



TARTU STATE UNIVERSITY

A SHORT STUDENT'S GUIDE
TO AMERICAN LITERATURE

XI

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A SHORT STUDENT'S GUIDE
TO AMERICAN LITERATURE

XI

THE TWENTIETH CENTURY AMERICAN
LITERATURE

From the '30s to the '60s

Materials for Seminars in American Literature

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P R E F A C E

The present study aid, "A Short Student's Guide to American Literature" XI, is destined for the senior students of Tartu State University to be used at special seminars on American literature. Its main aim is to provide material for some of the important authors in post-war American literature from the '30s to the '60s.

The representative writers are discussed under the following heads: I. Southern Literature: 1. William Faulkner; 2. Truman Capote II. Black Protest: 1. James Baldwin; III. The American War Novel: 1. Norman Mailer; 2. James Jones: IV. The Alienated Hero: 1. Jerome David Salinger: V. The Beat Generation: 1. Jack Kerouac.

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I. SOUTHERN LITERATURE

The so-called Southern Literary Renaissance is used to denote a wide upsurge of literary activities in the South since the 1920s. The movement proper opened in 1921 with the establishment of a number of literary magazines (i.e. "The Double Dealer" in New Orleans, "The Reviewer" in Richmond) and societies (i.e. "The Poetry Society" in South Carolina) the aim of which was to develop young Southern writers.

As to the literary genres, neither poetry nor drama developed a specifically Southern tradition. It was mainly inaugurated by Southern novelists.

In their most important manifestations Southern novelists have always revealed a strong regional character. As the Soviet critic F. Kameron notes: "Southern writers have penetrated into the depths of their own world, and set an aim to find the truth about man, proceeding from the familiar type of people and places" (1:18). The same regional quality has also been pointed out by such a genuine Southern novelist as Carson McCullers in one of her critical writings: "Many authors find it hard to write about new environments that they did not know in childhood... this is particularly true of Southern writers because it is not only their speech and the foliage, but their entire culture which makes it a homeland within a homeland (2:279).

Apart from regionalism, other Southern writers have laid stress on the separateness of the South from the rest of America because they try to fight back the influence of the industrialism of the North as a threat to the established Southern way of life. A whole literary grouping emerged within the Southern tradition, including such writers as John Crowe Ransom, John Gould Fletcher, Robert Pen Warren, Donald Davidson, Carson McCullers, Truman Capote and a few others. In their novels and stories they exposed such burning social issues as racial injustice, the industrialization of the South, etc. Their criticism was, however, rather moderate.

They were often conservative in their attitudes: fighting against the industrialization of the Southern society and its dire consequences, they stood for the old patriarchal agrarian traditions. This quite naturally brought about a certain idealization of the past.

There was, however, a group of more radically-minded realists, including William Faulkner, Harper Lee, Erskine Caldwell, etc., who protested more resolutely against the social evils of the American South in their works.

Taking into account these two attitudes the American critic John M. Bradbury has drawn the following conclusions: "Philosophically and sociologically Southern authors remain divided into the agrarian-minded conservatives and the forward-looking liberals and humanitarians, with the latter more and more in the preponderance". (3:156.)



WILLIAM FAULKNER

"William Faulkner has written nineteen books which for range of effect, philosophical weight, originality of style, variety of characterization, humor, and tragic intensity, are without equal in our time and country."

Robert Pen Warren, 1946

1. WILLIAM, FAULKNER
(1897-1962)

William Faulkner is generally grouped together with the novelists of the Lost Generation - Ernest Hemingway, Francis Scott Fitzgerald, Dos Passos, Sherwood Anderson and others - as in his early work he reflected the moods of post-war disillusionment and lack of purpose. At the same time he is better known as a typical representative of the so-called Southern Novel. More deeply than anybody else, he has penetrated into the very nature of the "White South". His novels and stories reflect the essence of the Southern past and the problems of its present in America.

Today William Faulkner is considered to be one of the greatest American realists. This recognition did not come, however, easily. From the beginning to the very end of his literary career he had difficulties in winning his place among the front-rank American writers. The controversy over his artistic merits and defects, which began with the publication of his first novel, had not ended by the time of his death.

The average reader has always been puzzled by the eccentricities in Faulkner's style, by his way of telling the story. And there is some truth in it. Although he proceeded from the traditions of the XIX and XX century American and English realism, he had also been influenced by the modernistic tendencies of Gertrude Stein and especially by that of James Joyce. During his short stay in post-war Paris he also frequented Gertrude Stein's literary saloon and was carried away by the literary atmosphere of the small, select group of writers.

Faulkner's experimentations in literary form and his traits of modernism were also the main reasons why the American critics tended to ignore him, even during the years when he was doing his best work. At the same time, however, European critics were praising Faulkner as one of the great-

est figures in the twentieth-century literature, and translators were busy to make his works known in various countries. A sense of bewilderment was therefore conveyed to most American readers when Faulkner was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature in 1950.

William Faulkner was born in New Albany, Mississippi, into the family of impoverished Southern aristocrats. At the time of his birth his father was running a livery stable and a hardware store. Later he became the business manager of the University of Mississippi when the family had moved to Oxford.

Faulkner was a poor student, and left high school after the tenth grade for a job in his grandfather's bank. He read, however, widely, wrote poetry and also tried his hand at painting. In Oxford he puzzled the townspeople as a moody young man without any practical interests in life. Because of underweight (he was only five feet high), he was turned down by the United States Army when he volunteered. Later he succeeded in joining the Royal Flying Corps in Toronto, Canada, as a cadet. He was sent to France when World War I broke out, but did not take part in actual fighting, spending most of his time in training camps. After the Armistice he returned to his home county, living in Oxford and New Orleans. Later he started running a small farm and devoted himself entirely to literary work.

Faulkner began his literary career as a poet, and that fact coloured all his later prose work. He has repeatedly called himself a "failed poet" who had turned to writing prose narratives as "the next best thing". Like most other writers of his age, Faulkner has often been preoccupied with the events and the implications of World War I, and his early books reflect it.

As a veteran of war Faulkner was allowed to enrol at the University of Mississippi, where he studied English, Spanish, and French, but he was in residence only one full academic year. Some of his contributions to the student publications suggest that he was a precocious, sardonic young

man who was having difficulties in finding himself as an artist or a professional. After a job at a bookstore in New York he soon came back to his home town, Oxford. In 1924 he met Sherwood Anderson, by that time an established man of letters, who encouraged his cherished dream to become a writer. The same year he published his first volume of poems under the heading "The Marble Faun", imitative of Swinburne and Beardsley. Soon, however, he turned primarily to the writing of prose sketches, short stories and novels.

Faulkner's first novel, "Soldier's Pay", which Sherwood Anderson helped to get published in 1926, reflects his own post-war disillusionment as well as that of the Lost Generation. It is a story of the return from war of a wounded flier. The author reveals the tragedy of the hero who enters peace-time life crippled both physically and spiritually. Man has been portrayed as a mere plaything at the mercy of blind forces of reaction. "Soldier's Pay" received favourable reviews, and its publisher signed a contract for a second novel.

"Mosquitoes", published in 1927, used New Orleans as a setting. It is a satirical novel, containing a series of American "tall tales" which the author, according to his own words, had worked up together with Anderson.

By the end of the 1920s, Faulkner had come back to Mississippi, and he spent the rest of his life in Oxford, which became the background for most of his books under the name of Jefferson, Yoknapatawpha County. He became famous for his fictional Yoknapatawpha epic, covering a long period of time from the beginning of the nineteenth century and the American Civil War to the '50s of the twentieth century.

Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha County, Mississippi, with Jefferson as the county seat, is both a mythical and an actual region. Reality and myth are difficult to separate because Faulkner has transcribed the geography, the history, and the people of northern Mississippi, but has also transmuted them. It is more sensible, however, to see Yoknapatawpha County and its people as a little self-contained world of

the imagination than an accurate history, from the time of the Chickasaw Indians down to the present of northern Mississippi. This mythical country, a part of the South, has been depicted as being very different from the rest of the United States, from the West, the East and the North. The resident of the Yoknapatawpha County is the southerner, who carries the burden of a painful heritage that began with slavery, and who responds to it in his individual way (4:3).

But northern Mississippi, especially the town of Oxford (Jefferson) and Lafayette County (Yoknapatawpha County) is, above all, Faulkner's own, native territory, as his family lived there since the Civil War. Many of his fictional characters have, therefore, also prototypes in real life.

Faulkner's first novels of the Yoknapatawpha epic deal with the past and the present of his home county and the history of the town Jefferson. These books are "Sartoris" (1929), "The Sound and the Fury" (1929), "As I Lay Dying" (1930), "Sanctuary" (1931), "Light in August" (1932), "Pylon" (1935), "Absalom, Absalom!" (1936), and the collections of short stories "Idyll in the Desert" (1931), "Dr. Martine" (1934), and "The Unvanquished" (1938). These books reflect Faulkner's hatred for the contemporary capitalist society and a certain sympathy with the patriarchal, agrarian mode of life in the South. But for all his attachment to the past he, at the same time, concentrates upon the decadence of the families, representative of the old Southern aristocracy.

The first novel of the series, "Sartoris", dramatizes the decay of a proud Southern family, the Sartorises. The main characters, Colonel Sartoris and Bayard Sartoris, have obviously been drawn from Faulkner's own eccentric great-grandfather and grandfather respectively.

The beginning of the most important eight-year period in Faulkner's entire literary career, was marked by the publication of "The Sound and the Fury" in 1929. The novel deserves to be regarded as Faulkner's first major literary triumph, which also brought him world renown.

Although the subject-matter of "The Sound and the Fury"

has much in common with that of "Sartoris", here Faulkner goes beyond his nostalgia and sympathy with the past glory. It is a more merciless exposure of the mental and moral decay of another proud and once distinguished Southern family, the Compsons.

Faulkner traces the history of the Compsons from 1699 to 1945. The family has had famous generals and wealthy planters in its ranks. Once it had owned the Compson Mill and many other properties. But the novel proper tells the story of the last generation of the Compsons, and is confined to a short period of time from June 2, 1910, to April 9, 1928.

Mr. Compson, the head of the family, is a witty lawyer and an educated man, who apart from his professional activities is interested in classical studies. Being too weak and selfish, however, he takes to drinking, thus revealing the open signs of decay in the family. Mrs. Compson is an ineffectual, self-pitying wife, a typical purposeless lady of the Southern aristocracy.

Partly because of this lack of moral support from their parents, the four children lead lives of tragedy and waste. They also represent, in varying degrees, the moral degradation of the South. Benjy is an idiot, Candace (Caddy) becomes an easy-going, promiscuous woman, after her personal life has failed. Quentin, a student of Cambridge (Massachusetts), commits suicide. The last Compson to survive, apart from the imbecile Benjy, is the younger Jason (IV), who turns out to be a demoniac, childless man. He is scornful of any family tradition, of principle or honour. He works in a hardware store, speculates at the stock market, and systematically steals the money Candace sends for the board and room of her illegitimate daughter, named Quentin (after her favourite brother). The girl returns the cruelty and meanness of her uncle by stealing the money from him and running off with a fellow employed by a carnival.

The tragedy of the Compsons has its source in the lack of love between the different members of the family. But the basic cause of their downfall is the cold and self-centred

mother. She does not have any real feelings for her children, being at the same time extremely sensitive about her faded glory, about the social status of her own family, the Bascombs. She can give her children neither genuine affection nor education for their independent life.

Contrary to the degenerate members of the Compson family, their servants are constant reminders of permanent values. Dilsey, the old Negress, is the most important of them. Decent, sympathetic and responsible, she provides the coherence and moral principles against which the Compsons are, by implication, judged. Although she foresees the decline of the family and understands their tragedy, she goes on taking care of them. It is she who manages to keep the household in some order and decency.

The symbolic title of the novel has been derived from Shakespeare's tragedy "Macbeth" (Act V, Scene 5): "It is a tale / Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury / Signifying nothing." The title casts light on many aspects of the story. All the Compson brothers are, in different ways, telling the tales of "sound and fury", most obviously, however, Benjy, who does not make any difference between the past and the present.

The sense of loss and chaos is intensified by Faulkner's symbolic setting of the action on Good Friday and Easter Sunday. The story of the family is told from the point of view of three persons which also increases the tragic atmosphere in which the novel is enveloped.

While writing the novel Faulkner was considerably influenced by the impressionistic tradition of Henry James, Ford Madox Ford, James Joyce and other writers of the '20s - the tradition which held that "life does not narrate but makes impressions on our brains". To James Joyce in particular Faulkner owes the "interior monologue" and the stream-of-consciousness technique which sometimes makes it difficult for the reader to follow the sequence of events, especially in the first part of the book.

All the characters think and speak primarily in their

own peculiar manner. Thus, for instance, all the thoughts of Benjy, the idiot, have to do with sensations - with smells, tones of voices, colours, etc. He never speculates in the abstract but simply feels. Time past, and present merge in his imbecile mind in a continuous flow. A typical example of Benjy's way of thinking is the following passage, which records his sensations when he is watching a golfing match: "Through the fence, between the curling flower spaces, I could see them hitting. They were coming forward where the flag was and I went along the fence. Luster was hunting in the grass by the flower tree. They took the flag out, and they were hitting." (5:21)

Differently from Benjy's confused sensations, Jason Compson's thoughts and speech are invariably clear-headed and ironic, expressing his extreme callousness and, at the same time, a sense of frustration. According to the author's own words Jason is the most vicious character he has ever created.

The modern protagonist, the suffering aesthete of the novel, is, however, Jason's brother Quentin. He cannot find an outlet from his own abstract reasoning and over-sensitivity. His thoughts and experiences on the day of his suicide on June 2, 1910, are recorded in the second part of the novel. He is very sensitive about the lost honour of his family, but especially about the disgrace of his sister Caddy, whom he loves. He has a frustrated desire to free himself and Caddy from the meaningless "sound and fury" of time by committing incest. At the same time he remembers his father's cynic attitude to his virginity, to matters of sex in general, and everything loses significance in his eyes. Feeling himself unloved and utterly forelorn he gets drowned.

In the '30s Faulkner published several gloomy novels, full of violence and irrationality. "As I Lay Dying" (1930) presents fifteen Southern characters in their relationships with each other, and especially with the old woman, Addie Bundren, who is dying. The action centres round the dying Addie and the members of her family: her favourite elder son,

Cash, who is building a coffin for her, while she is still living, her husband Anse, who lacks a sense of duty even in the face of death, and Darl, the second son, who has lost all favour in his mother's eyes.

"Sanctuary" (1931) is a horrific story of rape and murder in which sexual evils are identified with the oldness and decay of the world. It suggests a Southern society for which sex is only lust and human relationships of amoral engagements.

"Light in August" (1932), however, is the novel in which Faulkner for the first time deals with the relationships between the Negroes and the Whites in the South. The book is a condemnation of puritanical "righteousness" in the persecution of Negroes and reaches its culmination in the lynching of Joe Christmas. The idea of the novel is borne out by Gae Hightower, the old minister, who condemns the local protestant community in the following words: "Pleasure, ecstasy they cannot... bear. Their escape from it is in violence, in drinking and fighting and praying; catastrophe too, the violence identical and apparently inescapable. And why should not their religion drive them to crucification of themselves and one another? And they would do it gladly, gladly."(6:346)

The same theme of racial discrimination and violence is also central in "Absalom, Absalom!" (1936).

The end of the '30s witnessed the beginning of a change in Faulkner's outlook of life. When the early novels and stories revealed a certain sympathy with the Southern traditions and customs in the past, then now he concentrates his attention on the immediate present. His opposition to the evils of flourishing capitalism becomes more marked. His main concern is the exposure of the money-grabbing bourgeois, who starts dominating the society of the American South.

Faulkner's books of this later period are remarkable for their sober realism and artistic maturity. The author has got rid of his modernistic technique which puzzled so many of his readers. The structure of his novels has become more clearly outlined, the sequence of events and the relationships between his characters more logical than in his previous works.

In 1940 Faulkner wrote his novel "The Hamlet", which opened the "Trilogy of Snopes". The other two volumes of the trilogy appeared much later - "The Town" in 1954 and "The Mansion" in 1959. The trilogy is a sharp denunciation of the corruption and moral degradation of the so-called "newly-rich" in the South. It depicts the downfall of the old aristocratic Varner family and the rise to power of the former poor-whites - the Snopeses. By sheer deceit and unscrupulousness the latter become the financial oligarchy of the country.

In "The Hamlet" the former beggarly tenant, Flem Snopes, starts his career as a clerk at the rich storekeeper and politician Will Varner. By outrageously swindling his master he has, in a five-month period, acquired enough money to speculate with land and cattle. Gradually he becomes the most influential man in the village. He marries Varner's daughter Eula, whose rich dowry not only consolidates his fortune, but also drives him from one villainous machination to another. By the end of the novel Flem has completely ruined his father-in-law, Varner, and ousted him from his own store. When the possibilities of "business" in the village are exhausted, Flem sells his land to the farmers at a great price and moves to town.

In "The Town" Faulkner records Flem's further adventures in Jefferson. Soon he becomes the shareholder of a second-rate restaurant and of the electric station of the town. Through a most unscrupulous blackmail he also procures the post of president at the local bank. He drives to suicide his wife Eula and ruins the career of her lover, the financier de Spain, who leaves the town.

In "The Mansion" Flem's avidity and ambition will reach their highest peak. As the most influential person of Jefferson he lives now in the aristocratic mansion, which formerly belonged to the de Spains.

Faulkner strikingly shows how Flem's rise on the social ladder has unfavourably influenced the fate of his own people and relatives: his wife Eula, his daughter Linda and his

poor cousin Mike. Linda's aversion for such people as the merciless Snopeses and her desire to fight against them, make her a Communist. Although the author does not sufficiently reveal her belief in Communism, her understanding of its role in modern class society, she still symbolizes an active force that fights against Flem Snopes, the embodiment capitalist evil.

The grim fate of the humiliated and plundered farmers is embodied in Flem's poor cousin, Mike Snopes. The author depicts the hard labour of the impoverished tenant in the Mississippi State, and the privation of his family in winter after the payment of rent. In despair Mike kills Houston, a rich neighbouring farmer after the latter has taken away his cow, the only source of his livelihood. Mike hopes that Flem will help him to escape punishment, but the latter spares no effort to prolong the term of his imprisonment. Flem lives in constant fright before his furious cousin, who might come out of prison and take his revenge. On being released thirty-eight years later, Mike murders Flem as the main culprit of his sufferings and misfortunes. In both of his crimes, however, Mike does not set himself any social task. His is a blind riot of the poor against the rich.

Faulkner's realism reaches its highest peak in "The Trilogy of Snopes". Having started his literary career as an admirer of the patriarchal past, by the end of it he viewed more critically the social life in the South, making the corruption of the bourgeois the main butt of his satire. This broadening of his social consciousness can also be observed in his treatment of racial problems at that period. In his book of short stories, "Go Down Moses" (1942), and especially in the novel, "Intruder in the Dust" (1948), Faulkner devotes much attention to the relationship between the Negroes and the Whites, fiercely denouncing racial discrimination.

"Intruder in the Dust" tells the story of Lucas Beauchamp, an old Negro farmer, who is put into prison on a framed-up charge - the murdering of a white man, Vinson Cowrie. In his prison cell Lucas is visited by the County Attorney,

Gavin Stevens, and the latter's 16-year-old nephew, Charles Mallison, whose life the Negro had once saved.

Charles, who is also the narrator of the story, becomes an active fighter for Lucas's release. The Negro tells Charles that the only way of proving his innocence is to dig out the dead body of Vinson Cowrie. A close examination of the corpse should show that Lucas's gun had not been the murderer's weapon. When the grave is opened, however, the body of another man is found. Gradually the grim truth is revealed. It turns out that Vinson Cowrie's own brother, Crawford, had killed him with the view of accusing Lucas of the murder, as the latter had threatened to expose his theft of lumber from his brother Vinson. Crawford had also murdered Vinson's friend Jack, who knew about the crime, and put his body into Vinson's grave, to mislead the possible investigation and free himself from any suspicion. With the help of the legal authorities, Charles and some other members of the white community, Lucas Beauchamp's innocence is finally proved. (7:256)

After the publication of "Go Down Moses" and "Intruder in the Dust" Faulkner's literary skill began to weaken. His two volumes of short stories "Knight's Gambit" (1949) and "Collected Short Stories" (1950), as well as his elaborate novel about World War I, "A Fable" (1954), might be considered to be failures. His very last novel, "The Reivers" (1962), which was awarded the Pulitzer Prize, appeared immediately before Faulkner's death.

Faulkner's monumental literary output, in spite of its seeming narrowness of theme, offers a more profound and comprehensive picture of America than any other contemporary writer has succeeded in doing. This is also the main reason why his heritage has been more and more appreciated in the whole world today.



TRUMAN CAPOTE

"Growing up in some place like Monroeville (in the South) as it surely must have been in similar towns, produced a strange loneliness which added to sensibility, and seemed to increase creativity. In a way, I used up some of my loneliness by writing."

Truman Capote

2. TRUMAN CAPOTE

(b. 1924)

Truman Capote is one of the most original representatives of contemporary American prose. He differs from all other writers of his time for his particular intonation and for the special emotional tone of his narrative. In the course of 40 years of his literary activities his manner of writing has not much changed. It does not concern only the stylistic or compositional qualities of his stories and novels, but also his world outlook. He has remained true to more or less similar set of problems and psychologically similar characters. This persistence and steadfastness to his own theme has its strong and weak points. He is a keen and profound observer of life, but his fictional world is somewhat confined, closed within himself and therefore narrow.

In spite of his individual peculiarities, however, Truman Capote represents a well-established tradition. Already his first stories showed his close affinities with the Southern literary school, with its peculiar world outlook and human character, conditioned by the commonness of the native history. He belongs to the same group of writers as William Faulkner, Penn Warren, Harper Lee, Carson McCullers, Eudora Welty and many others.

Much in Capote's creative life is explained by the impressions of his childhood in the South. It is mainly these impressions that he is concerned with.

Truman Capote was born in 1924 in New Orleans, in the State of Louisiana. After his parents had separated, he was brought up in the South by his elderly aunts and cousins. He had learned to read before he started attending a school in Greenwich, Connecticut. His English teacher at Greenwich High School, Catherine Wood, is said to have been the first person who gave Capote a stimulus for writing. Under her guidance he contributed poems and stories to the school paper "The Green Witch".

Capote did not get, however, and systematic education. He lived in various parts of the South, spending his summers in Alabama or New Georgia and winters in New Orleans. But, according to his own words, his childhood was not unhappy, as he could always do what he liked, and not care much what other people thought of him. In these formative years his favourite pastime was reading, and the deepest early impression was made on him by the tales of Edgar Allan Poe.

Before Capote became a journalist and writer he held many odd jobs: as an office-boy for "The New Yorker", a dancer on a river boat and a movie-script reader. But at fourteen he had already started writing stories and some of them were also published. Later he commented on the beginning of his literary career as follows: "Growing up in some place like Monroeville, as it surely must have been in similar towns, produced a strange loneliness which added to sensibility, and seemed to increase creativity. In a way, I used up some of my loneliness by writing." (5:249)

Capote continued writing stories and soon also attracted the attention of the critics. He was nineteen when he had received twice the O'Henry Memorial Short Story Prize for his stories "Miriam" and "Shut a Final Door".

Capote's first novel, "Other Voices, Other Rooms", (1948), set against the Deep South, has a strong autobiographical colouring. The book achieved international recognition and brought Capote a place among the first-rank American writers.

In "Other Voices, Other Rooms" the author turns for the first time to his boyhood memories, that remain also the main fount of inspiration in his subsequent work. The poetic colouring of his first impressions somewhat lightens the otherwise gloomy story the action of which takes place in a provincial town. The teenage hero, Joel Nox, moves to New Orleans, after the burial of his mother, in search of his father, who long ago had abandoned the family.

According to the central idea of the novel the hero is destined to go through many trials in his lonely search for

truth. He must overcome his instinctive fear before the all-powerful "evil" and arrive at a silent comprehension of the beauty and tragedy of life. Wandering in the twisting corridors of a gloomy castle, he must symbolically find for himself "other rooms and other voices", i.e. tentatively making his way towards maturity and leaving behind his boyhood.

The undercurrent pessimism that becomes evident in Capote's first novel, is more clearly marked in his early collection of short stories, "A Tree of the Night" (1949). The heroes of these stories live in a dream world of their own, not capable of understanding real life and its objective laws. In fear of the surrounding cruelty they have withdrawn into a realm of abstract ideals of beauty, honesty, and justice. As these illusions usually collapse in the contact with grim reality, the heroes are forced to indulge in painful self-analysis and abstract reasoning. Owing to the illusory quality, there is practically no action in these stories. The contours of the picture are intentionally obscure and the designs deliberately slipshod. As the Soviet critic Zveryev has noted, the "phantasmagoria" of Capote's early stories sometimes calls forth direct associations with Poe or with the prose of surrealists. (9:6)

In 1951 appeared Capote's second novel, "The Grass Harp", which is generally considered to be his best and most characteristic work. The author himself regarded the book the "only true thing" he ever wrote. Like the first novel, it reflects his own childhood memories in the South. It deals with a small group of sincere, gentle people, who in revolt against the commercial and material values around them have withdrawn into a dream world of their own.

Although Capote's next, longer story, "Breakfast at Tiffany's" is set in New York and not in his native South, it is in many ways typical of the author's unconventional world outlook and his treatment of the grotesque, eccentric character. It tells the story of a girl from lower middle class, Holly Golightly, whose racketsy sexual adventures in the city are considered to be immoral by the standards of the narrow-

minded bourgeois, but who turns out to be the only one in her wide circle of chance acquaintances to believe in genuine honesty, human kindness and solidarity. Before the book ends the reader becomes convinced that the downfall of the heroine has been caused by the corrupt, immoral society in which she moves and not by her own, ultimately good and honest nature.

Apart from fiction proper Capote has also written publicistic work: a collection of essays and literary portraits, such as "Local Color" (1950), a review of the opera troupe "Borgy and Bessy" in the Soviet Union, under the heading "Muses Are Heard" (1956), and a collection of portraits from celebrities, "Observations" (1959). Among his journalistic reports, based on documentary evidence, the best-known is "In Cold Blood" (1966).

THE GRASS HARP

The story is set in a small American town in the South, which the author himself had most likely habited. The beautiful scenery around the town has also given rise to the title of the book. There is a field of Indian grass between the hill and the woods, that changes with every season: "... go to see it in the fall, late September, when it has gone red as sunset, when scarlet shadows like firelight breeze over it and the autumn winds strum on its dry leaves sighing human music, a harp of voices." (9:29)

The narrator of the story is Collin Fenwick, an orphan boy of sixteen, who has been living for years with his two elderly unmarried aunts, Dolly and Verena Talbo. The younger of them, Verena, is authoritative, practical and rich. She is the owner of a drugstore, a filling station, a grocery and an office building. The elder aunt, Dolly, whom the boy likes best, is shy, gentle and day-dreaming, a direct opposite to the businesslike Verena. Dolly's faithful Negro servant, Catherine Greek, is her best friend. The latter calls her mistress lovingly "Dolly Heart", whereas Verena is for her "That One".

In her youth Dolly had learned to make a medicine by boiling various herbs. The formula, which had been given to her by a gipsy woman, ended with the rhyme: "Boil till dark and pure / if you want a dropsy cure." Dolly sends the remedy, which is said to cure the dropsy, to sick people free of charge. A conflict rises between Dolly and Verena on account of this drug. With the help of a certain Dr. Ritz she tries to persuade Dolly to start a company for the production of the medicine: she has set her mind on profiting by it. This outrageous proposal makes Dolly flee from home, together with Collin and Catherine, to an old tree-house in the woods. Later in the day they are joined by two other loyal friends Riley Henderson, a boy of Collin's age, and Judge Cool, whose world outlook has much in common with that of Dolly. "Roosted in the sycamore tree" (9:98), five of them altogether, they spend three memorable days of late September in the lap of nature, away from the "rotten civilization", telling each other their life stories and feeling a real kinship of spirit.

The narrow-minded townspeople do not understand, however, this romantic, harmless rebellion. Soon they detect the fugitives and try to force them to return home. Two parties of men are sent out by Verena Talbo to punish them for having broken the accepted norms of behaviour. "Swinging their rifles against the undergrowth like canecutters, they swaggered up the path, nine, twelve, twenty strong". (9:98) At the head of the gang is the sheriff himself, followed by the "principal at school", the "grim Reverend Buster" and other town authorities. They make an uproar, surrounding the tree-house; and finally the shaking Verena herself is obliged to climb up in order to bring her sister to senses and leave the unseemly abode. It is, however, neither the threats of the crowd nor the entreaties of Verena but a pouring rain that ultimately makes Dolly and her company go home. The same winter Dolly falls ill and dies. The strain of the tree-incident had been too much for her delicate frame and sensitive nerves.

After the death of Dolly an important stage of Collin's

boyhood has come to a sudden end. Deprived of his dream-life he lapses into a meditative gloom. Thus we find him arguing: "I've read that past and future are a spiral, one coil containing the next and predicting its theme. Perhaps this is so; but my own life has seemed to me more a series of closed circles, rings that do not evolve with the freedom of a spiral: for me to get from one to the other has meant a leap, not a glide. What weakens me is the lull between, the wait before I know where to jump. After Dolly died I was a long while dangling!" (9:114,115) Collin feels that he cannot spend "a waking moment in the Talbo house. It was too thick with air that did not move." (9:115)

For some time he "dangles" unhappily between the different pleasures of the town. Then suddenly he makes up his mind to "jump" into the unknown - to leave his home place for good. In the company of his old friend, the Judge, he pays his farewell visit to the field of high Indian grass, as it best reminds him of aunt Dolly, the symbol of his happy boyhood: "Quietly astonished, we surveyed the view from the cemetery hill, and arm in arm descended to the summer-burned, September-burnished field. A waterfall of color flowed across the dry and strumming leaves: and I wanted then for the Judge to hear what Dolly had told me: that it was a grass harp, gathering, telling, a harp of voices remembering a story. We listened." (9:118)

IN COLD BLOOD

The book is based on the documentary evidence of a particularly shocking and brutal murder of an innocent Southern family, the Clutters, of West Kansas, in 1959.

Capote himself called the work his "Nonfictional Novel". Already for a long time he had intended to write a book in which fiction would be connected with journalism, art with the technique of the newspaper reporter, imaginary craftsmanship with exact documentary facts. He complained that his li-

terary work was becoming more and more subjective, based on his own personal self and reminiscences. Thus he determined to arrange his creative work in this way that it would objectively depict real life and its people. As a matter of fact, this type of documentary genre is one of the most prevalent recent tendencies, not only in America but in the whole world. It is true, however, that Capote was one of the first original practitioners of this genre.

"In Cold Blood" is based on careful research. Before writing his "Nonfictional Novel" Capote made abundant notes, running to 6000 pages. As a rule, he took these notes by memory, after the corresponding talk with a witness, not during it.

In November, 1959, soon after the American paper "New York Times" had carried the horrible news of the murder of four members of a Southern farmer's family, the Clutters, he decided to write about this most cold-blooded murder case he had ever heard. He rang up his friend and fellow-novelist, Harper Lee, who was a legal man by profession, and asked for his help in the investigation and in the collection of materials.

He found out that on November 15, 1959, four members of the farmer's family had been killed in a small village, Holcomb: Herbert William Clutter, his wife, the son Kenyon and the daughter Nancy. There was no evident motive of the murder as the family was respectable in the neighbourhood and had no enemies. The murderers had disappeared, leaving no trace of themselves. 5 years, 4 months and 29 days later, however, the two criminals, Perry Smith and Richard Hickock, were captured, put into prison and hanged in the Kansas State. Thus Capote's book is a penetrating investigation of the life and death of 6 people - 4 murdered victims, and 2 executed criminals.

Although Capote started collecting the necessary materials immediately after the tragic event had taken place, his research work lasted nearly six years. He examined the psychological and social causes of the murder. He got his

material from legal documents, as well as from his conversations with people who had close relations with the victims. He spent three years in West Kansas, visiting all the shops, boarding-houses and other places where the murderers had been, in order to get better acquainted with their past, their way of thinking, their mode of life. He took part in the legal investigation from its first days, had many conversations with the criminals themselves, who were waiting for the trial, and later was present at the court when the death sentence was read.

But although "In Cold Blood" is a book entirely based on documentary evidence, it is not merely a journalistic report. Capote presents all the facts about the murder, but these facts are closely connected with his main theme - the causes of the singular crime. The author has assembled his material like a producer in cinematography, using the facts in strict, logical sequence. In this way he has also presented a socio-psychological study. It shows how inhuman social order stirs up in people callousness, and an embittered desire to revenge. It likewise tries to give an answer to the question why man's life is so cheap in America, why criminality is such an important social problem. The reader does not see only the two murderers, Perry Smith and Richard Hickock, but also the social and moral atmosphere which creates such people.

The reader also learns all the possible facts about the Clutters, who had not had the slightest connection with the criminals. The head of the family, William Clutter was an educated, hard-working, deeply religious man, held in high esteem in the neighbourhood. His wife, a sickly woman, was also respected by all their relatives and acquaintances. Their two children had been the best pupils at the local school.

The murder might have been committed under the pretext of robbery. But this could not have been any real cause, as the family never kept their money at home. The murderers could also have taken the bounty, if they had found any in

the house, and left, without atrociously killing the people.

Neither Richard Hickock nor Perry Smith had committed any crime before. Richard was outwardly a pleasant young man, sincerely fond of his wife and child. And Perry was known to be a harmless youth, somewhat sentimental in his disposition. But he had been to the Vietnam War and had known how to kill a man. It was also he who murdered the Clutters, all the four of them.

The previous life of the young men had been to some extent unhappy and tragic which partly explains their crime. Both had been struggling with poverty since childhood and had had no chance to achieve material well-being later. This lack of success in personal life might have caused their anger, jealousy and cruelty towards people who were better-off. Partly, however, the crime was committed by men who were ultimately pathological, and could not lead a normal life.

Thus Capote's book "In Cold Blood" is not really a detective story but a profound, many-sided socio-psychological study. It is a warning against young people, who grow up in a society that is full of hidden hatred, distrust and revenge.

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II. BLACK PROTEST

One of the most characteristic features in American social life that appeared with great force in the 60s and 70s, was the mass movement of Negroes for their civil rights. Negro problem or the so-called "Black Protest" became in these years a problem No. 1, calling forth a great number of contradictions and conflicts.

Regardless of their political and other convictions, the leaders of this movement considered that America was creating two different worlds, two different societies, those of the whites and those of the blacks. The country was standing at crossroads. There were two alternatives: either a radical solution of the Negro problem or a general chaos and disintegration through racial and class discrimination.

Negro literature as one aspect of this movement, does not represent any unified phenomenon. Among Negro writers and intellectuals there are different literary and social-political tendencies. But for all of them a struggle for civil rights has become predominant. At the same time the notion "civil rights of the Negroes" has been understood in various ways. 1) The supporters of the murdered Negro leader, Martin Luther King, suggest peaceful means of struggle to convince everybody of the human dignity of the "coloured people". 2) On the other hand, the most militant representatives of the movement, demand immediate action of violence. Their anarchic slogans propagate the superiority of the black people to the white. They categorically deny the whole white civilization. They consider the word "Negro" an insult, and call themselves "Black".

Contemporary Negro literature in America includes many writers. The most popular and talented of them are: James Baldwin, William Kelly, Le Roi Jones, John Killens, Ralph Ellison, John Williams, Malcolm X, William Demby, William Gardner Smith, Chester Himes, Richard Wright, and a few others.

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1. JAMES BALDWIN
(b. 1924)

James Baldwin is not only the best-known Negro writer, but also one of the most talented American authors in general. His name has been mentioned together with such eminent writers of the post-war generation as Salinger, Bellow, Cheever, Styron, Updike, Malamud, etc., who emerged after the glorious older generation of Hemingway-Fitzgerald-Faulkner-Steinbeck.

The reader knows more about the formation of Baldwin's literary career than, perhaps, that of any other writer, because the links between his life and creative work are very close. In a number of autobiographical essays, written in the 1st person, he himself builds up his life-story with abundant commentaries.

Baldwin was born in 1924 and grew up in the Negro ghetto Harlem, in New York. There were nine children in the family and James was the oldest. As he comments on their big family: "I, James in August, George in January, Barbara in August, Wilmer in October, David in December, Gloria, Ruth, Elizabeth, and (when we thought it was over!) Paula Maria, named by me, born on the day our father died, all in summer time." (1:16)

The day of his father's death was in many ways a significant event in Baldwin's life. As he writes in his essay, "Notes of a Native Son": "On the 29th of July, in 1943, my father died. On the same day, a few hours later, his last child was born. Over a month before this, while all our energies were concentrated in waiting for these events, there had been, in Detroit, one of the bloodiest race riots of the century. A few hours after my father's funeral, while he lay in state in the undertaker's chapel, a race riot broke out in Harlem. On the morning of the 3rd of August, we drove my father to the graveyard through a wilderness of smashed plate glass. The day of my father's funeral had also been my nineteenth birthday." (2:85)

Baldwin hated his father. This hatred recurs like an obsessive theme in many of his books. Apart from being profoundly personal - the aversion of an intelligent, sensitive son towards his narrowminded, tyrannical father - this hatred was also an inborn feeling of all black children towards their parents. In one of his later essays Baldwin writes: "By teaching a black child that he is worthless, that he can never contribute anything to civilization, you are teaching him to hate his mother, his father and his brothers." (4:11)

Since his early youth it had been Baldwin's dream to become a creative writer. But his father was a preacher, and wanted to make him a preacher too. Thus at the age of 14 Baldwin became a preacher in Harlem. His deep contempt for the insincerity of chapel service, and the other desperate inner conflicts of his formative years, are convincingly reflected in his first novel "Go Tell It on the Mountain". At 17 he managed to get rid of the hated job, and soon after, left home to lead an independent life and devote himself to literature. His book reviews and first tentative attempts at creative writing brought him moderate success. At 21 he had "done enough of a novel to get a Saxton Fellowship". (2:4) When the novel turned out, however, unsalable, he was forced to do all kinds of odd jobs to keep himself alive. As he ironically comments on this period of his early career, apart from "waiting on tables in a village restaurant", he continued writing book reviews about the Negro problem "concerning which the color of my skin made me automatically an expert". (2:4) His second book, written under these straitened circumstances, met the same fate as the first "fellowship but no sale (It was a Rosenwald Fellowship)". (2:4)

Driven to despair, Baldwin decided to stop reviewing books, and in 1942, at the age of 24, he left America for Paris, where he finished with great difficulties his first novel.

Baldwin had secretly made up his mind to leave America for ever, to fight himself free from racial prejudice, and become a creative writer. Soon after arrival, however, he was

made to realize that he could not escape the color of his skin, the stigmatizing "laughter", in the foreign country either: "It could only remind me of the laughter which I had sometimes deliberately elicited. This laughter is the laughter of those who consider themselves to be at a safe remove from all the wretched, for whom the pain of the living is not real. I had heard it so often in my native land that I had resolved to find a place where I would never hear it any more. In some deep, black, stony, and liberating way, my life, in my own eyes, began during that first year in Paris, when it was borne in on me that this laughter is universal and never can be stilled." (2:158) In his essay, "Nobody Knows My Name", he writes with a mixture of grim humour and despondency about these difficult early days in Paris which included "starving and writing and drinking and very many other things". (5:53)

In 1946 Baldwin returned home, and again left for Paris in 1948. Thus, like many other American Negro writers - Richard Wright, his literary father, or William Demby, William Gardner Smith, etc. - he expatriated himself for shorter or longer periods in France, Italy, Switzerland or Turkey. When recognition came at last, it had been fought in the teeth of seemingly insurmountable difficulties.

Today Baldwin is widely known as a prolific, versatile writer. He has written several novels, short stories, plays and collections of publicistic essays. His numerous interviews and TV shows have given him the reputation of a serious, conscientious writer, who deeply loves his native land and is concerned about the welfare of its people.

Baldwin is the author of such novels as: "Go Tell It on the Mountain" (1953), "Giovanni's Room" (1956), "Another Country" (1962), "Tell Me How Long the Train's Been Gone" (1968), "If Beale Street Could Tell" (1974). His short-story collection "Going to Meet the Man", appeared in 1963, and his two best-known plays, "Amen Corner" and "Blues for Charlie" in 1956 and 1963 respectively. The publicistic essays, first printed, as a rule, in different magazines, were later

collected in the following books: "Notes of a Native Son" (1955), "Nobody Knows My Name" (1961), "The Fire Next Time" (1963), "A Rap on Race" (1961), in collaboration with Margaret Mead), etc.

Baldwin first achieved critical acclaim and universal recognition with his publicistic essays. It is also in these works that he most clearly expresses the underlying motive of his literary credo: the white and the black live in two different worlds, separated by an impenetrable wall. Although these essays are carried by a militant spirit and a violent protest against racial discrimination, one can also feel, at times, a spirit of sadness and pessimism, the existentialist motives of human existence, as if genuine freedom were achieved only by death. These ideas are explicitly expressed in such a book as "The Fire Next Time". Explaining the present alienation and indignation of the Negroes in America, their hatred for the whites, he refers to the past life of these native people in the following way: "... lynching, fire, pains, castration, childmurder, violence, death and humiliation, fright day and night, fright to the marrow of the bones, a constant doubt, if he is worthy of life, as nobody around him admits such a right..." (6:112) In the same book, however, he also declares his militant outlook: the Negroes do not expect to achieve equality in this "burning house", the present-day America. They are determined to create a new America, free from the ills of racial prejudice. The same idea is expressed in another publicistic essay, "I Have No Country, I Have No Flag": "Boys and girls with black color of skin know already at 16 or 17 that America is not going to fulfil any of its promises. They realize that they cannot find their place in life, although they also might work for the whole country." He adds that "The Negro has never been so humble as the white Americans consider him to be. The Negro has come from a whole generation of active fighters. And the character of the Negro has not changed. He cannot any more keep away revolution. A moment comes when the cup of sorrow is full." (7:2)

In such later essays as "A Rap on Race", however, his attitude becomes again sad and resigned, as if the race barrier could never be surmounted in America: "I no longer care to tell you the truth, whether white people can hear me or not." (4:16)

The general cast of Baldwin's novels is less optimistic than that of his publicistic work. But his novels are interesting, not only for the topical theme, the condition of Negroes in present-day America, but also as specimens of artistic prose, full of dramatic insight and psychological depth.

Baldwin's first novel, "Go Tell It On the Mountain", is divided into three parts. The first part presents the story of a Negro family, the Grimes, in Harlem during a Saturday and Sunday. There are four children in the family, who live in a pious, god-fearing atmosphere and are denied all worldly pleasures. This first part also presents the acute inner crisis of the eldest son, John, who is torn between his sense of duty towards his family, and his heart's desire to find his own identity outside the stifling religious atmosphere, forced upon them by their tyrannical "pater familias", a preacher by profession.

The second part of the novel throws light upon the past life of the different members of the family. Gabriel Grimes, the cruel, overbearing father, has been depicted as a hypocritical preacher, who teaches abstention in order to wash his own numerous sins, committed in the past. Gabriel's sister, Florence, hates him for his insincerity and unnecessary violence, whereas his wife, Elizabeth, the wise and loving mother of the four children, tries to reconcile the inimical forces and hold the family together. They all are suffering from the damnation of race hatred that has disfigured their lives from the very outset.

The third part of the novel presents a moving picture of the sufferings of the elder son. John Grimes, who has been forced by his father and environment to take up preacher's profession, which he has started already sincerely to hate.

In "Go Tell It on the Mountain" Baldwin has made use of several religious themes and allegories, which often allow him to avoid sharp social problems and turn to the eternal Biblical relationships between fathers and children, men and wives, to problems of humbleness and subordination. There is a constant analogy between the Biblical text and the composition of the novel. Thus, for instance, the second part of the novel, entitled "The Prayers of Prophets", consists of the following subdivisions: 1) The Prayers of Florence; 2) The Prayers of Gabriel, and 3) The Prayers of Elizabeth. In this allegorical, Biblical form Baldwin speaks of the pains and humiliations of the Negro people on the road of their "earthly life".

All Baldwin's novels offer a complicated and often contradictory fusion of realistic and modernistic tendencies. Although he started writing in the realistic traditions of the '20s and '30s, he is often concerned with "the strained nerves", the "wounded self", i.e. with the "psyche of the hero", which sometimes brings him close to the modernistic concept, especially when he starts analyzing the purely biological, sexual relationships of his characters. The vital social problem of contemporary American life, however, the problem of racial discrimination, always remains central in his work.

Baldwin's second novel, "Giovanni's Room", is to some extent exceptional as it does not present any Negro characters. In this novel, set in France, the author first touches upon the problems of homosexuality, which becomes an obsessive theme in his later fiction. The main character, David, represents a sophisticated Western youth, who has had several homosexual experiences: first in his boyhood with Joe, later in the Army, and then in France with Giovanni. As the title indicates, the author's attention is concentrated on "Giovanni's room", a poor attic, and on the relationship of the two men.

David has also a girl-friend, Hella, who has, however, gone to Spain to meditate over her love for David, and to

decide whether she is really in love with him or not. Ultimately David himself cannot decide whether he belongs to women or to men, or to both.

Both realistic and modernistic tendencies become strikingly evident in Baldwin's third novel, "Another Country". In this novel Baldwin creates a horrible picture of the vast million city, New York. The hero, in the first part of the book, a young Negro, Rufus Scott, is a musician and jazz-band player. He tries to establish his contact with the world of the white people, which is separated from the world of the black by a stony wall. In order to prove himself that he is able to destroy this indefinable barrier, he violates a white girl, Leona, from the South. It is necessary for him to experience sexual supremacy over a white woman. He sets about his aim like a possessed fanatic, and carries his plan duly into effect. This love-affair turns out to be, however, the main cause of Rufus's suicide and Leona's subsequent madness.

The author touches upon different other sexual relationships in the novel. The white writer, Vivaldo, and Rufus's sister Ida, provide another pair of white and black lovers. There are also several homosexual and heterosexual ties between various characters in the novel.

In the painful history of Rufus, and his white friend, Vivaldo, in the history of all the black and white people of the book, one can feel a fatal predestination, the senselessness of human existence in general.

The title of the novel, "Another Country", stands for the "black" America. For Baldwin this "another country" is concerned not so much with social relationships, as with racial-sexual relationships. The social structure of American society has often been reduced to a secondary plane as compared with the prominent sexual life of the heroes. The mutual relation between the blacks and the whites has been equalled to sexual ties. This is, of course, one of the specific peculiarities of the existentialist novel, which changes social problems for biological and sexual ones.

Nevertheless, the sharpness and force of Baldwin's protest against American society is so great that it penetrates through the existentialist colouring of the novel.

Baldwin hates racism in any form it exists in America or in any other part of the world. He is one of those contemporary Negro writers who does not accept the positions of the so-called "Negro nationalism", although in his depiction of the antagonism between the blacks and the whites he achieves unprecedented force.

In his novel, "Tell Me How Long the Train's Been Gone", he returns to the main theme of his earlier works, the position of the Negroes in American society. The Negro hero, Leo Proudhammer, is a popular artist and the narrator of the story. He falls in love with a white woman, Barbara, and his love is returned. At the same time he is poignantly aware of the fact that Barbara can never make her way into his family. She is doomed to remain a "white whore", a representative of the oppressors, and therefore an object of revenge.

In the relationship between Leo and his bodyguard, Black Christopher, Baldwin's recurrent theme of homosexuality and colour seem to be united. Before their departure for France Leo and Christopher visit a rock concert, in which they see a symbolic rite, a fusion of the past and the present.

When Leo returns to America, he achieves great professional success. He produces a movie, "Big Deal", and then a play, becoming prosperous and influential like the author himself.

The style and composition of the novel is typical of Baldwin's manner of writing. The reader learns about the hero's past and present, his attitude to life, by means of shifting flashbacks.

The novel opens with Leo's sudden attack on the stage. Within the space of a few pages the hero's obsessive thoughts of race hatred, his own bitter experiences are revealed. Thus he is deeply worried about his brother Caleb, who on a framed-up charge of robbery had been sent to prison: "I watched the walls of an old massive building. Alas, he was

not there: the building turned out to be City College; but my brother was on a prison farm in the Deep South, working in the fields." (8:17) He is likewise raging about the deaths of such outstanding Negro leaders as Martin Luther King and Malcolm X: "I thought of a very beautiful man whom I had known and loved, a black man, shot down in the hearing of his wife and children in the streets of a miserable Deep South town. There are deaths and deaths, there are deaths of which it is impossible and even ignoble to forgive the world, there are deaths to which one never becomes reconciled." (8:14)

All these racial problems are discussed throughout the whole book by means of flashbacks, knitting together the loose narrative and casting light on the hero's life and thoughts.

The underlying theme of the novel, the race hatred, the "black pride" colours the whole narrative. This "black pride" has exercised its influence on Leo's father, a former Negro slave, who thinks himself to be ultimately of royal blood. But the same "black pride" has also its effect on Leo: to challenge the world of the whites, he becomes a famous actor and producer, a spokesman of his humiliated race.

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III. THE AMERICAN WAR NOVEL

The Second World War must be regarded as a cardinal event from the point of view of American literary history. Perhaps more than in any other country it marked a new stage of development, "Many of the old social problems (especially questions of the labour movement and the internal economic development of the United States) were tacitly shelved; others (especially the struggle against fascism) acquired a more urgent development". (1:58-59)

Among the different literary trends in America, unlike, for instance, in England, the Second World War gave rise to a flood of war novels. At first glance this tendency seems to be unexpected as American continent remained entirely intact from the immense devastations and casualties, the European nations had to suffer. As M. Koreneva points out:

"Since 1865, when the Civil War came to an end not a single shell has exploded on American soil; not one bomb dropped from a hostile plane has destroyed a single home; America has not groaned under the heel of one foreign soldier's boot. Even the tempest of the two world wars which ravaged Europe did not touch her territory. There were no ruined cities, no blood-soaked fields, no Auschwitz or Dachau; no countless war deads, no casualties among old people, women and children. One could go listing the terrible calamities that America has been spared (though here, too, the wars took its toll) because the country experienced neither an enemy invasion nor even the proximity of an enemy force." (2:48)

The main reasons for the prominence of the American war novel should be sought in the new, dangerous social-political developments within the country. It is a well-known fact that the USA emerged from the Second World War as the most powerful imperialist state. Although, together with other European countries, she had fought for a just cause against German-Italian and Japanese fascism, she was herself gradually turning fascist. The country was actually being ruled by a small

number of industrial bosses and military leaders who had gained immense profits from the war, and who, in the post-war years began to use power policy to silence all opposition to their expansionist plans. (3:329) Under the dictatorship of senator McCarthy reaction prevailed and the cold war hysteria swept the country. It was not any more fascism but international Communism, with the Soviet Union at its head, that was now considered to be the chief enemy to American "freedom and democracy".

The all-round persecution of progressive politicians and intellectuals called forth a spirit of caution. During the so-called "silent decade" it was dangerous to take up broad social issues. Consequently many talented post-war writers turned to the pursuit of man's inner life to the problems of 'alienation' and other conflicts from a psychological viewpoint. The American war novelists were among the few writers who dared to challenge the prevailing mood of fascism and corruption in the country.

These war novelists are not historians or sociologists in the proper sense of the word. They are, however, critically minded, and as a rule, try to penetrate into other people's feelings, especially into the feelings of those whose native country is under American occupation. While themselves serving in the army they do not support the campaign, but protest against military discipline, considering it absurd and illogical. They are likewise inimical towards the hierarchy in the army, which serves as a wall between the officers and the privates.

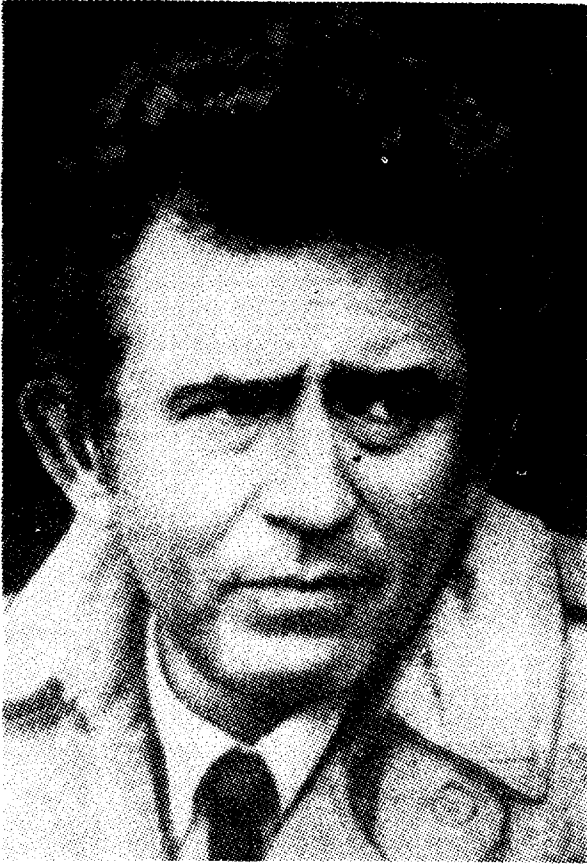
The most outstanding American war novelists of the period are Norman Mailer, James Jones, Irwin Shaw, Kurt Vonnegut, Joseph Heller, etc.

These writers are greatly influenced by the earlier war novelists of the Lost Generation, especially by Ernest Hemingway and Dos Passos, who wrote about the First World War. Just like the latter they depict war as a pitiless carnage, which brings infinite physical and moral sufferings to mankind.

But except for their debt to the writers of the Lost Generation, the works of the World-War-II novelists are in many ways different. They do not have any illusions about the war. These illusions have been lost for them and replaced by cynicism instead. They know that they have been sent out to be killed. Therefore the new generation of American war novelists sees the whole truth about the man-slaughter, sees it nakedly, without any romance or idealization.

Some of these novelists look upon the war not as a cause of all possible corruption and evil, as the writers of the Lost Generation did, but rather as a crusade against these evils. They believe that they are fighting on the side of the right and the good and that fascism, particularly the Nazi variety, has to be destroyed. Therefore some of the novelists of the Second World War are more optimistic. The war has become everyman's problem, and everyman has to fight it, and win it, and thereby make the world right again. This ideological position is best revealed by Irwin Shaw in his novel "The Young Lions". Michael Whitaker, who is clearly the spokesman of the author, says: "I believe in the war."

But such an optimistic message is not true of all the American war novelists. Few of them "had any deep-seated illusions about bourgeois democracy, which was itself not free from blame. It was a case of defending 'the bad against the worse', and war itself, however, inevitable it might be, was frightfully inhuman and irrational". (1:61) Therefore the majority of the American war novelists are undisguisedly hostile towards any war. They are pacifist and anti-war in their approach.



NORMAN MAILER

"Is there nothing to remind us that the writer does not need to be integrated into his society, and often works best in opposition to it?... I wonder if there has been a time in the last fifty years when the American artist has felt more alienated".

"Our Country and Our Culture"

1. NORMAN MAILER

(b. 1923)

Today Norman Mailer is known as a novelist, short-story writer, a poet, an essayist and playwright. But he has also become an active public figure, a political speaker, who has taken the floor on several crucial issues in American social life.

Mailer was born in New Jersey in 1923. He grew up in Brooklyn and entered Harvard University when he was only sixteen. While still a student majoring in engineering, he became interested in literature, and published his first story at the age of eighteen. In 1943 he graduated from Harvard University and the same year joined the U.S. Army. He served in the Philippines with the 112th Cavalry from Texas and took part in the so-called Pacific Campaign during the Second World War.

Soon after the Armistice he wrote his first, brilliant war novel, "The Naked and the Dead" (1948), based mainly on his own military experience. The novel became a best-seller in America and launched his literary career. It also remains his best hitherto published novel. As M. Mendelson rightly points out "the anti-fascist and, to a certain extent, anti-bourgeois tendencies, that were characteristic of Mailer immediately after the war, helped him give a true-to-life picture of the American Army. (4:423)

THE NAKED AND THE DEAD

The novel gives a truthful and grim picture of the front-line combat on a small island in the Pacific Ocean, Anapopei, held by the Japanese. In the course of 720 pages the author records the whole occupation of Anapopei by the Americans - from the landing operations to the final victory, when the last Japanese soldiers have been driven out of the island. But as Mailer himself has pointed out in one of his

essays, the main theme of his first novel was not so much the military campaign itself as the characters of men, who carried it out. (5:7)

Another peculiarity of the novel lies in the fact the Japanese army, an ally of the fascist Germany, against whom the Americans are waging a 'just' war, is in no way the object of Mailer's study. The occasional Japanese soldiers, the reader meets in the book, are ordinary exhausted warriors, or war prisoners deadly frightened by the forthcoming torture and death. They are far from being the carriers of fascist ideas. The author's whole attention is concentrated on the American war machine which has now become the embodiment of fascism and reaction. Thus the brief campaign has been used as a mirror of vaster political and social issues. 'In its portrayal of a dozen soldiers and officers, it gives the impression of ... American society itself in uniform'. (6:18)

Among the characters of the novel there are three men who stand out most clearly. They are General Cummings, Lieutenant Hearn and Sergeant Croft.

Both General Cummings and Lieutenant Hearn come from wealthy homes, both have rebelled against their tyrannical fathers. But in their adult lives they have developed in diametrically different ways: Cummings has become a reactionary, a fascist to his finger tips, whereas Hearn has turned into a frustrated liberal. Serving as an attendant to the general Hearn has been forced into the role of a reluctant listener to the latter's aggressive world outlook. In the nightly conversations of the two the contrastive philosophical and political tenets of the novel are borne out.

General Cummings is a man of sober and analytical mind, capable of evaluating facts, although his interpretation of these facts is far from being the truth. In his opinion, democracy rather than fascism is the root of all evil. His views of the Second World War, and the part of the USA in it, are openly imperialistic. He acts as an apologist for the cult of strength and power, declaring that war and politics are

beyond human morality. As on one occasion he claims to Hearn: "The only morality of the future is a power morality." (7: 323)

The army structure is ideally suited to the purpose of Cummings' 'power morality', to his principle of trampling down the weak. He does not seek for heroism or high ideals in his soldiers. Neither does he want them to be conscious of their patriotic or civic duties. What he needs are persons who obey him blindly, without thinking. It is fear that makes them respect and even like him. To smash and destroy the individuality of his men is for Cummings the only way of creating ideal soldiers-assassins. His well-proved method is the instillment of fear in all his inferiors.

"Break them down. Every time an enlisted man sees an officer get an extra privilege, it breaks him down a little more.... To make an Army work, you have to have every man in it fitted into a fear ladder... the army functions best when you're frightened of the man above, and contemptuous of your subordinates." (7:175, 176)

As Cummings reveals to Hearn in their numerous nightly conversations, power has always been the dominant factor in history. In his opinion, the real aim of the Second World War is to supplant the decadent fascism of the Old World by an authority that is more vigorous and cunning. Our century, he holds, belongs to the reactionaries. Hitler would not have remained in power for such a long period if he had not been able to detect the essence of the twentieth-century man. He even asserts that Hitler should be our interpreter, for the highest value, men can achieve, is not ethical or religious, but sheer power.

Cummings is also convinced that the war against Hitler is accidental and that it is necessary to fight against a more dangerous enemy - the Soviet Union. Thus his attitude is characteristic of the reactionary McCarthyism and the cold war of the '50s, of the virulent anti-Soviet propaganda in the United States.

Lieutenant Hearn finds himself in an awkward position.

He rejects all the generals' theories as inhuman, and creates his own vision of the world. At the same time he remains as hopeless and powerless as any other officer or soldier on the platoon; he is forced to obey the order of the general out of fear.

Realizing that his lectures on the present age and future have no effect on Hearn, Cummings decides to give him a 'lesson'. There is an episode in which during the absence of the general, Hearn drops a cigarette butt on the clean floor of the tent. Considering it an act of disobedience Cummings decides to teach his attendant. He throws a burning cigarette on the floor and asks Hearn to pick it up. Moreover, he also threatens Hearn if he refuses to pick the cigarette up, he will be court-martialed and given five years in the Army Stockade. Understanding that the general is not joking Hearn, bends down, picks up the cigarette and drops it into an ash-tray.

Hearn is an honest man but too weak to protest or carry his own principles into practice. He cannot follow the rules of militarism and is therefore, cleared out of the way without great difficulties. Frightened by his own cowardice, of his place on the 'fear ladder' he requests Cummings a transfer to another unit within the headquarters and is given the command of Sergeant Croft's reconnaissance platoon. The latter turns out, however, a still more formidable adversary than Cummings. Resenting the fact that Lieutenant Hearn has been placed above him, Croft misleads him about the real position of the enemy and makes him perish through a Japanese bullet.

Sergeant Croft, another central character of the novel, comes from the desert region of Texas, accustomed to the forces of elements and perils since childhood. He is the 'healthy', efficient platoon sergeant, a vicious and practical killer.

If in the character of Cummings fascism assumes the guise of abstract intellectualism, then in Croft it takes the form of a purely physical threat to mankind. Himself unintel-

igent and illiterate he violently hates any sort of learning. He believes that all problems can be solved by sheer use of force. Brave and audacious, he is also a born assassin, who likes killing for its own sake. Therefore he is the man who finds real satisfaction in the war. For Cummings he is an ideal soldier in whose hands the future state of 'power' lies.

It is not accidental that both Cummings and Croft are made authorities in the novel. They differ from other people only in their use of power: Cummings is a fascist theorist, Croft, a fascist practitioner.

There are several other characters in the novel, mainly ordinary Americans, who have been enlisted in the Army and sent to fight against the Japanese. They have been carefully selected by the author and shown as the products of the surroundings they come from. The campaign is tiresome for these rank-and-file soldiers who are not accustomed to the tropical rains, to the terrible heat and to other local conditions of the island.

Mailer creates truthful episodes of the warfare. He shows how the reactionary army leadership tries to turn common Americans into qualified Nazi assassins.

The only rebel apart from Hearn, who dares to be dissatisfied with the practices of the militarists, is 'Red' Valsen. This rank-and-file soldier is a representative of the working class. He comes from a poor miner's family in Montana and has experienced hardships since his early youth. At 18 he had left home and wandered across the vast country in search of odd jobs like many other lads in the years of Depression. Volunteering finally for the military service his vagabond freedom comes to a sudden end. Like other soldiers of the platoon he hates the officers-oppressors, but especially Croft for his unnecessary violence and cruelty. In an episode towards the end of the novel 'Red' Valsen is on the point of killing Croft but like Lieutenant Hearn is defeated in the unequal display of forces.

Thus the few democratic forces in the novel - Lieutenant

Hearn, the high-minded liberal, and 'Red' Valsen, a rebel "from the bottom" - are frustrated. Fascism preached by General Cummings and carried into practice by Sergeant Croft, seems to carry the day.

The overall pessimistic cast of the novel does not allow, however, the triumph of any 'sides'. Mailer depicts Cummings and Croft with loathing as they present a real danger to the future human existence. But he also depicts them ironically as absurd bastards of the decline of mankind. This irony reaches its highest peak at the end of the novel. The island of Anapoei is freed from the Japanese through the casual operation organized by Dalleon, one of the dullest officers of the staff and not through the brilliant strategic genius of Cummings. In Cummings's absence Dalleon destroys the hidden headquarters of the Japanese general. Both the general and his staff are killed and the soldiers either taken prisoner or shot down on the spot. The tactical plan, carefully prepared by Cummings, loses its value because it is discovered after the victory that the Japanese are in no condition to resist the Americans. There is absurdity everywhere, and the exhausted, tortured people remain the only reality.

The utter senselessness of war serves as the thematic basis for the subplot of "The Naked and the Dead". The style of the novel is cold, dispassionate and at times deterministic. The author shows human agony as a typical phenomenon of the universe and mortality as a fact of existence. The indifference of nature to the designs of man is a recurrent theme.

The naturalistic and modernistic tendencies that are prevalent in contemporary American fiction, have considerably influenced both Mailer's literary method and his pessimistic outlook. At the same time the novel remains a powerful indictment of fascism and the absurdity of war.

In none of his subsequent works has Mailer achieved the realism of his first novel.

"The Barbary Shore", the author's second novel, that met a sensational notoriety, was published in 1951. The main cha-

acter of the book, McLewd, a former Trotskyvite, turns out to be an agent of the FBI. He is presented as a convinced revolutionary of the past, who has been disillusioned in the ideas of socialism. The unhealthy, hysterical atmosphere of the book deprives it of genuine artistic merit and, at the same time, demonstrates the author's own shifting political convictions.

"The Deer Park" (1955) tells the story of an American film producer who tries to accommodate himself to the complicated post-war economic life of the country. The exposure of the corruption of art in Hollywood has been presented on a purely moral plane. It is, however, the author's growing interest in sex, as the only saviour and rejuvenator of humanity, that lends the novel its prevalent modernistic colouring.

"An American Dream" (1965), Mailer's next bulky novel, that deals exclusively with the nightmarish sex-life of the "war hero" Stephen Rojak, marks the strengthening of the author's modernistic concepts and a further retreat from realism.

In his two subsequent novels, "Why Are We in Vietnam?" and "The Armies of the Night", published in 1967 and 1968 respectively, Mailer once again tackles the war theme. He takes a firm stand against the American imperialist war in Vietnam, although the active fighting itself is not depicted. Neither of them can reach, however, the artistic level of his first war novel, "The Naked and the Dead".

In the '60s Mailer also wrote several publicistic works, which express his socio-political views, and two volumes of essays. These works include: "The Presidential Papers" (1963), "Superman Comes to the Supermarket" (1964), "Cannibals and Christians" (1960), etc.

Mailer is a radical writer, but at the same time also extremely contradictory, as his views and opinions change very quickly. In all his fictional works it is the individual, and the integrity of the individual, that must be fought for and preserved. Any kind of organization - army, state, industry, etc., is the enemy of the individual.



JAMES JONES

"Who stops revolutions half-way?
The Bourgeoisie."

"The Merry Month of May"

2. JAMES JONES
(1921-1977)

James Jones, the best-known and most talented American war-novelist of the 20th century, was born in 1921, in the State of Illinois. He lived for several years in the Hawaii and studied at the University of Honolulu. Later he entered the New York University, from which he graduated in 1945. Having joined the regular army at the age of eighteen, he took part in the Second World War. He served in the American Army mainly in the Pacific, up to the end of the hostilities, and was awarded several medals for his bravery: The Purple Heart, The Silver Star, etc.

Jones's military experience furnished him the background and the material for his literary work. He started his literary career in 1945 by submitting the MS of a novel to the publishers, which was, however, refused.

His first novel, "From Here to Eternity", published in 1951, remains his best work during the post-war period. The book shock some critics when it came out because it painted a brutal, agonizingly realistic picture of Army life. Now it is known as a classic.

FROM HERE TO ETERNITY

As was the case with Norman Mailer, Jones's first war novel remains his best work. It depicts the life of the American Army on the island of Hawaii, on the threshold of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour.

Already from the first pages Jones launches the reader into a dramatic conflict between the officers and men, which also remains the main theme throughout the book.

The conflict between Colonel Holmes and Private Robert E. Lee Prewitt somewhat reminds us of that between Cummings and Hearn in Mailer's "The Naked and the Dead". Like General

Cummings, Colonel Holmes entertains a despotic wish to trample down the individuality of his subject, to fit him into a fear ladder. Prewitt's desperate struggle to keep his independence and moral integrity suffers the same defeat as that of Hearn. Once again the main issue lies in the struggle between power policy and humanity in the army.

Private Robert E. Lee Prewitt comes from a worker's family, which had been in financial difficulties since the economic crisis of the '30s. He is the son of a Kentucky coal-miner, tired of the long-lasting poverty at home and hankering for some kind of stability in his life. His principal code in life - freedom and independence - makes him join the army. But it is precisely what the army will crush. Soon he is made to realize that army is no place for man's freedom, on the contrary, it is man's prison. Prewitt hates the whole spirit in the army - "because they demand hate in the army. If one hates, one will be the perfect soldier, one will obey every order perfectly and to the letter. The American Army likes those, who will not break a single rule, who will not make a single mistake, who will only hate". (8:270)

This philosophy of hatred is alien to Prewitt's very nature, he can never accept it. He stands for the moral integrity of the ordinary working people he comes from and opposes it to the corrupt values of the officers.

Prewitt's daily behaviour in the army, his stubborn individuality are things which cause him much trouble. Neither General Slater nor Colonel Holmes can put up with the private's self-reliance and superiority. Both are convinced that Prewitt should be given a 'treatment', a lesson. Slater even explains to Holmes that his military career depends on his success in breaking down Prewitt's rebellion. They conspire in their common fight against Prewitt: they punish him for every insignificant breach of the army discipline, they pick on him on the drilling field, they rob him even of his regular Sunday leave. Finally they cast him into the Stockade, the army prison.

Jones creates a realistic picture of the Stockade, which

is the embodiment of the worst qualities "of army life". "In the Stockade, whatever else happened, you worked, you swung your 16 lb hammer to crush this rock or you swooped a scoop-hovel to load this rock you had already crushed, into the trucks that came. Work without purpose, work without end, work without pride, your hands blistered, broke, bled, caloused. They corked up like a mailman's feet." (8:764)

During the months that Prewitt spends in the Stockade he starts thinking about his miserable life in the army. He comes to the conclusion "that it was the system that was at fault, blame the system". (8:557) But when he is set free from the Stockade, Prewitt kills the Stockade boss, Fatso, who, in his opinion, is the worst exponent of the hated policy of power and fear.

In the general confusion of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour, nobody pays attention to Fatso's death. Nevertheless Prewitt hides himself at a prostitute's place because he is afraid of being found out as Fatso's murderer. Finally deciding to rejoin his regiment, he is taken for a Japanese spy and killed by the battle police. Thus the army gets rid of Prewitt in the end. Even when he is fired at and falls down, he feels nothing but enormous loneliness. His last thought before death is: "Christ, but the world was a lonesome place." (8:764)

There are other positive characters among the rank-and-file soldiers. Angelo Maggio, the son of an Italian immigrant comes from a worker's family. Like Prewitt, he has joined the army in order to find some stability in his life. Prewitt and Angelo become friends. Angelo also protests against the violence and cruelty in the American Army: "Who wants to be a goddam citizen of this goddam country anyway?", he asks at a crucial moment, but tries also to give an answer: "I love this country. But still I hate this country... This country's army is why I hate this country." (8:576)

Like Prewitt, Angelo is given a "treatment" in the Stockade for his independent spirit. This punishment cannot break him down. Later, however, he is killed in the battle.

Jack Mallor is another rank-and-file soldier introduced to the reader through Prewitt. The latter gets acquainted with him in Barrack No. Two, meant for the most 'dangerous' prisoners. Jack Mallor is a principled man, the former member of a worker's society. He is different from all other soldiers in the unit for his progressive ideals. Not even the worst jail-keepers can break his freedom-loving soul. He believes in the solidarity of the working people and hates militarism. He does not, however, believe in revolution in the workers' struggle for a better future. We can also find many tendencies of anarchism in his views, which reveal Jones's own immature view's of the workers' problem.

Apart from these rank-and-file soldiers, Jones creates a whole gallery of American military leaders, who symbolize the policy of power and fear in the army. Portraying such men as General Slater, Colonel Holmes, Major Thompson, Sergeant Fatso, and other militant fascists, Jones makes the reader feel the justified hatred of the soldiers towards them. The chapters dedicated to the ruin of the heroes, Robert E. Lee Prewitt and Angelo Maggio, under the wheel of the war machine, are full of anxiety about man, about his precarious position in a militarist state.

In his novel "From Here to Eternity" Jones has concentrated his attention mainly on moral problems by investigating the possibilities of genuine heroism in a dehumanized society. This is also the main reason why several critics have pointed out that Jones has reached a pessimistic conclusion: he is suggesting that "a stoic fight for moral integrity and independence is the only form of heroism, and moral victory following actual loss, is the only form of victory possible in our time". Yet it is not unrelieved pessimism "for his heroes never give up their struggle against overwhelming forces or their dreams of a better future. He portrays his protagonists as generous and proud people worthy of love and respect." (3:330)

For all its shortcomings "From Here to Eternity" is the book of a partisan. With its critical attitude towards Ameri-

can Administration it marks the triumph of Jones's realistic art. The author understands the class character of the 'power policy' and draws striking parallels between the commanding staff of the army and the war monopolies in America.

Jones has written several other war novels. "Some Came Running" (1957) repeats some of the early materials of his war experience, before moving on to study a midwestern small-town society. It tells the story of a soldier who has come home at the time between World War II and the Korean War.

The main hero of "The Pistol" (1959) is again a rank-and-file soldier who happens to get a pistol, which serves him as a symbol of safety in war.

"The Thin Red Line" (1962) is like "From Here to Eternity" a panoramic novel about the war on the Pacific Islands. More particularly Jones deals here with the life of a U.S. infantry company on the island of Guadalcanal in 1942-43. Once again the author is critical of the degeneration of the American Army. He draws realistic pictures of combat action and creates a number of vivid characters. The title of the novel symbolises the main theme of the book: the senseless death of innocent soldiers, the uncertainty between life and death - the front line being coloured by blood.

In "Go to the Widow-Maker" (1967) Jones returns to the themes of manliness, attained through grim war experience. As before he is critical of American realities. When he creates realistic pictures of the army and the civic world of the country, his satire becomes at times biting and derisive.

In his last, unfinished novel about the Second World War, "Whistle", (1978) Jones holds the reader gripped when he shows what war does to all men, including the bravest, who take pride in their skill as soldiers.

Only in two of his books Jones has given up the war theme proper. "The Ice-Cream Headache" (1968) is a collection of his short stories with several prefaces and epilogues in which he expounds his views of literature and ethics. "The Merry Month of May" deals with a recent event in French his-

tory, the rebellion of the students in Paris, in 1968.

In his review of Jones's last novel, the well-known American critic, Maxwell Geismar, claimed that the author "must be considered among the very small group - perhaps no more than five or six writers - of major literary talent today". (9:flyleaf)

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IV. THE ALIENATED HERO

The American novel after World War II is characterized by an extreme variety of trends and downright contradictions. Books that openly propagate reactionary or conformist ideas appear side by side with those which are sharply critical of American reality. Even in the works of one novelist we can observe both socially critical and pessimistic, decadent elements.

This is especially true of the post-war generation of talented novelists - Jerome David Salinger, Jack Kerouac, Saul Bellow, John Updike, and many others.

In spite of their great individual differences all these novelists depict the crisis of an individual in relation to the inimical outside world. While Salinger and Kerouac deal with the problem of "alienation" in relation to the post-war American youth, Bellow concentrates his attention on the "alienated" intellectuals in opposition to American urban civilization.

Commenting on the work of the post-war generation of writers the Soviet critic A.R. Hone has distinguished three characteristic tendencies, which combine to form a quantitatively new attitude to life. Firstly, the process of "alienation" is intensified. In literature it may be defined as the treatment of man's environment, in both nature and society, as something indifferent to his needs, if not essentially hostile (1:65). Secondly, the concepts of existentialist philosophy can be observed in the works of nearly all the outstanding post-war writers (1:66). The third tendency, which is closely connected with the two preceding ones, is the importation of Japanese Zen Buddhism and the doctrines of the ancient Chinese philosopher Chuang Tze. These schools of thought advocate the free self-identification of the individual with the spontaneous movements of nature. Salinger has greatly been influenced by these ideas, and it has been one of the central themes of the writers of the Beat Generation, especially of Jack Kerouac. (1:66)

Although the above-mentioned talented writers have been brought to the limelight of public and critical attention, we still often meet the opinion that they have not attained the heights of the previous generation of the '20s and '30s - the Hemingway-Faulkner-Fitzgerald-Steinbeck prestige. Thus the American critic Nathan A. Scott asserts:

"Now it has been a habit of American critics lately to submit the achievement of our writers in this country since World War II to various stocktaking and fretfully to speculate on the possibility of regarding the years just gone by as having... been anni mirabiles. The twenties and early thirties are the golden time in American literary life which is exhilarating to recall, but they are also years that weigh heavily upon us as a challenge... that constantly threatens to become a diminishing reproach if there cannot be described in our uncertain present the signs of a stature comparable to that splendid insurgency of forty years ago... of Fitzgerald, and Hemingway and Faulkner." (2:28) The same critic expresses, however, his hopes for the future as the post-war generation of talented novelists is still actively writing and has not said his last word (with the exception of Jack Kerouac who died in 1969). He rejects the widely-spread opinion that the novel as a literary medium is gradually deteriorating and dying out. (2:28)

Although Nathan A. Scott's main contentions seem to be right, he has left out an important point, not observed by the Western critics in general. The main difference between the two post-war generations of writers lies not so much in the artistic levels as in the very nature of their work. When Hemingway, Faulkner or Steinbeck set their heroes amidst active life and paid much attention to external happenings or social events, then the novelists of the new generation have, as a rule, confined themselves to the passive self-analysis and psychology of the "alienated" hero or "anti-hero". The so-called "serious novel" has been developing a new quality in which the changes in social life are registered by the psychic seismograph of the central character. Very often such a

novel with individual approach to the outside world can offer no less penetrating social criticism as the best novels of Kerouac, Salinger, Bellow, Mailer, etc. show. Due to the fact, however, that this criticism of the "alienated" hero acquires an impassive and often strongly naturalistic bent (i.e. the novels of Bellow or Mailer), these novels lose much of their life force and cannot challenge the genuinely realistic works of Hemingway, Faulkner and their generation.

In the final resort, it is mainly the problem of "alienation" which determines the relation between the realistic and modernistic elements in the American novel after World War II.

In the interaction between the individual and society realistic writers look upon "alienation" as a social-economic factor, caused by the highly developed capitalist society, and try to overcome it. For modernistic writers "alienation" is a natural, biological state of the individual, and therefore insurmountable. (3:205)



JEROME DAVID SALINGER

"We know the sound of two hands clapping. But what is the sound of one hand clapping?"

A Zen Koan

1. JEROME DAVID SALINGER

(b. 1919)

Jerome David Salinger was born in 1919 in New York. His mother was of Scottish-Irish descent, and father, a Jew by nationality, was a prosperous businessman, an importer of ham and cheese. The boy grew up in a rich home together with his sister Doris, eight years his senior.

As Salinger did not do well at several elementary schools, his parents sent him to Valley Forge Academy, a military school in Pennsylvania, known for its strict discipline. At the dormitory of this institution Salinger wrote his first short stories, secretly under the blanket in the light of an electric torch. In 1936 he finally got his school certificate.

In 1937 Salinger studied for a short period at New York University, but did not take his degree. Seeing the son's unsuccessful intellectual pursuits, his father wanted to make him a ham merchant. Salinger had, however, firmly decided to become a writer. He took part in the work of a literary seminar at Columbia University and in the '40s his first short stories, "The Young Folks" (1940), "The Varioni Brothers" (1943), etc. started appearing in various literary magazines in New York.

When World War II broke out Salinger served as an infantry sergeant in Europe from 1942-1946. He took part in the combat campaign in Normandy. These war experiences coincide with those of Sergeant X in the early story - "For Esme - with Love and Squalor". (4:104) While in France, he met Hemingway, the war correspondent, who had read his published stories and commented on them with his typically terse appraisal - "Hellova talent!"

Soon after the armistice Salinger returned to his home in New York and continued his literary work. In 1945 he published his first story about Holden Caulfield, "I'm Crazy" in in the "Collier's", some fragments of which can be found in

the novel "The Catcher in the Rye" (chs. 1, 2, 22). Another story "A Slight Rebellion of Madison Avenue" appeared in 1946 in "The New Yorker" and became, with some changes ch. 17 of "The Catcher in the Rye". Some other Salinger's early stories of a slight sentimental colouring, which appeared in different New York magazines, such as "Story", "Harper's", "Saturday Evening Post", "Esquire", "Cosmopolitan", etc., did not find any literary acclaim and they were not reprinted anywhere later.

In 1951, however, Salinger published his first, and hitherto only novel, "The Catcher in the Rye", which brought him world-wide fame. In a few months the book took first place among American best-sellers. Published in England, soon after its American edition, it became as popular there as at home. A special difficulty for its quick translation into different European languages was provided by the novel's distinctive slangy idiom. The title "Catcher in the Rye", based upon the hero's misconstruction of a line in Robert Burns's well-known song, "Comin' thro' the rye", caused also considerable trouble to translators, who had little success in arriving at literary equivalents. These obstacles were, however, overcome, and Salinger's place as one of the most talented young American writers of the '50s was firmly established.

At the same time the noisy popularity disturbed the modest author greatly. He was continuously fleeing from the reviewers and hangers-on. For a long time he had been looking for a quiet place where he could carry on literary work in peace. In 1953 he moved from New York to the provincial Cornish, in New Hampshire, where he also met his future wife, Claire Douglas. They were married in 1955 and had two children.

Since the publication of his "Nine Stories" (1959), Salinger's literary production was limited to the stories about the Glass family, which all appeared in "The New Yorker": "Franny" (1955), "Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters" (1955), "Zooey" (1957) and "Seymour: an Introduction" (1957).

Then a longer period of silence followed before his most recent story of the Glasses, "Hapworth 16, 1924" (1965), appeared.

In spite of this comparatively scarce literary output, Salinger quickly became one of the most widely-read American authors, his popularity being especially great among the youth, who identified themselves with his protagonists.

Salinger was a typical writer of the late '40s and early '50s. This so-called "silent decade" was known for the reactionary policy of McCarthyism and cold war. The general spirit of conformism and lack of purpose found its reflection in all spheres of cultural life and above all in literature. Several "writers who earlier had been radically oriented abandoned these sympathies and joined the pursuit of commercial success". (5:130-131) Salinger did not become a commercial writer, but he most strikingly conveyed the mood of the American youth at the period. "He observed the quality which sociologist Paul Goodman called the 'phenomenon of social immaturity', the desire not to grow up. That is why Salinger consistently sets the world of grownups in opposition to the world of the child with its sincerity, purity, goodness, and lack of concern for self." (5:132) If his characters do not accept the grim reality but categorically reject it "they are just as categorical in their search for what is true, for an opportunity to live with meaning and nobility in the name of a worthy goal. This is already a radical rejection of conformism and alienation". (5:132)

THE CATCHER IN THE RYE

The main theme of the novel, individual in conflict with society, is not new in world literature. Salinger has treated this old theme, however, with great originality and talent. In the centre of his attention are the problems of education and upbringing of an adolescent. "School is the agency by which society consciously socializes the immature for the entry into the approved adult activities. Thus the adoles-

cent's relation to his school becomes a microcosm." (6:194).

All the events and the critical study of the American scene are shown through the eyes of the hero, Holden Caulfield, a sixteen-year old schoolboy of middle-class, Jewish parents. He has been expelled from the expensive, private school, Pencey Preps, as the result of his failing in all subjects except English. The novel opens on the week before the Christmas vacation in the late '40s and covers some three or four days.

Salinger has chosen a difficult form for his narrative, a 1st-person monologue, in which the hero tells about a short but difficult period of his life when he is nearing a serious nervous breakdown. With this stylistic device the author has achieved great success, because he has succeeded in making the hero's confession convincing and sincere, as if addressed to a friendly, all-understanding grown-up person.

The day Holden leaves Pencey Preps and starts telling his story, we learn that it is the fourth school he has unsuccessfully attended. But still he is glad to be "flunked out" because he is not only hostile to the spirit of the school but also entirely alienated from it. He speaks contemptuously of the clamorous "ads" in "about a thousand magazines" praising the educational system of Pencey Preps: "Since 1888 we have been molding boys into splendid, clear-thinking young men..." In his opinion "They don't do any damn more molding at Pencey than they do at any other school. And I didn't know anybody there that was splendid and clear-thinking and all." (7:28)

As Holden later tells his sister, Pencey Preps "was one of the worst schools I ever went to. It was full of phonies. And mean guys. You never saw so many mean guys in your life... It was a stinking school." (7:172)

Like most sensitive adolescents, Holden is seeking for real friendship, love and understanding, but cannot find it anywhere. All his well-to-do schoolmates are repulsive and their interests trivial, among them "you have to keep making believe you give a damn if the football team loses and all

you do is talk about girls and liquor, and sex all day." (7:131) He finds it disgusting when the boys are eager to boast about their sexual conquests. The girls he has sometimes dates with are no better either, as they are sexy too, and all they expect from a guy is that he must "give them the time".

Above all Holden hates the snobbishness and material values worshipped in the school, which are symbolized in the very "Ossenburger Memorial Wing of the new dorms" he lives. In his opinion, the career of "this guy Ossenburger" who "made a pot of dough in the undertaking business after he got out of Pencey", is typical of the whole institution. "What he did", Holden comments with scathing satire, "he started these undertaking parlors all over the country that you could get members of your family buried for about five bucks apiece, You should see old Ossenburger. He probably just shoves them in a sack and dumps them in the river. Anyway, he gave Pencey a pile of dough, and they named our wing after him." (7:40)

Holden is not interested in the successful career of an Ossenburger, that the diploma of Pencey Preps might guarantee him. And that is one of the main reasons why he is glad to leave the school: "all you do is study so that that you can earn enough to buy a goddam Cadillac some day". (7:40)

Pencey Preps is "a stinking school" because everybody there is caring only for material values and outside behaviour. The pupils and teachers alike are, therefore, insincere and phony. Although Holden must admit that there are some "nice" teachers in the faculty, he adds that "they are phonies too" (7:172), as, for instance, the history teacher, Mr. Spencer, who immediately changes his usual pedagogical manner when the headmaster Thurmer comes into the classroom: "Old Spencer'd practically kill himself chuckling and smiling and all, like as if Thurmer was a goddam prince or something". (7:173)

Alienated from the conventional standards of living, Holden is nearing a serious mental crisis. He is struggling

without outside help against greater odds than he can possibly bear. His condition is complicated by the lack of parental guidance that an adolescent at his age desperately needs. He has no intimate relationship with his mother, who is nervous and ailing, and his father is always too busy with work to discuss "things" with him. And the school to which "he has been packed off fails to take the place of his parents". (8:108)

On the first pages of the novel Holden also mentions an elder brother D.B., whom he "had admired more than anyone else in the world". He had been a "terrific writer", when they lived together in New York. But D.B., too, had betrayed him. He had gone to Hollywood and started writing for the movies, earned "a lot of dough", and bought a Jaguar. From this time on he was lost to Holden, because he had become "a prostitute", i.e. sold his talent for profit: "If there's one thing I hate, it's the movies. Don't even mention them to me" (7:28), he says with comic finality.

Holden feels instinctively that he must leave Pencey Preps, or he will collapse. Above all he is afraid of being "molded" like most boys of the school, of getting accustomed to the surrounding hypocrisy and falsehood. The symbol of his revolt is a red hunting-cap, which he wears demonstratively with the peak in the back of his neck, to show his independence.

In the portrayal of this stage of Holden's development J. Rãhesoo has detected the influence of Zen-Buddhism on the author. In order to find some kind of human contact, Holden must rely on his own experience and abandon certain ways of thinking. Man's real disposition can be revealed only by something of minor importance, e.g. in the ability to whistle or dance. Then it is not suppressed by the control of egoism. As the critic further notes: "Zen ideal is a spontaneous being, identical to oneself and united into a whole." (9:27)

Holden runs off to New York, but the three independent days he spends there bring him neither deliverance from the state of depression he has tried to leave behind, nor the har-

mony he is instinctively seeking within his own being. In his native city he meets the same hypocrites and phonies.

With a quixotic gesture he poses to be entirely free and grown up. He does not go home to his parents, but stays at a hotel, visits a night-club, a theatre, etc. But these independent escapades do not bring him any pleasure. At every step something spoils his elevated spirit. He is disappointed in the girls at the bar because they do not respond to his "intelligent conversation" and do not "know any better" than "drinking Tom Collinse - in the middle of December". (7:91) He irritates a taxi-driver with his repeated questions about the ducks in Central Park. In another attempt to strike up a conversation with Carl Luce, an ex-schoolmate, and now a student at Columbus, he meets again misunderstanding. Carl avoids discussing the questions that most interest Holden and finally advises him to consult a psychoanalyst. His bold gesture to be grown up and to have a prostitute to be sent to his hotel room, ends likewise with a failure. He is disgusted with the girl's stupidity and her business-like attitude to love-making. When, however, he is beaten up by an elevator-boy, who tries to rob him of his last money, Holden is forced to defend himself in earnest.

Life in the big city does not agree with Holden. He himself is continuously forced to admit: "I swear to God I'm crazy." But actually he convinces the reader that the civilized "phony" world around him is crazy, and that he, the adolescent misfit.

Seeking for the company of an older and wiser person Holden visits Mr. Antolini, a family friend, and "about the best teacher he had ever had". But instead of giving Holden moral help Mr. Antolini shocks him more than anybody else with his tentative homosexual advances.

Wandering aimlessly in the Fifth Avenue in an agitated state of mind, Holden turns to the memory of his elder brother Allie, muttering desperately to himself: "Allie, don't let me disappear. Allie, don't let me disappear... Please, Allie!" (7:199) But Allie is dead and cannot help anybody.

Finally Holden is rewarded with the peace of mind he has been seeking all along at the sight of his little sister Phoebe going round by the carousel. It seems to him that these minutes of aimless joy are the best that life can offer. He has the same desire that he has always had - to protect small, innocent kids from the "phony" outside world. As he had told Phoebe herself on a previous day, when he had secretly visited home at night: "You know what I'd like to be? ... I mean if I had my goddam choice. ... I keep picturing all these little kids playing some game in this big field of rye and all. Thousands of little kids, and nobody's round - nobody big, I mean - except me. And I'm standing on the edge of some crazy cliff. What I have to do, I have to catch everybody if they start to go over the cliff - I mean if they're running and they don't look where they're going I have to come out from somewhere and catch them. That's all I'd do all day. I'd just be the catcher in the rye and all. I know it's crazy, but that's the only thing I'd really like to be." (7: 177)

The "crazy cliff" has been differently interpreted by critics. Warren French seems to be near the truth when he suggests that "it is most obviously the border between the care-free innocence of childhood and the phony adult world that Holden himself does not wish to enter" (8:120)

We can recognize Holden's desire not to grow up because he sees no role for himself in this world. Like other Salinger's heroes he displays a hypersensitive reaction against all that is false. He does not accept reality but categorically rejects it. His alienation, however, is different from that of the fast-living Beat hero. His higher humanity lies in the fact that he desperately tries to find a way out, to lead some kind of noble life, even if it is only a dream.

THE GLASS FAMILY

The problems discussed in "The Catcher in the Rye" are further developed in the six stories about the Glass family. The Glasses are a Jewish-Irish family, Les and Bessie

Glass with their seven children, living in New York. The parents, who at their prime had been successful vaudeville entertainers, have brought up the children in a sophisticated home atmosphere and taught them many skills. All bright and talented, the Glass children had themselves for some 20 years been active performers of the famous radio program, "It's a Wise Child". (10:54) At the same time the children are disgusted with the "phony" and false values of the world the parents have prepared for them. Like Holden Caulfield they rebel against the American mass society, the banal movies and the clamorous popular magazines, advertizing fashionable clothes, luxurious furniture and high living. The central theme in these stories, as in all Salinger's work, is the conviction that the standardized middle-class world is dangerous to grow up into, and that any young person with sensitive inner life must guard himself against it.

At different times of life all the Glass children have been attracted to various forms of religion, including Zen Buddhism. This interest in Oriental mysticism and philosophy is not only a feature of Salinger's own spiritual development, but typifies also "the general religious revival that is now a growing part of American literary and intellectual life, and a "solution" to the alienation that seems to pervade all social life, is closely connected with existentialism". (11:59)

The reader gets first acquainted with the Glasses in "A Perfect Day for Bananafish". In this story the eldest and cleverest son, Seymour, commits suicide. As he is generally loved by everybody, his influence is to be felt also after his death, in all the remaining stories.

"Seymour: An Introduction" is mainly about him, told by his brother, Buddy Glass. The story presents all Salinger's main principles of writing, his search for inner integrity and spiritual values.

"Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters" is a story of Seymour's marriage, which partly explains his suicide soon after the wedding. Through the agencies of a psychoanalyst

Seymour had been persuaded to adjust himself to a regular upper middle-class marriage and enter a world that was utterly against his ethical principles. His awakening to the enormity of his folly, however, turned out to be fatal - he shot himself, and with this act left the Glass children without a leader.

It is a deeply allegorical story, imbued with the wisdom of Oriental philosophy. It opens with the legend about a horse-dealer, who could always purchase the most perfect horse as he instinctively knew the animal's inner qualities and considered the outward symptoms to be illusory and of secondary importance. As Buddy Glass notes, after Seymour's death it was difficult to find anybody, who could "purchase a horse."

In the stories "Franny" and "Zoocy" the mental crisis of the youngest child, Franny, has been depicted. She is a 20-year-old student, who apart from her literary studies has also attended a course of lectures on the philosophy of religion. Like Holden Caulfield she has started closely observing life around her and reached a serious mental crisis. She is depressed by the insincerity and hypocrisy of the bourgeois world and turns to religion as the only form of escape. Finally, neglecting her studies and giving up her successful part in a play, she goes home.

In "Zoocy" the author shows the endeavours of the brother to help Franny out of her crisis. Zoocy himself is a television and stage actor, who at 25 also experiences an inner crisis. He is not any more satisfied with his profession as he is disgusted with the commercialism and lack of spiritual values at the theatre.

The attitude of the Glass children towards each other becomes also best evident in "Franny" and "Zoocy". They respect their parents and feel genuine affection for them but in real trouble always rely on a sister or brother. When Holden at his crucial moments never turned to his parents, but to the memory of his dead brother Allie, in the same way the Glass children look up to Seymour for moral support. After Seymour's death Buddy has partly assumed the role of a lead-

er, but each of them can also expect the loyalty of the sister-brother relationship.

The stories of the Glasses are full of warmth and concern in the intimate family circle. The picture of their life is so concrete and homely that many critics have considered Salinger to be one of the sons of the Glasses. The autobiographical elements are strong in these stories, but still the critics do not venture to suggest any definite parallels or prototypes as many facts about the author's own life have deliberately been left obscure.

At present Salinger has, to a certain extent, separated himself from the literary life of his country, but still the reader has not lost the hope that a more comprehensive Trilogy of the Glasses, at which the author is said to have been working for some time, will soon see the light.

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V. THE BEAT MOVEMENT

The Beat Movement is a typically American phenomenon concerned with a large section of the young, postwar generation, born in the '20s, who went through World War II and got entirely disenchanted with the world around them. They were also called Beatniks.

The history of the Beatniks goes back to the middle of the '50s when big spontaneous colonies of American youth sprang up in many cities - San Francisco, Los Angeles, Denver, New York, etc. They were educated people, college graduates, young writers, painters and musicians, mostly from wealthy middle-class families, united by a common refusal to accept the conventional standards of living. They ignored all social responsibilities and in their self-imposed poverty preferred to lead a nomadic existence "on the road", doing, if necessary, various kinds of odd jobs in order to keep alive. From all parts of their vast country they gathered to California and their centre became San Francisco.

In the basements and vaults of some empty houses of the city, where they had temporarily settled down, the Beatniks arranged their customary literary readings, dancings and pop-singing parties. Dressed in challengingly shabby clothes they also organized big demonstrations demanding the banning of atomic bomb, or the right of the American youth to live as he chose.

The Beatniks did not form any programmic social or literary school. Their movement represented a spontaneous challenge to the governing policy of McCarthyism, to the instigation of war hysteria and to the prevalent spirit of conformism characteristic of the so-called "silent decade".

The Beatniks did not conceal their disgust for all forms of restrictions on man's individuality, insisting on absolute ethical freedom which often verged on pathology. The morals and world outlook of the prospering "average American" called

forth their scathing satire. This conventional, insensitive man, who considered that his own life embodied all the decent moral values, was given the contemptuous nick-name "Square".

The spontaneous protest of the Beatniks against the accepted norms of behaviour found its expression in their wild jazz orgies, in the use of alcohol or narcotics and in their provocative insistence of absolute sexual freedom. As the Scandinavian scholar, Howard C. Brashers notes: "Society was to be rejected, even at the cost of outlawry. The individual had to get "out", even if the way down was the only way out". (1:205).

Apart from these modern excesses the Beatniks were also attracted by nature, by hiking and mountaineering trips, as an antithesis of the corrupt civilization. In these anti-society moods they found a kindred spirit in the intuitive Oriental religion of Zen Buddhism, which in their opinion, glorified everything that was "natural" and mysteriously alive. The worship of Zen gave the Beatniks their desired liberation from Time. The past and the future became fleeting illusions and only the present moment appeared to be real. That is also the main reason why Beatniks insist on living in the "present" (2:44), and ignore entirely the past experience or the future perspectives.

The sensation and shock that the Beatniks caused in America in the middle and the end of the '50s soon lost its actuality. Beginning with their uncompromising protest against the American reality in the years of political reaction, and with their flat denial of the "mass society", the Beatniks were imperceptibly, and comparatively quickly, forced to accept the canons of the same society, and, in fact, capitulate before it. Their main weakness lay in the failure to overcome their utter individualism. Their lack of any social and political purpose made them rebels without a cause. The traces, however, that they left in literature and in the spiritual life of the country did not disappear so soon. They can be felt even today. (3:192)

In literature the Beat Movement found first reflection in poetry. The most typical Beat poets of the period were Allen Ginsberg, Lawrence Ferlinghetti, Robert Creeley, Gregory Corso, Philip Lamartia and a few others. Of these writers Ferlinghetti and Creeley played a considerable part in the formation of the movement. In their poems both used "exclamatory oral juxtapositions and manipulation of rhythms, often broken, for effective perception and expression". (1:205) Ferlinghetti also arranged public readings by the "new poets" with jazz accompaniment, which gave the tone to much Beat poetry. What is more important, these two men helped other poets get their work printed. Creeley was the editor of the "Black Mountain Review" in North Carolina, and Ferlinghetti, the owner of "City Light Books" in San Francisco, which was both a book-store and a publishing house. (1:205)

Of all these poets it was Allen Ginsberg who attained international fame. His poem "Howl" (1955) became also the manifesto of the Beat Movement in literature.

The acknowledged spokesman of the Beat Movement, who did much to popularize it through press and TV, was, however, Jack Kerouac. He became known as the author of a series of loosely constructed novels which were deeply autobiographical and which celebrated all the typical canons of the post-war uprooted youth. Their wide-spread popularity lay in the fact that in spite of the obvious limitations and modernistic colouring they also had a real human warmth and a contagious vitality. (4:71) It was also Jack Kerouac who, according to his own words, introduced the term "beat". In one of his interviews of 1958 he said: "Well, actually, it's just an old phrase. I knocked it off one day and they made a big fuss about it. It's not really a generation at all ... It starts with rock-n-roll teenagers and runs up to the 60-year-old junkies, old characters in the street. Well, it's a hipness. It's 20th century hipness to life. (5:2)

As can be seen from the above quotation, for Kerouac the word "beat" means something "beatific", i.e. full of joy and happiness, as he understands it. It does not refer to the

idea of "defeat", but to the rhythm or pulse of jazz music, as expressive of the carefree, happy-go-lucky attitude to life, characteristic of the hippies. Still the majority of the critics give different connotations to the word. Some consider that the Beat rebels "actually look upon themselves as defeated, emotionally disturbed, chronically depressed, neurotically unbalanced, filled with despair". (2:44) Others strike a double view, as, for instance, Howard C. Barsbers, who notes that the well-known magazine of the Beat Movement - "Beatitudes" was intended to be "be pronounced two ways - suggesting both the Biblical 'Blessed are the poor' and the slang word 'beat', exhausted, admitting defeat". (1:205)

Another point of argument lies in the accentuated values of the Beat Generation as a literary grouping. Many foreign and Soviet critics hold that there is nothing intrinsically new about the Beat, that it is the same rebellion against the established society and accepted standards. Thus A.R. Hone writes:

"Essentially modern, they nevertheless answer to a long-standing tradition of American literature and their slogan of disaffiliation - though differently expressed - may be traced back to the secessionist attitude of the Lost Generation, or even Thoreau. Their characteristic attempt to achieve human solidarity on a basis of sheer self-assertiveness, has its antecedents in Whitman. (4:70)

There is certainly a close link between the Lost Generation of the '20s - '30s and the Beat of the '50s. Both were utterly disenchanted with the post-war world. Both rejected materialism, emphasized sensual pleasures and expressed their fascination for Eastern religions.

Still the difference between the two post-war literary trends seems to lie not only in the degree of "non-attachment", but also in the kind. Although Hemingway of the Lost Generation also condemned the contemporary American society, and became an exile, like many of his heroes, there is always a great undercurrent humanism in his most pessimistic moods. As M. Tugusheva points out, Hemingway's credo is that "Man

must and should fight, even if he is doomed. Life can destroy a real man, but it can't beat him". (6:127) The critic goes on to say that "Hemingway's 'program' of the fifties, teaching concern for one's fellow man, challenged the general mood of isolation and pessimism, which characterized the intelligentsia of that period. (6:127) This last sentence is especially apt if we compare the still heroic Lost Generation with the pleasure-seeking, self-centred Beat.

Perhaps the greatest novelty of the Beat writers lies in the style of their work. Although they themselves admitted that in their stream-of-consciousness technique and impressionistic style they had been considerably influenced by such writers as James Joyce, Henry Miller, Franz Kafka and other experimenters of form, still they introduced something entirely new. There is a marked tendency towards a combination of poetry and prose, which is rare in literature. Much attention is being paid to the musicality and rhythm of the sentences and whole paragraphs.

From its very beginning the Beat Movement was closely connected with American musical culture and especially with jazz. This jazz method becomes strikingly evident in all Kerouac's novels. Already in his early novel, "On the Road", the stress is laid on the rhythm or "beat" of his style, as, for instance, in the following sentence in which the movement of a bus ride has been imitated: "The shades come, night falls, the bus roars down road - People sleep, people read, people smoke." (7:116)

Kerouac himself, and his friends, especially Allen Ginsberg, called this style "spontaneous". In many of his novels, "On the Road", "The Subterraneans", etc., Kerouac entirely ignores all the marks of punctuation, in order to achieve this feeling of spontaneity, the illusion of the present moment. As he himself explained to a critic, for instance, he wrote "On the Road" in 21 days "on one long roll of paper, with no periods, no commas, no paragraphs, all single-spaced". (5:2)

Thus we might say that the Beat writers changed the literary use of the language itself. Their language reminds us of the spoken word, as it is oral in structure. The musical quality of the sentence, however, recalls the "beat" rhythm of jazz. This peculiarity of the style once again refers to the etymological origin of the word "beat". Ultimately it seems to have denoted a peculiar rhythm of spontaneous living and not so much the predicament of being defeated. The "defeat" came later as a logical outcome of their mode of life.



JACK KEROUAC

"My favourite complaint about contemporary world: the facetiousness of "respectable" people ... who, because not taking anything seriously, are destroying old human feelings..."

Jack Kerouac ("Lonesome Traveler")

1. JACK KEROUAC

(1922-1969)

Jack Kerouac was born in 1922 in a small factory town of Lowell, Massachusetts, into the family of a printer. The family was of French Canadian descent and the boy was brought up in the spirit of strict Catholicism. He even got part of his early education from "Jesuit Brothers" at St. Joseph's Parochial School in Lowell. He remained to a certain extent an outsider during his schooldays, as he spoke in his childhood mainly French.

Kerouac was a dreaming, thoughtful boy, much given to roaming fields and riverbanks day and night. Very early he also became interested in literature, his favourites being such American authors as Twain, London, Melville, Whitman, Saroyan, Hemingway, Wolfe and a few others. According to his own words he himself used to write "little novels" in the solitude of his room (the first being created at the age of 11), and keep extensive diaries. Under the influence of the local poet, Sebastian Sampas, he decided to become a writer at 17. (8:5)

In 1940 Kerouac entered Columbia University in New York, where he met Allen Ginsberg, William Burroughs and Neal Cassady. These beginning writers provided him the desired literary atmosphere, and also became his life-long friends. As a student he continued reading very much, both poetry and prose, his new literary models being Dostoyevsky, Rimbaud, Baudelaire and Céline. As he later noted in one of his numerous interviews, he was far from being a model student at Columbia College: he "set a record cutting classes in order to stay in dormitory room to write a daily play and read, say, Louis Ferdinand Céline," instead of 'classics' taught in the curriculum. (8:6)

At Columbia Kerouac also practised painting and wrote poetry.

When World War II broke out, Kerouac became a seaman and shipped out with the Merchant Marine. Before the war ended, however, he was drafted out of the ship's crew, as being psychologically not the suitable person for strict, regular activities.

Coming back from military service Kerouac had no permanent occupation. He changed many odd jobs, being a railroad worker, a cotton picker, a sport reviewer for a provincial newspaper, a fireman, a construction worker, etc. He also travelled much in the United States, Mexico, African Morocco and other countries. For a period he fell into the company of American "hobos" and criminal elements. In New York he became widely popular in the literary Bohemia and enjoyed a great authority and love among his friends. Allen Ginsberg, who shared many of his travels, devoted to Kerouac his poems. Seymour Krim wrote an enthusiastic introduction to Kerouac's novel "Desolation Angels". Clifton Holmes based his philosophic ideas (see: "The Philosophy of the Beat Generation", "Esquire" February, 1958) on Kerouac's work. (7: 178)

Although he has written also two collections of poetry, various philosophical essays and autobiographical works, it is in the field of novel that Kerouac achieved enormous popularity among a large section of the post-war American youth. In 1946 he had started writing a novel, "The Town and the City", which was published in 1950, but did not bring him critical acclaim. About the same time, however, he had completed another novel, "On the Road", which the publishers refused to print at first. When it saw the light seven years later, in 1957, it made the author famous overnight, as it most strikingly gave voice to the ideas of the Beat Generation. When a series of other, similar novels appeared in quick succession, the canons of the Beatniks spread rapidly in America and Europe. Kerouac was called the "King of the Beat Generation", the "Homer of the Hippies".

ON THE ROAD

"On the Road", the most popular of Kerouac's novels, introduces to the reader the Beat Generation, a group of young men and women, who wander from one city to another over the vast American continent in pursuit of "kicks", i.e. sensations. They are both recklessly irresponsible and touchingly pathetic in their uprootedness and in their desperate search for some kind of purpose or truth. The fact that they feel themselves defeated and inwardly dead, urges them on from place to place in quest of mad drinking parties, jazz music, sex and narcotics. Every moment must provide a new sensation, a novel thrill. Thus Kerouac's characters are always restlessly on the move. Travelling "on the road" is both a liberation from the old, stale pleasures and a promise for new ones. Living fast, being not tied to any permanent work-place or to the responsibilities of marriage, they are rotating in a vicious circle, never finding anything better than an extreme exhaustion, a desire to sleep.

The story-teller and narrator of the novel is Sal Paradise, a young, beginning writer, who after the separation from his wife lives together with his respectable aunt in New York. He is surrounded by a circle of intellectual friends, who, like him, rebel against the civilized society, but can offer only their "bookish or political or psychoanalytical reasons". (7:11) Then one day, when Sal has just recovered from a serious illness, and has a feeling that "everything is dead" (7:5), he meets Dean Moriarty, who brings a fresh wind into his "stilted" life. He is not "in the negative", on the contrary, he says "yes" to everything, he "just races in society". (7:11) Dean belongs to the category of people whom Sal has always admired - "the mad ones, the ones who are mad to live, mad to talk, mad to be saved, desirous of everything at the same time, the ones who never yawn or say a commonplace thing, but burn, burn, burn like fabulous yellow roman candles, exploding like spiders across the stars and in the middle you can see the blue centerlight pop and everybody goes "Awwv!". (7:9)

Dean is a typical Beat man. He has gone through many things in his young life. When he was a child, he used to beg and steal in order to bring money to his drunkard, Indian father. When his father was arrested he "had to plead at court to the judge to let him go 'cause he was his pa and he had no mother". He "made great mature speeches at the age of eight in front of interested lawyers". (7:171)

When Dean grew up, however, he had become an experienced delinquent, specializing in car stealing. Between the age of eleven and seventeen he was usually in reform schools.

When Sal meets Dean, he has just come out of jail, "eager for bread and love". (7:11) In spite of the great differences in their character and Dean's doubtful past record, Sal is immediately captivated by him. For him Dean is just the real man, full of vigour and vitality, of "a wild yea-saying overburst of American joy". (7:11) He reminds him of "the west wind, an ode from the Plains, something new, long prophesied, long a-comin". (7:11) Dean loves madly the road, because, as he explains to his friends, the road "must eventually lead to the whole world". (7:189)

With the coming of Dean Moriarty begins also the part of Sal's life which he calls his "life on the road". In the first part of the novel Kerouac does not show Dean, "the hero of the West", in action. But under the latter's influence Sal starts exploring the roads of America alone. He has often dreamed of going to the West, to see the country, always vaguely planning and never taking off. Now, after a casual meeting with Dean, he gets a real stimulus to carry this dream into effect.

This first part of the novel in which the road is always a thread that leads Sal from one place to another, is full of optimism and a spirit of liberation. For Sal it is a new discovery of America, a time of observation and meditation. There are many poetic descriptions of scenery seen through his enthusiastic eyes, as, for instance, that of his "beloved Mississippi River, dry in the summer haze, low water, with its big rank smell that smells like the raw body of America

itself, because it washes it up". (7:14) Although he must do various kinds of odd jobs, in order to keep going, he is always full of joy of exploration. At the end of the I part Sal returns to New York to the dull routine life he hates.

In the following four parts of the novel the central symbol "road" loses much of its former romantic halo. After Sal has joined Dean and his boisterous companions, the road becomes a mad racing place in their search of pleasures. Different has also become the portrait of the Beat hero, Dean Moriarty, when seen at close quarters.

Although, as before, Sal remains the story-teller, many of the observations have been made by Dean, who for all his faults holds everybody spellbound and is the central figure in all their undertakings.

The reader gets acquainted with the fabulous exploits of the hero, his casual friends and their girls, when they race from one city to another. Sometimes they buy or hire cars through a travel-bureau, at other times they steal cars, under Dean's leadership and skill in this matter, and leave them carelessly behind. Wherever they arrive there will be a wild boozing party, terrific dancing to jazz music, promiscuous sex and narcotics. But they stay nowhere long as Dean, their leader, loves madly the road and is at his best when holding the steering-wheel in his hands.

The more the companions learn about the ways of Dean, the more they get disappointed in him. He is never considerate of others, but always after his own selfish interests. Eventually even Sal, Dean's greatest admirer, loses faith in him. Thus, for instance, Dean leaves Sal and Marylou (Dean's first wife) alone in a foreign city, without any acquaintances or a penny in the pocket. When Sal asks Marylou why Dean is not concerned about their welfare, Marylou, who is better acquainted with her ex-husband's caprices, answers: "Dean will leave you out in the cold any time it's in his interest." (7:141)

When at the beginning of the novel Sal had admired Dean's consuming passion to "dig" life, and had accepted his maxim

that "every moment is precious", then in the long run much of his idol's sensuality, his countless relations with different girls, strike him as morbid and pathological. Sal is really shocked when Dean urges him into sexual intercourse with his wife Marylou at his presence. Dean's frantic urge to race along the road at terrific speed, seems to him, at times, ridiculous and clownish. He has a "mad vision of Dean running through all his life just like that - his bony face outthrust to life, his arms pumping, his brow sweating, his legs twinkling. (7:128)

Like a typical Beat man Dean wants desperately to escape from the loneliness and aimlessness of his life. It is not, in fact, his thirst for some kind of full-blooded, free existence, but his fear of death that urges Dean on in a non-stop flight.

The main value of the novel lies in the fact that Kerouac takes a detached, critical attitude towards his hero, and the whole Beat Generation, realizing its rootlessness and tragedy. Referring to the inherent loneliness and unhappiness of the life of Dean and his companions, the author makes the protagonist Sal Paradise, say that "they were like the man with the dungeon stone and the gloom, rising from the underground, the sordid hipsters of America, a new beat generation that I was slowly joining". (7:46)

For all his critical attitude, however, Kerouac's own affiliation to this generation becomes also clear from the last sentence of the above quotation. He hates the petty-bourgeois respectability, Mammon worship and standardization in the post-war world as the surest symptom of man's spiritual death. For this reason he celebrates the Beat hero as the only hero possible in contemporary America. The rebellion of this hero against the established norms of behaviour is, however, that of an individual without a purpose. The only important conclusion to which the Beat hero comes, is that he is alone and doomed to failure. Therefore he is primarily concerned with the exploration of his own self, "not capable of the act of faith required by a belief in tomorrow". (2:48)

The great popular success of "On the Road" stimulated Kerouac to write new books on the Beat Generation. In the late '50s and in the '60s he published ten more novels, each of them presenting as if a fragment of the adventurous life of the author and his friends. Taken together they form an indivisible whole. In the preface to his later novel "Big Sur", Kerouac himself confesses: "My work comprises one vast book like Proust's except that my remembrances are written on the run instead of afterwards in a sick bed. Because the objections of my early publishers I was not allowed to use the same personae names in each work, On the Road, The Subterraneans, The Dharma Bums, Doctor Sax, Maggie Cassidy, Tristessa, Desolation Angels, Visions of Cody and the others including this book Big Sur are just chapters in the whole work which I call the Dulouz Legend. In my old age I intend to collect all my work and re-insert my pantheon of uniform names, leave the long shelf full of books there, and die happy. The whole thing forms one enormous comedy, seen through the eyes of poor Ti Jean (me), otherwise known as Jack Dulouz, the world of raging action and folly and also gentle sweetness seen through the key-holes of his eye." (10:1)

THE SUBTERRANEANS

"The Subterraneans", published soon after "On the Road", is typical of the whole Legend of Dulouz. Once again the author celebrates the Beatniks as "the great men I had known in my youth, great heroes of America I'd been buddies with, with whom I'd adventured and gone to jail and known in raggedy dawns, the boys beat on curbstones seeing symbols in the saturated gutter, the Rimbauds and Verlaines on Times Square". (11:49-50)

The novel centres on the love-story of Leo Percepied, the Beat poet, and Mardou Fox, the half-negro half-Indian girl. As in the author's other novels this mixed relationship does not refer to any racial problems, like, for in-

stance, in most James Baldwin's work. In the world of Beatniks all races are equal.

The "subterraneans" are the young poets, painters and jazz musicians of post-war San Francisco, who form Leo's group. Like typical Beat rebels the "subterraneans" anarchistically deny all outside influences, they have nothing sacred to worship.

It is a wild, nervous world in which Leo and Mardou revolve - the noisy bars and jazz clubs of San Francisco in the fifties. Love turns out to be the only island of harmony in the universal absurdity around them. Since the time they have found each other, Leo and Mardou have cut themselves off from the rest of the world with an impenetrable wall. They are least concerned with the goings on in the social scene, and have concentrated on a purely biological existence - eroticism and narcotics. Their love-story goes through all the usual stages from the hesitant first meetings and the brief happy union to the following pangs of jealousy and the final alienation. Their tender but doomed affair symbolizes another, lyrical aspect of the Beat Generation. It also reveals the modernistic tendencies and the philosophy of alienation that became prevalent in American fiction of the '50s.

THE DHARMA BUMS

Although in several of his following novels Kerouac returns to the life of Beatniks, he seems, at times, to have reached an impasse in the treatment of the central theme. He starts looking for some positive programme, a credo which might provide him faith in life and serve as a support in his approach to man. In "The Dharma Bums" (1958), published in the same year as "The Subterraneans", these searches have found an expression in Zen Buddhism. This Oriental religion, based on passivity, resignation and contemplation, enjoyed great popularity in the '50s. A section of the intellectuals, who had entirely given up the ideals of bourgeois society, tried to build up its positive programme on these doc-

trines. The "Zen intellectual, artistic Buddhism" as Kerouac depicts it, is different from "the traditional Buddhism" (12:91) A disciple of Zen Buddhism stands outside the standard respectability, is full of love for life and for all living beings.

If the protest of Dean Moriarty against the respectable, conventional society was always unconscious and instinctive, then that of Japhy Ryder, the protagonist of "The Dharma Bums", is cognizant and intellectual. He considers it to be a dire punishment for some sins in the past "to be born in America where nobody has any fun or believes in anything, especially freedom". (12:27) He becomes a leader of the "dharma bums", i.e. the followers of Zen Buddhism. With the help of this form of Oriental mysticism he hopes to restore the lost individual freedom.

Thus the novel takes up another quest of the individual for anarchical freedom and self-fulfilment. The story-teller, Ray Smith, records the adventures of the hero, just as Sal Paradise did in "On the Road". Japhy Ryer, a student of Indian lore and myth, has also learned the Chinese and Japanese languages and become an Oriental scholar, an expert in Zen Buddhism. But he has cast aside the concept of passivity, and concentrated on another aspect, inherent in the doctrines of the religion, "the sacred act of fertility". His "practical" approach to the problem is expressed in a terse sentence: "I distrust any kind of Buddhism or any philosophy or social system that puts down sex." (12:18-19) This maxim provides Japhy also the values emphasized in the novel: Zen Buddhism, combined with sex, is the new religion for the exhausted man of the Western civilization.

Zen Buddhism has opened new vistas for Japhy. In his solitary, immaculately clean and simply furnished cottage in California, he has devoted himself to scholarly pursuits, undertakes mountaineering trips to the Sierras or solitary bicycle rides in the locality. But he also arranges week-end boozing parties, orgiastic sexual sprees, in mixed, naked company. Among other "dharma bums" he has become the greatest

expert in girls. They are all captivated by his magnetic charm, but themselves have no lasting power over him.

To Kerouac Japhy is not only "the big hero of the West Coast", but also "a great new hero of American culture" in general, which once again underlines his idealization of the Beat man.

Kerouac's next two novels, "Doctor Sax" and "Maggie Cassidy", both published in 1959, might be regarded as sequels to "The Subterraneans" so far as the central theme is concerned. They likewise have the same loose structure and impressionistic style.

"Lonesome Traveler" (1960) and "Book of Dream" are in some ways his most autobiographical books, based on his own adventures and immediate experiences. They do not offer, however, anything new about the Beat Generation as they repeat the theme of uprootedness of "On the Road".

Like his friend Allen Ginsberg, Kerouac continued passionately to defend the "genuine morality" of the Beatniks also in the '60s. In a different historical and political situation, however, when in the centre of public attention were the war in Vietnam, the growth of the Black protest and youth movement, Beatniks had outlived, their sensational novelty and had even become out of place. Kerouac's novels of this later period - "Big Sur" (1962), "Tristessa" (1963), "Desolation Angels" (1965), "Visions of Cody" (1965), "Satori in Paris" (1967), etc. - reveal an endless repetition of the central types and situations, and lend his work the character of a prolonged illness. His insistence on full ethical freedom was in the middle of the '60s understood as an attempt to justify dark and pathological ideas. Kerouac's evolution as a writer seemed to be stunted and the Beat Movement in decline. As seen from such later novels as "Big Sur" and "The Vanity of Dulour" he himself understood these contradictions.

BIG SUR

"Big Sur" stands out in Kerouac's later work as being more clearly outlined and as it deals with the "crack-up of the bloody King of the Beatniks", the famous pop-singer, Jack Dulouz.

At forty the hero experiences a crisis of mind and spirit. Pursued by reporters, visitors and hangers-on, attracted by fame and financial success, Dulouz feels that he is on the verge of collapse. He takes to drinking heavily, but instead of finding relief in alcohol, he is even more hopelessly, overcome by the madness which he is trying to escape. He realizes that he must make "one fast move" or he will perish. He goes to a small fishing village, Big Sur, to a friend's cabin in a canyon at the edge of the ocean. Away from civilization, in complete solitude, he hopes to cure his shattered nerves. After three weeks of happy time there, during which he writes down the sounds of the Pacific, watches birds, feeds Alf, the mule, he is once again seized by a fit of horror and despair. He feels that he does not know what he lives for, everything seems to be senseless. Not tolerating the ever-present silence around him, he flees back to San Francisco to parties, boozing, sex and Zen Buddhism. Then his friend Cody (known also from the novel "Visions of Cody") introduces him to a girl Billie and Dulouz starts living with her and her little son Elliott. But he cannot regain his usual self-confidence any more. He feels alienated from his surroundings, encountering everywhere death as if a nightmare. Even when he goes with Billie back to Big Sur, he cannot sleep at night. He sits up in his sleepingbag, watching the others sleep and muttering to himself: "Sleep is death, death is everywhere." Dulouz is on the point of going crazy. At last he makes a decision: "I'll get my ticket and say goodbye on a flower day and leave all San Francisco behind, and go back home across autumn America and it'll all be like it was in the beginning. - Simple golden eternity blessing all - Nothing ever happened." (10:216) Thus the book ends.

In his last novel, "The Vanity of Duloux. An Adventurous Education. 1935-1946" (1967), Kerouac presents more clearly a reevaluation of his former beliefs. To a certain extent he admits that the Beatniks failed to go on living as they did. Critizing the main hero for his "vanity" the author puts his life philosophy in perspective for the reader to decide.

In spite of the all-pervading pessimism and the marked modernistic tendencies of Kerouac's novels, his merit lies in the fact that he succeeded in depicting a vast section of American post-war society, different from the America known to us. Although the cause of the Beatniks is individualistic, vague and abstract, they still remain rebels against the universally known sores of American reality in the '50s.

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