Chicago indicates his naiveté. . . . All he wants is a good show. . . .

"The Duster"'s comments on Mencken might well be applied to Vanity Fair's reviews in the thirties. Never particularly penetrating, the notes on books which appeared in this last period of the magazine seem to have been designed more for witty entertainment than for profound literary discussion.

After the two appearances of "The Dust-Jacket," regular book-reviewing resumed with the January, 1934 issue of Vanity Fair. From January to June, 1934, the magazine ran a feature called "New

Books on the Literary Checklist," or more briefly just "The Literary Checklist." This consisted of capsule reviews, and the contributors, identified only by their initials if at all, were various members of the magazine's staff. In July, 1934, the "Literary Checklist" was combined with a new feature called "Praise and Prejudice: The New Books in Review," and the feature continued under this name until the end of 1935. In January and February, 1936, the last two issues of Vanity Fair, the feature was simply called "Praise and Prejudice." The responsibility for the "Praise and Prejudice" feature, from July, 1934 until the end, fell to George Dangerfield.

Since the "Literary Checklist" consisted of a series of brief notes, usually one or two paragraphs each, the literary discussion was not very extended. As the name "checklist" would imply, the feature did little more than note the appearance of new works, and pass brief judgment. The choice of works noted is in itself, however, an index of taste and sensibility.

The first "Literary Checklist" (January, 1934, page 58) considered five books. Somerset Maugham, in his new work Ah King, was considered by the reviewer "N. H." [Nancy Hale] to be "master of a brilliant and artificial style; he really has little to say. . . ." Of Human Bondage, continued Hale, was by comparison a "great book . . . simple, direct, and entirely true and authentic. . . ."

Dashiell Hammett, whose "hard-boiled" detective novels had made the bestseller lists in 1929 (Red Harvest) and 1931 (The Glass Key), was represented in the first checklist by The Thin Man. The reviewer "H. B. N." [Helen Brown Norden] praised Hammett's style, claiming that it exhibited a real "toughness," as opposed to works by the Hemingway-Caldwell school, which she termed "sentimental." The account of J. B. Priestley's Albert Goes Through by "N. H." [Nancy Hale] was scathing; although the book was "a money-maker," Hale was of the opinion that ". . . the formula . . . seems unbelievably tinny, loud with the creaking of the machinery, and incapable of appealing to any but an audience of high-grade cretins." The consideration of Noel Coward's Play Parade by "H. B. N." [Helen Brown Norden] had nothing to say about the plays in the collection, but praised the "informative and witty introduction by Mr. Coward, whose display of sanity and self-humor proves him to be not quite the brittle-brained young egoist he has on occasion been termed."

The last book considered in this first literary "Checklist" was Elinor Wylie's Collected Prose, reviewed by "N. H." [Nancy Hale]. Elinor Wylie, who was by this time no longer living, had been a member of Vanity Fair's staff in the twenties, and this account of the four novels and shorter prose pieces in the collection was extremely reverential, more a tribute than a critical review: "To one who loves and honors Elinor Wylie there seems almost nothing to be said of this book of her unique, lucent prose; in the same sense that Titian was said to be the perfect painter, one can say

that Elinor Wylie was the perfect writer." The edition included five prefaces by other writers written, according to Hale, in "that tenor of emotion and amazement one finds in the memoirs of those who knew Shelley and could not bear his early death."

The search for polished style, and an absence of "formula" writing, continued in the "Literary Checklist" for February, 1934 (page 60). Sean O'Faolain's A Nest of Simple Folk was criticised by "N. H." [Nancy Hale] for its artificiality:

We do not like books about three generations of humble folk, particularly humble Irish folk. This may sound captious, but all those pages of Celtic idiomatic speech and the fine Irish flavour of it and the poem two pages long in which every line ends with "says he," gets us down. . . .

Sinclair Lewis' Work of Art also came under attack in this checklist. The reviewer "R. S." [Robert Sherwood?] was disappointed that Lewis' originality had degenerated into formula writing:

It is a curious and pathetic fact that Sinclair Lewis, who was one of the first to protest against the standardization of American life, should now be the victim of the standardized novel -- the novel built on a formula . . . it is a book which only he could have written, but he has written it once too often. . . .

The "Literary Checklist" for March, 1934 (page 72) was concerned with a number of serious and popular works. Maxwell Anderson's play Mary of Scotland was judged by "H. B. N." [Helen Brown Norden] to have a "beauty and vitality even greater than that which it has in the theatre"; the pleasure of reading this

play as literature stemmed for her from its "strong and lovely words." Accuracy, according to Norden, was less important than dramatic power: "He has falsified history, perhaps, but he has given us full-bodied drama." The autobiographical work The Well of Days, by the Russian Nobel laureate Ivan Bunin, received an uninspired review which concentrated on the factual material it contained, and on its "mystic" qualities.

James M. Cain's The Postman Always Rings Twice, which achieved great popularity at the time, was described merely as belonging to "the school of Dashiell Hammett." Smirt, by the popular writer James Branch Cabell, whose Jurgen had been a bestseller in 1919, received a favourable review by "H. B. N." Norden concentrated on the book's subject matter, and noted that Cabell "takes riotous, even vicious, pokes at himself, at life and literature, at love and book critics . . ." and described the author as "an honest and undeceived man, as well as one of the finest writers of his times. . . ."

Perhaps because space limitations created the necessity for concisely conveying the tone of the works reviewed, the accounts in the "Literary Checklists" often described works in terms of others. Various authors were treated as touchstones, the mere mention of their names presumably sufficient to convey a style of writing. Thus, for example, James M. Cain was described as belonging to "the school of Dashiell Hammett" (March, 1934), and Hammett himself deemed superior to the "Hemingway-Caldwell school"

(January, 1934). This same procedure was employed in the review of Cabell's Smirt, where Norden commented that "this book is dedicated to George Jean Nathan, and surely Mr. Nathan will relish it. . . ."

It would seem that, by the time of these reviews of the thirties, an entirely new group of exemplary writers and styles had come to be employed. Where Brinsley, for example, writing in the era before the twenties, compared recent works to British or Classical writers, by the time of the "Checklists" of the thirties the comparisons were often with other American writers. More importantly, these writers were described as belonging to "schools"; works were more typically perceived as belonging to a particular kind of writing, and these styles exemplified by their noted exponents. Despite the criticism in many of these reviews of "standardised" writing, the reviews themselves tended to contribute to this "standardising" process, in the creation and use of these new literary signposts. This procedure was congruent with Vanity Fair's tendency, in other features in the thirties, to contribute to the creation of literary "stars" with full-page photographs of writers, reports on their trips to Europe, and so on.

The Depression brought with it a spate of "rags-to-riches" novels, one of the most famous of which was James T. Farrell's The Young Manhood of Studs Lonigan. In this same "Checklist" for March, 1934, "H. B. N." [Norden] called Farrell's work an "honest record of shanty-Irish boyhood," displaying a "passion for realistic, and preferably foul-mouthed, detail. . . ."

Nevertheless, Norden was not favorably disposed to the work, finding the surface realism to be ultimately oppressive, and without redeeming significance:

But there is a lack of beauty, a lack of deeper purpose . . . and the dirty words get pretty monotonous in print. Young boys and sex - we have heard all this before; and the tendency is to retort, "Yes, yes, - we know - why take 400 words to tell us again?"

The reviews which appeared in the thirties did not generally favour the new style of "social realism." Although many American writers were attempting to write "proletarian literature" depicting the hardships of the Depression, Vanity Fair clung to standards of beauty and literary merit established in the more "aesthetic" days of the twenties. The response to James Farrell just quoted was typical of the attitude taken by Vanity Fair's reviewers.

Even Vanity Fair was not totally immune to the economic and social concerns of the thirties, however. Matthew Josephson's account of early American capitalists, The Robber Barons, was reviewed in April, 1934 (page 79) by "P. S." The sense that the thirties marked a new era in American history was evident in the review:

Although the period covered by this multiple biography of our great empire builders (Jay Cooke, Morgan, Rockefeller, Vanderbilt, Jay Gould, Jim Hill, etc.) actually runs from post-Civil War days to 1900, the book as a whole is an obituary for an age and a philosophy which died, idealists like to think, with the crash of 1929.

Although the reviewer was in sympathy with the critical

attitude of the book, the method was found lacking:

. . . The facts set forth are allowed for the most part to speak for themselves -- which is on the whole a less deadly method [than accusatory exposé]. Here is a volume which should, but which won't, be required reading in our secondary schools.

While sometimes showing an awareness of and concern with the literary developments in the thirties which reflected a growing social consciousness, Vanity Fair's reviews in this period were usually unconcerned with social matters. After a period in the twenties marked by an awareness of the social and historical context of literature, particularly as explored in the reviews and articles by Edmund Wilson, the reviewers in the thirties returned to an approach not unlike that of Henry Brinsley in the magazine's earliest days. Reviews were once more concerned primarily with content, or with "style" as perceived in a rather superficial manner. While the brevity of the reviews in the thirties might partly explain this phenomenon, the very fact that Vanity Fair ran such short reviews is in itself indicative of a different attitude towards the importance of literature. The review feature in the twenties had appeared at the very front of the magazine, while the "Literary Checklist" was lost in the middle or end pages. Literature had once more become merely one of the many areas where people of "taste" should evince some interest and knowledge; it no longer held, in the eyes of Vanity Fair, the excitement and primary interest perceived in the twenties.

The "Checklist," and later the "Praise and Prejudice," was

a mere brief mention of current works; literature was no longer seen to be an area meriting extended or profound investigation. This perhaps had something to do with the characteristic attitude towards literature maintained by the Vanity Fair staff in this last phase. As has been shown by Harold Baron,³⁷ the fiction published in Vanity Fair in the thirties was out of step with the characteristic literature of that era. The magazine continued the literary and aesthetic standards developed in the twenties, whereas most American writers in the thirties turned their attention to social concerns. The same phenomenon existed in Vanity Fair's political orientation in the period -- while many periodicals moved to the left politically during the thirties, Vanity Fair inched slowly towards the right. As described in the account of the magazine's staff, this had much to do with the influence of Clare Boothe Brokaw on the publisher.

Aside from indicating a certain commitment to the literary positions of the twenties, this situation had an important consequence for the literary standards employed in the reviews of the thirties. Since most literary debate in the thirties was motivated by social concerns, and the attempts to establish modes of writing and criticism appropriate to these concerns, Vanity Fair was not involved in the most current literary developments. The reviews tended, therefore, to reflect attitudes and criteria of an earlier era. Thus, for example, the books reviewed were no longer primarily American, but also European. In the same way, the judgments were no longer motivated by the most advanced

critical attitudes, but reverted to criteria of style and decorum from earlier periods. Perhaps most importantly, the reviews returned to the superficiality and critical naiveté of the earliest periods of reviewing in Vanity Fair, more an attempt to provide guidance to "entertaining reading" than exploration of recent literary experiments.

Thus, for example, Louis-Ferdinand Céline's Journey to the End of the Night was described in May, 1934 (page 87) as a "monstrous masterpiece" by the reviewer "D. F." [Donald Freeman]. The account focused on the "shocking" language and content of the work, and Freeman speculated that the American edition (he was working from a European text, the reviewer's copy not yet released) would be cut, because ". . . the horrors of Faulkner, the rude male oaths of Hemingway, ~~are~~, believe us and be duly warned, as nothing beside the subject and language of Dr. Céline - Destouches. . . ."

The review of Weymouth Sands, by John Cowper Powys, which appeared in May, 1934 (page 86) was also reminiscent of those reviews by Brinsley in the early days. The reviewer "H. B. N." [Norden], like Brinsley, paid attention to style, language and "feeling," and attempted to place the author in a larger tradition of British writers. ~~The desire to identify and praise a separate~~ American tradition of letters was no longer paramount, as it had been in the twenties; literature was once more seen as universal, with special attention reserved for "the Great Ones":

Although it is part of the fashionable pattern among

smart young people to poke fun at Mr. Powys with a derisive impudence, it seems more than likely that future literary historians will write him down as one of the Great Ones. There is a dignity about his prose, a thundering music, which mark it for survival. He is frequently compared to Hardy, but he lacks the latter's coldness. There is an exultant and mystic passion in his feeling for nature, which makes him more akin to Lawrence. . . . He creates fantastic, tortured creatures . . . all interwoven in ecstatic patterns against the background of the sea, in a prose of . . . strange beauty. . . .

The contempt for "journalism" expressed by Brinsley also reappeared in reviews during this last period, as in the account of Alexander Woollcott's While Rome Burns in May, 1934 (page 87) by "M. P." This collection of already-published pieces, which became a bestseller, was praised as entertaining reading, but the reviewer was highly critical of the lack of profound thought and critical judgment:

. . . As usual, the author shows little critical discrimination -- but, also as usual, his bad judgments make more entertaining reading than the more accurate pronouncements of other journalists. Don't read it all at once; not only because it doesn't hold up under continued examination, but because it contains such excellent pieces that they should be saved for holiday consumption.

June, 1934 was the last issue which contained a "Literary Checklist," before it was combined with George Dangerfield's "Praise and Prejudice." That issue contained two other articles of literary note. On page 57, there appeared a "Guide to the Guide Books," a satire by John Riddell, a pseudonym for Corey Ford, on Ulysses and the various guides to it which had appeared since the novel's publication in Paris in 1922. This witty satire, which was afforded almost two pages of space, was headed by the

note:

. . . The editors of Vanity Fair have requested Mr. John Riddell to compile a guide-book to all these guide-books to Ulysses, complete with map, thesaurus, and six (6) socially-correct remarks about James Joyce to make to your partner at a formal dinner.

The article then began by stating, in italics, that the key to Ulysses is "that Ulysses, in reality, is a vast allegory showing the progress of a thought through James Joyce's mind. No wonder that nobody can understand it." The metaphor was continued, with the description of various correspondences: the "arena of action" was Joyce's mind, Stephen Dedalus represented Joyce's idea of him, Bloom was "A Spinal Impulse," Mrs. Bloom "A Spinal Ganglion," Blazes Boylan the "Pons," and so on.

Then came a guide for a "tour" through Ulysses, playing on the concept of "guide-books" and resting on a metaphor of hiking:

Although past efforts to explore and map this vast wilderness have taken a heavy toll of readers, nevertheless the fascination of Ulysses still persists, and plans are being made today to organize a vast expedition which will endeavour to penetrate the final chapter and track down a persistent rumor that Gertrude Stein is being held captive there as a White Goddess by an unknown tribe of natives. . . .

Beneath the frivolity of this satire lies an attack on the pomposity which had attended Ulysses' arrival on the literary scene, and an attack on the supposed impenetrability of the work itself.

Vanity Fair always exhibited an eclectic and curious mixture of interests. This extended to the literary realm, where the same issue could contain articles, written in very different styles, on disparate sorts of literature. The issue of June, 1934 was a

good example of this: in addition to the satiric article on Joyce's Ulysses just discussed, the same issue also contained a tribute to Charles Dickens, occasioned by the recent posthumous appearance of his The Life of Christ. The book, written by Dickens for his children, appeared for the first time 64 years after his death, and was a précis of the four Gospels and some of the Acts.

The review formed the lead article for that month, and was written by George Dangerfield, who would assume literary editorship with the next month's issue. Dangerfield said little about the work itself, concentrating rather on Dickens' tour of America and his tremendous popularity on both sides of the Atlantic. Describing Dickens' appearance during his lecture tour of 1867-68, with a gas light on the floor shining in his face, Dangerfield felt that "thus focused, his eyebrow, eyes and mouth shuttled about in his face like a Walt Disney cartoon." This article was little more than a celebration of Dickens' popularity, perhaps summed up by Dangerfield's assertion that Dickens "was a two-hundred per cent Ordinary Man."

The "Literary Checklist" was combined with "Praise and Prejudice" in July, 1934, under the editorship of George Dangerfield, who continued in this capacity until the end of Vanity Fair in 1936. "George Dangerfield" was the nom de plume of George Seddon,³⁸ an English-born historian who became a noted American writer.³⁹ Dangerfield's reviews in his "Praise and Prejudice," like

those in the "Literary Checklist," were brief and superficial. The focus, as in the early reviews by Henry Brinsley, was on "style" and content, and the books considered were a mixture of popular and serious writing, both American and European.

James Hilton's bestseller Goodbye, Mr. Chips! (June, 1934, page 71) was described as a ". . . warm, generous, and justly proportioned little novel. . . ."; the first volume of Joseph and his Brothers (July, 1934, page 71) was called ". . . a wonderful tribute to Thomas Mann's scholarship and philosophy, but first and foremost . . . great story telling. . . ." André Malraux's Man's Fate (August, 1934, page 8a) was praised for its "sustained and thrilling narrative," and described as "one of the few novels of contemporary violence which actually turns the human being into something worth thinking about"; in Mikhail Sholokhov's And Quiet Flows the Don (August, 1934, page 8a) ". . . one can detect . . . the germ of a new and valid revolutionary fiction." Ignazio Silone's Fontamara (November, 1934, page 83), the story of an Italian village's rebellion against Fascists, was called "a wry, passionate, compelling and often unexpectedly witty indictment of modern tyranny. . . ."; and about A. J. Cronin's The Stars Look Down (October, 1935, page 56), Dangerfield believed that "the truth is that the novel lacks a central human interest, a backbone. . . ."

Dangerfield's review of F. M. Forster's biography Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson (August, 1934, page 8a) began by claiming, somewhat ironically, that Dickinson was a bad subject for a biography

because his life lacked drama.

. . . He really belonged to those quaint twenty years in English history -- the twenty years which preceded the war, years when creative people used the word "Beauty" freely and without blusing and rather too frequently, and when England swarmed with engaging second-rate thinkers. Dickinson was one of these. . . .

Dangerfield continued with a veiled criticism of his contemporary society, which became an implicit praise of Forster and an attack on the "popular" attitudes of the day:

If he [i.e. Dickinson] has any meaning, it is that he was a man who diligently pursued the life of the spirit, and the life of the spirit these days is about as old-fashioned as the bustle and the buggy: it has a dull, dead sound. Forster brings him triumphantly to life and he does so by means of something equally dull -- a set of moral values. . . .

Forster has had to fight against every disadvantage, but this is one of the most subtly exciting biographies I have ever read. . . . Written by a man with a perfect literary style, an active imagination, some wit, and no humor, it does not set itself out to be popular, and for that reason it may escape attention. . . .

Dangerfield's dislike of the "popular" taste was again evident in his review of Nancy Hale's Never Any More (November, 1934, page 83). Hale was herself a Vanity Fair reviewer (see, for example, her review of Somerset Maugham in January, 1934), so it is not surprising that Dangerfield lamented the fact that she had achieved little notice:

President Butler recently complained in the course of a monumental grumble to the students of Columbia, that Demos has the most discouraging taste for literary junk. To his venerable plaint one might add that it has sometimes a peculiar distaste for anything readable. Witness [. . . a . . .] recent victim of popular neglect . . . Nancy Hale's Never Any More. . . . Miss Hale points no moral. She creates for our pleasure a fragment of breathing reality; her imagination is swift and precise; and she has a gift for spontaneous, physical dialogue which you must go far to parallel.

Other American writers were considered in Dangerfield's "Praise

and Prejudice." Ellen Glasgow's The Vein of Iron (October, 1935 page 56) was given grudging praise:

The plot is developed with infinite skill; the atmosphere is full of those innumerable, suggestive shades of color which are the effect of sheer good writing; but the characters move more and more slowly. They labor, they pant, they threaten to give up. You follow them in dread that they won't stay alive till the end, and that they'll collapse into just so much writing. Well, they make it, but that's about all. Of course, The Vein of Iron is a book which you ought to read. It's a semi-success and a semi-success -- if I may be forgiven such a trite comparison -- is a whole lot better nowadays than a mediocre success.

Dangerfield, even in his short reviews, sometimes continued the Vanity Fair practice begun in the twenties of celebrating the American tradition of literature. A characteristic example of these attempts to determine peculiarly American styles was his review of Damon Runyon's collection of short stories, Blue Plate Special (September, 1934, page 75):

Mr. Runyon is hereby hailed as the legitimate successor to Ring Lardner. . . .
 . . . Runyon is clearly more limited than Lardner, and he is something of a cynic and something of a sentimentalist -- and Lardner was neither of these. Moreover, Runyon's dialogue is in the Hemingway mold, being more the symbol than the transcript of a conversation. But he belongs in the good tradition: he takes it for granted that one can understand his language; he treats his characters, as though they were his equals; and no other country could have produced him. . . .

In addition to the book-review features, the pages of Vanity Fair also contained numerous articles concerned with literature. Sheer volume precludes an exhaustive account of these articles, both serious and satiric; we will therefore consider only the treatment of major writers of the period.

C) Literary Articles in Vanity Fair

1. American Literature

As Vanity Fair entered its most distinguished period, in terms of literary concerns, in the twenties, with John Peale Bishop and then Edmund Wilson assuming the duties of literary editor, the magazine devoted more attention to American writing. This was only natural in a review dedicated to chronicling "progress in America," and native writers and writings soon began to make regular appearances as one aspect of the growing progress and assurance of American culture. Post-war America was of course on the rise, and the "coming-of-age" in the economic sphere was paralleled by a growing confidence and independence in American letters. This spirit of national pride and assurance was reflected in the pages of Vanity Fair, and American letters became throughout the twenties one aspect of the magazine's celebration of American cultural ascendance.

An interesting herald of this new focus on American letters was a photo-feature which appeared on page 55 of the January, 1921 issue. This page followed the format of the already-existing regular feature called "We Nominate for the Hall of Fame," where each month Vanity Fair selected a number of luminaries from the worlds of art, literature, politics and business; their photos were captioned by a brief notation of their achievements, and the feature, while set out in a sober and genteel style, had a certain implicit tendency towards the "star" system then developing in Hollywood. Although the people nominated to the "Hall of Fame"

were always noteworthy for their serious contributions, the feature itself partook of a superficial journalistic iconography.

The feature appearing in the January, 1921 issue, while it followed the "Hall of Fame" format, was concerned only with American writers. This marked the first time that American literature was so singled out for attention, and revealed Vanity Fair's new attitude that American literature was separate from British, and capable of distinction in its own right.

The feature itself honoured six "American Novelists Who Have Set Art Above Popularity," with a photo of Edith Wharton, "The greatest living American novelist. . . ," surrounded by photos of Sherwood Anderson, "Foremost among those who are using the novel as a means of criticizing American civilization"; Theodore Dreiser, "Whose crudely written but relentlessly truthful records of life are among the most extraordinary phenomena of American letters"; Willa Cather, "Who has brought a careful and sure technique to her novels. . . ."; James Branch Cabell, "The champion of romance against realism"; and Joseph Hergesheimer, "Of all the American novelists, the one -- aside from the gilded potboilers -- most read in England."

Despite the fleeting appearance of England as a critical barometer, this feature clearly marked a keen interest in and praise of American literature as a separate field of endeavour. The magazine had come a long way from Henry Brinsley's assumption of a "cis-Atlantic nation."

It is interesting to note that the "Hall of Fame" for that

same issue mentioned only one non-American, the British novelist John Galsworthy. The others "nominated" were all American, with the central place of honour going to John Sargent, "Because he is the greatest of the living American painters. . . ."

The May, 1921 issue contained another variation on the "Hall of Fame" format, this time concerned with honouring American critics (page 38). Again, the reader was presented with photographs, captioned by brief accounts of the achievements of those illustrated. It is noteworthy that fully half of the ten critics so honoured were young: Van Wyck Brooks, H. L. Mencken, Heywood Brown, George Jean Nathan, Floyd Dell; and several were in the more progressivist or even radical traditions: Brooks, Dell, Mencken, Nathan. Vanity Fair, by 1921, had moved from the gentility of Brinsley to a full recognition of the young and innovative forces at work in American letters.

By 1921, the pages of Vanity Fair were fully in tune with the New York spirit of revolt against the conventionality of "Main Street," a revolt symbolised at the time by Sinclair Lewis' novel of the same name. True to its stated intent, the magazine began to poke fun at the posturings of the literary radicals themselves, and in the July, 1921 issue the editor's "In Vanity Fair" (page 17) consisted of a parody of Lewis' novel, containing the moral that Gopher Prairie could redeem itself by reading Vanity Fair.

This parody is significant for several reasons: Vanity Fair's readership was evidently such that a familiarity with Main Street, and an adherence to its philosophy, could be assumed; Vanity Fair

was thus in a position to poke fun at the self-congratulatory "revolt" inherent in the work. The use of such a literary parody to function as what was in essence an advertisement for the magazine itself, was one example of Vanity Fair's continual intermingling of commerce and culture, here parodied with conscious self-reflection.

The representation of American writing and writers in the pages of Vanity Fair, given the magazine's eclectic concern with culture and the chronicling of "progress in American life," took many forms: reviews of books within the book review features themselves (already considered); the publication of new writings; chronicling in the monthly "Hall of Fame"; and the use of writers as feature contributors. A representative sampling of some writers' appearances in the pages of the magazine gives an indication of the varied methods by which Vanity Fair noted their importance and, in some cases, aided their careers.

Henry James was twice nominated to the "Hall of Fame," in July, 1914 (page 49), and October, 1915 (page 52). In the September, 1920 issue, he was considered in a review by Edmund Wilson (page 65). The issue for August, 1922 contained a parody of his style (page 63); and the December issue for that year included a monologue which he had written for the American impersonator Ruth Draper, entitled: "The Presentation at Court" (page 53).

This monologue was presented with an accompanying sketch;

which took up the top half of the page, entitled "A Group of Henry James' Characters Waiting in his Ante-Room to Consult Him." The sketch was a satiric rendering of some of the more pretentious characters from his later works, with the caption underneath ending, "Mr. James will hear all their problems with infinite patience and tact, but, judging the injustices of life irremediable, will not make any attempt to solve them but sighingly surrender them to fate."

Van Wyck Brooks was noted only in honorific photo-features, in the "American Critics" of the May, 1921 issue already described, and in two "Hall of Fame" features (June, 1922, page 76; March, 1924, page 63).

John Dos Passos was represented by a poem, "Venice," in the February, 1922 issue (page 8); and, surprisingly, by a reproduction of a watercolour by him in that same issue (page 43). He was also used as a contributor, with articles on the theatre. In the May, 1925 issue, he contributed an article (page 64) called "Is the 'Realistic' Theatre Obsolete?", concerned with John Howard Lawson's Processional, described in the caption under the accompanying photograph as an "expressionist jazz drama." Dos Passos began the article by stating that

We may as well admit that for our time there are no questions of aesthetics. Least of all in the theatre, where the problem is now one of sheer existence. It is doubtful, anyway, if the stage will long be able to compete with the movies and radio and subsequent

mechanical means of broadcasting entertainment and propaganda. Perhaps it will follow the bison and the dodo and the wild swan. Certainly it is among the last survivors of what might be called the arts of direct contact.

If the theatre is to subsist, it must offer something that city-dwelling people need extremely, something matchless, that can't be found anywhere else. A century that has to snatch its hasty life furtively between time clock and alarm clock requires the stimulant of some human externalization, warm and glamorous and passionate, that it misses in the chilly fantasmagoria of the movies or in the slightly curdled strains of radio music. Baseball, football and prizefights fit the bill in one direction; jazz dancing, in another. But as America is racked more and more by the growing pains of conscious adolescence, we have got to have some more organized and purposeful expression of our loves, fears, and rages. That is the theatre's one chance to survive.

We find here expressed in deliberate and excursive fashion the same view of American civilisation embedded in literary fashion in Dos Passos' U.S.A. trilogy. What is important here is that Vanity Fair afforded Dos Passos the opportunity to apply his vision of the changes taking place in America to the consideration of an innovative new play. He went on in the article to note that American theatre had been largely unsuccessful because of its inability to stress its theatricality, relying instead on a literary view of its form and function:

. . . The theatres that have run a successful course in various parts of the world since people went out and sat all day on the stonecut seats of an Athenian hill, have had various aims and motives, but none of them have been literary. . . .

Various aspiring organizations that are trying to coax the American public into taking the theatre seriously, have never quite gotten away from the point of view that plays must be regarded primarily as masterpieces of literary effort, fraught with the culture of a bygone age. As a result, their audiences consist largely of wistful and literary-minded people who seek in culture a dope to make them dream that

they live in a Never Never Land, European, decorous and unattainable to the Man-on-the-Street, in which the Beautiful and True hold sophisticated discourse in a Louis-Quinze drawing room. As long as the theatre depends on that audience, it will be more occupied with the idiotic schism between Highbrow and Lowbrow than with wringing people's minds and senses and hearts. . . .

This denunciation of the genteel tradition was followed by an account of the play under consideration, praised for its ability to use directly theatrical means to arouse emotional reaction in the audience. Dos Passos praised the play's conscious and deliberate abandonment of "the convention of the invisible fourth wall," stating that films had rendered that convention obsolete. What was now needed, according to Dos Passos, was a new theatre based on theatricality itself, rather than the old convention of verisimilitude. He ended the article with the proclamation that "Processional is the Uncle Tom's Cabin of the new American Theatre."

These views on theatre, while certainly avant-garde, were hardly unique to Dos Passos or the pages of Vanity Fair. Their appearance does, however, place Vanity Fair squarely with the progressive theatrical forces of the time. More significantly, the editorial procedure of using a writer like Dos Passos to consider a play like Processional indicated Vanity Fair's credo that the arts, and "taste" in general, were indivisible. Dos Passos' vision of the changes then taking place in American life, and his own professional concern with expressing those changes in new literary fashion, made him a profound critic of this play within its wider cultural context. We may turn this around,

of course, and note that Dos Passos was himself offered the opportunity to examine in detail one manifestation of the cultural changes with which he himself was concerned as a writer.

It was precisely this kind of mingling of genres and areas of "expertise," this practical application of the belief that all taste resided on the same continuum, that gave Vanity Fair its vitality and force in the twenties. All the arts, indeed all aspects of life where discrimination and judgment were needed, were united in the pages of the magazine and in the choice of critics and contributors.

In the June, 1928 issue, Dos Passos contributed another article on modern theatre (page 72) entitled "A Machine Age Theatre: A Proposal that Modern Drama Follow an Ancient Greek Example and Justify Something." This piece, a general essay which did not consider any particular play, was concerned with the same issues that had motivated the May, 1925 article. The major thesis was that, "What Zeus was to the Greeks, a vast and tangled complex of ill-controlled machinery is to us." Dos Passos' programme for the theatre, then, was that it continue to be concerned with making sense of its surrounding world; in the contemporary situation, that implied a profound engagement with the "machine age." Once again, it was Dos Passos' own professional concerns which were here translated to theatrical criticism.

Dos Passos contributed one more article to Vanity Fair, for the July, 1928 issue (page 72). Once more, he was concerned with

the theatre; this time, he directed his attention to theatre critics. After first "proving" that theatre critics were necessary, he then proceeded to define what a critic was -- essentially, anyone who saw the theatre as something more than mere entertainment:

. . . a critic would be a man with a standard to measure things by, or else a man with an exceptionally fine palate like a coffee-taster or a man with an historical sense or a man with a nose for news in his particular line or a man with a chip on his shoulder, if the chip were hefty enough to be worthwhile, or a man who had a philosophical axe to grind, or a man who was just naturally fond of and curious about the theatre. . . .

In an article entitled, as this one was, "Lynch the Critics!", it was to be expected that Dos Passos would dwell on the "inferiority complex" of critics. He laid the blame, however, more on the American attitude towards intellectual work, than on the critics themselves:

The thing is that in these United States the intellectual worker has such a hard time explaining himself to the folks back home. It's bad enough for creative writers. The only excuse is that sometimes there's money in the great American play or the great American novel. So that a writer at present almost occupies the same social position as a bond salesman or a real-estate agent. There's always a chance that he may win the Pulitzer Prize or strike oil in some other way. But, imagine writing home and saying that you were studying to be a critic: . . . It's obvious to the folks at home and everybody else that there can't be much money in it ever. . . .

This article pointed to the same "commercialism" in American life that other Vanity Fair contributors, including Wilson, were railing against. But Dos Passos did not recommend a withdrawal from commerce; as in his previous contribution to Vanity Fair, he noted that his age was the "machine age", the theatre critic, like

theatre itself, must therefore engage fully in analysis and consideration of the worlds of commerce and the machine.

Despite its critical concern with the new forces in literature, Vanity Fair continued to honour American writers who worked in more traditional ways. Edith Wharton, while never a contributor herself, was twice "Nominated to the Hall of Fame" (October, 1916; August, 1919), and was the central figure in the January, 1921 tribute to American writers. Edmund Wilson twice reviewed works by her in his regular feature (March, 1921; September, 1922), and a full-page photo of her appeared in the March, 1927 issue (page 60) over the caption "Our Most Distinguished Ambassador to Europe."

F. Scott Fitzgerald appeared only three times in the pages of Vanity Fair, aside from consideration of his works in the review pages. In July, 1925, Ernest Boyd contributed an article entitled "Books and other Hors-d'Oeuvres" (page 57), a light and frothy piece on some of the season's new writing. Included among the works mentioned was Fitzgerald's The Great Gatsby. Boyd compared Gatsby to the earlier This Side of Paradise, and noted that "there is more maturity here and none of the 'smartness' which he himself came to deplore; the author has grown up and his friends -- and also, I imagine, his admirers -- have cheered up at the immense stride he has taken. . . ."

The two other mentions of Fitzgerald were even more light-

hearted. The July, 1927 issue contained (page 47) a mock rogues'-gallery of current notables. Fitzgerald's "mug" shot was included, with the caption "Alias, 'The Kid'. A smooth worker in the clubs and smart society places." We have here a forceful example of the sort of iconography of writers then in evidence, a process which made these writers "stars," and identified them with one obvious, and often personal, characteristic.

The third mention of Fitzgerald was in the December, 1927 issue, where Charles G. Shaw provided satirical biographies of "Three Literary Radicals" (page 92). Fitzgerald was the first of the three mentioned, the others being Anita Loos and H. L. Mencken. Since the piece was nothing more than a satiric parody of a contemporary form of superficial "biography," nothing of note concerning the writers appeared in the article. It is interesting to note, however, that in the table of contents for this issue (page 55), the "Three Literary Radicals" piece was listed under neither "Literary Hors d'Oeuvres" nor "Satirical Sketches," but was instead included in the section headed "The World of Ideas."

Sinclair Lewis appeared often in the pages of Vanity Fair throughout the twenties and early thirties. Honoured in brief photo-features in April, 1921 (page 57) and June, 1921 (page 58), his Main Street was satirised in the "In Vanity Fair" of July, 1921 already described. The issue of May, 1925 contained another full-page tribute (page 75) to mark the appearance of Arrowsmith; this tribute consisted of a photograph of Lewis which filled

two-thirds of the page, with a caption underneath concerned with Lewis' position in American letters:

It has long been a matter of debate as to whether either Main Street, or Babbitt . . . could be classed as the great American novel -- so earnestly looked for -- but it is quite certain that, throughout America, and even in England, Main Street has passed into the vernacular as a term symbolizing and satirizing the stuffy complacency of smug-minded people, and that Babbitt has come to represent to all men the too-familiar type of the average man, reaching greedily after success, accepting blindly the idols of the market place, conventional-minded, and yet all the time vaguely discontented, vaguely seeking to penetrate to the real and beautiful. . . . Now, at least . . . Mr. Lewis has found a hero to admire, not merely to satirize. . . .

In the "Books and Other Hors d'Oeuvres" of July, 1925 already described in terms of its mention of Fitzgerald's The Great Gatsby, Boyd also considered Lewis' Arrowsmith. His account of Lewis' work was as sketchy as that on Fitzgerald, but his judgment in this case was negative. Boyd was not impressed with the novel, stating that

the noble lives of doctors . . . inspire in me the same respect that I have for the Fire Department. But, as I do not want to read a novel with a fireman hero, I am also uninterested in the medical hero. . . .

As to Lewis' incorporation of technical medical knowledge, and his prose style, Boyd was left unmoved:

Mr. Sinclair (sic) is too skilled an advertizing man not to make some showing in the adaptation of knowledge supplied by an expert. . . . But, alas, I do not trust our brilliant ads, lovely as the prose is in which they are couched.

Vanity Fair nominated Lewis to the "Hall of Fame" in October, 1925 (page 73), "Because, since the appearance of Main Street in 1920, by virtue of his great literary unpopularity he has become the most popular novelist in America."

The July, 1926 issue commemorated Independence Day with a photo-feature honouring "Signers of Our Literary Declaration of Independence" (page 70). Sub-titled "Some Important American Authors Who Have Founded a Tradition of Their Own in Native Letters," the feature, in the style of the monthly "Hall of Fame," noted

. . . seven signers of our modern Declaration of Literary Independence from the backgrounds, the peculiarly English culture, even the language, of our parent country. As England evolved from Celt and Saxon, Dane and Norman, into something of sharp individuality, so we have been evolving away from English cultural dependence also into something of sharp individuality. The authors pictured on this page are characteristic products of this evolution, or have consciously worked to hasten it. What they write could have been written nowhere else than in America, and by nobody except Americans. And one of them, in origin, is Celt, one Scandinavian, one Germanic. That too is important. . . .

In a brief six years, from the feature in January, 1921 which for the first time honoured American writers as distinct from British, the magazine had moved to a celebration of a unique and separate American tradition of letters.

The writers so honoured were Sinclair Lewis: ". . . in revolt against smugness, Lewis is an uncannily accurate reporter of the American scene and language; an unsparing satirist; . . . he knows Main Street from end to end"; Sherwood Anderson, who ". . . represents the revolt of New America from crude materialism and the great cult of bovine contentment"; Theodore Dreiser, who ". . . with a peasant persistence championed the ordinary, commonplace man in fiction, with all his facets, vicés and virtues, against the aristocratic tradition of 'nice people', correct form and half truths"; Eugene

O'Neill, "Our first cosmopolitan dramatist whose work has made Europe suspect we may have a national soul after all"; Edgar Lee Masters, who ". . . freed us from the sentimental elegiac tradition of English poetry"; Carl Sandburg: "Inheritor of Whitman's 'Barbaric yawp', Sandburg is poet of Chicago. . . . The Prairie wheat at last really articulate"; and Ring Lardner: "American literature has always been most individual in humour. Lardner . . . has made literature out of our vernacular."

The satiric biographical sketches by Charles G. Shaw in a number of Vanity Fair issues included, in the November, 1927 issue (page 68), a sketch of Lewis. As in the December sketch of Fitzgerald, this contribution was little more than a testament to Lewis' popularity at the time, and contained no account of his literary importance.

The issue for January, 1931 commemorated the awarding of the Nobel Prize to Lewis, with a full-page caricature by William Cotton, depicting Lewis strangling the American Eagle. The caricature (page 48) was captioned by an ironic paragraph by H. L. Mencken:

The award of the Nobel Prize to Sinclair Lewis must have come as gruesome news to the pedagogues who have been laboring so shrilly of late to restore sweetness and light to the national letters. He represents everything that they fear and abominate -- and yet, with the prize in his pocket, he also represents American literature to the world. . . .

This veiled praise of Lewis by Mencken was balanced, in the May issue of the same year, by Ernest Boyd's caption to a photograph of Lewis in false whiskers which appeared on page 38.

Entitled "America's Nobel-man," Boyd's paragraph was a denunciation of America's first Nobel-laureate:

There is something symbolic in a photograph of Sinclair Lewis in false-face, taken in Berlin during his recent literary vaudeville tour. . . . His false whiskers present a curious analogy with that false sense of values which enabled him to cite as examples of great artists suffering from the neglect of the American public, a few of the most popular, and best-selling authors in America. His face is no more disguised than his real sentiments about literature, which are those measured in terms of advertising and royalty checks. Surely, Sinclair Lewis in false-face is a symbol.

This opinion was again reversed in December, 1932 when "Red" Lewis was honoured by a full-page photograph by Steichen on page 21. Celebrating his newest novel, Ann Vickers, which would appear the following month, the caption under the photo praised the "satirist extraordinary to the American people . . . who . . . helped bring about an intellectual revolution in America." Lewis was by this time clearly a star, or as the caption put it, "an American classic," and this full-page tribute took the form of others the magazine paid to stage and screen or sports stars.

This "star" treatment occurred once more in the issue for March, 1934, which contained (on page 48) a full-page photo of Lewis and his wife, Dorothy Thompson, entitled, "The Lewises: Reporters at large." Lewis and his wife were by this time an institution, and the magazine was more concerned to chronicle his comings-and-goings than to review his books.

The first mention of Ernest Hemingway in the pages of Vanity Fair occurred in the April, 1927 issue, where he was included in

a photo-feature, following the format of "Hall of Fame," in honour of bestselling American authors. The feature, which appeared on page 65, was titled, "Harvesters in the Golden Field of Fiction: Six Distinguished American Novelists Who Have Found that Good Books Can Be Best Sellers." A photograph of a smiling Hemingway was captioned,

The most striking of the Parisian contingent of American writers . . . in The Sun Also Rises, has made himself the historian of the expatriates; the interpreter of those people who have found, in Europe, the atmosphere of general indifference to their prolonged antics, which they have sought in vain in America.

The other American writers honoured in the piece were Willa Cather, "One of the most telling of American novelists and a stylist of precision and beauty. . . ."; Carl Van Vechten: "An author who has delved deep into Bohemia. . . . has entered the bestseller ranks with Nigger Heaven, a dramatic exposition of Harlem . . . with its tragedy and humour, its social and literary gradations, and its uncanny resemblance to the more pretentious and neighbouring white civilization"; Louis Bromfield; Edna Ferber: "With Show Boat far and away the bestseller of the year, Edna Ferber has achieved the unique and sought-after goal of both critical and popular approval. . . ."; and John Erskine: "A professor, but not a pedant . . . John Erskine has continued his amusing satirical method of bringing the classics up to life, if not up to date. . . ."

This photo-feature on current bestselling American authors appeared on the page opposite an article by Ford Madox Ford on the American expatriate writers (page 64). Hemingway, as the facing

feature noted, had just published The Sun Also Rises, and brought expatriate literary Paris into popular view. Ford accordingly concerned himself with Hemingway, Ezra Pound, and the composer George Antheil.

In the article, Ford attempted to explain the phenomenon of voluntary exile by many of the most distinguished American writers to their public back home. Ford began by proclaiming the importance of the work being done by these expatriates:

. . . Big Business may make the United States envied, or detested, or ignored, or avoided, by Europe in general and France in particular; respect it cannot earn. It is long since France discovered that a country's books are its best ambassadors.

He then proceeded to a consideration of the supposedly riotous life indulged in by the expatriate community, especially as it is described in The Sun Also Rises:

I do not know that Mr. Ernest Hemingway's admirable novel The Sun Also Rises or the fame of the uproars that arise when Mr. George Antheil gives a public concert have not added to or confirmed these rumours of riotous lives led in the greyer and more mouldering streets of Paris. . . . Mr. Hemingway's book is certainly finely alcoholic and irregular, but it is not a balanced record of life in Paris, any more than the newspaper records of crime in New York give a balanced impression of the quiet metropolitan existence that life in New York really is. . . .

. . . There is a good deal of tosh about these Paris-American legends.

. . . And if you think it out for yourself you will see that that must be the case. Mr. Hemingway writes extremely delicate prose -- perhaps the most delicate prose that is today being written. . . .

. . . Now it is an extremely difficult thing to write delicate prose. . . . Well, you cannot write delicate and beautiful words . . . in what is here, I believed, called a state of hang-over. . . . Art -- any art by which you may become famous -- is a tiresome and laborious affair. . . . Then it is mere common sense to assume that the artist is not a candidate for delirium

tremens or the other things that men fear. . . . The South Side of Paris is less amusing than New York, for it is a place of hard work and precious little money.

Ford went on to note that,

The queer thing is that a constant warfare wages between the American colony of the North Bank and that of the Quarter -- or rather, the American Colony of the Quartier de l'Etoile is constantly making raids on the Americans of the Quartier Montparnasse. Why Americans cannot let each other alone I could never understand. . . . But the resident Americans of Commerce, Industry, Finance and the rest are never easy but when they are trying to improve the morals of their unfortunate artistic compatriots on the South of the Seine.

Ford recounted an anecdote concerning the attempts of a minor American official to prevent the honouring of George Antheil, on the grounds that he was a friend of Ezra Pound, and thus presumably anti-American. Ford was appalled and saddened by this American internecine warfare in Paris, and pleaded with the American public to leave her artists in peace:

The American artistic colony of Paris -- and, heaven knows, of New York too -- do a good deal to dignify the United States in the eyes of the world. Let the testimony of myself, a foreigner, bear witness to that. Then the non-artistic part of the United States should at least let them alone. The reason why large numbers of American artists live in Europe is almost entirely economic. They are very badly paid; they can live in Paris for almost nothing. . . .

. . . Americans should read the poems of Mr. Pound and see that the works of Mr. Antheil are performed often and with applause. That is bound to come some day. It would be well if it came soon -- for that would really be the New World redressing the balance of the Old.

We quote this article at length, only because of the forceful documentation it provides for the already-widespread legend of the "riotous life" of the expatriate writing community in Paris.

The juxtaposition of this sensible account by Ford of the hard work being done in Paris, opposite an account of Hemingway as the chronicler of "those people who have found, in Europe, the atmosphere of general indifference to their prolonged antics," is a fine example of the essential schizophrenia of the magazine. While debunking the myth of literary Paris in a full-page article by a noted European author, the magazine provided on the opposite page another contribution to that very same myth.

Hemingway could be praised as a writer of "extremely delicate prose -- perhaps the most delicate prose that is today being written," and also as the "interpreter of . . . prolonged antics." While the assessment of Hemingway's art remained the same, the attitude toward the life he chronicled was quite different; one may only suggest that the photo-feature format itself elicited a more sensational and superficial caption.

The January, 1928 issue contained (on page 78) a parody of Hemingway's style by John Riddell (Corey Ford). Written as an imaginary interview between Hemingway, Riddell, and a bull, on the occasion of the publication of Men Without Women, the piece satirised the writer's spare dialogue and obsession with bull-fighting. In the centre of the page, the reader was presented with a caricature of Hemingway dressed as a toreador, sitting at a café table with a bull; the caption read,

Beauty and the Beast: Mr. Ernest Hemingway, legendary hero of the bull-ring and the short story among all who eschew the salads and junkets of literatures, is etched above . . . while discussing technic with his fidus Achates, the bull.

Hemingway was nominated for the "Hall of Fame" in the September, 1928 issue (page 79). The photo was "the characteristic one of the period, Hemingway in workman's cap and sweater looking pensive, and the caption honoured him,

Because in two years he has become one of the leading American novelists; because identifying his characters has become a national pastime; . . . and finally because although he lives in France he writes about Americans.

The issue for December, 1930 included a photo-and-quotation feature (page 66) entitled, "Modern Soldiers Look at War," with Hemingway's photo, and the now-famous passage about "abstract words such as glory . . ." from A Farewell to Arms, heading the page. The editorial comment at the bottom of the page noted that,

The financial rewards of these tragic recollections have, twelve years later, turned their authors into a new kind of war-memoir millionaire. There is something cruelly ironical in the thought that their bitter philosophy, the gruesome portraits they draw of the conflict have, perhaps, only served to reestablish war in the popular mind as one of our most romantic institutions and most profitable literary topics.

The apotheosis of Hemingway as popular "star" continued with his inclusion, in the May, 1933 issue, in a photo-feature concerning writers in Hollywood (page 40). Theodore Dreiser and William Faulkner were also among those pictured, and described in short captions, as participating in the movie industry. Hemingway's connection was the cinematic rendering of A Farewell to Arms and The Sun Also Rises.

This status of Hemingway as "star" was satirised by Vanity Fair in the March, 1934 issue, where he was the subject of a feature, which appeared throughout the thirties, called "Vanity

Fair's own paper dolls." In this series, a different celebrity was selected each month for caricature, surrounded by a series of pointedly-appropriate cut-out uniforms. In this one reserved for Hemingway, "no. 5" in the series (page 29), Hemingway appeared in a leopard skin, holding a club and a dead rabbit, obviously female, under the caption, "Ernie, the Neanderthal Man." The cut-out costumes surrounding him were, "Ernie as the Lost Generation," seated at a café table writing; "Ernie as the Unknown Soldier," bearing a red cross and a crutch; "Ernie as Don José, the Toreador," with a vanquished bull by the horn; and "Ernie as Isaac Walton," in a fish-laden boat. The caption at the bottom of the page read, "Ernest Hemingway, America's own literary caveman, hard-drinking, hard-fighting, hard-loving -- all for art's sake." Vanity Fair was not just in the business of celebrating stars according to their famous characteristics; it could also satirise the pretention and foolishness of that process.

Another caricature of Hemingway appeared in the June, 1934 issue, as part of a full-page cartoon facing a review of Dickens' posthumously-published The Life of Christ. The cartoon (page 20), entitled, "Mr. Dickens Meets His Rival Best-Sellers," pictured Dickens surrounded by Sinclair Lewis, Kathleen Norris, Hervey Allen, Ernest Hemingway, and Dashiell Hammett. The caption read, "In a nutshell, Mr. Dickens, what we want to know is this: how do you sell a 14,000-word manuscript for \$250,000, sixty-four years after you are dead"?

It is interesting to note that Hemingway and Lewis are here

numbered among the more commercial writers; most of the attention which Vanity Fair gave to Hemingway in the thirties consisted of poking fun at his popularity and public posturings. The counterpoint between honour and satire continued with the July, 1934 issue, where on page 25 Vanity Fair published a full-page picture of "The Hemingways on land and sea," a photo of Ernest and his current wife Pauline on board a tramp steamer. This photo was similar to the one of Sinclair Lewis and Dorothy Thompson, an evocation of a "celebrity couple," and the caption noted that,

Ernest and Pauline Hemingway bid fair to supplant the Douglas Fairbankses as America's Favorite Gypsy Couple (always excepting the Charlie Lindberghs, of course). Meanwhile, the Hemingway public cries -- we mean, bellows -- for a successor to A Farewell to Arms. . . .

Virtually all the references to Hemingway in the pages of Vanity Fair had to do with his role as "public" writer, rather than with the writings themselves. Hemingway's popularity surely had something to do with this, as was the case with Sinclair Lewis. In both instances, they appeared in the pages of the magazine as celebrities, as popular figures who happened to be writers. The writings themselves received little attention.

William Faulkner made only two appearances in the pages of Vanity Fair, both insignificant. The first was in June, 1931, where on page 69 were listed a number of "New reputations -- This has been their gala year." This consisted of a double row of photos, accompanied by brief sketches. Faulkner's read,

William Faulkner wrote The Sound and the Fury, Soldier's Pay and As I Lay Dying, but it was not until Sanctuary that he was loudly acclaimed by the critics as a 'genius'. The late Arnold Bennett said of him "He writes like an angel."

Others noted in the feature included Ogden Nash, the Russian actress Eugénie Leontovich, set designer Jo Mielziner, film star Marlene Dietrich, wrestler Jim Londos, swimming champion Eleanor Holm, film producer Carl Laemmle, Jr., and Francis Yeats-Brown, the author of The Lives of a Bengal Lancer.

Faulkner's other appearance, although the same photograph was used, was in the feature on writers in Hollywood in the May, 1933 issue (page 40) already mentioned for its inclusion of Hemingway. The caption accompanying Faulkner's photo read,

William Faulkner is one of the last authors on earth whom we should expect to find writing for the movies, but here he is, with a Hollywood contract tucked away in his pocket and two films already practically finished. Today We Live and Sanctuary. More are forthcoming.

It is perhaps significant that it was not until after the appearance of Faulkner's self-proclaimed pot-boiler, Sanctuary, that Vanity Fair made any mention of the writer.

Thomas Wolfe was nominated for the "Hall of Fame" in May, 1935 (page 23), after the appearance of Of Time and the River, which became a bestseller. The tribute ends, ". . . because he has now sneaked off to Europe again, to elude the tea-leaves of a literary triumph in America." The October, 1935 issue contained a short story by Wolfe, called "The Bums at Sunset" (page 30), a short vignette about a

young farm boy's initiation into the hobo life on the rails.

St. John Ervine contributed numerous articles to Vanity Fair from 1920 to 1929. These were on a variety of subjects, including "The Changing American Woman" (May, 1920, page 43); "Lennox Robinson - Irish dramatist" (February, 1921, page 62); "How to Act in Shaw and Shakespeare" (August, 1921, page 42); "English Dialect and American Ears" (June, 1922, page 53); and "A. A. Milne the Playwright" (July, 1922, page 49).

In September, 1921, he contributed a full-page article entitled "American Literature and English Readers" (page 38), which bore the sub-title "Suggesting that the American's Knowledge of His Own Authors Leaves Something to be Desired." He began by countering Sinclair Lewis' recent claim that English booksellers were unfamiliar with American writing, with the assertion that "the average cultured reader in England has a better acquaintance with American writers and their work than the average cultured reader in America." He then went on to state his amazement at the fact that Americans were better acquainted with English writing than with their own:

And here I wish to make a point which may be received in America with incredulity. It is, nevertheless, a point of fact. I have met educated Americans -- people with considerable knowledge of contemporary English writing, even minor in character -- who are totally ignorant of the contemporary literature of their own country. I find, when I am visited by Americans, that the surest way to startle them is to mention the name of an American author. . . . I do not know what is the explanation of this singular ignorance, although I suspect it of a snobbish origin, but it undoubtedly exists. When I

mention the name of Mr. Eugene O'Neill to Americans, many of them listen as if I were talking to them in the language of a Bashi-Bagouck. They are so full of European culture that they have no room for knowledge of the notable writers of their own race.

It is interesting to note the American authors and works cited by Ervine in 1922 as worthy of attention: Vachel Lindsay, Edwin Arlington Robinson, Zona Gale, Dos Passos' Three Soldiers, Frost's North of Boston, William Beebe's Jungle Peace.

Ervine went on to assert that American writing was, indeed, known in England, especially through the work of the London publisher, Jonathan Cape, who specialised in the publication of American books. Through Cape's efforts, continued Ervine, the British public had been made familiar with the critical writings of Mencken, the plays of O'Neill, at least three of which had been performed in London, and the novels of Sherwood Anderson, Joseph Hergesheimer, James Branch Cabell and Dorothy Canfield.

Ervine went on to note, rather pointedly, that, "It is notorious, of course, that Mr. Sinclair Lewis' novel Main Street was not a success in England." He then proceeded to explain the reason for this lack of success:

Mr. Lewis suffers from a common failing among many contemporary American authors. They are not novelists at all -- they are sociologists. . . . Mr. Lewis' book has immense value as a sociological document, but it has much less value as an artistic production. Over here, people had difficulty in believing that a town could be so destitute of decent people as Mr. Lewis made Main Street. We were much more interested in Dr. Kennicott than we were in Carol who seemed an unusually futile female, full of silly priggishness. . . . Mr. Lewis is more interested in argument than in art. He probably becomes more excited over statistics than over words. He does not greatly care for the good shape of a

sentence. . . . He never uses one word when twenty-five will do. . . .

. . . He is an excellent example of the sort of author who is becoming more common in American literature than is good for American literature. . . . Sociology fills their minds. They have not yet discovered that mankind is greater than theories about mankind and that all of us are more interested in people than we are in statistics. . . . They cannot cope with humanity because humanity will not confine itself within the corners of their arguments. . . .

We find here expressed a view very similar to the one enunciated by Vanity Fair's own reviewer, Henry Brinsley, in the pre-war years, the view that great literature is concerned with the "eternal" human questions, and moves beyond the particular and merely "sociological." This position is intensified, of course, by appearing in a review by an English author of an American book. The magazine's very choice of critic, for what amounted to its only major consideration of Main Street, was an illustration of the thesis.

The universality of great literature was emphasised by Ervine himself at the end of the article (page 94):

. . . the average reader of a book does not enquire about the nationality of its author before he reads it. His interest is entirely in the question of whether or not the book is what he calls a good one. . . . Only the very good or the very bad [books] are capable of crossing frontiers -- unless there is some happy accident, such as the common tongue of England and America, to make the passage easy. . . . I doubt whether many American authors will get a handsome reception in England while they are preoccupied with local sociology and are uninterested in common human qualities. And rightly so. Sociology is a shifting and uncertain science -- if, indeed it is a science at all -- but the common human qualities endure forever. . . . America has produced men of great distinction in literature, all of whom have received immediate recognition in England. Some of them have even received

it in America. I do not doubt that something of that sort will continue to happen while time lasts.

It is interesting that such an article, containing this kind of assessment of Lewis' work, should appear around the time of Lewis' winning international recognition with the Nobel Prize for Literature. It is even more interesting that it should appear in the pages of Vanity Fair at the same time that the magazine was beginning to celebrate American letters as a distinct and praiseworthy tradition.

Vanity Fair was never narrowly consistent, or limited to one literary doctrine or point of view. At the same time that the magazine was celebrating the emergence of an independent tradition of American literature, it could also print the reflections of a British writer on the universality of great literature. This was one indication of Vanity Fair's refusal to stoop to a narrow or provincial literary or cultural nationalism. Concerned to promote and praise the growing strength and quality of the native artists, the magazine's editors were also always convinced that they should, and could, be ranked among the best in the world.

Ervine contributed another article to Vanity Fair condemning the "sociological novel," this time focussed on Lewis' Babbitt, for the October, 1923 issue (page 113). More satiric in tone, the piece lacked the gravity of the earlier article; the views about literature, and especially the disparity between reality and the world depicted by Lewis, were the same.

2. British and other Literature

Joseph Conrad made a number of appearances in Vanity Fair, in addition to consideration of his works in the regular book-review feature. In June, 1915, Grace Willard contributed a short interview with Conrad (page 37), which was illustrated with a photo of him writing in his study. "Conrad is so absolutely un-English," she wrote, "that a person, under the spell of Lord Jim, Youth, Nostromo, and the other matchless ones, meets the author for the first time with a kind of shock."

The June, 1915 issue included a full-page feature on the sculpture of Jo Davidson, including a recent portrait bust just done of Conrad. The English writer Hugh Walpole contributed several "Pen Portraits" during the early years of Vanity Fair, under the title "Literary Close-Ups." The one appearing in the December, 1919 issue (page 39) was of Joseph Conrad. Like the other "pen portraits" in the series, this full-page account was a lyric tribute to the writer, part biography, part interview; it contained no serious consideration of his works, short of the general judgment that, "Here, surely, if ever, is genius -- the possession by a divine spirit of man's earthly clay . . . and it is to him that we must pay our debt -- not only we, but all the generations that will follow us."

Conrad was nominated for the "Hall of Fame" in June, 1920 (page 63), ". . . because, in middle life, he deserted the sea and, in response to 'an obscure inner urgency', commenced to write;

but chiefly because he has become one of the greatest of living English novelists." The celebration of Conrad continued with a full-page photo of Conrad in the issue for November, 1923 (page 93), which bore the title, "Joseph Conrad -- Romancer and Philosopher: Although a Pole by Birth, He Has Outdistanced Most of His British Contemporaries as a Master of English Prose." The photograph showed a very aristocratic and genteel Conrad, in morning-suit and high collar, perched on the edge of a table.

The July, 1923 issue included a full-page article on Conrad by Philip Guedalla (page 64), entitled, "Joseph Conrad -- a Master of Ships and of Story." Guedalla wrote in a breezy, rather superficial style, and the article makes entertaining but not particularly edifying reading:

There is a sinister rumor that the vested interest of the Author's Society have petitioned the Board of Trade to schedule the British novel as a key industry for protection under the Safeguarding of Industries Act. But, given the almost total illiteracy of our masters, the intrigue will probably fail. Mr. Conrad, at any rate, is a shining demonstration of the blessings of literary Free Trade. . . .

Guedalla touched on the exotic locales of Conrad's works, and on his famous indirect method of narration; these features were noted wittily, but not considered critically. The article exhibits a kind of breathless wonder that Conrad, not a native speaker of English, can so hold his reader, and the entire account is ultimately biographical. The article ended with Vanity Fair's customary tribute to Conrad (page 102):

Mr. Conrad has a queer gift. Like Mr. Belloc, he writes English with the strange perfection of a man to whom the language is not native, with the detachment of a scholar

polishing his Latin prose or his Greek iambs. One feels that he holds each sentence at arm's length before he puts it into place. And its place is always in a long study of fine shades in strange, outlandish places. Mr. Conrad has lived so long in queer company that he can give a touch of oddity to almost any scene. He has made the Upper Congo inexpressibly strange; yet (it is a greater triumph) he makes the Russian Embassy in The Secret Agent as queer as the jungle. But his gift is something more than queer. It is great; and one is innately thankful that out of the four or five languages which that strange sea captain knew, he selected English for his experiment in literature.

It is interesting to note that this assessment of Conrad, like the photographic tributes appearing earlier, essentially regards Conrad as an oddity, although it praises his writing. The characteristics chosen for emphasis are his Polish identity, his sea-faring past and his exotic settings. Although he is accorded the attention worthy of a "great man of letters," the attention, nevertheless, is focussed on those things which set him apart from the normal "literary giant."

It is perhaps precisely the form the attention takes, namely photographic reproduction with short caption, that produces this emphasis of striking anomaly. The process of icon-creation necessitates the delineation of striking characteristics. The stage is beginning to be set for the creation of literary "stars," a process which would be satirised by Vanity Fair itself when dealing with a writer like Hemingway.

The March, 1934, issue contained an "Estimate of Joseph Conrad" contributed by Frank Swinerton (page 54). The article was illustrated with a photograph of Conrad, "A Polish sailor who has taught English novelists the craft of their profession. . . .",

and a photograph of Swinnerton. "The well-known English novelist, whose columns on George Gissing and other writers have established his reputation as a literary critic and biographer."

Swinnerton began with the assertion that "Mr. Conrad's books are read wherever the English language is read, and his place among the great romantic fiction writers of our time is secure. . . . Mr. Conrad's books are all romances. His life has been a romance." He then provided the seemingly-obligatory details of his life at sea and as a novice writer, and continued with an account of the effects of his earlier, unclaimed novels on those who had discovered him before he attained wide popularity with Chance:

. . . from the beginning of this century, Youth, and from somewhere about 1910, Mostramo, have been for me books holding unsurpassed beauty and romance, by whatever standard in the world's literature they are tried. Nobody who first realized the greatness of Mr. Conrad in 1914, when Chance was published, can have any conception of the thrills which his earlier lovers received from those older books, beautiful, mysterious, foreign at first to all English notions of romance writing. Mr. Conrad brought psychology into romance. He restored grandeur to the characters who played parts as few English writers since Shakespeare have successfully ventured to portray. . . .

In relation to these early works, Swinnerton continued,

Conrad's latest novel, The Rover,

. . . is less wonderful. It is upon a lower plane, if a more popular plane, of romance. It is more clear, more proficient, much less than these others were, a story which has created itself at length in spite of the author's resolve to be brief. . . . The Rover is a good romantic tale of old fighting days, told with delicacy and reserve; but the grandeur and the marvel of Mr. Conrad's best work is out of it. . . .

Swinnerton then attempted to account for The Rover's lesser stature, its failure to come up to the best of Conrad's writing,

despite its solid workmanship:

. . . These other books were stolen from the heart of beauty itself, and were brooded over by a magician whose richness of understanding made him sometimes overful of revelation, lest we should fail to accept this treasure. . . . Their author's unfamiliarity, it may be, with the language in which they were written, the fact that his prime lesson-book in English had been the Bible, gave Lord Jim and Nostromo and Youth and Typhoon some of the marvelousness with which they were worked. But not all. The books were all, for Mr. Conrad, explorations. He was never satisfied, but was seeking, in this theme and in that, the fulfilment of his own romantic vision, otherwise not to be seized. The fact that Lord Jim was begun as a short story, that it became the novel we know, is proof enough of Mr. Conrad's quest. He was in those days less a master of his craft than he is today; but he was the fairy weaver of tales that will endure forever. The Rover is upon a lower plane of romance. It is upon a lower plane because it is finite. It is a story, fully grasped by the author, and coherent in its detail. . . .

Swinnerton proceeded to praise the craftsmanship of the book, to note that, had it been by any other writer, it would be highly praised for its skill and interest. But Swinnerton was unable to praise Conrad for such a work:

Impossible for Mr. Conrad -- possibly impossible for Mr. Conrad alone among living authors -- to win us by such a tale as The Rover! With some passages anyway (for Mr. Conrad is still the supreme writer and beyond comparison in evocation of beautiful sky- and sea-scapes) the book is not wholly outside the range of other, and, picturesquely romantic novelists with a knowledge of the sea. Mr. Conrad is no longer exploring. He is master of his craft. The gold of his book is minted. That it is finely minted, many readers will discover for themselves; but for those of us who demand that Mr. Conrad should all his life be a seeker . . . this romance is something too conventional for our delight.

We have here, emerging through the somewhat dated prose, an evocation of the modernist creed; Swinnerton alone, among the Vanity Fair contributors concerned with Conrad, touches on the essentially open-ended nature of his writing, the manner by which

he implicates the reader in the creation of meaning, the sense in which the process of a Conrad novel is the process of creation of significance. The article ends with Swinnerton's realisation that the condemnation of The Rover is really a tribute to Conrad:

For Mr. Conrad, nothing less than the superb is tolerable. He is arraigned now because of former grandeur. It is a hard lot; but in its true perspective, this dissatisfaction with The Rover is tribute to Mr. Conrad's place among the elect -- among those (and they are very few) who have created life as gods. He is a god; and as coming from a god, The Rover, by comparison, is but a toy.

Conrad's final appearance in the pages of Vanity Fair was in the December, 1924 issue, which included a photograph of a recently-completed posthumous bust of the author by the sculptor Jacob Epstein (page 73). The caption mourned the passing of Conrad,

whose death a few months ago signalized not only such a loss to the world of letters, but also a lamentable dwindling in that much smaller group of rare and significant personalities -- to which Anatole France also belonged. . . .

George Bernard Shaw appeared often in the pages of Vanity Fair, from 1914 to 1935. His plays were reviewed and social theories discussed, often with the accompaniment of Shaw's photo as illustration. A parody of Shaw's style appeared in September, 1924 (page 57).

H. G. Wells was another frequent subject in Vanity Fair, from 1916 to 1935, and again his photo often appeared as illustration. W. B. Yeats was considered only once, in May, 1916; Rebecca West appeared twice, in July, 1916 and March, 1924; and

Thomas Hardy four times from 1920 to 1926, including a full-page photo in April, 1926 (page 59) bearing the caption, "Thomas Hardy -- Last of the Great Victorians."

The great moderns were also considered in the pages of Vanity Fair. James Joyce, for example, was the subject of critical analysis, and also of the "star" treatment we have already described for Sinclair Lewis and Ernest Hemingway. In May, 1917, John Quinn contributed a long article on "James Joyce, A New Irish Novelist" (pages 49 and 129), where he was concerned mainly with the Portrait. "James Joyce has come to town," Quinn began, "and he has come to stay. A new star has appeared in the firmament of Irish letters, a star of the first magnitude."

Portrait had just appeared in New York (1916) after its serial appearance in The Egoist, and Quinn began with an account of Joyce's life and work to date. He then placed Joyce in the context of other Irish writers, most notably Yeats, whose Reveries Over Childhood and Youth he then compared to Joyce's own bildungsroman:

Yeats' book is like a series of tapestries depicting his youth and childhood in Sligo and in the art and literary world of London. Joyce's book is like a series of etchings. In some cases the acid has bit deep into the plate. To read Yeats' book might be compared to going into a finely proportioned room hung with noble paintings by Puvis de Chavannes. To read Joyce is like being in a room decorated with paintings by Daumier or Toulouse-Lautrec.

Joyce next appeared in a "Hall of Fame"-like photo-article called "The Younger School of British Novelists" (May, 1920, page 74), along with Compton Mackenzie, Frank Swinnerton, Hugh Walpole, and

St. John Ervine, and was nominated to the "Hall of Fame" in July, 1922 (page 76).

In April, 1922, Djuna Barnes presented a "Portrait" of Joyce (pages 65 and 104), where she strove to convey something of the nature of the man whom the sub-title of the article called "One of the More Significant Figures in Literature." In describing Joyce's appearance, Barnes remarked that,

People say of him that he looks both sad and tired. He does look sad and he does look tired, but it is the sadness of a man who has procured some medieval permission to sorrow out of time and in no place; the weariness of one self-subjected to the creation of an over abundance in the limited.

If I were asked what seemed to be the most characteristic pose of James Joyce I should say that of the head: turned farther away than disgust and not so far as death, for the turn of displeasure is not so complete, yet the only thing at all like it, is the look in the throat of a stricken animal.

This literary portrait by Barnes was illustrated by a reproduction of a sketch of Joyce made by Mina Loy in Paris.

In December, 1929 David Cort contributed an article on those portions of Finnegans Wake which had appeared as Work in Progress, under the title "James Joyce's what-is-it?" (pages 67, 132 and 149): Cort considered Joyce "the man who is probably the most important, by any measure, practitioner of modern English," and his Ulysses "the Domesday Book and the Talmud of every young writer of consequence in Europe and America." He then admitted that, at first glance, the portions of the work already in print "would seem to any reader solidly, continuously and en bloc the purest gibberish." Cort believed, however, that

. . . during those seven years since Ulysses, Mr. Joyce has been perfecting a new language in art. Now for the first time in book form we can see the strange, dislocated idiom of this new lingo. . . . Mr. Joyce's experiment has in the literary world a paramount news value. . . . Whatever Mr. Joyce elects to write must now command serious attention.

He then proceeded to elucidate Joyce's experiment, his attempt to create a new language based on the resonances of the old, to transcend the restrictions of a literary "Prometheus Bound" and "leap masterfully into a scrupulously arranged chaos" based on violations of traditional English usage, and requiring a "mental nimbleness" for comprehension. Ultimately, believed Cort, this attempt is a failure: "One is inclined to think that Mr. Joyce, rather than muscularizing his language, has brought it to the final enfeeblement of decay."

Cort's article was the last in Vanity Fair to deal with Joyce's writing; in the thirties it was as a literary "star" that Joyce appeared in the magazine. The issue of January, 1930 ran a full-page photo of Joyce (page 30) with a caption that began, "Ulysses, unquestionably the most important single volume of fiction written in our time. . . ." A photo of James and Peggy Joyce appeared in July, 1933 (page 34), and a full-page caricature of Joyce holding a copy of Ulysses appeared in March, 1934 (page 16) with the title, "Portrait of the Artist as a Best-Seller." Joyce as "star" made a final appearance in November, 1934, where his photo appeared in a photo-feature (page 46) on famous men with their children or grandchildren; others in the feature included Babe Ruth and John D. Rockefeller.

The expatriate American Ezra Pound wrote one article for Vanity Fair, called "On the Swings and Roundabouts," which appeared in August, 1922 (page 49). Having moved to Paris from London, he compared the energy of his new city to the conservatism of the one he had just left, and began the article by stating, "London when I left it, had more than ever its air of a learned society of taxidermists." More than anything else, claimed Pound, the British after the war were seeking a sense of stability, and clinging to established cultural conventions as lifebuoys: "The old ideas are 'debout', they are on their feet, lifeless to be sure as the effigy of Admiral Dewey in Mme Tussaud's, but upright."

The "new movement," modernism, was dead in London according to Pound, but alive and energetic in Paris:

"Gravity," as Sterne remarked, "a mysterious carriage of the body to conceal the defects of the mind"! The French have handed down this, the chief British virtue, to their firemen (pompiers), and in its absence they are, for the moment (au usual), indulging in more mental activity than all the rest of the world put together. . . ."

And as if to illustrate this point, the text of this article was published around a reproduction of a sketch of the French musician Georges Auric by Jean Cocteau, "the poet and critic, who in his spare moments operates a cabaret and makes line drawings."

Three articles by T. S. Eliot appeared in the pages of Vanity Fair. The first, "Contemporary English Prose" (July, 1923, pages 51 and 98), had appeared in French in the Nouvelle Revue

Française, and traced the development of English prose from the Renaissance to Eliot's own time. The modern prose writers considered were James Joyce, Wyndham Lewis, May Sinclair, and D. H. Lawrence. Joyce's early work, claimed Eliot, was in the tradition of Pater; with Ulysses, however, Joyce achieved his own distinctive voice:

. . . it appears to me that A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man is the work of a disciple of Walter Pater as well as of Cardinal Newman. In Ulysses this current disappears. In Ulysses this influence, like the influence of Ibsen and every other influence to which Mr. Joyce was submitted, is reduced to zero. It is my opinion that Ulysses is not so distinctly a precursor of a new epoch as it is a gigantic culmination of an old. In this book Joyce has arrived at a very singular and perhaps unique literary distinction: the distinction of having, not in a negative but a very positive sense, no style at all. . . .

In November, 1923 Eliot contributed an article called, "A Preface to Modern Literature" (pages 44 and 118), in which he attempted to outline the historical context in which modern writers worked. According to Eliot, modern writers in English were operating in cultural isolation, their native tradition having been destroyed with the discrediting of Oscar Wilde and the literary group around him:

To discuss the "present" is not a matter only of judgment and taste; it requires also a faith and a foresight which vary with the individual. For the present consists of a great deal of the past and a little of the future; it contains a majority of people who are echoing the past and a very small number of writers who will represent this time fifty years hence, but who are, at the moment, rather a part of the future. To give a fair view of the present, as it appears to a contemporary, it is necessary to begin with the dreariest part of the subject, the vast background of death against which the solitary figures of the future are relieved. It is necessary

to begin about the date of the trial of Oscar Wilde.

The effect of this trial upon English literary society was fatal. Here was a small group of English people, who had succeeded, in the midst of Victorian society, in acquiring a high degree of emancipation from the worst English vices; . . . a public scandal disposed of its social leader for ever; the broken group lost all influence upon English civilization. Wilde and his circle stood for . . . the end of a type of culture. In general, they represented urbanity, Oxford education, the tradition of good writing, cosmopolitanism. . . .

English letters after Wilde's trial, according to Eliot, was reduced either to the academicism of "the already dead," or to "an industrious, popular and rather vulgar super-journalism." The few great writers, like Henry James or Joseph Conrad, were "solitary figures." In addition to these developments in England, changes had also occurred in the literary worlds of Ireland and America. According to Eliot, the Irish influence on London, which had been "potent and valuable" thirty or forty years previously, had ceased with the collapse of that literary society represented by Wilde, and Irish writers became focused around the Abbey Theatre and the Irish Revolution.

In the same manner, continued Eliot, American letters became separated from the British tradition:

At the same time, or rather later -- indeed, within the last ten years -- another centrifugal action has been dividing America from England. The solid mass of American-writing in the nineteenth century was hardly more than a local function of literature in England; with plodding dignity it followed, and but for a few men of great importance -- Poe, Whitman, Hawthorne -- it did not contribute or originate. The absence of any new creative effort in England, the passing of the exclusive control of American letters out of the hands

of a group of gentlemen in Boston closely associated with Harvard University, the decline of prestige of the University professor, the increase of non-Anglo-Saxon elements in the population: various causes combined to give rise to styles of writing which are based on anything but contemporary English models.

As substantial performance, I am not inclined to attach to our contemporaries in America as much value as they attribute to themselves. Their work is interesting -- one can see why to people in America it has supreme importance -- but it is interesting as a symptom. It has a manner of bustle, freedom, and perhaps illusory hope. . . .

For Eliot, all literature written in English was part of a unified tradition. The current splintering of the tradition was to be deplored, but Eliot remained convinced that it was only temporary:

It will appear that English literature is in a state of disintegration into at least three varieties of provincialism. . . . Certainly, this is an unstable period; but what I have called attention to is, I believe, a temporary aberration which the appearance of any new writer of the first order should serve to check.

At a time when Vanity Fair was celebrating the emergence of distinctly American letters, it was also publishing accounts, like this one, of the fundamental unity of all writing in English. In contrast to the energy and optimism of those articles chronicling the new American writers, Eliot's article sounded a note of melancholy isolation:

. . . We are very much alone. Wells, Bennett, Chesterton, Shaw, Kipling are separated from us by a chasm; we can no longer draw sustenance from them. In spite of our admiration, neither James nor Conrad is very near to us. It is not, as is often said, that English literature is merely a collection of isolated and freakish men of genius. There was a long tradition from Ben Johnson through Dryden, down to Samuel Johnson and perhaps a little later; there was another tradition from Locke.

This is an exceptional period, in its being so little the offspring of the preceding: Walter Pater, in an

earlier epoch, was an heir of Arnold and Ruskin, and Wilde the heir of Pater. I have conceived these prolegomena to be useful in order that the significance of the significant figures of our time may be more immediately grasped.

In January, 1924 Eliot contributed an article (page 29) on three writers whom he believed to be important cultural influences: Henry James, James Frazer, and the philosopher F. H. Bradley. Of Frazer's Golden Bough, Eliot wrote that the work "has extended the consciousness of the human mind into as dark a backward and abyss of time as has yet been explored," and he believed that,

. . . It is a work of no less importance for our time than the complimentary (sic) work of Freud -- throwing its light on the obscurities of the soul from a different angle; and it is a work of perhaps greater permanence, because it is a statement of fact which is not involved in the maintenance or fall of any theory of the author's (sic). . . . The absence of speculation is a conscious and deliberate scrupulousness, a positive point of view, and it is just that: a point of view, a vision put forward through a fine prose style, that gives the work of Frazer a position above that of other scholars of equal erudition and perhaps greater ingenuity, and which gives him an inevitable and growing influence over the contemporary mind.

Henry James was, for Eliot, a writer with "profound significance for the future. He began his account with a description of the lack of comprehension or appreciation which James' work had suffered:

Henry James is an author who is difficult for English readers, because he is an American, and who is difficult for Americans, because he is a European; and I do not know whether he is possible to other readers at all. . . .

James has suffered the usual fate of those who, in England, have outspokenly insisted on the importance of technique. His technique has received the kind of praise usually accorded to some useless, ugly, and ingenious piece of carving which has taken a very long time to make; and he is widely reproached for not succeeding in doing the things that he did not attempt to do. With "character," in the sense in which the portrayal of character is usually expected in the

English novel, he had no concern; but his critics do not understand that "character" is only one of the ways in which it is possible to grasp at reality: had James been a better hand at character, he would have been a coarser hand altogether, and would have missed the sensibility to the peculiar class of data which were his province.

That "peculiar class of data," according to Eliot, had to do with James' "romanticism," a romanticism stemming from "the imperative insistence of an ideal which tormented him" --

. . . He was possessed by the vision of an ideal society; he saw (not fancied) the relations between the members of such a society. And no one, in the end, has ever been more aware -- or with more benignity, or less bitterness -- of the disparity between possibility and fact. . . .

The example which Henry James offered us was not that of a style to imitate, but of an integrity so great, a vision so exacting, that it was forced to the extreme of care and punctiliousness for exact expression. James did not provide us with "ideas," but with another world of thought and feeling. For such a world some have gone to Dostolevsky, some to James; and I am inclined to think that the spirit of James, so much less violent, with so much more reasonableness and so much more resignation than that of the Russian, is no less profound, and is more useful, more applicable, for our future.

Eliot made one more appearance in Vanity Fair, when he was nominated to the "Hall of Fame" in July, 1925 (page 55). The caption under his photograph was the following tribute:

Because he is a cerebral poet and a poetic critic; because he is both a classicist and a realist; because he is one of the few who has used to any purpose the technique devised by James Joyce . . . because his Waste Land made the critics who came to scoff remain to acclaim his importance in modern poetry . . .

The Bloomsbury group made periodic appearances in Vanity Fair. We have seen that Clive Bell, Roger Fry, Bertrand Russell, and John Maynard Keynes all contributed articles. Lytton Strachey's

Eminent Victorians was reviewed, and Strachey also contributed articles in 1922 and 1923, as well as being nominated to the "Hall of Fame" in March, 1929. Virginia Woolf, too, was nominated to the "Hall of Fame" in September, 1929.

European literature was represented in Vanity Fair primarily through the publication of stories by writers like Colette, Cocteau, and Paul Gerald, often printed in French, and the Italian Giovanni Papini. Continental writers were reviewed, especially in the thirties, and from time to time a full-length article would consider the corpus of one of these writers.

Marcel Proust, for example, was nominated to the "Hall of Fame" in January, 1923. In March of that year an account of Proust's works by Symons was published (page 108); and in June, 1923, Clive Bell contributed "A Note on Marcel Proust" (pages 42 and 100), which bore the sub-title "An English View of the Great French Symphonist of the Emotions." Thomas Mann, too, was reviewed and honoured in the pages of Vanity Fair, and nominated to the "Hall of Fame" (May, 1929). He also contributed articles himself, including, in December, 1929, a piece on "The Extremely Moving Pictures" (page 98).

The pattern of literary articles published in Vanity Fair corresponds to that of the book-review feature: the phase before and just after the war was concerned with established writers, with those who had already made their mark; the period of the twenties

marked a flowering of literary concerns in Vanity Fair, and a widening of critical acumen to include the new literary movements, many exponents of which themselves wrote articles for the magazine; the thirties saw a re-narrowing of vision, a return to a concern with writers who had already made a name for themselves, and to more conventional criteria of judgment.

CHAPTER V

The Significance of Vanity Fair

Condé wanted "class magazines." For Vanity Fair his aim was not circulation, which never rose much above 90,000, but quality and prestige, which it certainly had on both sides of the Atlantic.¹

A) Vanity Fair and Modernism

We have seen that Vanity Fair was concerned with modernism in literature, painting, and music. We have also seen that the magazine displayed an interest in the energetic new "lively arts" then in full swing. Moreover, these concerns were juxtaposed with photos, articles on bridge and diversions, and advertisements.

How, then, are we to make sense of this collage of voices and subjects, this magician's bag of tricks, linked only by the sometimes tenuous thread of "taste"? One is left with the feeling that something fundamental remains to be said, that the essential voice of the magazine has yet to be identified.

It is to modern literature itself that one must turn for guidance, for the magazine in its entirety represented the same intellectual and aesthetic quest as was manifested in the literature of the time.

We have only to consider the classics of modern literature, to discover precisely this problem of classification, this sense of groping towards some new and barely articulate understanding, and this cacophony of voices and styles. There is Eliot, with his use of jazz rhythms and his experiments in incorporating colloquial

syntax and semantics into poetic language, his allusive ranging through the history of English poetry, his use of myth and Eastern religion, his poetic culmination in the religious and exotic mystery of the repetition of "Shanti."

There is Woolf with her groping towards a new poetic prose, a language capable of articulating the processes of the individual heart and mind. There is Lawrence, investigating the worlds of mythology, and his own personal, mythologised, understanding of passion, in order to express realms of human experience heretofore left inarticulate. There is even Forster, the most traditional of the great moderns, with his evocation of the disorientation and inarticulate wisdom created by exposure to the cave. In all these writers, there is the attempt to express the unreason of reason, and the rationality of the irrational.

The emblematic modern British writer is, of course, Joyce, with his attempt in Ulysses to form a narrative structure out of the very process of a search for narrative, his attempt to render in Finnegans Wake a new language composed of all languages, and all dialectal and colloquial uses of language. In a sense, Ulysses is a sort of textbook for Finnegans Wake, an exploration in systematic fashion of literary and rhetorical decorum, a journey by example through the languages peculiar to and expressive of contexts such as religion, nationalism, passion, information, sentimentality, and literature itself.

This concern with expression, with the very process of articulation, with the sense that there is some indescribable human

essence and knowledge which has yet to be said in words, is central to the American moderns as well. There is Hemingway, from the outset of his writing career with In Our Time, attempting to create a language stripped of emotional overlay and speaking directly. There are Hemingway's godparents, Anderson and Stein, with their own experiments to discover or create a discourse of the heart, a syntax of the personal.

Even Fitzgerald, whom it was fashionable to dismiss as a perpetual adolescent in love with glamour, was in fact in quest of a discourse adequate to his subject; and like all romantics, he discovered his true subject more by intuition than by systematic thought: for the world of the rich, the world of money, is the reigning myth in American culture, and his attempt to articulate that world is the appropriate attempt for a modern American trying to express the unexpressed in his culture.

America's Joyce was Dos Passos, with his USA trilogy, and it is highly symptomatic that the title of the European work should refer to a human being, and to a classical myth and narrative, while the American epic is named for a place, and more significantly by the essentially modern, almost technological acronym for the place.

These two great modern epics, one European and the other American, may be viewed as a sort of literary delineation of the history of Vanity Fair itself. Their publication dates coincide with the publication history of the magazine; and their publishing histories testify to the centrality of the American spirit in

literary modernism as a whole: the initial copyright to Ulysses (1914, 1918) is in the name of Margaret Anderson, the enterprising American who first published the eleventh episode in her Little Review. The full manuscript was first published by yet another American lady, Sylvia Beach, under the imprimatur of her Parisian Shakespeare and Co., in 1922; it was through the intervention of yet another American, Ezra Pound, that Joyce met Beach. And Joyce's earlier Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man first appeared through the courage and literary acumen of yet another American, Harriet Weaver, with her London-based Egoist Press. This publishing history is well known; what is less often acknowledged, however, is the centrality of American literary sensibility in the history of modern English letters.

While this sort of activity was being pursued by expatriate Americans in London and Paris, and many of the most enterprising of the young American writers were travelling to Paris to sit at the feet of Gertrude Stein, publishing in New York was still hampered by prohibitive obscenity bans. Again the publishing history of Ulysses is emblematic: unable to achieve legal publication in the U.S., or in England for that matter, throughout the twenties, the book nevertheless enjoyed tremendous popularity and influence through smuggled copies and pirated American editions. This situation was finally rectified on December 6, 1933, when the ban on Ulysses was lifted in U.S. District Court. That same week marked the repeal of Prohibition, and the two major bulwarks of Babbitry or, as Mencken would have it, "booboisie" were removed

from American social and literary life. By 1933, of course, the first two volumes of Dos Passos' trilogy had already appeared, The 42nd Parallel in 1930, and Nineteen Nineteen in 1932. With the publication of The Big Money in 1936, the trilogy was complete.

The two epics, then, form a convenient literary parallel to the publication dates of the magazine: Ulysses, first public instalment in 1914; USA, last public instalment in 1936; with all the history of American expatriate writing and publishing in between. A comparison of the two works will help to give some sense of the passage of literary time in between.

As already noted, the titles themselves give some indication of the difference in literary emphasis and sensibility: Joyce signals the reader that his account of a uniquely modern day will be filtered through the persona of a latter-day Ulysses; his work still bears the unifying principle of an individual in quest of meaning and identity. The referential universe may be all of Western history, the style may be a compendium of available literary and non-literary discourse, but the focus is still the human, the individual, the mind and body and psyche of the human inheritor of the tradition and civilisation of the West in contact with the modern world. In this respect the novel is profoundly European.

Dos Passos, on the other hand, signals us that the true protagonist of his trilogy is the New World itself. To those critics who have ascribed this to the supposed fact that the work is more an exercise in political and social discourse than a novel,

a product of the author's then-Marxist views, one need only point to tendencies in his earlier works, Three Soldiers and Manhattan Transfer, where the same sensibility is manifest. The title of the first novel, while retaining the human reference, already implies the desire to signify a more general and abstract function, the human defined in terms of social function and collectivity, reduced from individual identity to identity defined by work.

The second novel, a kind of testing out of the literary and rhetorical experiments developed more fully in the trilogy, points to the protagonist as the process of urban life itself. Dos Passos' real subject is motion within Manhattan, the processes of technological and industrial communication and change implied in the word "transfer," both a subway transfer and the process of transformation itself. The title points to the importance of mechanical communication; the subway, in modern urban life, and the transforming properties of this new technology of physical communication. We find in the second novel as well the same concern with the processes of communication exhibited by Eliot in his Waste Land, the coexistence of the subway, of jazz, and of newspapers and popular music. Dos Passos, like Eliot, demonstrates that the rhythms of the new communication technologies are parallel to, and mutually influential with, changes in linguistic and intellectual rhythms and structures.

The title of the earlier Manhattan Transfer does not merely signal to the reader the transformative powers of new modes of communication in the urban New World. It also carries and elaborates another dominant focus of modern American writing, the emphasis on

specific time and place and the desire to place the particular narrative as a representative of more general and abstract, and also somewhat inhuman or extra-human forces. One thinks of Winesburg, Ohio, of Main Street, of Our Town, of This Side of Paradise, of In Our Time, even of The Great Gatsby with its evocation of the dehumanisation of the individual through the myth-making of the Barnum-and-Bailey of the carnival and of American show business.

One need only compare this tendency to situate the narrative within the wider context of place and time, with the British tendency in modern letters towards abstraction of the human and the psychological: Dubliners (an American might have called it "Dublin"), Sons and Lovers, Women in Love, Mrs. Dalloway, The Longest Journey. It is significant that the British moderns, when they point away from the human, employ the natural world (The Rainbow, The Waves), or the interplay between the human and the natural (To The Lighthouse, The Waste Land, Howards End), rather than the world of technology or the modern city; even The Waste Land, concerned with the city, points in its title towards a non-urban context for its ironic purposes. The subject of USA is not, then, the nation as a human creation and environment, as Dublin is the product and context of the modern Ulysses; it is rather the state as a separate being, an entity which has transcended its human creators and citizens and acquired a life and history of its own.

This sense of the modern, the quintessentially American nation as a supra-human, almost an extra-human entity, is implicit in the

various voices by means of which Dos Passos tells its story. Where Joyce makes use of different modes of human discourse, of human speech and writing, Dos Passos employs the devices of the new technological communication: the Newsreel, the Camera Eye. And even his two other voices, the two that retain the human in content if not exactly in form, are more expressive of individual history as communication product than as living subject. The biographies of historical figures already contain the transformation of the specifically human and unique into the historically public and emblematic, the transformation of life as lived and felt into life as exemplary deed and public utility, the human transfigured as myth, the process stabilised as image.

The last voice employed by Dos Passos, the narrative voice describing the histories and adventures of his fictional characters, is the one which has occasioned the greatest amount of criticism; these passages are faulted for a lack of life and emotion, for a certain tedium occasioned by one-dimensional and distanced exposition, for lack of human interest. This criticism, while appropriate to a different sort of book, misses the point of the trilogy entirely. For the intent of these passages is precisely to evoke the irrelevance of traditional fictional modes to the description of human existence as lived in USA.

The fictional characters in the trilogy lack human vitality and warmth precisely because the historical existence of USA itself as a supra-human entity has diminished the possibility of complex human life. The cardboard lives of the fictional characters embody the

one-dimensionality of their lives within the greater organism of USA itself, an organism which is no longer so much a creative expression of the individuals who live within it as a complex of institutional and corporate forces which has achieved a life, albeit a non-human life, of its own. One may criticise the extent of Dos Passos' bleak vision of USA itself; but the narrative voices are consistent with the signification of the work.

The protagonist of Joyce's epic is a latter-day Ulysses, wandering through the physical and linguistic culmination of Western civilisation, a civilisation which is in full Bloom. The protagonist of Dos Passos' work is modern civilisation itself, or rather, the form that it takes in the new world: a civilisation cut off from its roots in the Old World, and founded on new modes of communication. These are no longer language and the tradition of history contained within language, but machines (the camera, the newsreel projector), money, and the corporate structures which create and administer money. There is still a sense of history in this world, but it is history as presented by the newspaper and the newsreel, history as isolated event and pocket biography, history as image and emblem.

History for Joyce resides in language, in the lived expression of communal convention and discourse, and while that discourse may be in the process of disintegration into cacophony and even meaningless babble, the unifying faculty of the individual consciousness is still presented as a potential. In Dos Passos' universe, however, language has been replaced by technology and capital, and human civilisation by the corporate institutions which

control and administer that technology and capital.

It is, of course, terribly reductionist to summarise all of literary modernism by two works. These works are highly representative, however, because they contain within themselves almost all the major concerns of the literary developments of the period, and also because they embody their concern with language and expression within a wider framework of theoretical structure. More importantly, this theoretical framework includes an awareness of society, and of the nature and function of discourse within civilisation.

Lawrence, for example, embodies his artistic work within a wider structure of meaning concerned with passion and the psycho-sexual, but the process of expression and communication is not one of his themes. Hemingway, as a contrary example, is much concerned with language and expression, but rarely addresses directly the question of the social context of language. Joyce and Dos Passos, on the other hand, embody within their expressive experiments an implied analysis of the worlds which they are conveying, and a mature understanding of the social and historical forces which press upon discourse itself.

These social and historical forces have been examined with great thoroughness and insight, and they in fact form one of the major strains in our inherited body of theory of the modern period.² There are certain touchstones which stand out: the concern with the individual psyche, and the attempts to give literary expression to the interior processes of consciousness; the

preoccupation with mythology, both in the rediscovery of non-Western and the reinterpretation of Western myths, and in the attempts to create unique mythological systems to embody specific artistic visions; the sense of despair and alienation which runs like an undercurrent through almost the entire stream of modern writing; the intense conscious preoccupation with language, and the conviction among virtually all the moderns that the old forms of language require expansion or complete replacement. There is at the heart of all these various concerns a profound uneasiness about the modern world, a sense that the traditional conception of man as a rational participant in his social environment is narrow, if not absolutely wrong. Hence the despair, the exploration of ancient and non-European myths, the evocation of the isolated, alienated psyche and consciousness as indicative of profound social malaise.

The comparison of these modern concerns with the distinctive preoccupations of the nineteenth-century novel is striking. In the shift from little more than one literary generation to the next, the profound sense of man as an essentially social being is lost, and the focus has shifted from the actions of man in his social context, to man as supremely individual and isolate, or even profoundly out of tune with and in opposition to his society. The seeds of this transformation are, of course, already present in nineteenth-century literature, and hark back at least to the Romantics. The point that is crucial about the modern period in letters, however, is that this profound disaffection is now, for the first time, a basic assumption, not so much a revelation or

rallying point as a point of departure, a basic given.

The transition is hardly as abrupt or as dramatic as talk of literary generations would seem to imply, and even the Great War, as Kazin has shown,³ was less a turning point than a definitive and dramatic symbol. What is crucial, however, is that for the moderns the social world was no longer seen as a comfortable home, and the literary moderns turned to the past, to myth, to the exotic, or within themselves to find meaning and material for their creativity.

The moderns on both sides of the Atlantic perceived themselves as at the centre of a major turning point in Western civilisation. The most pessimistic in Europe followed Spengler and perceived this point as the winding down, the slow disintegration of civilisation. Others, such as Lawrence and Woolf, turned inward for universal or individual psychological truths. The Americans, citizens of a younger and newer society, expressed their pessimism as the destruction of innocent ideals (for example, Hemingway), or the hollowness of the reigning American quest for material and financial success (for example, Fitzgerald). Most, as literary artists, dealt with one or two aspects of this disintegration of the old, and filtered it through the personal perceptions or history of one or two fictional characters. Joyce and Dos Passos, however, as writers of epics, were forced to contend with the larger picture, were forced to make some sense of the wider historical and social dimensions of the modern situation.

If we try to pinpoint what exactly it is that the moderns, literary and extra-literary, perceived as their unique concerns and

problems, we see that it is in some way bound up with the question of individual identity and meaning. What, after all, is the concern with interior psychology and thought processes, with myth and sexuality, with disillusionment and social sterility, but a fundamental calling into question of accepted ideas about man's place in the world as a rational being. The conventional sense of man as the conscious author of his destiny, the rational creator of his world, had been attacked on two fronts.

The two nineteenth-century thinkers with the greatest impact on man's conception of himself were Freud and Marx; their influence on the writers and intellectuals of the modern period is well known and much studied; what is important here is that they conducted their attacks on the conventional view of man from opposite sides. Freud, continuing the process already started by Darwin, pointed to the essential irrationality of human behaviour, the basis of conscious rational thought and action in irrational desires and motivations. Marx, continuing the work of French romantics like Rousseau, exposed the underlying irrationality of supposedly rational social and economic organisation, and the basis of political and economic structures in personal greed and power-drive.

While the process of analysis of the two was the same, to expose the hidden and essentially irrational basis and motivation of supposedly rational organisation and action, the focus was different: Freud concerned himself with the archaeology of the individual and the personal, Marx with the explication of the communal and the social. One was concerned with the individual

human psyche, the interior life; the other investigated collective social institutions, the exterior life. For both, however, reality consisted in the hidden, underlying motives and desires propelling thought and action, and both demonstrated the inadequacy of rational description of the visible and manifest for explaining entire truth and meaning.

More importantly, both exposed the essentially universal and collective nature of individual action and endeavour. For Freud, individual motivation lay in underlying psychological reality, in an unconscious which was universal in terms of structure, drive, and function. For Marx, concerned with the social rather than the personal, individual economic position and function was due, not to degree of personal industry and initiative as the nineteenth-century liberals maintained, but to the organisation and function of the social and economic system as a whole, to the interaction of institutions and economic forces.

Freud, concerned with the interior life, and Marx, concerned with the exterior, both mounted a severe attack on the supremacy and power of the individual rational human being -- the significance and explanation of a personal life rested, not so much on the hard work and intelligence of the individual, but on structures and forces greater than the individual and common to all.

We find this same emphasis on the extra-individual in the writers of the period. Those concerned with an expression of the personal, like Lawrence or Joyce, turned to psychology and myth, transforming the unique interior processes of an individual mind

and heart into the universal symbols of ancient myth or psychological stream-of-consciousness. Those, like Conrad or Shaw, concerned with social matters turned to the evocation of disillusionment, to an analysis of the failures of old structures and beliefs, to the description through narrative of the emptiness of accepted models and ideals, an anatomy of war, materialism, and nineteenth-century rationalism and liberalism.

For the modern writers, the truth and meaning of an individual story no longer lay only in the details of that personal life; the personal became an evocation of the more general and universal, and the themes not so much an explanation of the human story by means of social and personal forces, but rather a description of the general and social by means of the personal narrative. Thus, for example, the tendency to regard each specific work as an evocation of the generation, as in the public reception of Fitzgerald and Hemingway, of Eliot and Lawrence. Hence, too, the use of myth and symbol, providing a universal and generalising frame for a particular narrative.

What we find evident in the modern period, then, manifested concurrently by social thinkers and by literary writers, is a transfer of emphasis from the unique and individual to the general and collective. Personal feelings become general psychological processes, individual experience becomes social history, and solitary disillusion becomes collective anxiety.

In the case of literature, it is of course true that all great writing moves from the particular to the universal, from the

specific history to the human narrative. What is crucial in the modern period, however, is the conscious shift in emphasis from the concern with specific detail and particularity to the concern with universal signification, the conscious emphasis on myth and symbol, the transformation from story to fable, from novel to myth, from particular to abstract.

The tendency is of a piece, moreover, with the greater conscious concern with the process of expression itself, with stylistic experiment and innovation. Just as modern painters moved from the representational to the abstract, from content to colour and composition; just as modern composers moved from the evocative to the concrete, from harmony and lyricism to sound and structure, so the modern writers moved from story-telling to story itself. Artists are always concerned with technique; but in the modern period that concern itself became content; the process of art began to turn to itself for substance, and to become more abstract, general, universal.

These are all manifestations of the same process, a process of conceptualising the human as more general than particular, more collective than individual. In the same way, human history tended to be seen as composed primarily of collective patterns, forces rather than faces, movements rather than leaders, and mythic heroes rather than individual human beings. The particular, in literature, became emblem of the general, and it was the general which was the real narrative.

It follows, then, that writers would start to focus on language

itself. For, as Joyce made evident, language bears within itself human history, it is the conventional carrier of accumulated meaning and interpretation. And given the fact that in the modern period Western man came to be confronted with more than one kind of language, with communicative systems composed of visual images, as in photographs and film, or of automatic concepts, as in newspapers and popular biography, it was inevitable that modern writers would turn to an exploration of the various means of conveying information and concepts.

The range, the territory, of modern writing had expanded. Literature was no longer only the expression of individual narrative and feeling; life was no longer merely personal and unique. Rather, the human had come to be seen as encompassing not only emotion and reason, but also the irrational and internalised social history. The individual was no longer merely the sum of his education and will and emotional reactions; his story was also history, his feelings also the collective unconscious, his exploits also universal myth. And the world of man was no longer merely his environment, which he inherited and created; it was also all human environments, and the culmination of history up to his moment in time, and the point of intersection of social and economic and political institutions much larger than himself.

The nineteenth-century novelist was concerned with society as the environment of man, as the creation and creator of man; the focus, however, was on the individual. The modern writer, on the other hand, saw the individual as the embodiment or the victim of entities larger

than himself, either mythic and psychological, or social and institutional; the subject was also the general mind or psyche or social environment, and the particular human also a manifestation of the abstract.

We can see a parallel development in the world of criticism and comment. In the nineteenth century, literary commentary was concerned with examination of the subtleties and intricacies of idea and argument. Just as the nineteenth-century novel focussed on individual conflict and development, so the literary periodicals were concerned with the elaboration of specific ideas and theories, with the development and sophistication of thought and expression, of theory and technique. For the moderns, however, the focus of criticism shifted to manifestos and polemics, to the expanding and elaboration of conflicting theories about literature, and the meaning of technique itself. The focus was no longer only specific works in themselves, but also works as exemplars of ideas of literature. Literature was itself no longer an accepted and understood phenomenon, but rather something to be investigated and reinvigorated.

The focus of criticism in the modern period became, then, not so much specific literary works, as theories about and approaches to literature. If there is any significance to the comment that the modern period in literature is the Age of Criticism, it must lie in the fact that literary criticism became as much an act of intellectual creation as writing itself. If the modern literary

protagonist was also a mythic hero, and the modern literary world also a culmination of mythic or economic forces, then criticism and commentary must become a ranging among various theories, an examination of various possibilities and an attempt at intellectual synthesis.

In a period of such intense expansion and upheaval, it is only natural that literary comment be reduced, in too many cases, to polemics or manifestos. Just as society was seen as composed of forces and institutions as much as of people, and the interior self as drives and complexes as much as personal history, so literature, too, became as much an interplay of movements and theories as a collection of specific works.

The function of literary comment and criticism in the modern period was partly transformed, then, from commentary on and judgment of specific works, to explanation and defense of particular manifestations of literary innovation or theory. The function of the critic was no longer merely judgment of a particular work according to the standards of traditional literary value, but also explication of the specific literary conception or style embodied by the work, and judgment was more on the basis of assent to some new theory of literature and evaluation of the work's success in embodying or using this new theory or concept.

The critic of the modern period, before he was able to exercise standards of taste or judgment, had first to create the standards themselves, or at the very least understand the specific standards applying to the work in question. The modern critic was not, then,

merely a judge of sensibility, but also an explorer of various kinds of sensibility. If the traditional notions of literature itself, as of man and society themselves, were being called into question or expanded beyond their conventional boundaries, then the critic, too, had to range among the various new theories of standards of judgment.

The "modern" sensibility was not, then, merely a new sensibility, but one based on an exploration of various kinds of sensibilities. What this meant, most fundamentally, was a rejection of the literary decorum of the past. The attack on literary decorum that was begun in the eighteenth century, when the novel started to express areas of reality hitherto deemed inappropriate for literature; the process continued by the Romantics, who extended this expansion of literary decorum to poetry, using the medium of poetry for the expression of common life and feeling; this expansion of the notion of literary decorum was continued by the literary moderns to the realm of expression itself.

The boundaries of literature were further expanded, and literary expression and structure used to encompass varieties of perception and expression hitherto deemed outside of and beneath the realm of literature. The decorum of the past, in the moderns, could only be maintained in the area of attitude, of critical distance; it no longer defined the use of language itself. In the modern period, for the first time, literary expression became a synthesis of high and low, of elite and popular; the old distinctions were maintained in ironic distance only, but no

longer in expressive decorum.

Since levels of taste or judgment could only be maintained through a critical attitude towards various structures of discourse, the literary hero could become, like Joyce's Bloom, a kind of critic, a consciousness which roamed through the worlds of sense and discourse and reached his own conclusions and judgments about their validity and value.

Just as history could become the narrative of forces and institutions, just as psychology could be transformed into the interaction of collectively unconscious drives and conflicts, so literature could be the journey through languages and different modes of expression.

It is precisely this kind of process which we find at work in Vanity Fair. The curious amalgam of literary essay, political essay, cultural critique, theatre review, photographs of popular actresses and statesmen, articles on bridge and golf, satiric sketches of night-club life, descriptions of vaudeville and jazz, reports of men's and women's fashions, society news, and other superficially miscellaneous accounts of cultivated New York life, which made up each issue of the periodical, was in fact a ranging through the world of taste which was analogous to the literary ranging through the world of discourse. And just as the modern writers like Eliot and Pound and Joyce and Dos Passos ranged through the entire world of possible discourse, including modes of expression which were outside, or "below," the language of high

literature, so the magazine too exhibited this democratic investigation of the worlds of taste, not just taste in matters of serious literature and art and music, but also taste in entertainment and sports and popular writing and film stars and clothes and popular music.

The notion which unified the various explorations of diverse worlds and entertainments in Vanity Fair was the notion of "good taste"; the purpose of the exposition of these various pursuits and pastimes was not just description, but judgment, the application of standards of "taste." Vanity Fair ranged through all the worlds inhabited by the cultivated or, as they liked to say in Vanity Fair, the "sophisticated" modern city-dweller, and exercised the faculty of judgment or "taste." The image of Crowninshield as "man about town" was thus entirely appropriate, for in a sense his magazine provided glimpses of all those aspects of the modern Vanity Fair which required judgment.

It is important to emphasise the fundamentally democratic and open-ended nature of this process. While the particular judgments of "taste" and value might be traditional or élitist, the process itself of examining and investigating new worlds of creativity and expression was liberating. For a period in literary and cultural history, the period which we now know as "modernism," there was the attempt to deal with all levels of aesthetic expression and concern and to create a synthesis of these various levels within the unifying concept of individual consciousness, of cultivated taste and sensibility.

This synthesis was a precarious and short-lived one, and soon broke down into new categories and levels of expression and decorum. Writers later abandoned the attempt to incorporate all language and levels of language in one artistic whole as Joyce had done in Ulysses, and the foray into the languages of technology conducted by Dos Passos proved to be unseminal. In the same way, the attempt by Vanity Fair to range through all the areas of taste and intellectual inquiry proved a short-lived experiment, and magazines soon reverted to a new rigidity of concern, intellectual inquiry and comment relegated to the intellectual reviews and monthlies, popular culture relegated to the mass magazines, and recording of the passing scene limited to the new photo-magazines like Life and Look which developed in the thirties.

Perhaps the tension of unity and synthesis was too great, and could only be maintained during a period of intense experimentation and discovery like the twenties. Perhaps, too, as publishing became increasingly industrialised, it became more economically feasible to appeal to more limited and precisely defined audiences.

Certainly, the curious synthesis effected by Vanity Fair, a fundamentally modern synthesis, had no beneficiaries, and the developments explored in the pages of the magazine were divided among different, more specifically-concerned magazines afterwards, the New Yorker taking over the area of sophisticated urban humour and commentary, the photo-magazines continuing the tradition of top-quality photography and reproduction, the intellectual periodicals continuing the function of critique and analysis, the

mass magazines continuing the concern with popular culture and the star-system, and the newspaper magazine supplements appropriating book and theatre reviews. The peculiarly modern synthesis effected by Vanity Fair, and the exploration of critical and aesthetic decorum which it engaged in, did not survive the era which it represented and investigated. The potential for cultural and critical universality proved unfulfilled.

B) The Influence of Vanity Fair

In order to understand why the synthesis effected by Vanity Fair, the attempt to range through all worlds of taste, ultimately failed, it is instructive to consider the various other magazines of the period. These may be roughly divided into three types: the mass-circulation magazines like Time, Reader's Digest and the Saturday Evening Post; the "little magazines" concerned with the avant-garde in the arts, like The Little Review and The Dial; the journals of opinion, with small circulation but wide influence, like the New Republic and the Nation. The period when Vanity Fair appeared was one of the golden ages of magazine publishing in the United States, and the vast array of periodicals which were born and died in that era exclude any neat categorisation. Some description of the variety, however, aids in explaining the phenomenon of Vanity Fair.

The "little magazines" did much to introduce classics of modernism. For example, the Little Review of Chicago (1914 to 1917) and New York (1917 to 1929), edited by Margaret Anderson, first

published portions of Ulysses; and The Dial, which moved from Chicago to New York in 1919, introduced The Waste Land to American readers in November, 1922. The Freeman was another influential "little magazine" of the period, and under Van Wyck Brooks' literary editorship did much to publicise modernist writing.

Vanity Fair's concern with literature and the other arts put it in competition with these other modernist journals, and the same interests were manifested by all these magazines concurrently. The consideration of the sculptor Constantin Brancusi is a good example of this competition: the Little Review published a "Brancusi number" in Autumn, 1921 (which appeared in early 1922), followed by an article on him in The Dial in November, 1922. But Vanity Fair scooped The Dial by publishing photos of Brancusi's work in May, 1922.⁴

Despite this competition, staff writers and editors moved freely among these magazines, and writers contributed to all of them. Gilbert Seldes, for example, who was a regular contributor to Vanity Fair in the twenties, was Managing Editor at The Dial from 1921-1923⁵; John Dos Passos, who wrote articles on the theatre for Vanity Fair, contributed pieces on Spanish literature to The Freeman from 1920 to 1922; and Edmund Wilson, who was then literary editor at Vanity Fair, wrote reviews for The Freeman in 1922.

Another kind of low-circulation magazine of the period was the journal of opinion, concerned with general social and political questions as well as art. These, like the "little magazines," depended on patrons for their existence: the Nation and the New

Republic, for example, both had circulations of about 30,000 in the twenties.⁶ Despite their small readership these magazines had great influence, because they were read by the political and social élite:

Franklin P. Walsh once called the Nation the greatest mystery in American journalism. An article he had written about the railroads was published in the Nation in the days when its circulation was about 27,000. A series of his on the same subject was syndicated among the Hearst newspapers, which had a total circulation of about 10 million. Soon after the Nation appeared, Walsh received telephone calls from senators, serious lobbyists, persons of importance. But never, he later recalled, had he ever met a person who mentioned his articles syndicated by Hearst.⁷

Edmund Wilson joined the New Republic as a writer after he left Vanity Fair in 1922, and later became that journal's managing editor.

Two regular Vanity Fair contributors were also involved with another type of "journal of opinion." George Jean Nathan and H. L. Mencken were co-editors, from 1914 to 1923, of the Smart Set (circulation about 22,000), an influential magazine of review and comment which also published fiction. In December, 1923 Nathan and Mencken put out the first number of the American Mercury, a magazine designed for the "civilized minority."⁸ The Mercury soon became the "foremost magazine of iconoclasm"⁹ in America, with a peak circulation of 77,000 in 1927.¹⁰ Nathan stayed with the magazine, as co-editor and theatre reviewer, until 1930,¹¹ when he became theatre editor at Vanity Fair. He had, of course, been a regular Vanity Fair contributor from its earliest days. Mencken continued as sole editor until 1933, when he, too, resigned.

While magazines like the Freeman, the American Mercury, and Vanity Fair did not survive in their distinctive form past the

thirties (American Mercury, for example, lost its iconoclastic character with Mencken's departure in 1933), other periodicals which started in the twenties or thirties managed to become very successful. Time, founded by Henry Luce in 1923, quickly achieved spectacular success, as did Reader's Digest, also founded in the twenties. Fortune, founded by Luce in 1929, aimed to link science and the arts with business, "the distinctive expression of the American genius."¹³ Fortune's editors and contributors included Archibald McLeish, Alfred Kazin, Dwight Macdonald, and John Kenneth Galbraith.¹⁴

Two successful publishing ventures of the late twenties and early thirties were frankly modelled on Vanity Fair. Esquire, started in 1928 with an interest in men's fashions,¹⁵ became in the thirties one of the foremost publishers of new fiction. Arnold Gingrich, the founding editor, recalls Vanity Fair as one of the models in those early days: "Town and Country, American Mercury and Vanity Fair were the three magazines of the day that we thought of as combining most nearly the type of features we had in mind for our magazine."¹⁶

Vanity Fair's chief competitor, from the day it first appeared in 1926, was Harold Ross' The New Yorker, and that journal would ultimately supplant Vanity Fair as the exponent of New York sophistication and taste. The New Yorker copied Vanity Fair's blend of humour and serious writing, and many Vanity Fair staff members later worked for Ross' publication. Margaret Case Harriman, who would herself become a New Yorker writer after she left Vanity Fair, recalls Crowninshield's reaction to the first issue of The New Yorker:

We went through The New Yorker together page by page, and when we had finished Crownly leaned back and took off his pince-nez.

"Well, Margaret," he said, "I think we have nothing to fear."

Dear Crownly. All The New Yorker eventually did was put Vanity Fair out of business.

Nobody, it is true, could have guessed that that would happen from reading The New Yorker's first issue. Compared to Vanity Fair's rich Steichen photographs, imposing array of names, and handsome make-up, it was pretty flimsy-looking. But its humor was, from the beginning, fresh and unexpected.¹⁷

Harriman has, of course, pinpointed the major difference between The New Yorker and Vanity Fair. While The New Yorker continued Vanity Fair's tradition of satire and humour, and of concern with literary and cultural matters, it did not adopt the visual aspect of the older magazine. Cartoons were the only visual component of The New Yorker; the photographs and reproductions of paintings did not appear. And The New Yorker certainly never indulged in the "star" treatment of celebrities, actors and actresses, and writers which Vanity Fair enjoyed.

The New Yorker was a much more traditionally decorous magazine than Vanity Fair; its pages included no such mixing of levels of taste and culture as had characterised Vanity Fair. While the humour and literary comment of Vanity Fair were continued, the distinctive mixture of high and low, of glossy and intellectual, was lost.

We may in fact speculate that the publishing successes of the late twenties and thirties prospered precisely because they specialised. Time and Reader's Digest appealed to those who wanted pre-digested information; Life won its public with photography;

the "intellectual" magazines offered serious comment and analysis. The various levels of taste and concern had re-established themselves, and a compendium of all levels, like Vanity Fair, could no longer survive.

Certainly the later careers of Vanity Fair editorial staff members testify to this splitting of concerns, this re-establishment of levels of taste and concern. Edmund Wilson, whose first job was with Vanity Fair, never again worked for a magazine which included among its concerns popular culture or entertainment, and while he resisted the pressures to become an academic critic, he did concern himself with intellectual and theoretical concerns, and gradually became the most traditionally bookish of the Vanity Fair alumni. Dorothy Parker, who also started her career at Vanity Fair, became a popular humorist and wit, and spent much of her writing time in Hollywood, the new employer of those concerned with the creation of cultural images.

Helen Brown Norden later married a high-ranking union organiser, like Wilson becoming involved in the Marxism which attracted so many of the American intellectuals in the thirties, and moved on to a career as a free-lance magazine writer, primarily for Esquire, for whom she still contributes articles of general comment on the cultural and social scene. Gilbert Seldes continued his concern with popular culture, and became a noted critic and analyst of radio and movies. Aldous Huxley abandoned the general cultural criticism which he did for Vanity Fair, devoting himself to the creation of literary works, and also spent some time in

Hollywood as a screenwriter.

A suggestive career was that of Clare Boothe Brokaw. After her departure from Vanity Fair, she was for a time a glamour-girl writer in the thirties; the best known of her products from this period was The Women, a witty but superficial play which became a very successful movie. After her marriage to Henry Luce, she turned to politics, eventually becoming a Congresswoman and later U.S. Ambassador to Italy. Clare Boothe's career may be taken as suggestive of the shift in magazine function and social alignment which began in the thirties and continued to the present day in America.

What this realignment consisted of, most fundamentally, was a shift in power and authority from things cultural and literary to matters journalistic and informational. This assertion must, by its general nature, remain speculative, but may be drawn from the complex of intellectual, social, and economic forces which coexisted in the period of the twenties in America, and is certainly borne out by the differences already noted between Joyce's Ulysses and Dos Passos' USA.

Residing in a new civilisation, American writers and intellectuals did not look to European history, as embodied in language and literary convention, for inspiration. For the literary moderns, the attack on accepted concepts of human life was focused on their own particular social myths and ideals. The most prevalent, and most

commented on, was the attack on the "genteel tradition," an attack mounted on both the social and idealistic fronts. As Kazin has shown,¹⁸ the tendency started by the muckraking journalists at the turn of the century was continued by writers as diverse as Lewis and Mencken, who attacked the conventions of traditional morality. And whereas British writers like Woolf and Lawrence translated Freudian insights into literary expression of expanded psychological and sexual reality, American writers like Anderson and Lewis translated the notion of psycho-sexual knowledge into a critique of American small-town life.

Again, where the Great War served for British writers like Ford and Woolf as the symbolic destruction of civilisation and culture, for an American like Hemingway it was less a destruction of all possible human and humane life than a destruction of the old, lying, false ideals, and the possibility still remained of individual, albeit somewhat desperate grace and meaning.

The most interesting of the American moderns were those who, like Fitzgerald and Dos Passos, continued the analysis of American manners and social ideals begun by earlier writers as disparate as Dreiser and Wharton, the analysis of that culture which was the reigning culture of America, the culture of money. Wharton and Dreiser, writing before the period of institutionalised revolt of the post-war period, represented the two perspectives possible for an American in relation to that culture of money: Wharton

revealed the oppression and sterility of the "genteel tradition" of the Old money, Dreiser the energy and dehumanisation of the New. In the post-war period, Fitzgerald and Dos Passos concerned themselves with the effects of that money-culture on American sensibility and life, correctly perceiving that any modern expansion of accepted values in America was intimately bound up with the world of the creation and expenditure of wealth.

By the twenties, the cultural power had passed to the Smart Set, and Fitzgerald set out to examine this group, which established its cultural control through images of glamour and sophistication. He was in the fortunate position of combining the perceptions of those within and outside of this new élite, having the perspectives of both Wharton and Dreiser, the consciousness of the poor boy looking in at the party and of the rich boy dancing inside. A midwestern Catholic, he was also the Glamour Boy of the twenties, and thus able to express the American ambivalence towards the world of rich glamour, a mixture of desire and fascination coupled with resentment and moral outrage.

Dos Passos exposed the mechanics of USA, the corporate and communication structures by which it operated; Fitzgerald probed, the human content of these new structures, the images of desire and wish-fulfilment by which they created and maintained their power. If we may speak of Marx and Freud as the two progenitors of modernism, laying the conceptual framework for the creation of modernism, one dealing with the external and the other with the

internal world, then Dos Passos and Fitzgerald were the two literary moderns who best expressed this expansion in America, Dos Passos in terms of the social and economic organisation of modern America, Fitzgerald in terms of the personal and psychological reality by means of which it enforced and maintained its power.

There is, of course, a profound inner connection and logic to the combination of industrial corporate social and economic organisation with images of glamour and sophisticated display of wealth. It was not accidental that the images by means of which the communications industry was just developing its power in the twenties in America were images of wealth and glamour, rather than, for example, images of sobriety and wisdom. It is not attributable merely to the fact that the new economy of industrial production required mass consumption in order to maintain its growth, although this was certainly a contributing factor.

More importantly, the post-war period in America was a period of conflicting ideals and values, a period of intense conflict with respect to governing social images and myths. The old ideals, as Hemingway demonstrates so forcefully in his works, and as the social novelists like Lewis expressed in more direct and journalistic form, were for many now bankrupt. With the profound social disorientation caused by the war, and the emergence of a new and newly-rich social élite, there was a pressing need for a new set of social images, a new social mythology to explain and define many aspects of American life.

Since the new élite, the Smart Set, was one whose credentials

rested on wealth rather than family or breeding, it made eminent sense that the new images be those of wealth and "tasteful" consumption, of "sophistication" rather than breeding, of wit rather than wisdom, and of glamour rather than learning or accomplishment.

More importantly, these attributes were ones that were well-suited to the new mass media of communication. "Glamour" and wit were easily-transmitted commodities, based more on instant perception than on reflection and accumulated knowledge, and they were ideal for transmission by photographic and journalistic means. They were, in fact, more a matter of external style and image than of internal development and understanding. There is a sense in which it is true that the American equivalent of the European modernist doctrine of "art as absolute" was "style is all." And, translated by the increasingly-powerful communications media of journalism and film, style became little more than image.

In the desperate and anxious search for instant ideals which was a fundamental concern of the American post-war period, ideals to tide society over until the frenzied ranging among possibilities had subsided into new patterns of organisation and tradition, instant images were not only desirable but psychologically necessary. Where the British literary moderns could conduct their process of expansion within the context of a long historical tradition, and without the added upheaval of a new economic élite, the American moderns were in desperate pursuit of some kind of working mythology, one which could make sense of, or at least be useful for, the social and economic conditions of post-war America,

conditions which included a new and uncultivated economic élite, intense economic activity, and the expansion of the most highly-industrialized economy in world history.

The new images of glamour and wealth were thus perfectly suited to these demands, both structurally and in terms of content. Where the content of images of wealth served to provide appropriate images of style for the new class of uncultivated wealth, the instantaneous-image nature of their structure was perfectly suited to dissemination by newspapers and films. And, as Dos Passos perceived and effectively presented in his trilogy, it was these new media of instant-image communication which were the language, the discourse in which resided meaning, of USA.

It is important to note the dual nature of the transformation of modes of discourse in post-war America. The changes of images, the turning to a mythology which represented wealth and glamorous use of that wealth, was a transformation of the content of social discourse, an urban and industrial expansion, a supplanting of the older values of work, sobriety, and sexual restraint, or what came to be known in the twenties as Babbittry or midwestern booboisie. The change in medium itself, the gradual importance of mass media communicative techniques, was a transformation of the structure of discourse, a shift from conventional literary notions of narrative and decorum to discourse based on instantaneous image and the evocation of glamour through iconic use of people and events, through the emblematic use of story and scene. Whereas the literary writers

conducted exploration of these new techniques within the framework of literary form, it was in fact the new mass media themselves, the newspapers and magazines and films, which extended this process.

While this transformation was thus a matter of both content and medium, it is important to note that the newer media actually made use of the older forms within their own structures. Thus, for example, literary and artistic persons were made the subject of the new image-creation, and writers like Fitzgerald and Hemingway became known more for some kind of image of literary glamour which they supposedly represented, than for their books themselves. In the same way, heads of state and political leaders were, for the first time in history, presented as images of style rather than conveyors of substance. Kings, princes, aristocratic playboys, theatre stars, movie stars, writers, classical musicians, were all represented as "stars," and achievement became reduced, in public presentation, to iconic image.

Again, we note the essentially democratic nature of this process, where figures of stature were all presented in the same way, and the essential importance came to be, not so much the specific areas of achievement, but rather the fact of achievement itself, the presence of some quality which could be used to create the image of heroism or "stardom." This was, of course, the beginnings of that essentially industrial marriage of art, politics, and business which later came to be known as "show business," the amalgam of achievement with promotion. What is of importance

for our purposes is the transformative power of this process itself, a transformation from substance to style, from content to image.

While writers like Fitzgerald and Dos Passos could include in their literary creations the presentation of this process and also a critique of it, a magazine like Vanity Fair performed this dual function by separation, encompassing images of style and glamour, and also articles of analysis and criticism. What is of primary importance, however, is that the magazine did combine both functions, that it did analyse and comment on the very process of image-promotion which it itself was engaged in. And, in order to ensure that this element of criticism was present, the magazine devoted much space to satire, to humorous caricatures of wealthy patrons of the arts and ironic presentations of literary and social fads, to parodies of other magazines and newspapers and irreverent criticism of political and cultural developments. With its tongue in its cheek, therefore, Vanity Fair could mock the very processes which it itself engaged in, and thereby provide a critique of the very world which it represented and appealed to.

As already noted, this synthesis of image-presentation and critique was a short-lived one, and the two functions soon separated in the world of magazines and comment. Criticism and analysis became, in the thirties, the domain of the intellectual magazines which were in opposition to established reality, their tendency to Marxism merely making this fact more obvious and dramatic, while images of glamour and social myth became the concern of the mass magazines, and the increasingly powerful movie industry.

The important consequence of this development was the loss of social authority of all those connected with critical analysis of their social and intellectual environment. Relegated to the "intellectual" magazines, criticism lost touch with any possible popular base, for the creative tension between evocation and criticism of popular images was forfeited. Authority shifted, of course, to the image creators and purveyors, to Hollywood and newspapers, and to the magazines which fed off the images and stars created by Hollywood and the newspapers; movies and movie stars provided entertainment and fantasy, and "news" and political stars covered practical concerns.

It is in this sense that Clare Boothe was the most representative, among the Vanity Fair alumni, of later developments in American cultural life. Encompassing both the "glamour" of Hollywood, and the power of journalism through her marriage to Henry Luce, she embodied the possible power available to the media in America, a power consisting of glamorous images and journalistic influence. What was left out, of course, was the element of criticism, the element of distance, the element of judgment and "taste."

The synthesis effected by Vanity Fair, a synthesis in magazine form which paralleled the literary synthesis of a Dos Passos or a Fitzgerald, did not survive the thirties. The combination of image-creation and criticism, the ranging through all of culture in order to formulate new judgments and conclusions, was lost. And, just as American industry prospered by use of the assembly-line technique based on separation of function, so

industrial America prospered by the same technique applied to cultural forms: Hollywood and the mass magazines provided "entertainment," newspapers and newsmagazines provided information, and criticism and synthesis were relegated to the "intellectuals."

It was precisely the program of Vanity Fair to range through all of modern life which gave it its importance, for it was its refusal to be bound by rigid classifications of literary or cultural "levels" of taste which enabled its readers to engage in the modern quest for meaning. As magazines again "specialised" more intensively, criticism became relegated to a clearly-defined class of "intellectual" magazines, thereby losing some of its potential social influence. For its brief moment in time, Vanity Fair played a part in the potentially-liberating climate of American modernism, a potential which remains unfulfilled.

Dos Passos proved to be prophetic, and Fitzgerald an astute analyst: the forces of money prove victorious. The final irony, of course, was that Vanity Fair was incorporated into Vogue. Commerce proved stronger than satire.

- 1916 @ Windy McPherson's Son, Sherwood Anderson
Chicago Poems, Carl Sandburg
Mountain Interval, Robert Frost
General William Booth Enters Heaven,
Vachel Lindsay
Portrait (in New York)
- 1917 @ Heartbreak House
@ Prufrock and Other Observations
@ Ezra Pound: His Metric and Poetry,
T. S. Eliot
@ A Book of Prefaces, H. L. Mencken
@ Cream of the Jest, James Branch Cabell
Renaissance, Edna St. Vincent Millay
Son of the Middle Border, Hamlin Garland
- 1918 @ The Return of the Soldier, Rebecca West
@ Exiles
@ Eminent Victorians
@ Poems of Rupert Brooke
@ My Antonia
@ Pavannes and Divisions, Ezra Pound
@ Cornhuskers, Carl Sandburg
- 1919 @ Night and Day
@ The Moon and Sixpence
@ My Man Jeeves, P. G. Wodehouse
@ The Economic Consequence of Peace,
John Maynard Keynes
@ Winesburg, Ohio
@ Jurgen, James Branch Cabell
- A Heap o' Livin', Edgar A. Guest
Poems, Alan Seeger
Rhymes of a Red Cross Man, Robert Service
* Just David, Eleanor H. Porter
@ * Seventeen, Booth Tarkington
@ * Mr. Britling Sees it Through, H. G. Wells
@ ** When a Man's a Man, Harold Bell Wright
- The Light in the Clearing, Irving Bachelier
Over the Top, Arthur Guy Empey
My Four Years in Germany, James W. Gerard
A Student in Arms, Donald Hawkey
Dear Enemy, Jean Webster
@ God the Invisible King, H. G. Wells
- The Education of Henry Adams
The U.P. Trail, Zane Grey
* The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse,
Vincente Blasco Ibanez
Diet and Health, Lulu Hunt Peters
* Dere Mable, Edward Streeter
@ The Magnificent Ambersons, Booth Tarkington
@ Joan and Peter, H. G. Wells
- A Man for the Ages, Irving Bachelier
@ Jurgen, James Branch Cabell
@ Arrow of Gold, Joseph Conrad
@ The Lamp in the Desert, Ethel Dell
@ The Saint's Progress, John Galsworthy
@ In Flanders Fields and Other Poems,
John D. McCrae
@ The Moon and Sixpence

- 1920
- @ Prejudices: First Series
 - @ Ten Days that Shook the World
 - @ The Theory of the Leisure Class

 - @ Women in Love
 - @ Hugh Selwyn Mauberley
 - @ The Outline of History
 - @ The Sacred Wood
 - @ This Side of Paradise
 - @ Flappers and Philosophers
 - @ The Age of Innocence, Edith Wharton
 - @ Poor White, Sherwood Anderson
 - @ Main Street, Sinclair Lewis
 - @ The Emperor Jones
 - @ Beyond the Horizon, Eugene O'Neill
 - @ Smoke and Steel, Carl Sandburg
 - @ The American Credo, G. J. Nathan and H. L. Mencken
 - @ The Ordeal of Mark Twain, Van Wyck Brooks
 - @ Character and Opinion in the United States, George Santayana

 - 1921
 - @ Chrome Yellow
 - @ Back to Methuselah
 - @ Poems, 1918-21, Ezra Pound
 - @ Queen Victoria, Lytton Strachey
 - @ Sea and Sardinia, D. H. Lawrence
 - @ Three Soldiers
 - @ The Triumph of the Egg, S. Anderson
 - @ Anna Christie
 - @ Collected Poems, E.A. Robinson

 - @ White Shadows in the South Seas, Frederick O'Brien
 - @ An American Idyll, Cornelia Stratton Parker
 - @ Dangerous Days, Mary Roberts Rinehart
 - @ "Same Old Bill, eh Mable!"; Edward Streeter
 - * The Recreation of Brian Kent, Harold Bell Wright

 - @ The Americanization of Edward Bok
 - @ The Valley of Silent Men, James Oliver Curwood
 - @ This Side of Paradise
 - @ Now It Can Be Told, Philip Gibbs
 - * The Man of the Forest, Zane Grey
 - @ The Economic Consequences of Peace
 - @ Main Street
 - @#* The Great Impersonation, E. Phillips Oppenheim
 - @ As You Were, Bill!, Edward Streeter
 - @ Outline of History
 - @ The Age of Innocence

 - * The Brimming Cup, Dorothy Canfield
 - * The Mysterious Rider, Zane Grey
 - #* Maria Chapdelaine, Louis Hémond (First Am. ed.)
 - * The Sheik, Edith Hull
 - * If Winter Comes, A. S. M. Hutchinson
 - @ Simon Called Peter, Robert Keable
 - @ The Mind in the Making, James Harvey Robinson
 - @ Scaramouche, Rafael Sabatini
 - @ Queen Victoria, Lytton Strachey
 - @ Story of Mankind, Hendrik W. Van Loon
 - @#* The Age of Innocence

- 1922
- @ Ulysses (In Paris)
 @ Jacob's Room
 @ Aaron's Rod
 @ The Forsyte Saga
 @ The Waste Land (In the Dial)
 @ Swann's Way (Engl. trans.)
 @ Loyalties, Galsworthy
 @ Fantasia of the Unconscious
 @ The Beautiful and Damned
 @ Tales of the Jazz Age
 @ Babbitt
 @ The Hairy Ape
 @ Civilization in the United States
 ed. Harold Stearns
 @ The Enormous Room, e. e. cummings
 @ Prejudices, H. L. Mencken
- 1923
- @ Kangaroo
 @ Antic Hay
 @ Men Like Gods, H. G. Wells
 @ Rinceyman Steps, Arnold Bennett
 @ Told by an Idiot, Rose Macauley
 @ Studies in Classic American Literature
 @ Landmarks of French Literature,
 Lytton Strachey
 @ A Lost Lady, Willa Cather
 @ Black Armour, Elinor Wylie
 @ The Adding Machine, Elmer Rice
 @ Harmonium, Wallace Stevens
 @ New Hampshire, Robert Frost
 @ Spring and All, William Carlos Williams
 @ Tulips and Chimneys, e. e. cummings
 @ Collected Poems, Vachel Lindsay
- Self-Mastery Through Conscious
 Auto-suggestion, Emile Coué
 @ River's End, James Oliver Curwood
 @ Forsyte Saga
 @ The Covered Wagon, Emerson Hough
 @ * Babbitt, Sinclair Lewis
 @ Etiquette: The Blue Book of Social Usage,
 Emily Post
 @ Captain Blood, Rafael Sabatini
 @ Outline of Science, John Arthur Thomson
- @ * Black Oxen, Gertrude Atherton
 @ Damaged Souls, Camaliel Bradford
 @ Flaming Youth, Warner Fabian
 @ Life of Christ, Giovanni Papini
 @ * The Sea Hawk, Rafael Sabatini
 @ The Midlander, Booth Tarkington
 @ New Decalogue of Science, Albert Wiggam

- 1924
- @ The Meaning of Relativity, Albert Einstein
- @ A Passage to India
- @ The Inimitable Jeeves
- @ The White Monkey, Galsworthy
- @ The Green Hat, Michael Arlen
- @ Saint Joan
- @ Juno and the Paycock
- @ When We Were Very Young
- @ Speculations, T. E. Hulme
- @ In our time (in Paris)
- @ Billy Budd
- @ Desire Under the Elms
- @ All God's Chillun Got Wings
- @ What Price Glory?, Maxwell Anderson and
Laurence Stallings
- @ Observations, Marianne Moore
- @ Chills and Fever, John Crowe Ransom
- @ The Seven Lively Arts, Gilbert Seldes
- 1925
- @ Mrs. Dalloway
- @ Those Barren Leaves, Aldous Huxley
- @ Mrs. Warren's Profession
- @ Hay Fever and Fallen Angels, Noel Coward
- @ Poems, 1909-1925, T. S. Elliot
- @ Collected Poems, H. D.
- @ The Common Reader I
- @ The Great Gatsby
- @ In Our Time (N.Y.)
- @ Manhattan Transfer
- @ An American Tragedy
- @ Arrowsmith, Sinclair Lewis
- @ The Making of Americans
- @ Dark Laughter, Sherwood Anderson
- @ * The Green Hat, Michael Arlen
- @ * So Big, Edna Ferber
- @ The Plastic Age, Percy Marks
- @ Ariel, André Maurois
- @ When We Were Very Young
- @ * The Little French Girl, Anne Douglas Sedgwick
- @# Jeeves
- @ * Glorious Apollo, E. Barrington
- @ The Man Nobody Knows, Bruce Barton
- @ Sorrell and Son, Warwick Deeping
- @ Why We Behave Like Human Beings, George A. Dorsey
- @ * The Private Life of Helen of Troy, John Erskine
- @ Soundings, Arthur Hamilton Gibbs
- @ The Royal Road to Romance, Richard Halliburton
- @ * The Constant Nymph, Margaret Kennedy
- @ Arrowsmith, Sinclair Lewis
- @ * Gentlemen Prefer Blondes, Anita Loos
- @ * Beau Geste, Christopher Wren

- 1926
- @ The Professor's House, Willa Cather
 - @ Barren Ground, Ellen Glasgow
 - Roan Stallion, Robinson Jeffers
 - In the American Grain
 - Democracy and Leadership, Irving Babbitt
- 1926
- @ The Plumed Serpent
 - @ The Informer, Liam O'Flaherty
 - @ The Silver Spoon, Galsworthy
 - @ Winnie the Pooh
 - The Plough and the Stars
 - Satirical Poems, S. Sassoon
 - Seven Pillars of Wisdom
 - History of England, G. M. Trevelyan
 - Decline of the West (Engl. trans.)
 - The Sun Also Rises
 - Soldier's Pay
 - All The Sad Young Men
 - The Cabala, Thornton Wilder
 - The Great God Brown
 - White Buildings, Hart Crane
 - Notes on Democracy, H. L. Mencken
- 1927
- @ To The Lighthouse
 - @ The Magic Mountain (Engl. trans.)
 - @ Men Without Women
 - The Bridge of San Luis Rey
 - Elmer Gantry
 - Death Comes for the Archbishop
 - Lazarus Laughed
 - Marco Millions
 - Main Currents in American Thought, Parrington
 - The Rise of American Civilization, Charles and Mary Beard
- @ The Chinese Parrot, Earl Derr Biggers
 - The Murder of Roger Ackroyd, Agatha Christie
 - Microbe Hunters, Paul De Kruif
 - * Sorrell and Son, Warwick Deeping
 - The Story of Philosophy, Will Durant
 - # Topper, Thorne Smith
 - The Benson Murder Case, S. S. Van Dine
 - Beau Sabreur, Percival Christopher Wren
- Rise of American Civilization, Charles and Mary Beard
 - Jalna, Mazo de la Roche
 - The Glorious Adventure, Richard Halliburton
 - The Bellamy Trial, Frances Noyes Hart
 - Trader Horn, Aloysius A. Horn and Ethelreda Lewis
 - @ * Elmer Gantry
 - We, Charles Lindberg
 - Count Luckner, the Sea Devil, Lowell J. Thomas
 - The Canary Murder Case, S. S. Van Dine
 - * The Bridge of San Luis Rey

- 1928 @ Lady Chatterley's Lover (Italy) @ Behind That Curtain, Earl Derr Biggers
 @ Point Counter Point John Brown's Body
 @ Orlando Skyward, Richard Byrd
 @ Decline and Fall * Bad Girl, Vina Delmar
 @ The Well of Loneliness, Radclyffe Hall Art of Thinking, Abbé Ernest Dimmet
 @ The House at Pooh Corner
 @ The Intelligent Woman's Guide to Socialism
 @ Memoirs of a Fox-Hunting Man, S. Sassoon
 @ John Brown's Body, Stephen Vincent Benét
 @ The Hamlet, Archibald MacLeish
 @ Strange Interlude
- 1929 @ Lady Chatterley's Lover (Paris) Young Man of Manhattan, Katharine Bush
 @ Death of a Hero, Richard Aldington #* The Magnificent Obsession, J. Lloyd C. Douglas
 @ Whiteoaks, Mazo de la Roche The Mansions of Philosophy, Will Durant
 @ All Quiet on the Western Front @ Red Harvest, Dashiell Hammett
 @ The Apple Cart @ Dodsworth
 @ Bitter Sweet, Noel Coward * All Quiet on the Western Front
 @ Marriage and Morals, Bertrand Russell * The Bishop Murder Case, S. S. Van Dine
 @ A Room of One's Own
 @ Goodbye to All That, Robert Graves
 @ The Sexual Life of Savages, Malinowski
 @ A Farewell to Arms
 @ The Sound and the Fury
 @ Sartoris
 @ Look Homeward, Angel
 @ Dodsworth, Sinclair Lewis
 @ The First Mrs. Fraser, St. John Ervine
 @ They Stood to Folly, Ellen Glasgow
 @ Street Scene, Elmer Rice
 @ The Modern Temper, Joseph Wood Krutch
 @ Middletown, R. S. and H. M. Lynd
- 1930 Vile Bodies Trent's Last Case, E. C. Bentley

	The Stamboul Train, Graham Greene		Peril at End House, Agatha Christie
@	Sweeney Agonistes		What We Live By, Abbé Ernest Dimmet
@	The Common Reader II		Forgive Us Our Trespasses, Lloyd C. Douglas
@	Letters of D. H. Lawrence, ed. Aldous Huxley		The Fountain, Charles Morgan
@	Light in August	#	Life Begins at Forty, Walter B. Pitkin
@	1919		The Egyptian Cross Mystery, Ellery Queen
@	The Sheltered Life, Ellen Glasgow		
@	Young Lonigan		
@	Tobacco Road		
	Conquistador, Archibald MacLeish		
	Mark Twain's America, Bernard DeVoto		
1933	Down and Out in London and Paris	#*	Anthony Adverse, Hervey Allen
	Love on the Dole, Walter Greenwood		God's Little Acre
@	The Shape of Things to Come, H. G. Wells	#	Little Man, What Now?, Hans Fallada
@	Winner Take Nothings, Hemingway		The Case of the Sulky Girl, Erle Stanley Gardner
	Miss Lonelyhearts, Nathanael West		"
	God's Little Acre	@/#*	The Case of the Velvet Legs,
@	Both Your Houses, Maxwell Anderson		The Case of the Lucky Legs,
@	Mary of Scotland		Lost Horizon, James Hilton
			Lamb in His Bosom, Caroline Miller
1934	A Handful of Dust		Stars Fell on Alabama, Carl Carmer
	Burmese Days	@	Mary Peters, Mary Ellen Chase
	I, Claudius	@	The Life of Our Lord, Charles Dickens
@	Claudius the God	#	Robert E. Lee, Douglas Southall Freeman
@	The Woman Who Had Imagination, H. E. Bates	@ *	The Case of the Curious Bride, Erle Stanley Gardner
@	Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson, E. M. Forster		Good-bye Mr. Chips, James Hilton
@	18 Poems, Dylan Thomas		Victoria Regina, Laurence Housman
@	Tender is the Night		You Must Relax, Edmund Jacobson
@	A Cool Million	#	The Adventures of Ellery Queen, Ellery Queen
@	The Young Manhood of Studs Lonigan		The Chinese Orange Mystery,
@	Journey to the End of the Night	@	Forty Days of Musa Dagh, Franz V. Werfel
@	Joseph and His Brothers, Thomas Mann		While Rome Burns, Alexander Woollcott

- 1935
- Man's Fate
@ And Quiet Flows the Don
- Mr. Norris Changes Trains,
@ Christopher Isherwood
- Murder in the Cathedral
@ Seven Pillars of Wisdom
OF Time and the River
- Tortilla Flat
@ It Can't Happen Here, S. Lewis
- The Darling Young Man on the Flying
@ Trapeze
- Waiting for Lefty
@ Awake and Sing
- Winterset, Maxwell Anderson
@
- 1936
- Ulysses (London)
@ Eyeless in Gaza
- Keep the Aspidistra Flying
@ Gun for Sale, Graham Greene
- Collected Poems, T. S. Eliot
@ Abinger Harvest, E. M. Forster
- Absalom! Absalom!
@ The Big Money
- In Dubious Battle
@
- So Red the Rose, Stark Young
- Man the Unknown, Alexis Carrel
Life With Father, Clarence Day
* Green Light, Lloyd C. Douglas
- The Case of the Caretaker's Cat,
Erle Stanley Gardner
- The Case of the Counterfeit Eye,
Erle Stanley Gardner
- It Can't Happen Here, S. Lewis
@ Take It Easy!, Walter B. Pitkin
- The Spanish Cape Mystery, Ellery Queen
@ The Last Puritan, George Santayana
- Of Time and the River
@ Woolcott Reader, Alexander Woolcott
- Wake Up and Live!, Dorothea Brande
Flowering of New England, Van Wyck Brooks
How to Win Friends and Influence People
White Banners, Lloyd C. Douglas
- * Drums Along the Mohawk, W. D. Edmonds
- # The Case of the Stuttering Bishop,
Erle Stanley Gardner
- Inside Europe, John Gunther
Live Alone and Like It, Marjorie Hillis
Lady in the Morgue, Jonathan Latimer
Return to Religion, Henry C. Link
#* Gone With the Wind, Margaret Mitchell
- The Rubber Band, Rex Stout

Sources: British and American Fiction, Drama and Prose from:

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"Chronology of Events," in Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane, eds., Modernism: 1890-1930, Pelican Guides to European Literature (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1976), pp. 595-612.

Bestsellers from:

James D. Hart, The Popular Book: A History of America's Literary Taste (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1961), pp. 312-315.

Suzanne Ellery Greene, Books for Pleasure: Popular Fiction 1914-1945 (Bowling Green Univ. Press, 1974), Appendix A, pp. 162-167.

Key: # indicates a cumulative bestseller, total sales in all editions, at least one per cent of the U.S. population, from Frank Luther Mott, Golden Multitudes (New York, 1947).

minimum sales: 1913-1919	900,000
1920-1929	1,000,000
1930-1936	1,200,000

* indicates one of top-ten bestsellers in given year, sales of hardback edition, not including book club or reprint editions, from yearly lists of Publisher's Weekly, compiled in Alice Payne Hackett, 60 Years of Bestsellers (New York, 1956).

@ indicates authors reviewed in Vanity Fair.

APPENDIX B

Books Considered in Regular Book Review Features

September, 1913

E. F. Benson	<u>The Weaker Vessel</u>
Willa (Sibert) Cather	<u>O Pioneers!</u>
Winston Churchill	<u>The Inside of the Cup</u>
James Oliver Curwood	<u>Isobel</u>
Reginald Wright Kauffman	<u>Running Sands</u>
Richard Pryce	<u>Jezebel</u>
George Santayana	<u>Winds of Doctrine</u>

October, 1913

Ellen Glasgow	<u>Virginia</u>
Henry Sydnor Harrison	<u>V. V.'s Blue Eyes</u>
Maurice Hewlett	<u>Love of Proserpine</u>
Anne Douglas Sedgwick	<u>The Nest</u>
C. N. and A. M. Williamson	<u>The Port of Adventure</u>

November, 1913

Winthrop Alden	<u>The Lost Million</u>
Geraldine Bonner	<u>The Book of Evelyn</u>
Frederick S. Isham	<u>Aladdin From Broadway</u>
Owen Johnson	<u>Murder in Any Degree</u>
Jack London	<u>John Barleycorn</u>
Arthur B. Reeve	<u>The Poisoned Pen</u>
George K. Styles	<u>The Dragoman</u>

December, 1913

Witter Bynner	<u>Tiger</u>
Arthur Conan Doyle	<u>The Poison Belt</u>
Justus Miles Forman	<u>The Opening Door</u>
D. H. Lawrence	<u>Sons and Lovers</u>

January, 1914

J. A. Chaloner
 Robert W. Chambers
 Robert Hitchens
 George Barr McCutcheon
 Meredith Nicholson

February, 1914

Cyril Harcourt
 Helen Huntington
 Vaughan Kester
 Charles Marriott
 Edith Wharton

March, 1914

Elsie de Wolfe
 Gertrude Hall
 Arthur Davison Ficke

April, 1914

Hall Caine
 Maria Thompson Davies
 Louis Joseph Vance
 Mrs. Humphrey Ward

May, 1914

Eleanor Hallowell Abbott
 E. F. Benson
 Coningsby Dawson
 Robert Dunn
 W. B. Maxwell

June, 1914

Robert Hugh Benson
 William R. Castle, Jr.
 Sir Edward Cook
 Sinclair Lewis

Scorpio

The Business of Life
The Way of Ambition
A Fool and his Money
Otherwise Phyllis

The World's Daughter

Marsh Lights

The Hand of the Mighty

The Wondrous Wife

The Custom of the Country

The House in Good Taste

The Truth About Camilla

Mr. Faust

The Woman Thou Gavest Me

The Tinder Box

Joan Thursday

The Corvston Family

The White Linen Nurse

Dodo's Daughter

The Garden Without Walls

The Youngest World

The Devil's Garden

Initiation

The Pillar of Sands

The Life of Florence Nightingale

Our Mr. Wrenn

Frank Norris
 Kathleen Norris
 Arthur Stanwood Pier
 Simeon Strunsky
 Charles Vale
 Anne Warwick

July, 1914

Joseph Conrad /
 Leona Dalrymple
 William J. Locke
 Onions, Oliver
 H. G. Wells

August, 1914

Will Levington Comfort
 Theodore Dreiser
 Gilbert Parker
 Mary J. H. Skrine
 Hugh Walpole

September, 1914

Arnold Bennett
 Frank Danby
 Jack London
 Charles Marriott
 Alice Duer Miller
 Gouverneur Morris
 May Sinclair

October, 1914

Earl Derr Biggers
 Joseph Hergesheimer
 Robert Herrick
 Albert Hickman
 W. Douglas Newton

Vandover and the Brute

The Treasure

The Women We Marry

Post Impressions

John Ward, M.D.

Victory Law

Chance

The Green Van

The Fortunate Youth

The Story of Louie

Social Forces in England and America

Midstream

The Titan

You Never Know Your Luck

Bedesman

The Duchess of Wrexhe

The Price of Love

Full Swing

The Strength of the Strong

What a Man Wants

Things

The Incandescent Lily

The Return of the Prodigal

Love Insurance

The Lay Anthony

Clark's Field

Canadian Nights

War

November, 1914

Gertrude Atherton
 Basil King
 Louise Kennedy Mabie
 E. Phillips Oppenheim
 Ralph D. Paine
 John Trevena

December, 1914

J. D. Beresford
 A. S. M. Hutchinson
 Jennette Lee
 Duke Litta Pompeo
 Anne Douglas Sedgwick

January, 1915

H(ector) H(ugh) Munro
 Meredith Nicholson
 May Sinclair
 Netta Syrett
 Edward C. Venable

February, 1915

Samuel Hopkins Adams
 Florence Barclay
 George A. Birmingham (pseud.)
 Samuel G. Blythe
 H. G. Wells

March, 1915

John Helston
 Fannie Hurst
 Compton Mackenzie
 Harvey J. O'Higgins
 E. Phillips Oppenheim
 Barry Pain

Perch of the DevilThe Letter of the ContractThe Lights Are BrightThe Vanished MessengerThe Wall BetweenGraniteThe House in Demetrius RoadThe Clean HeartThe Woman in the AlcoveMonsignor VillarosaThe EncounterBeasts and Super-BeastsThe PoetThe Three SistersThe Jam QueenPierre VintonThe ClarionThe Wall of PartitionFrom Dublin to ChicagoThe FakersThe Wife of Sir Isaac HarmanThracian SeaJust Around the CornerSinister StreetThe Adventures of Detective BarneyMr. Grex of Monte CarloStories in Grey

Berta Ruck

April, 1915

G(ilbert) K(eith) Chesterton

James Oliver Curwood

W. L. George

Booth Tarkington

Horace Annesley Vachell

May, 1915

George Agnew Chamberlain

Philip Curtiss

Arthur Conan Doyle

Gouverneur Morris

Hugh Walpole

H. G. Wells

June, 1915

Gilbert Cannon

Joseph Conrad

Maurice Hewlett

Ernest Poole

Anne Warner

July, 1915

Katherine Fullerton Gerould

Henry Sydnor Harrison

Eden Phillpotts

August, 1915

Winston Churchill

William J. Locke

John Roland

Robert Steele

Arthur Train

Stories Without Tears

His Official Fiancée

The Wisdom of Father Brown

God's Country - and the Woman

The Second Blooming

The Turmoil

Quinney's

Through Stained Glass

The Ladder

The Valley of Fear

The Seven Darlings

The Wooden Horse

Bealby

Young Earnest

Victory

A Lover's Tale

The Harbor

The Taming of Amorette

The Great Tradition

Angela's Business

Brunel's Tower

A Far Country

Jaffery

The Good Shepherd

One Man

The Man Who Rocked the Earth

September, 1915

E. F. Benson
J. D. Beresford

Lord Dunsany
Cosmo Hamilton
Arthur Stringer
H. G. Wells

October, 1915

Madison Grant
Lord Frederic Hamilton

(William) Somerset Maugham
Marmaduke Pickthall
Mary Roberts Rinehart
Gene Stratton-Porter

November, 1915

George A. Birmingham (pseud.)
Richard Harding Davis
John Galsworthy
Mrs. John Lane
A(lan) A(lexander) Milne
Howard Vincent O'Brien
Henry De Vere Stacpoole

December, 1915

Theodore Dreiser
Edna Ferber
Maurice Hewlitt
Hugh Walpole
H. G. Wells

January, 1916

James Branch Cabell
C. M. Cresswell

Arundel

A Candidate For Truth
The Early History of Jacob Stahl
Fifty-one Tales
The Miracle of Love
The Hand of Peril
Boon: The Mind of the Race

The Passing of a Great Race
The Holiday Adventures of
Mr. P. J. Davenant

Of Human Bondage
Tales From Five Chimneys

K
Michael O'Halloran

Minnie's Bishop
Somewhere in France
The Freelands
Maria Again
Happy Days
Thirty
The Pearl Fishers

The "Genius"
Emma McChesney and Co.
The Little Iliad
The Golden Calf
The Research Magnificent

The Rivet in Grandfather's Neck
The Making and Breaking of Almonson

Jeffrey Farnol

Anthony Hope

Stephen Leacock

Compton Mackenzie

Richard Pryce

February, 1916

Arnold Bennett

Jack London

William Hamilton Osborne

Netta Syrett

Louis Joseph Vance

March, 1916

Joseph Conrad

W. L. George

Lord Frederic Hamilton

Stanislas Przybyszewski

Henry Milner Rideout

I. A. R. Wylie

April, 1916

Rupert Hughes

Edwin Lefevre

Belle L. Maniates

Gertrude Atherton

Bartimeus (pseud. Lewis Ritchie)

Geraldine Bonner

Nathan Kussy

James Stevens

Marion Ames Taggart

June, 1916

Ivor Brown

Donn Byrne

W(illiam) H(enry) Hudson

Beltane the Smith

A Young Man's Year

Moonbeams from the Larger Lunacy

Plasher's Mead

David Renstephen

These Twain

The Star Rover

The Boomerang

The Victorians

Nobody

Within the Tides

The Stranger's Wedding

Some Further Adventures of
Mr. P. J. Davenant

Homo Sapiens

White Tiger

The Temple of Dawn

Clipped Wings

H. R.

Mildew Manse

Mr. Belfame

A Tall Ship

The Black Eagle Mystery

The Abvss

The Crock of Gold

Hollyhock House

The Years of Plenty

Stories Without Women

Green Mansions

Marmaduke Pickthall	<u>The House of War</u>
Berta Ruck	<u>The Boy with Wings</u>
P(elham) G(renville) Wodehouse	<u>Uneasy Money</u>
<u>July, 1916</u>	
Charles Francis Adams	<u>Autobiography</u>
<u>December, 1916</u>	
Elsie Clewes Parson	<u>Social Freedom</u>
<u>June, 1917</u>	
Mary MacLane	<u>I, Mary MacLane</u>
<u>July, 1917</u>	
Henri Barbusse	<u>Le Feu</u>
Richardson Wright	<u>The Russians - An Interpretation</u>
<u>September, 1917</u>	
Fran Meisel-Hess	<u>The Sexual Crisis</u>
<u>October, 1917</u>	
Lord Dunsany	<u>The Gods of Pegana</u>
<u>April, 1918</u>	
J. P. Bullock	<u>Sleep, Its Cause and Cure</u>
<u>April, 1919</u>	
Booth Tarkington	<u>The Magnificent Ambersons</u>
Thorstein Veblen	<u>The Theory of the Leisure Class</u>
<u>July, 1921</u>	
Lytton Strachey	<u>Queen Victoria</u>
<u>October, 1921</u>	
Stephen Vincent Benét	<u>The Beginning of Wisdom</u>
John Dos Passos	<u>Three Soldiers</u>
F. Scott Fitzgerald	<u>The Beautiful and Damned</u>
<u>May, 1922</u>	
Walter De La Mare	<u>Memoirs of a Midget</u>
John Dos Passos	<u>Rosinante to the Road Again</u>

July, 1922

Maxwell Bodenheim

e. e. cummings

Introducing IronyThe Enormous RoomSeptember, 1922

Edith Wharton

Ernest W. Longfellow

The Glimpses of the MoonRandom MemoriesOctober, 1922

Clive Bell

Willa Cather

Adelaide Crapsey

Since CézanneOne of OursPoemsNovember, 1922

F. Scott Fitzgerald

Eugene O'Neill

Anatole France

Tales of the Jazz AgePlaysLa Vie en FleurDecember, 1922

Sinclair Lewis

H. L. Mencken

James Huneker

Guy de Maupassant

Octave Mirbeau

BabbittPrejudicesLettersCollected WorksCalvarieJanuary, 1923

Max Beerbohm

T. S. Eliot

Philip Guedalla

A. E. Houseman

Rossetti and his CircleThe Waste LandThe Second EmpireLast PoemsFebruary, 1923

John Dos Passos

Raymond Holden

Mrs. James T. Fields

Mrs. Patrick Campbell

A Pushcart at the CurbGranite and AlabasterMemoirs of a HostessMy Life and LettersMarch, 1923

Charles Rumford Walker

Steel

John V. A. Weaver

Louise Pound, ed.

Ernest Boyd

Kenneth Macgowan

April, 1923

Ivan Bunin

Edward Hutton

Abélard

May, 1923

Sherwood Anderson

Virginia Woolf

Hilaire Belloc

June, 1923

F. Scott Fitzgerald

Joris Karl Huysmans

Raymond Mortimer and Hamish Miles

Gertrude Stein

July, 1923

Thomas Boyd

Elinor Wylie

Stephen Vincent Benét

Edward Arlington Robinson

August, 1923

Richard A. Garnett

Jean Cocteau

J. W. Mackail

Lytton Strachey

September, 1923

Vachel Lindsay

Zona Gale

Raymond Radiguet

Gamaliel Bradford

Finders

American Ballads and Songs

Ireland's Literary Renaissance

Continental Stagecraft

The Gentleman from San Francisco

Life of Petro Aretino

Autobiography

Many Marriages

Jacob's Room

On

The Vegetable

Against the Grain

The Oxford Circus

Geography and Plays

Through the Wheat

Black Armour

The Ballad of William Sycamore

Roman Barthalow

Lady Into Fox

Le Grand Ecart

Virgil

Landmarks of French Literature

Collected Poems

Faint Perfume

Le Diable au Corps

Damaged Souls

October, 1923

Albert Einstein

Waldo Frank

E. M. Forster

November, 1923

Louise Bogan

John Mills

Carl Van Vechten

Harold Nicholson

December, 1931

John Riddell

November, 1932

D. H. Lawrence

Liveright (publishers)

H. L. Mencken

H(endrick) W(illem) Van Loon

January, 1934

Noel Coward

Dashiell Hammett

(William) Somerset Maugham

J. B. Priestley

Elinor Wylie

February, 1934

David Burnham

Robert Coates

Sinclair Lewis

Sean O'Faolain

Anne Parrish

Albert Parry

Jules Romains

March, 1934

Louis Adamic

The Meaning of RelativityHolidayPharos and PharillonBody of this DeathWithin the AtomThe Blind Bow-BoyTennysonBalancing the BooksLady Chatterley's LoverMore Merry-Go-RoundMaking a PresidentVan Loon's GeographyPlay ParadeThe Thin ManAh KingAlbert Goes ThroughCollected ProseWedding SongYesterday's BurdensWorld of ArtA Nest of Simple FolkSea LevelTattooPassion's PilgrimsThe Native's Return

Maxwell Anderson
 Phyllis Bentley
 Ivan Bunin
 James Branch Cabell
 James M. Cain
 Clemence Dane
 James T. Farrell
 Hugo Gellert
 Charles Phillips

Edith M. Stenn
 Hugh Talbot

April, 1934

Geoffrey Dennis
 Jane Harvey Houlson
 Matthew Josephson
 Gina Kans
 William March
 G. B. Stern
 L. C. N. Stone
 Phil Stong

May, 1934

Edgar Calmer
 Helen Grace Carlisle
 Louis-Ferdinand Céline
 Roy S. Durstine
 Roy Helton
 Elizabeth Jenkins
 Sylvia Paul Jerman
 Eric Linklater
 Romo Nijinsky
 John Cowper Powys
 Tess Slesinger
 Tiffany Thayer

Mary of Scotland
A Modern Tragedy
The Well of Days
Smirt
The Postman Always Rings Twice
Come of Age
The Young Manhood of Studs Lonigan
Karl Marx' "Capital" in Lithographs
Paderewski, The Story of a Modern
Immortal
Men Are Clumsy Lovers
Gentlemen - The Regiment!

Bloody Mary's
Blue Haze
The Robber Barons
Dark Angel
Come In at the Door
Summer's Play
German Family
Village Tale

Beyond the Street
The Wife
Journey to the End of the Night
Red Thunder
Mitchey Tilley
Harriet
Set Free
Magnus Merriman
Nijinsky
Weymouth Sands
The Unpossessed
Dr. Arnoldi

- Alexander Woollcott
 Leave Zugsmith
June, 1934
 Charles Dickens
 James Joyce
July, 1934
 James Hilton
 Ralph Y. Hopton
 Thomas Mann
 T. S. Tribling
August, 1934
 E. M. Forster
 André Malraux
 Mikhail Sholokhov
September, 1934
 A. P. Herbert
 Damon Runyon
October, 1934
 W. R. Burnett
 Josephine Johnson
November, 1934
 Nancy Hale
 R. H. Bruce Lockhart
 Ignazio Silone
August, 1935
 James Hanley
 Robert Rylee
October, 1935
 A. J. Cronin
 Ellen Glasgow
 Stefan Zweig
- While Rome Burns
The Reckoning
The Life of Christ
Ulysses
Goodbye, Mr. Chips!
Bed Manners
Joseph and His Brothers, vol. 1
Unfinished Cathedral
Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson
Man's Fate
And Quiet Flows the Don
Holy Deadlock
Blue Place Special
Goodbye to the Past
Now in November
Never Any More
Retreat from Glory
Fontamara
The Furys
Deep Dark River
The Stars Look Down
The Vein of Iron
Mary Queen of Scotland and the Isles

APPENDIX C

Edmund Wilson's Articles in Vanity Fair

- March 1920, p.-49 "The Inevitable Literary Biography"
A review of Gilbert Muirhead's Life of Edmund Moore Gresham, published privately in 1920 and by the Exotic Press (N.Y.), in 1925.
- May 1920, p. 59 "Brieux's Les Américains chez nous"
A review of Brieux's play, produced at the Paris Odéon on January 9, 1920.
- August 1920, p. 4 "The Progress of Psychoanalysis"
An account of psychoanalysis, including a review of Freud's An Introduction to Psychoanalysis.
- September 1920, p. 65 "The Gulf in American Literature"
An account of the problems facing the American artist, with special reference to Henry James' Letters.
- October 1920, p. 65 "Things I Consider Overrated"
- November 1920, p. 65 "The Anarchists of Taste"
- December 1920, p. 59 "Things I Consider Overrated"
- March 1921, p. 38 "Things I Consider Underrated"
- April 1921, p. 44 "The New Englander Abroad"
A review of Hawthorne's diary of his trip to France and Italy.
- February 1922, p. 49 "The Aesthetic Upheaval in France"
A discussion of French aesthetic interest in American phenomena (jazz, film, architecture), and its relation to American culture.
- March 1922, p. 48 "The Ballets of Jean Cocteau"
- March 1923, p. 56 "Diplomacy in the Home," by T. Fordyce Wilton
- September 1923, p. 63 "A Guide to Gertrude Stein"

- October 1923, p. 63 "The Real Religion of the Witches"
- January 1924, p. 63 "Wanted: A City of the Spirit"
- "Books of the Month"
- September 1922, p. 19 Edith Wharton, The Glimpses of the Moon
 ". . . perhaps her least important novel . . ."
- Ernest W. Longfellow, Random Memories
 (The son of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, he was an artist who studied in Paris).
- October 1922, p. 26 Clive Bell, Since Cézanne
 Willa Cather, One of Ours
 Adelaide Crapsey, Poems
 "The handful of poems that she left are among the best things in American poetry."
- René Maran, Batouala
 (an English translation of a French depiction of life in Central Africa; Maran was a Negro writing in France, "who has brought to the savage life he describes the traditional method of the French novelists . . .")
- November 1922, p. 24 F. Scott Fitzgerald, Tales of the Jazz Age
 Eugene O'Neill, Plays
 Anatole France, La Vie en Fleur (Memoirs)
- December 1922, p. 25 Sinclair Lewis, Babbitt
 H. L. Mencken, Prejudices
 James Huneker, Letters
 Guy de Maupassant, Collected Works
 ". . . underrated in America . . ."
- Octave Mirbeau, Calvarie
 "If he had only had more restraint (sic), he might have been the Swift of our time."

January 1923, p. 17

Philip Guedalla, The Second Empire

Max Beerbohm, Rossetti and His Circle
(Guedalla and Beerbohm are of "the School of Strachey," in their "ironic anatomy of the nineteenth century.")

A. E. Houseman, Last Poems

". . . There is nothing new to say about him, because he has attempted nothing new. There is nothing to do but to note once again one's admiration for a classic."

T. S. Eliot, The Waste Land

February 1923, p. 22

John Dos Passos, A Pushcart at the Curb

Raymond Holden, Granite and Alabaster

Mrs. James T. Fields, Memoirs of a Hostess
(The era of Holmes and Hawthorne).

Mrs. Patrick Campbell, My Life and Letters
(Her correspondence with George Bernard Shaw).

March 1923, p. 11

Charles Rumford Walker, Steel

". . . a sort of Three Soldiers of the steel industry. . . ."

John V. A. Weaver, Finders (poetry)

Louise Pound, ed., American Ballads and Songs

(" . . . makes one eager for" a collection of American popular songs, including Negro blues and vaudeville).

Ernest Boyd, Ireland's Literary Renaissance

Prof. Stuart Sherman, a pamphlet on
Sinclair Lewis

Kenneth Macgowan, Continental Stagecraft

April 1923, p. 11

Ivan Bunin, The Gentleman from San Francisco

". . . one of the most polished and effective satires yet written upon the plutocratic civilization of the twentieth century . . ." (The translation from the Russian was finalized by D. H. Lawrence).

Edward Hutton, Life of Petro Aretino
A depiction of the "anarchy of ideals
in the Renaissance," better than the
anarchy of ideals of the twentieth century
because "more robust" and "in the grand
manner . . ."

Abélard, Autobiography (English translation)

May 1923, p. 8

Sherwood Anderson, Many Marriages
"Sherwood Anderson's 'Babbitt,'" it fails
because of a "lack of reality."

Virginia Woolf, Jacob's Room

Hilaire Belloc, On (essays)
"Yet in the end Mr. Belloc disgusts me a
little," because these are "prejudices,
not thought . . ."

June 1923, p. 18

Gertrude Stein, Geography and Plays

Joris Karl Huysmans, Against the Grain

Raymond Mortimer and Hamish Miles, The
Oxford Circus

July 1923, p. 18

F. Scott Fitzgerald, The Vegetable (play)

Thomas Boyd, Through the Wheat
". . . probably the most authentic novel
yet written by an American about the
war . . ."

Elinor Wylie, Black Armour

Stephen Vincent Benét, The Ballad of
William Sycamore

". . . that bright comet of the Yale
Literary Magazine . . . has taken to
being a poet . . . producing doggerel
of a fairly high order . . ."

Edward Arlington Robinson, Roman Barthalow
Robinson . . . "having accomplished work of
actual distinction, should be allowed to
run to seed without scolding."

August 1923, p. 6

These United States (symposium)

R. A. Garnet, Lady into Fox

Jean Cocteau, Le Grand Ecart

Lytton Strachey, Landmarks of French Literature

J. W. Mackail, Virgil

September, 1923, p. 23

Zona Gale, Faint Perfume
 ". . . even more of a melodrama than
Main Street . . ."

Raymond Radiguet, Le Diable au Corps

Vachel Lindsay, Collected Poems

Gamaliel Bradford, Damaged Souls

October 1923, p. 20

Albert Einstein, The Meaning of Relativity

Waldo Frank, Holiday

E. M. Forster, Pharos and Pharillon
 (About ancient and modern Alexandria)

November 1923, p. 26

Louise Bogan, Body of this Death

Carl Van Vechten, The Blind Bow-Boy

Harold Nicholson, Tennyson

". . . applies the inevitable Stracheyan
 formula but with something less than his
 master's felicity."

Notes

Chapter I

¹ From an advertisement for handbags, Vanity Fair, May, 1914, p. 2. Unless otherwise stated, all further references will be to Vanity Fair, I:1 - XLV:6, September, 1913-February, 1936 (New York: Condé Nast; rpt. Ann Arbor: University Microfilms, Inc.; New York: Arno Press, 1966).

² "In Vanity Fair," May, 1914.

³ Max Horkheimer, quoted by Martin Jay, The Dialectical Imagination: A History of the Frankfurt School and the Institute of Social Research, 1923-1950 (Boston and Toronto: Little, Brown and Co., 1973), p. 173.

⁴ Subtitle of the retrospective album of Vanity Fair, ed. Cleveland Amory and Frederic Bradlee (New York: The Viking Press, 1960).

⁵ The Twenties: American Writing in the Postwar Decade, rev. ed. (New York: The Free Press, 1965), p. 108.

⁶ Cleveland Amory, introduction to the retrospective album, op. cit., p. 7.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Raymond Williams, in Culture and Society (Hammondsworth: Penguin, 1963) has provided a penetrating analysis of the historical development of these terms from the Romantic period to the present.

⁹ This is the most value-laden term of all; it is interesting to note that membership in the "mass" is considered to be deplorable, while full-spirited membership in a cultural "minority" is desirable -- is culture value, then only a quantitative measure? The word "élite" is obviously much more polemically useful.

¹⁰ Alexis de Tocqueville, Democracy in America, ed. Phillips Bradley from the Henry Reeve text as revised by Francis Bowen (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1945).

¹¹ (London: Faber and Faber, 1948).

¹² E.g. Clement Greenberg, "The Plight of Culture," Art and Culture: Critical Essays (Boston: Beacon Press, 1961), pp. 22-33. The essay first appeared in 1953.

13 F. R. Leavis and Denys Thompson, Culture and Environment (London: Chatto and Windus, 1933); F. R. Leavis, Mass Civilization and Minority Culture (Cambridge: Minority Press, 1930); Dwight Macdonald, "Masscult and Midcult," Against the American Grain (New York: Random House, 1962); also Macdonald's Preface to the book, esp. pp. ix-x.

14 Matthew Arnold, Culture and Society (London, 1869); Leavis, op. cit.

15 Clement Greenberg, "Avant-Garde and Kitsch," in Bernard Rosenberg and David Manning White, eds., Mass Culture: The Popular Arts in America (New York: The Free Press, 1957), pp. 98-107.

16 Irving Deer and Harriet A. Deer, eds., The Popular Arts: A Critical Reader (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1967), esp. intro., pp. 1-20

17 See, on this subject of the conflict between the new urban and old rural cultures, Roderick Nash, The Nervous Generation: American Thought, 1917-1930 (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1970).

18 José Ortega y Gasset, The Revolt of the Masses, trans. anon. (Madrid, 1930; rpt. New York: Norton, 1957). I have here combined the analyses of Ortega and Macdonald, since their conclusions are the same, although their emphases are slightly different: Ortega is more concerned with the effects of intellectual specialisation (see, e.g., ch. 12, "The Barbarism of Specialisation"), while Macdonald analyses the effects of industrial specialisation via the assembly line. In both cases, however, the culprit is what Ortega calls "technicism."

19 Ibid., p. 112.

20 "Masscult and Midcult," op. cit.

21 Illuminations, trans. Harry Zohn, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken, 1969), pp. 217-252. First publ. in Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung, V, 1, 1936.

22 After Strange Gods (London: Faber and Faber, 1933), p. 18.

23 Quoted by Daniel Aaron, "The Letters of Edmund Wilson," TLS (May 20, 1977), 609.

24 Culture and Society, p. 312.

25 It should be clear, for example, that we do not accept "mass culture" as an appropriate grouping, since "mass" is more a polemical and arrogant term than a reflection of lived human reality.

- 26 Raymond Williams, Culture and Society.
- 27 See, e.g. Q. D. Leavis, Fiction and the Reading Public (London: Chatto and Windus, 1932); Leo Lowenthal, Literature, Popular Culture, and Society (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1961).
- 28 N. Angell, as quoted by F. R. Leavis and Denys Thompson Culture and Environment, p. 36; Dwight Macdonald, pp. 8-13.
- 29 For good summaries see, e.g., Diana Laurenson and Alan Swingewood, The Sociology of Literature (London: MacGibbon and Kee, 1972); Malcolm Bradbury, The Social Context of Modern English Literature (Toronto: Copp Clark, 1971); Milton C. Albrecht, "The Relationship of Literature and Society," American Journal of Sociology, 59 (March 1954), 425-436.
- 30 E.g., Walter Benjamin, *op. cit.*
- 31 Jan Mukařovský, Aesthetic Function, Norm, and Value as Social Facts, trans. Mark E. Suino, Michigan Slavic Contributions no. 3 (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1970). Orig. ed. Prague, 1936.
- 32 Pp. 1-4.
- 33 P. 24.
- 34 P. 34.
- 35 The Sacred Wood: Essays on Poetry and Criticism (London: Methuen, 1920).
- 36 Mukařovský, p. 35.
- 37 (London, 1947), ch. 2.
- 38 Q. D. Leavis, *op. cit.*; Laurenson and Swingewood, *op. cit.*; Levin L. Schlücking, The Sociology of Literary Taste, trans. Brian Battershaw (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1966). Orig. ed. 1923.
- 39 Schlücking, *op. cit.*
- 40 "In Vanity Fair," 1st number of Vanity Fair, vol. 1 no. 1 (Sept., 1913).
- 41 Susan Sontag, "Notes on Camp," Against Interpretation and other essays (New York: Dell, 1969), p. 278.
- 42 Amory and Bradlee, *op. cit.*

⁴³ Van Wyck Brooks (New York, 1915).

⁴⁴ In fact, theoreticians of cultural analysis have pointed out that one of the chief means of defining the values and meaning of a particular culture is to determine those features or phenomena which are perceived to be outside the culture and opposed to it (e.g. Roman culture defined itself as non-"barbarian"). On this notion of the relation between culture and "non-culture" see Juri Lotman et al, "Theses on the Semiotic Study of Cultures," The Tell-Tale Sign, ed. Thomas A. Sebeok (Netherlands: Peter de Ridder Press, 1975), pp. 57-83, esp. pp. 57-61.

⁴⁵ Amory, op. cit.

Chapter II

¹ John E. Drewry, Some Magazines and Magazine Makers (Boston, 1924). p. 111.

² Nicholas Joost, Years of Transition: The Dial, 1912-1920 (Barre, Mass.: Barre Publishers, 1967) p. 261.

³ Susan J. Turner, A History of The Freeman: Literary Landmark of the Early Twenties (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963), p. 176.

⁴ Frank Luther Mott, A History of American Magazines: 1741-1905, 5 vols (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968), vol. 2. p. 520ff.

⁵ Ibid., vol. 4, p. 47.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Drewry, p. 111.

⁸ Diamond Jubilee issue of British Vogue (London: Condé Nast, 1976).

⁹ "In Vanity Fair," January, 1914, p. 13.

¹⁰ Drewry, p. 110.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Although The Patrician is listed in the catalogue of the British Museum (vol. 185, col. 705), these holdings of the magazine were destroyed during the blitz, and no other existing copies have been located. However, since The Patrician appears in neither the Whitaker's Almanack nor the Willing's Press Guide at any time during the period 1919-1946, and since no mention of it is made in literary

histories or studies of the period, we may assume that it played no significant role in the literary life of the period.

13 Richmond P. Bond, The Tatler: The Making of a Literary Journal (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1971), p. 234.

14 Theodore Peterson, Magazines in the Twentieth Century (Urbana, Ill.: The University of Illinois Press, 1956), p. viii.

15 Ibid., p. ix.

16 P. ix.

17 Ibid.

18 James Playsted Wood, Magazines in the United States, 3rd ed. (New York, 1971), pp. 304-330.

19 Ibid.

20 Joost, pp. 259-261.

21 Peterson, p. 258: "The company gave declining revenues as the reason for the merger of Vanity Fair with Vogue." This was borne out in statements made by Harold Meyer, Vice-President for financial affairs at Condé Nast, and Paul Bonner, Jr., of the Book Division at Condé Nast, in separate interviews conducted on July 2, 1976.

22 Peterson, op. cit., p. 258.

23 Frederick J. Hoffman, Charles Allen, and Carolyn Ulrich, The Little Magazine: A History and A Bibliography (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1946), p. 2.

24 P. 3.

25 P. 4.

26 P. 3.

27 P. 3.

28 In private conversation, July 2, 1976.

29 A letter dated October 22, 1935, provided by Jeanne Ballot Winham.

30 Ibid.

31 In conversation, op. cit.

32 Ibid.

33 Paul Bonner, Jr., in conversation, op. cit.

34 Bonner, quoting his father, Paul Bonner, Sr., who was a regular at poker games of the Algonquin set.

35 Bonner, Jr., op. cit.

36 Figures provided by Joan Hogan, Research Director, Condé Nast Publications, Inc., in a letter to Harold Baron dated March 6, 1968, and quoted in "The Magazine Vanity Fair and its Ability to Interpret and Reflect the Literary Trends of its Time," Diss. New York University 1969, pp. 77-78.

37 John Keats, You Might as Well Live: The Life and Times of Dorothy Parker (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1970), pp. 54-55; Corey Ford, The Time of Laughter (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1967), p. 32; Dorothy Parker, in Writers at Work: The Paris Review Interviews, First Series, ed: Malcolm Cowley (New York: The Viking Press, 1967), p. 74.

38 Harold Baron, op. cit. (p. 121), provides the following figures on advertising revenue of Vanity Fair, again furnished by Joan Hogan of Condé Nast:

1914	\$ 54,489	1925	\$601,721
1915	83,463	1926	786,968
1916	167,383	1927	772,526
1917	241,505	1928	770,075
1918	172,728	1929	831,736
1919	245,206	1930	674,013
1920	488,851	1931	455,930
1921	396,973	1932	259,908
1922	428,418	1933	210,213
1923	491,811	1934	336,574
1924	492,688	1935	220,377

39 There are some discrepancies in circulation figures provided by the Condé Nast publishing house. The figures provided by Hogan to Baron (op. cit., p. 125), do not seem as reliable as the ABC figures (Audit Bureau of Circulation) provided by Harold Meyer, Vice-President, in the interview, op. cit.

VANITY FAIR Average Monthly Circulation (Hogan to Baron)		VANITY FAIR Subscription and Newsstand Circ. (ABC: Meyer to Hoffman)	
1913	12,356		
1914	23,383		
1915	40,610		
1916	62,216		
1917	69,322	1917	69,322
1918	59,497	1918	59,491
1919	73,399	1919	68,273
1920	not available	1920	81,628
1921	not available	1921	81,271
1922	not available	1922	75,621
1923	30,600	1923	77,251
1924	35,462	1924	77,301
1925	34,392	1925	80,544
1926	37,430	1926	82,121
1927	39,819	1927	85,923
1928	38,393	1928	84,556
1929	36,800	1929	83,312
1930	35,237	1930	79,505
1931	95,238	1931	90,462
1932	91,569	1932	88,673
1933	87,196	1933	94,459
1934	90,688	1934	87,268
1935	92,737	1935	88,368

⁴⁰ The Luce approach to publishing was evidently more in tune with later developments in American social and cultural history, as his later success with Life magazine also shows. The connection between the histories of Vanity Fair and the Luce empire, in the person of Clare Boothe Brokaw, is discussed in the section on Vanity Fair's staff.

⁴¹ M. K. Singleton, H. L. Mencken and the American Mercury Adventure (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1952), p. 5.

⁴² Susan J. Turner, p. 159.

⁴³ Margaret Case Harriman, Blessed Are the Debonair (New York: Rinehart and Co., 1956), p. 141.

⁴⁴ Lillian Hellman, Pentimento: A Book of Portraits (Scarborough, Ontario: New American Library, 1974), p. 101.

⁴⁵ Letter from Paul Bonner, Jr. to K. Hoffman, May 20, 1974.

⁴⁶ Jeanne Ballot Winham, "Insider's Flashbacks," Vogue (June, 1975), p. 145.

- 47 Letter from Helen Lawrenson to K. Hoffman, March 28, 1978.
- 48 Stranger at the Party: A Memoir (New York: Random House, 1975), esp. chapter 5, pp. 80-97.
- 49 Blessed Are the Debnair (New York: Rinehart and Co., 1956), chapter 5, pp. 141-163.
- 50 Letter from CBL to K. Hoffman, February 24, 1978.
- 51 Harriman, p. 114.
- 52 p. 121.
- 53 p. 117.
- 54 Robert E. Drennan, ed., The Algonquin Wits (New York: The Citadel Press, 1968), p. 12. Crowninshield is also named as a member of the Algonquin Round Table by Howard Teichmann, George S. Kaufman: An Intimate Portrait (New York: Atheneum, 1972), p. 65.
- 55 Ibid.
- 56 Robert Benchley, "Mr. Vanity Fair," Bookman, 2 (January, 1920), 429-33.
- 57 Ibid. as quoted by Norris W. Yates, Robert Benchley (New York: Twayne, 1968), p. 50.
- 58 Harriman, p. 142.
- 59 Quoted by Geoffrey T. Hellman, "That was New York: Crowninshield." New Yorker, 23 (February 14, 1948), 71.
- 60 Harriman, p. 144.
- 61 Ibid.
- 62 Ibid.
- 63 Geoffrey Hellman, p. 72.
- 64 Harriman, p. 147.
- 65 Ibid.
- 66 Ibid.
- 67 Editorial, New York Herald Tribune (December 30, 1947).
- 68 Harriman, p. 144.

- 69 Ibid.
- 70 Harriman, p. 142.
- 71 Lawrenson, p. 67.
- 72 Ibid.
- 73 Ibid., p. 87.
- 74 Ibid., pp. 85-6.
- 75 Carl R. Dolmetsch, The Smart Set: A History and Anthology (New York: The Dial Press, 1966), p. 63.
- 76 Peterson, op. cit., p. 159.
- 77 Margaret Case Harriman, Take Them Up Tenderly: A Collection of Profiles (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1944), p. 65.
- 78 Geoffrey Hellman, op. cit., p. 70.
- 79 Harriman, Take Them Up Tenderly, p. 63.
- 80 Stuffed Shirts (New York: 1931: rpt. Short Story Index Reprint Series, New York: Books for Libraries Press, 1971).
- 81 W. A. Swanburg, Luce and His Empire (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1972), p. 11b.
- 82 Ibid.
- 83 Lawrenson, in a letter to the editor of the New York Times (July 21, 1974), Section 1, p. 6.
- 84 John Kobler, Luce: His Time, Life and Fortune (New York: Doubleday, 1968), p. 100.
- 85 Peterson, p. 314.
- 86 Kobler, op. cit., p. 99.
- 87 Peterson, p. 314.
- 88 "The Woman." Esquire (August, 1974), 75-155.
- 89 P. 76.
- 90 P. 79.
- 91 Ibid.

- 92 Ibid.
- 93 Lawrenson, Stranger at the Party, pp. 67-8.
- 94 Ibid., p. 68.
- 95 Ibid.
- 96 Conversation with K. Hoffman, op. cit.
- 97 Harriman, Blessed Are the Debonair, pp. 162-3.
- 98 Ibid., p. 163.
- 99 Ibid., pp. 164 and 167.
- 100 Harriman, Blessed Are the Debonair, p. 163.
- 101 Paul Benner, Jr., in conversation with K. Hoffman, op. cit.
- 102 Blessed Are the Debonair, p. 163.
- 103 Carey Ford, The Time of Laughter (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1967), p. 73.
- 104 Nathaniel Benchley, Robert Benchley: A Biography (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1955), p. 142.
- 105 Winham, "Insider's Flashbacks," p. 24.
- 106 Ibid., p. 145.
- 107 Ibid.
- 108 Helen Lawrenson, letter to K. Hoffman, op. cit.
- 109 Jeanne Ballet Winham, in conversation with K. Hoffman, op. cit.
- 110 J. B. Winham to Harold Baron, in diss. op. cit., pp. 95-6.
- 111 The details about the masthead are from Helen Lawrenson's letter, op. cit.
- 112 Information about editorial procedure from Helen Lawrenson's letter, *ibid.*
- 113 Ibid.
- 114 David A. Jasen, F. G. Wodehouse: A Portrait of a Master (New York: Mason and Lipscomb, 1974), p. 53.

¹¹⁵ Norris W. Yates, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

¹¹⁶ The Vicious Circle, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

¹¹⁷ Janet Flanner, Paris Was Yesterday: 1925-1939, ed. Irving Drutman (New York: The Viking Press, 1970), p. xviii.

¹¹⁸ Susan Edmiston and Linda D. Cirino, Literary New York (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1976), p. 85.

¹¹⁹ Sybille Bedford, Aldous Huxley: A Biography (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1973), pp. 112 and 130.

Chapter III

¹ Yates, Robert Benchley, *op. cit.*, p. 49.

² Michael J. Arlen, Exiles (New York: Ballantine, 1976), p. 51.

³ F. Scott Fitzgerald in a letter to Edmund Wilson, 1924, quoted by Nancy Milford, Selda (New York: Avon, 1971), p. 112.

⁴ Comparative figures on products advertised in Vanity Fair are based on the lists of ads in the Index to the photo-reproduction edition, *op. cit.*

⁵ In The Crack-up, quoted by Aaron Latham, Crazy Sundays: F. Scott Fitzgerald in Hollywood (New York: The Viking Press, 1971), p. ix.

⁶ Gilbert Seldes, The Seven Lively Arts (New York: Harper, 1924), p. 391.

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 309-310.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 319.

Chapter IV

¹ See Edmund Wilson, The Twenties: From Notebooks and Diaries of the Period, ed. Leon Edel (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1973), pp. 3-5, 35, 68.

² Alfred Kazin, On Native Grounds: An Interpretation of Modern American Prose Literature (New York: Doubleday Anchor, 1956), chapters 1 to 6.

³ Suzanne Ellery Greene, Books for Pleasure: Popular Fiction, 1914-45 (Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1973). I am indebted to this work for much of the characterisation of popular writing which appears in this chapter.

⁷ Eric Homberger, "Chicago and New York: Two Versions of American Modernism," in Modernism, ed. Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane, Pelican Guides to European Literature (Hammondsworth: Penguin, 1976), pp. 151-161. The discussion of Pound and Brooks as representative of the two approaches is based on Homberger's account, pp. 158-9.

⁵ Malcolm Cowley, Exile's Return: A literary odyssey of the 1920s (New York: The Viking Press, 1975), pp. 94-103.

⁶ (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 1961).

⁷ P. 130.

⁸ P. 131.

⁹ P. 133. The figures on book publication are from the same source, p. 133.

¹⁰ Op. cit.

¹¹ An Age of Criticism: 1900-1950 (Chicago: Gateway, 1966), p. 3.

¹² P. 10.

¹³ P. 3.

¹⁴ Pp. 3-4.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ P. 7.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ P. 9.

²¹ P. 7.

²² (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1961).

²³ This passage is based on Aaron's account, pp. 43-45.

²⁴ P. 44.

²⁵ Pp. 45-46.

²⁶ Roderick Nash, The Nervous Generation: American Thought: 1917-1930 (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1970).

²⁷ P. v.

²⁸ TLS (August 26, 1977), 1029.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Cowley, op. cit., esp. parts III and IV.

³¹ Greene.

³² Hart, chapter 14.

³³ Kazin, pp. 288-289.

³⁴ Hart, p. 248. The figures on movie attendance are from the same source.

³⁵ Greene.

³⁶ In the marked copies of Vanity Fair kept in the Condé Nast offices in New York, the November, 1932 issue has a note beside "The Dust-Jacket" (page 4a) that \$25 was paid to William Harlan Hale. The identity of "The Duster" as Hale was confirmed during the interview with Jeanne Ballot Winham, op. cit. Mrs. Winham had no recollection of Hale, apart from the fact that he was "The Duster," and no further information about him has been found in relevant literary histories or companions.

³⁷ Ph.D. diss., op. cit.

³⁸ According to Jeanne Ballot Winham, quoted by Harold Baron, op. cit., p. 116.

³⁹ Born in 1904, Seddon came to the U.S. in 1930, and became an American citizen in 1943. Under the name of George Dangerfield, he became a noted American writer of historical works: The Strange Death of Liberal England, 1935; Victoria's Heir, 1941; The Era of Good Feelings, 1952 (for which he won the Pulitzer Prize); Chancellor Robert R. Livingston of New York, 1960. [From the Oxford Companion to American Literature, 4th ed., p. 204.]

Chapter V

¹ Helen Lawrenson, Stranger at the Party, op. cit., pp. 57-58.

² See, for example, Richard Ellmann and Charles Feidelson, Jr., eds., The Modern Tradition: Backgrounds of Modern Literature (New York, 1965).

- 3 On Native Grounds, op. cit.
- 4 Nicholas Joost, Years of Transition: The Dial 1912-1922 (Barre, Mass.: Barre Publishers, 1967), p. 157.
- 5 Nicholas Joost, Scofield Thayer and the Dial (Carbondale, Ill.: Southern Illinois University Press, 1964), p. 76.
- 6 Peterson, op. cit., pp. 364-5.
- 7 Ibid., p. 364.
- 8 From the announcement of the magazine by the publisher, Alfred A. Knopf, in the New York Times, August 13, 1923.
- 9 Peterson, op. cit., p. 372.
- 10 Ibid.
- 11 M. K. Singleton, H. L. Mencken and the American Mercury Adventure (Durham, N. C.: Duke University Press, 1962), p. 216.
- 12 Ibid., p. 3.
- 13 From the prospectus in the first number of Fortune, quoted by John Kobler, op. cit., p. 30.
- 14 Ibid., p. 33.
- 15 Arnold Gingrich, Nothing But People: The Early Days at Esquire. A Personal History, 1928-1958 (New York: Crown, 1971), pp. 27-28.
- 16 Ibid., p. 28.
- 17 The Vicious Circle, op. cit., p. 137.
- 18 On Native Grounds, op. cit.

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