# THE TIRESIAN INFLUENCE IN HEMINGWAY, HARD-BOILED FICTION, AND FILM NOIR

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# PREFACE

The collective works of such poets as Ezra Pound, W. B. Yeats, and T. S. Eliot represent the literary mood of the early twentieth century in Europe. The poetry of these writers comprises a conscious effort to incorporate mythic symbols and legends that they believed represented man's deepest instincts about himself and society. By using such symbols as they found, for example, in Frazer's The Golden Bough, Pound, Yeats, and Eliot believed that they were providing readers with a meaningful context in which mythical representations of man and his problems could be balanced with the new fears and doubts germane to the early twentieth-century world.

Through the influence of his older mentors Pound and Yeats, Eliot felt that the modern reader lacked a strong and vital link with such literary traditions as are found in the Greek classics. If this familiarity could be regained, he thought, then such a synthesis between present and past would reinvigorate society in the post-World War I world. And a revitalized literature was a cornerstone for Eliot's vision of a revitalized modern culture.

Toward this end, he strived for a fresh approach to

subject matter in his poetry and drew heavily upon antecedent references for his symbolism and examples. For The Waste Land (1922), he found a correct orientation for the modern reader in the voice and consciousness of Tiresias, the blind prophet of Greek mythology. Because the Tiresian myth involves a union of opposites, his character was uniquely suited to represent Eliot's attempt to synthesize not only a present and past perspective but everything intellectual, moral, and cultural that he perceived collapsing around him.

Eliot's use of Tiresias modifies the character's depiction in earlier literary appearances. Because of the impact of Eliot's work, this reintroduction of Tiresias into modern literature did not go unnoticed. At least one young writer of the 1920s incorporated the Waste Land theme into his writing and, with it, the character or characteristics of Tiresias as well.

Ernest Hemingway's The Sun Also Rises (1926) shares The Waste Land's theme of a shaken and undirected European culture in the wake of World War I, and offers a similar, Tiresias-like protagonist in Jake Barnes to personify and comment on that theme. Several other of Hemingway's works also portray or convey Tiresian characteristics, including his short stories, "The Sea Change," "Cat in the Rain," "The Snows of Kilimanjaro," and "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber," and his novels A Farewell To Arms (1929), To Have And Have Not

(1937), and particularly the posthumous The Garden of Eden (1986).

Ideas and characterizations Hemingway borrowed from Eliot and further matured and developed in his lifetime of writing represented a highwater mark in literature for American writers beginning their careers in the 1920s. Chief among the Hemingway-esque new stylists were writers of popular mystery and crime fiction such as Dashiell Hammett, James M. Cain, and, later, Raymond Chandler. Hemingway's treatment of the Tiresian myth, a reworking of Eliot's, influenced the "hard-boiled" style and character portrayal in the work of his contemporaries in their new genre. And, as certain of those writers' works were adapted to film, becoming classics of the film noir genre, the original writer's statement about the modern condition was expressed through terminology and imagery that recalled Tiresian characteristics and themes.

This study, after examining the development of the Tiresias myth and speculating on Eliot's intentions in using the character, enlarges upon the accepted perception of Hemingway's "tough guy" characters by considering their Tiresian roots. Particularly in light of criticism following the publication of Hemingway's posthumous novel The Garden of Eden, this study's emphasis on the androgynous nature of many of his protagonists complements some of the most current Hemingway scholarship.

For example, it had long been assumed that Hemingway's war wound and his subsequent overdramatization of it to his family and acquaintances were the genesis of his overly-masculine approach to life. This perspective has since been ammended, however, by work published during this study's writing that suggests that Hemingway's orientation to sexual identities and/or androgyny has roots in his early family environment. The effect of such new information is that it strengthens the position of primacy in his work that is given to Tiresian considerations such as the struggle to manifest sexual and intellectual understanding out of ambiguity and the absence of certainty.

Given its Tiresian focus, this study proceeds to investigate Hemingway's fellow writers of the "hard-boiled" brand of fiction in ways that have not been fully explored before now. The "hard-boiled" hero is often discussed as being overly masculine and interacting with women by alternately being attracted to and then repulsed by them. But the association of these characteristics with something as vital to the literature of the period as The Waste Land carries such criticism a step farther, toward an understanding of the genre's larger social contributions. The evolution of an adaptation of Tiresian qualities and perspectives that mirrors the American society's doubts and altering viewpoints can be charted through the works of such

writers as Hammett, Chandler, and Cain.

Because popular fiction reflects the values and fears of the culture it thrives in, and because film provides an even stronger and more widely acknowledged venue for that reflection, the Tiresian aspects of crime fiction also provide a fresh outlook on their adaptations into film noir and the cinematic development of the anti-hero. The Tiresian search for identity and meaning, which can be called a Tiresian perspective or consciousness, links this important movement in American film history, film noir, with one of the most pervasive, albeit subtextual, literary themes of the century. One of the larger purposes of this study is to demonstrate and explore that ubiquity of Tiresian influence in American literature and film and examine, in a historical context, what the attraction to and the development of a Tiresian consciousness signifies about the culture's evolving view of itself and its purpose.

## CHAPTER ONE

## ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE TIRESIAS MYTH

In order to determine as nearly as possible what T. S. Eliot's purpose was in selecting Tiresias as the primary figure for The Waste Land, both Eliot's and the character's literary pasts bear examination. Eliot may have been drawing on two separate versions of Tiresias' origin, one from Greek mythology and the other from Alfred Lord Tennyson.

In his Dictionary of Classical Antiquities, Oskar Seyffert notes that "the cause of [Tiresias's] blindness has been variously stated" (614). Seyffert relates three accounts of the event. In the first, the agent of the blindness is "the gods"; in the second, Athena; and in the third, Juno/Hera. Each tale agrees with the theme that blindness was thrust upon Tiresias as punishment, but not because he had knowingly done wrong. Instead, he was speaking or seeing something that caused him to trespass into the realms of the gods. Because of his essential innocence, he is compensated with gifts in the Athena and Juno tales. Athena awards him a knowledge of the language of birds and a staff with which he can walk

as though sighted. After Juno blinds him, he receives the gift of prophecy and a longer-than-mortal lifespan from Jove/Zeus.

This latter tale is detailed in Book III of Ovid's Metamorphoses and is the one Eliot refers to in his "Notes on The Waste Land" at the close of the poem. As Ovid constructs the scene, Jove, during a period of relaxation, casually remarks to Juno that women, he believes, receive greater pleasure from sex than do men. Juno disagrees and takes the opposing view, creating a strange cross-pairing of opposites. Jove argues in favor of females, the gender/point of view of which he has no personal experience. And Juno does the same, as she believes it is males who enjoy sex more.

Their argument does not concern the nature of their own gender, but concerns the ability to understand the nature of the opposite. Ovid shows that this mystery of acknowledging and understanding another is something that was even beyond the consciousness of the king and queen of gods. Only an individual who had lived the type of duality that Tiresias had could know the experience of perceiving through a genuinely separate identity, sex, and consciousness. The nature of a separate knower outside the perceiver, or the nature of a separate way of experiencing than the one the perceiver knew--Ovid places this fundamental question (whether it is possible to really know, to be, an "other" or not) directly in the

sexual arena, posing it in terms of the most basic of human differences.

Into the midst of their disagreement Jove and Juno call Tiresias. Ovid's explanation for their choice, translating in part from Eliot's note, reads as follows:

> For once, with a blow of his staff [Tiresias] had outraged two huge serpents mating in the green forest; and, wonderful to relate, from man he was changed into a woman, and in that form spent seven years. In the eighth year he saw the same serpents again and said: "Since in striking you there is such magic power as to change the nature of the giver of the blow, now I will strike you once again." (Miller 147)

And so he reversed, or completed the circle of, his sexual metamorphosis, becoming male once more. With this unique perspective, he decided in Jove's favor, that women derive more pleasure from sex than men.

Angered by Tiresias's choice, Juno blinded him, but Jove compensated the loss by giving him the power of prophecy. These actions are a subtle continuation of Tiresias's metamorphosis toward androgyny. As Heilbrun points out, Juno's act robs Tiresias of a masculine, active function, and Jove's reaction imbues Tiresias with a feminine, intuitive function (12-13). Another line of thought refers to Tiresias's answer to the question as a "violation of the supposed purity of the mother woman--a

sullying of her ideal image that cannot go unpunished" (Bedient 130), and so his blinding becomes a symbolic castration. In lieu of that loss, Jove intervenes and bestowes on Tiresias a different sort of ability to create something from nothing, since his special knowledge (prophecy) has no apparent source.

Jove and Juno seek Tiresias's help because he has lived as both male and female, and in the end they leave him free from another stalemate of opposites--his prophetic ability places him outside the constraint of time. Although he exists physically in the present, the past and future are equally real to him ("he alone . . . possesses unimpaired memory and intellect" [Seyffert 614]), an awareness that he retains even after his death (as evidenced when Ulysses meets him in Homer's Odyssey in hell, Book XI).

The Tiresian motif, then, functions on different levels. The character represents both sexes in one entity, not in the hermaphroditic sense of simultaneously sharing one body, but rather one androgynous consciousness of both sexes. He also represents a meeting of light and darkness, or sight and blindness. And his special insight represents a bridge between knowing and not knowing, a supernatural understanding that is limited only by the ignorance of Tiresias's listeners.

Each of these manifestations of the Ovidian Tiresias

suit Eliot well in The Waste Land. On the surface, the character is sexually ambiguous; he knows things about those he observes that they do not know about themselves, and he introduces an authoritative tone and level of understanding into the poem, drawn from his special experience. But Eliot had other sources of influence than Greek mythology for his writing, and even in them there appear to be subtle links that may add information to what we can surmise about Eliot's feelings toward an understanding of the Tiresias figure.

Hugh Kenner traces Tiresias's Waste Land origins through Eliot's preoccupation with seventeenth-century drama. He contends that Eliot "naturally conceived a long poem as somebody's spoken or unspoken monologue, its shift of direction and transition from theme to theme psychologically justified by the workings of the speaker's brain" (128). Eliot's interest in the dramatic monologue seems to have been fueled from even his earliest readings. Peter Ackroyd documents Eliot's exposure and fascination "at about the age of fourteen" with Fitzgerald: "entry into the bright world of [the Rubaiyat] was, Eliot said, 'overwhelming'; he compared the experience to that of conversion" (26).

Perhaps it was the Rubaiyat's monologue style that led Eliot to an appreciation of Tennyson, about whom he wrote, "His poems are always descriptive, and always picturesque; they are never really narrative . . . The

very greatest poets set before you real men talking, carry you on in real events moving" (Prose 241). Tennyson's realism inspired Eliot, maybe most strongly in the former's realistic but somewhat darkened world view. Eliot qualifies Tennyson's "emotional intensity" as being "emotion so deeply suppressed . . . as to tend towards the blackest melancholia" (Prose 242). Eliot responded most strongly to such a position in Tennyson's long poem Maud, subtitled "A Monodrama," from which he paraphrased Tiresias's statement, "I will show you fear in a handful of dust" (Waste Land l. 30). Part II, section v, stanza 1 of Maud contains the lines, "And my heart is a handful of dust/ And the wheels go over my head" (Works 299). Tennyson's speaker at this point in the narrative is in an asylum and is relating fragmented memories of his time spent there.

The similarities between Maud's title character and Eliot's Tiresias are striking. As Tennyson described Maud,

> This poem is . . . the history of a morbid poetic soul, under the blighting influence of a recklessly speculative age. He is the heir of madness, an egotist with the makings of a cynic, raised to sanity by a pure and holy love which elevates his whole nature. (Memoir, I 396)

Tennyson's Maud, like Tiresias, is a lone searcher in a cynical world, straddling a thin line between insanity

and a universal love. Eliot seems to have found Tennyson's dark mood in Maud too theatrical, noting that "[t]he fury of Maud is shrill rather than deep, though one feels in every passage what exquisite adaptation of metre to the mood Tennyson is attempting to express" (Prose 242).

Eliot's borrowing from Maud is an indication of how strongly he was interested in exploring the aberrant or ostracized consciousness, the objective view from outside the "madness" and "recklessness" of the modern world. He appreciated Tennyson's role as the thankless poet/seer of his time, writing that "he has been rewarded with the despite of an age that succeeds his own in shallowness" (Prose 247). His identification with Tennyson extended even beyond patterning his Tiresias after Maud, as Eliot certainly must have been familiar with Tennyson's collection Tiresias and Other Poems.

In the introduction to this collection, Tennyson's son writes that "Tiresias and Other Poems was affectionately dedicated 'To my good friend, Robert Browning' . . . [who] had previously dedicated a Selection of his own poems to my father'" (Works 973-4). The collection opens, though, with the poem "To E. Fitzgerald"--translator of the Rubaiyat and a good friend of Tennyson's. The poem to Fitzgerald, in honor of his seventy-fifth birthday, echoes in its purpose the writing of Catullus, Roman poet of the first century B. C., who

also had dedicated his book "to an old friend who at the very beginning of [my] career had found some merit in [my] rhymes" (Mustard 87). The balance of Tennyson's Fitzgerald poem is an homage to Fitzgerald's expertise and art in his translation of the Rubaiyat.

Tennyson remarks that once, when he tried Fitzgerald's vegetarian diet for ten weeks, then "tasted flesh again," he dreamed of food, but that even his delirious images could not compare to the beauty and power of Fitzgerald's composition of the Rubaiyat. Tennyson follows this poem with Tiresias as a gesture, a gift that he hopes Fitzgerald will "welcome . . . less for its own than for the sake/ of one recalling gracious times," as a salute to old age and approaching death as the natural symbols of a worthwhile life.

The Tennysonian Tiresias's tale appears to have been generated from a need to present the perspective of advanced age. In honor of Fitzgerald's years and perspicacity, Tennyson likened him to Tiresias. Tiresias begins the narration with the expression of a nostalgic desire for less complicated times:

> I wish I were as in the years of old,
> While yet the blessed daylight made itself
> Ruddy thro' both the roofs of sight, and woke
> These eyes, now dull, but then so keen to seek
> The meanings ambush'd under all they saw . . .
> What omens may foreshadow fate to man

And woman, and the secret of the Gods. (Works 489)

These opening lines accomplish two points. They suggest that the basis of Tiresias's secret knowledge may have arisen from an equal interest in fate's working with both sexes ("fate to man/ And woman"), the androgynous element. In the broader view, the lines establish that he is a seeker after solutions to mysteries, a hidden understanding, perhaps even of an occult nature. This probing attitude may be the connecting link Tennyson recognized between Tiresias and Fitzgerald, with Fitzgerald's translation of the Rubaiyat acting as a probe into an exotic, unexplored world. His effort to remake or remold understanding is a model of the poet's role in general, which Eliot adapts in The Waste Land and Hemingway continues in The Sun Also Rises, his fictionalization of the Waste Land motif. Ironically, not only in their content but in their writing itself these writers embody the basic Tiresian quality of metamorphosis.

For his account of Tiresias's origin, Tennyson did not choose the Ovidian model that Eliot would use, but that of Tiresias's encounter with the goddess of Wisdom, Athena. Tiresias recalls the incident himself early in Tennyson's poem. He remembers being parched and hot one day and "sick/ For shadow," following a river to a waterfall. There, in a moment of silence, he saw Athena stepping from the water,

> . . . a dreadful light
> coming from her golden hair, her golden helm
> And all her golden armor on the grass,
> And from her virgin breast, and virgin eyes
> Remaining fixt on mine, till mine grew dark
> For ever, and I heard a voice that said
> "Henceforth be blind, for thou hast seen too much,
> And speak the truth that no man may believe."
> (Works 527)

In this Cassandra-like curse, Tiresias becomes (like Eliot's assessment of Tennyson, and Eliot himself in his time) a thankless seer, a trait that Tennyson may have felt was shared by Fitzgerald and himself. The poem therefore espouses the uselessness of words, and in particular the truth, when they run counter to public opinion. "Virtue must shape itself in deed," then, Tiresias says, and his message is a call to Menoeceus, a virginal, young, and virile warrior to sacrifice his life in defense of Thebes.

Tiresias measures his ultimately fruitless life against this seemingly empty gesture: "Fairer thy fate than mine, if life's best end/ Be to end well!" (529). Also, there is a cry for the single, correct action that will cut through human ignorance and immediately right a situation: "the sun, the moon, the stars/ Send no such light upon the ways of man/ As one great deed" (529). Tennyson clearly saw Fitzgerald's work on the Rubaiyat as

such a great deed but, oddly, under the poet's curse the deed does not reflect his own glory but Omar Khayyam's, as Menoeceus' deed does not reflect Tiresias's greatness but his own.

This type of doubling relationship has its rhyme in many works of modern writers and poets who, like Tiresias, fulfill their role as watchers of human fate. Within many of those works that reflect the Tiresian model, an inactive or deactivated protagonist observes, usually, another character who is active and vital but in a way that throws doubt on his freedom to act. Nick Caraway's fascination with Jay Gatsby in The Great Gatsby and Jake Barnes' fascination with the bullfighter Romero in The Sun Also Rises are two modern examples that leave the reader to puzzle how the protagonist is transformed through his contact with these apparently Menoeceus-like pure and elemental characters.

Tennyson allows Tiresias a final transformation as a result of Menoeceus's taking his advice. The poem "Tiresias" ends with an epilogue, written because Fitzgerald had died and would not read this poem that Tennyson felt showed that there was, after all, some value to old age and experience. As he grieves over losing his last living friend, Tennyson strikes another echo among Tiresias, Fitzgerald, and himself by wishing that he may share the peaceful end that both of them finally found.

In such acceptance of death lies the possibility of a final change, the metamorphosis of one's life from meaningless struggle to peaceful accomplishment, whether the work and worker have been judged as being great or not. Tennyson uses Menoeceus as an example of how surrender, and in this case the extreme surrender of innocence and the promise of a full life by one's own sacrifical hand, can open the door for self-transformation that cannot be achieved any other way. For Menoeceus to let the moment pass by, according to Tiresias, would leave his remaining life "unvenerable" in the memory of all mankind.

In this scenario, Menoeceus had no opportunity to be an idle spectator who could watch the life and death struggle, do nothing, and remain unaffected. And through Menoeceus's death, Tiresias gains a brighter perspective about his life, or at least now anticipates a more pleasant afterlife than he had reason to expect before his advice was followed. Interestingly, the scene Tiresias imagines for himself after death is rich in sensual imagery. Besides the restoration of his sight, he hopes for the return of "the golden lyre/ . . . sounding in heroic ears/ Heroic hymns" and a pervading "grateful incense-fume," signs of a reunion between man and God. In his final line, "On one far height in one far-shining fire," Tiresias seems to surmount his own internal divisions in a personal celebration of unity.

What is left, then, at the end of Tennyson's "Tiresias" is the feeling that a life spent in secondary importance may have its own rewards. More specifically, Tiresias's inability to affect events forced him into a perception and acceptance that ultimately, through self-transformation, benefited him.

T. S. Eliot may have gathered some of these metamorphic details from Tennyson for his Tiresias. But an idea that more directly carries over from Tiresias and Other Poems is that of an aged man looking back for meaning into his years past. Eliot's collection Poems (1920) opens with "Gerontion," a poem that foreshadows The Waste Land, particularly in the detachment of the narrator. In fact, Eliot wished to use "Gerontion" as a prefix to The Waste Land to lend the longer poem a unified speaker, but changed his mind through Ezra Pound's influence (Easthope 333-4).

From "Gerontion"'s title, from the epigraph from Measure For Measure ("Thou hast nor youth nor age/ But as it were an after dinner sleep/ Dreaming of both"), and from the first line ("Here I am, an old man in a dry month"), the theme of dissatisfied and disconsolate age imbues the poem. Eliot creates a stronger parallel to the opening of Tennyson's collection, though, by the situation he establishes with the second line: "Being read to by a boy, waiting for rain." The allusion could well be to Fitzgerald and the Rubaiyat, another tale

being related by a boy, and a direct link to Tennyson's collection and use of Tiresias in exploring the mysteries of both old age and understanding.

In "Gerontion," Eliot continues and reinforces the image of old age as a particular state of mind or a condition of life (whether the persona is actually old or not) in which a person feels that he exists in an undefined gray area on the edge of reality. In this gray area, traditional guidelines for behavior, morality, and meaning cannot help to reduce the new uncertainty, the new confusion, that exists in a present that seems so wildly different from its past. Published in 1920, "Gerontion" is obviously a post-war indictment of sudden change on a cultural, national, and global scale. Whereas Tennyson and, in his poem, Tiresias could philosophize about the earlier times with some languor, Eliot is confronted, and confronts his readers with, the more immediate, twentieth-century version of change. The dissolution of the familiar and comfortable leads inevitably to existential questioning, fatalism, and cynical pessimism.

For the speaker of "Gerontion" (who can be imagined as a pre-Waste Land Tiresias), there seems to be time only for such things. Time itself has taken on a curious stillness; a non-active state exists in which nothing meaningful seems to, or seems able to, take place. The "old man in a dry month" waits, inactive, for a tangible

sign of an end to barrenness. That end may be a renewed fertility, or it may be a final destruction. Such probabilities can no longer be ascertained by logic.

His "dull head among windy spaces" is only useful here for noting the uselessness in action: "Neither fear nor courage saves us. Unnatural vices/ Are fathered by our heroism. Virtues/ Are forced upon us by our impudent crimes" (ll. 44-6). And we see in the content and in the form of these lines an early tendency on Eliot's part to express this incapacity to act or to know in terms of static opposites. Faced with turning one way or the other, the speaker in "Gerontion" sees both as equally unproductive, and so is frozen in a form of impotence.

Here, again, is the androgynous echo of Tiresias, cursed to be powerless as an end result of his vacillation between sexual identities. And just as Tiresias was thrust into his dilemma by being forced to make a decision, so, too, Eliot prefers to illustrate modern powerlessness as a result of the inability of the mind to decide between two polarities. In not making a choice, the fate of the mind stuck in such a position is worse than any "wrong" choice could have been.

His loss is magnified as the poem draws to a close. In an eerie reversal of Tennyson's Tiresias regaining his senses in death, this character experiences a series of losses. Love becomes fear, passion fades, and finally all five senses disappear. It is as if his sense of self

had been reduced finally to only the tangible, and in an effort to remove himself from the problems of life, he rejects even that suggestion of identity. He closes with a further reduction by flaunting any idea of purpose when we are but one among millions who are all caught in "the Gulf" (l. 71), anyway.

He just happens to be near death in his "sleepy corner" (l. 73), of no more substance or significance than random "[t]houghts of a dry brain in a dry season" (l. 75). The tone is depressing, even ultimately nihilistic, as the speaker of this dramatic monologue affirms his empty life and his forfeiture of any resolve to change it. But such hopelessness and apparent powerlessness may be intentional on Eliot's part. He further reduces the speaker in the poem from an actual human being at the beginning to an individual consciousness at the end, an important step in his evolution toward the Tiresias he presents in The Waste Land.

The search for the identity and the character of Tiresias's role in Eliot's poem is equivalent to the task of defining consciousness itself and, indeed, that may be the ambiguous goal for any deep probe into the poem's meaning. Most modern critics speak of Eliot's Tiresias as one consciousness of the poem, and many concentrate on Tiresias's androgyny as the key to his role. Others can be divided between those who see Tiresias's frailty,

impotence, and fragmented perceptions as symbols of what Eliot was trying to warn the reader against, and those who see Tiresias as an example of a mythic sight that envisions the self following an ever-renewing path through, but separate from, the physicality of the world.

Hugh Kenner associates Tiresias with a limited consciousness, but one that is ordinary, not substandard, in its limits: "[Tiresias] is . . . the name of a possible zone of consciousness where the materials with which he is credited with being aware can co-exist; and what else . . . can a developed human consciousness be said to be?" (36). By this description, Eliot uses Tiresias not for any extraordinary insights he is capable of, but perhaps just for the character's traditional attributes, the sight with blindness, the androgyny, the advanced age. In that respect, Tiresias is simply one locus in the poem through which Eliot can project ideas. In other words, the entirety of the poem, according to this line of thought, is not Tiresias's experience.

> For example, according to Easthope,
>
> Tiresias does <u>not</u> speak the whole poem: on the contrary, its speaker assumes the role of Tiresias at this point and only for this section ["The Fire Sermon," in which Tiresias identifies himself] . . . Tiresias is only one [role], a <u>persona</u> of apparently unassailable detachment adopted at this point." (333)

Easthope characterizes the speaker, the voice, of the whole poem as being "a consciousness at the edge of oblivion, either dying or in madness imagining itself so" (334). Easthope's speaker, though, does assume Tiresian characteristics in the first section, "The Burial of the Dead":

> Having discovered nothingness [his impression when he returns with the hyacinth girl from their lovemaking], the absence of Good and Evil in human sexuality, the living for him are as the dead, the living body is "a handful of dust" in which he finds fear, and life in the modern world is a routine of meaningless automatism. (336)

He sees the speaker as delivering not so much an informed commentary on the early twentieth century, but an example of the babble of one of its inhabitants: "read aloud the effect [of the poem's last paragraph] is unmistakable: the speaker collapses into incoherence and true madness" (340).

Or is it some inexpressible spiritual truth that Eliot feels he has led the reader to, and now only needs to verbalize in chant to share with the reader? In the end Easthope appears to offer the poem a backhanded compliment: "the poem contrives to be a general representation of modern experience. Its success in a divided society derives from the degree to which the poem prevents the origin of its meaning coming into question

and so, possible rejection" (343). He seems to be saying that, if society were not so "divided," this poem that exhibits so much fragmentation and ambiguity could be appreciated as the "not wholly untraditional dramatisation" (Easthope 334) that it is.

Easthope's view suggests, though, that Eliot's depiction of post-First World War London is arbitrary to the extent that the real world was not as fragmented and recessive as his poem implies. But Bedient's more recent study opposes that view. Bedient securely anchors his opinion to the very real trauma articulated as "modernism" that Eliot and other intellectuals were coming to terms with at the time.

Pointing to the release of Rudolph Otto's Das Heilige (The Sacred) in 1917, Bedient recalls that Otto's concept of a "desacralized," non-religious world had given modernists "a new-felt sense of 'the fragile limits of the speaking being,' and . . . a new-felt terror of naked exposure before the x of the Other" (Bedient 206). This terrifying "Other" of the modernists is the mystery that Tiresias's experience as male and female revealed for him, but that for everyone else remains the void that man senses beyond his limited consciousness, a void (or fulfillment--God) that man cannot be part of but cannot face being (consciously) separate from.

Modernism bridges the chasm between these two philosophical poses; it was "a vertical explosion that in

one direction reopened the 'unseen' and in the other the abysmal" (Bedient 205). And Bedient sees Eliot plunging into the vortex of that division:

> [The Waste Land] takes a position--with The Golden Bough, with The Rite of Spring--at the "place" where art, philosophy, and religion all spring from terror; where "the Other" seems to interrogate the abjectness of human existence as if it were still a phenomenon of the jungle and knowledge of redemption had still to be wrested out of the lowering clouds. (Bedient 206)

Tiresias's special understanding of "the Other," the "one reality of religious terror: inexplicable, ontological power" (Bedient 204) is rooted not in his wisdom and prophecy but in his past metamorphoses, because "transformation entails dread and awe" (207).

But Bedient does not believe that Tiresias holds a lofty position as one of the poem's voices. Although these modernist considerations of other consciousnesses and an absence of purpose and meaning do ground Eliot's poem in a more sophisticated statement than Easthope would seem to allow him, Bedient sees Tiresias's inclusion in the poem as that of a worn-down, second-hand example of a narrative mind too old or senile or re-used over and over through the ages to respond clearly to the modern scenes before him.

Bedient does point out that Tiresias's lapses

in syntax and drifting of attention are a mimetic reference to the style of modern thought (131-38), but he thinks it is Tiresias's age that Eliot wants to capitalize on most:

> Tiresias perceives differently from anyone else in modern time, but what he perceives is precisely its modernness, its hapless difference from preceding ages: it is the antiquity of his intellect, his knowledge of "tradition," that makes it so avante-garde, so "original." (132)

According to Bedient, Eliot was counting on Tiresias's distance from the twentieth-century experience to create the sterile, detached mood of the character:

> Through tired Tiresias, Eliot applies judgement [and] performs it, not with throbbing agony of soul but with a relatively automatic hand. The metaphysical "soul" cannot be evoked, and can scarcely be involved, in the social, cultural, and snobbish accents of the pastiche. (138)

Besides only being useful as a passive mirror and a stand-in for an impersonal (divine) observer, Tiresias is also demeaned because of his past sexual experience: "The protagonist becomes Tiresias only for the sake of a skit in which everything sexual is automatic, degrading, and comic" (130).

Bedient's vision of Tiresias's function for Eliot is that of a bungling clown, perfect for reflecting how bad

the situation is and how hopeless if the reader (and the protagonist) only have Tiresias's discerning abilities on which to rely for an understanding of their world. It is ironic that this Tiresias (certainly an uncommon interpretation of the character) resembles what the loftier version eventually evolves into through its manifestations in Hemingway and various "hard-boiled" writers who would follow.

Bedient sees Tiresias as being "seedy from his exposure and overexposure to the commonplace, an expert witness of abjection" (130). The phrases also accurately describe the figure of the private detective envisioned by Dashiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler, an ordinary protagonist from a James M. Cain novel, or even, further extending the comparison, a trapped, ill-fated "hero" of any of a hundred <u>films noir</u>.

Whether Eliot's Tiresias is perceived as a mystic or as an antiquated and useless observer, a unique quality that yet sets him apart from the rest of humanity still comes through. He has still "seen" ages of humanity, and either interpretation commands a measure of authority because he has simply experienced more of reality than any living being. Whether Tiresias's experience can be a lesson or a model for the modern age probably was an idea Eliot contemplated as he used the character, and one that was perhaps contemplated by other writers as well, as Tiresian characteristics were incorporated into other

genres.

Tomlinson expresses a position diametrically opposed to those of Easthope and Bedient regarding Tiresias's value and the poem's fragmentation and conclusion. He examines the poem's lack of straightforward narration in light of Eliot's past dealings with the problem of being "incapable of saying just what one means" (23). He shows that Eliot may have had a specific purpose in using more than one speaker: "Eliot . . . choose[s] a fragmented art form where psychic wholeness can yet be hinted at by the use of myth and of metamorphosis" (23). This point of view raises Tiresias at least to the level of a major voice in the poem, if not the only voice, and not an impotent voice. Tomlinson points out that the "business of the double sex . . . fits Eliot's whole concern with the uncertain nature of identity where nothing connects with nothing" (33), echoing the sense of emptiness behind the speaker of "Gerontion."

The image of a void that is created by these abstractions of negation (and is an echo of the poem's title) is further developed, Tomlinson feels, through Eliot's use of sound and silence in the poem. The various languages, animal and human, he notes, build into a "metamorphosis of meaning into noise [in which] . . . metamorphosis invades and shapes the fabric of the poetry itself" (31). In the end, it is this process of transformation itself that becomes the consciousness of

the poem, when we discover that "metamorphosis is not variety and fecundity, but the phantasmagoria of a divided self, of a mind that contains and unifies and yet, in need of spiritual metamorphosis itself, depletes and dries up" (33).

Tomlinson also points to the Tiresias character's similarity to the social role of the poet (as in regard to Tennyson and Fitzgerald). "The blind Tiresias," he writes, "was a good choice for the interior vision [because] he points outwards from his own psychic wounds towards human history" (35). Tiresias does act as a transmitter for what Tomlinson calls a poet's "longing for a significant music across the centuries" (45) through a heritage that is both mythic and literary.

Audrey Rogers focuses on Tiresias's mythic value, arguing that the Tiresian voice, although weak, is mythic in its intent to manifest through verbalization "the eternal return, the unified, unbroken existence" of the self's search for identity and purpose (279). Cleanth Brooks asserts that Eliot's presentation of Tiresias is acceptable as a barometer for the confusion, the feeling of estrangement, often associated with the advent of the twentieth century. Brooks, Rogers says, "justifies the fragmentation in the poem as an artistic reflection of the shattered mind of the twentieth century" (292n).

Rogers also contributes to the discussion concerning Tiresias's sexual significance for the poem. She

believes that "the ironic effect of juxtaposing fertility myths with the sterility of modern experience provide[s] a clue to the basic tension of the poem" (279). Tiresias, of course, is an ideal representative for such a convergence. Rogers, among many others, points out the value of Tiresias as a type of receptacle in which divergent parts collect in order to produce some new perspective: "Tiresias's vision holds in tension all the irreconcilable elements, fusing them in a world that he, the poet, has constituted" (280).

This function is also explored in the novel Picture Palace by Paul Theroux, wherein the Tiresian main character "perhaps represents a common quasi-erotic tendency of the artist, the scholar-critic . . . and the lover, namely the drive to create a whole world synthetically through union of the disparate parts" (Bell 18-19). Eliot, these writers suggest, also sees Tiresias to a certain extent as a reflection of himself as poet, an idea reminiscent of Tennyson's selection of the character for his poem.

In that regard, Rogers compliments Eliot and Tennyson on their choice of Tiresias by concluding that "To the mythic mind, a fresh start, rebirth, always necessitates going back to the 'beginnings,' whether cosmic, racial, or individual. One way to recover the beginning and thus defeat profane time is through memory" (286). Tiresias's memory functions as the poet's memory,

and perhaps as a racial memory as well.

Another perspective on Tiresias's consciousness is that he spans religious and cultural differences as well as sexual ones: "Tiresias [is] not . . . different in kind from the other voices in the poem but [is] emphasized by Eliot because his is the voice that links . . . the male and female understandings of all the other non-Christian voices in the poem" (Headings 84-5). Headings allows Tiresias a special niche in a larger, cosmic consciousness that is represented by the poem as a whole. He reminds us that

> [Stephen Spender] concludes [in his T. S. Eliot (1975)] that 'the completely conscious and unrepressed individual would preserve in his mind a reflection in miniature of all the stages of the development of civilization. Part of his consciousness would be that which is symbolized by Tiresias.' (85)

For such a divine consciousness, Eliot may have felt that the entire poem could suffice, but still, Tiresias's abilities deserve to be examined for their uniqueness, especially in light of the twentieth-century context in which Eliot places them.

After the decimation of World War I, values that were previously taken for granted, such as those relating to a life's work or a society's cultural aims, came under close inspection. Any behavioral "norms" as such were

now elements for reconstructive survival, not simply a result of geographic differences in culture and lifestyles. In a world that had perpetrated the ultimate insanity, nothing could now be taken for granted. New purposes, not derived from scientific observation but based on personal experience, had to be clearly charted in order to replace what had been lost with something meaningful that would endure.

Eliot must have seen in Tiresias the opportunity to present the modern reader with a view that reflected an omniscient understanding of the truths of a forgotten past, but that was also coupled with a paralysis, an impotence, that reflected the helplessness and confusion of the present. Every characteristic of Tiresias has a striking relevance to the early twentieth-century life that Eliot saw about him and to which he reacted.

Tiresias's transformations are mirrored in the mass consciousness that has seen both the pre-World War I life and the collapse of that life in Europe after the ravages of that war. His blindness, a penalty imposed because he had "seen too much," becomes a symbol of man's lost direction. The modern, inquisitive mind, glorifying in its intellectual and scientific advances, separates from everyday passions and feelings. The void created by this separation is the "Gerontion" speaker's experience of life, as well as Eliot's etherized Prufrock and other benumbed protagonists of the twentieth century.

Tiresias's occasional lack of effective speech, also a deprivation over which he has no control, has its corollary in modern man's sense of helplessness that finds solace in a dormant silence that is a freedom from bondages of time and of consciousness in its stillness. And his old, old age reemphasizes the lure of death behind the modern sense of ennui.

But Tiresias is also "man transformed," and he holds out for the reader an example of metamorphosis through the death of one concept of self and a rediscovery of self after becoming the "other." That simple message alone, that there is another consciousness and it is accessible, could be the sum of Eliot's prescription for surviving the wasteland he saw around him.

The suggestive power of Eliot's model was strong enough to influence the course of poetry and writing in his time. As the shock of the war dissipated over the years, writers were left with the need either to reconstruct values of incapacitated modern man, or simply chronicle his shattered life. These "lost generation" writers included F. Scott Fitzgerald, Hart Crane and other modernist poets, Nathanael West, the Gertrude Stein group of European writers, and, working his way among them all, Ernest Hemingway.

Hemingway siezed upon the Tiresian image of sexual ambiguity, often presented as a sexual problem or deficiency, as a malady common to nearly all his

protagonists. For these depleted heroes, seeking after a knowledge that will somehow unite them internally and make them whole, Hemingway and other writers presented an ideal, like that of Tiresias and Menoeceus, in which the "hero" acts through another character.

In their search for and longing for the unperturbed but violent essence of this "other consciousness" that they perceive as freedom and free will, these protagonists were succeeded, through a literary metamorphosis, by the private investigators of popular detective fiction. Hemingway's realism--an extension perhaps of Eliot's existentialism and, perhaps, also of Tennyson's Maud--directed attention toward a starkness in style, a "toughness" in the use of colloquial speech patterns, and a survival mechanism in attempting to perceive what was right in a world that seemed strangely wrong and unfamiliar.

The manifestations of the Tiresian character that followed his reappearance in The Waste Land depict a competent but unsettled representative of modern consciousness. Tiresias's is a consciousness fragmented by radical changes that reach to the depths of its identity, a lost consciousness searching for the voice to speak its "other" self, its whole self, into existence.

## CHAPTER TWO

## TIRESIAS IN HEMINGWAY'S USE OF ANDROGYNY

When Hemingway first read Eliot's The Waste Land, lent to him by Ezra Pound in 1923, his public reaction was sarcastic. As Carlos Baker notes, "Ernest was unable to take it seriously, though he echoed it once after watching the antics of a pair of cats . . . 'The big cat gets on the small cat,' he wrote. 'Sweeney gets on Mrs. Porter'" (107). But Hemingway's personal dislike and mockery of the older poet belied a measure of respect for the material's mythological sources and its intent in incorporating them into a modern setting. Hemingway's lines also point out that, for him, the long poem's aims could be reduced to the simple theme of sexual desire, in both its natural and its unnatural expressions, as he saw it.

The full effect of the poem on Hemingway can be judged by the content of The Sun Also Rises, his first novel and first work after exposure to Eliot's poem. The Sun Also Rises shares its Waste Land lineage with The Great Gatsby, which pre-dated Hemingway's novel and was accepted by Eliot himself as an extension in fiction of

his ideas. "Eliot had a personal reason to be [pleased with Fitzgerald's novel]," Adams writes, " for [it] has the same theme, uses the same imagery, and is based on the same myth as The Waste Land" (124). Joost and Brown also reflect on the close timing of the three works, pointing out that "in May 1925 Eliot . . . was greatly pleased with [The Great Gatsby]" and "[b]y July, Hemingway was at work on The Sun Also Rises" (431). Considering the writers' fraternization at the time, converging at Sylvia Beach's book shop and sharing frequent public coffees, the positive reception of The Great Gatsby probably helped spur Hemingway to the completion of his book.

True to his raucous nature, though, Hemingway in print only joked about any debt he owed The Great Gatsby for its articulation of Eliot's wasteland images. From his letter to Fitzgerald in April, 1926, comes the half-kidding remark, "[In The Sun Also Rises] I have tried to follow the outline and spirit of The Great Gatsby but feel I have failed somewhat because of never having been on Long Island" (Letters 200). And in another letter to Fitzgerald, in November 1926, he joked: "I am asking Scribners to insert as a subtitle in everything after the eighth printing The Sun Also Rises (Like Your Cock if You Have One)--A Greater Gatsby" (231), again poking fun at the attention to sexual dysfunction in the three works, and also Eliot's homage

to Pound as "the greater craftsman" at the beginning of his poem.

In a serious vein, it is generally accepted by critics that both The Sun Also Rises and later Hemingway works are derivative of these two earlier pieces. By way of examining sexual relationships in Hemingway's work, Spilka unites the three works under a common theme: "The flavor of romantic impossibility that Eliot and Fitzgerald had introduced . . . became [Hemingway's] own, and the inventions he used to convey it were legitimately employed" (348).

Joost and Brown refer to the three writers' works as "sexual tragedies that express a general breakdown of social order and cultural values" (431). The personification of such breakdown and loss of value occurs most clearly in the characters of Eliot's Tiresias and Hemingway's Jake Barnes. Although some critics contend that it is the Fisher King from Jessie L. Weston's From Ritual to Romance who is the model for Jake (Cowley 49, Adams 127), the complexities of Tiresias offer more similarities than the single observation that Jake and the Fisher King both share a sexual wound and "reign" over an infertile land and time. But a Fisher King-Jake Barnes connection is only one of many possible symbols offered by characters in Hemingway's first novel. As Father Crozier points out, "Jake Barnes's wound . . . links him inescapably to the search for God

or meaning implied in Jacob's own endurance in the struggle which wins for him the name of Israel or wrestler" (295). In another study, Cohen examines Jake as a Ulysses figure to Brett's Circe.

In light of these varied theories, the derivation of the character of Jake may seem to be not limited to one particular character from The Waste Land. But Tiresias is more than simply a blind prophet, and Jake not only reflects a number of Tiresian qualities, but also foreshadows appearances of the Tiresian influence in Hemingway's work beyond The Sun Also Rises. (For example, some of Hemingway's later works draw more directly on Tiresias's androgyny than does The Sun Also Rises.) Many studies describe Jake in clear Tiresian terms, to the point where the two names are practically interchangeable:

> Because of his hurt, Jake is a character who knows a lot about life's problems . . . Detachment, apartness, are imposed on Jake by his condition; but these limitations strengthen his position as a narrator. Unable to be wholly involved, he is in a better position to see things clearly and objectively. (Hook 56)

Direct references have also been made between the two characters: "Tiresias, at the end of The Waste Land, is no more sexually potent, fertile, or hopeful than Jake at the end of his book" (Adams 123). Greenberg compares

Tiresias and Jake in their role as narrative guides for the reader, as do Joost and Brown:

> Jake's castration is similar to Tiresias's blindness to the extent that it provides him with the same kind of "second sight" that enables both the seer and the reporter to see beyond the hollow existence of their fellows in the Waste Land. (432)

From any perspective, a predominant role assigned to sex, a sexual malaise, and general sexual confusion regarding role identity are common themes shared by Tiresias and Jake.

Central to The Sun Also Rises, as suggested by Hemingway's ribald joke about his revised title, is Jake's wound. It identifies him, describes him psychologically, and indicts his society and his time. But, just as it is the cause of his ills, it also allows for his positive characteristics, which have been tempered by the fire of his loss. To editor Max Perkins in another of his letters, Hemingway joked about a picture of himself on a dust jacket looking "much as I had imagined Jake Barnes . . . a writer who had been saddened by the loss or atrophy of certain non-replaceable parts" (Letters 223). His word "saddened" was enlarged upon in a later letter in 1951, when he recalled a "personal experience" he had when, lying wounded himself in a hospital, he

> wondered what a man's life would have been

> like . . . if his penis had been lost and his testicles and spermatic chord remained intact . . . what his problems would be when he was in love with someone who was in love with him and there was nothing that they could do about it. (Letters 745)

Joost and Brown further characterize Jake's "emasculating war wound" as "one way to express [the] condition" of being "able to desire but unable to act on [that] desire" (349), in other words, being potent but having no means of expressing or exercising that potency.

Jake's impotence is presented symbolically from the first chapter of the novel. He appears first as a disembodied "I," telling the reader not about himself but about his friend Robert Cohn and the trouble Cohn had with his first two wives. As if to set a tone for this book and much of his other fiction to follow, Hemingway-through-Jake relates that Cohn's second wife "evidently . . . led him quite a life" (7). Jake's role as journalist places him in the Tiresian position of watcher and commentator, and what he mostly sees, like Tiresias, is sexual discord. Remarking on the relations of his many acquaintances, Jake tells us, "I have a rotten habit of picturing the bedroom scenes of my friends" (13), bringing to mind Tiresias's observation of the typist and the young man in Eliot's poem, and Tiresias's accompanying lack of sexual feelings (Waste Land 214-56).

His isolation is a two-edged sword for Jake. On the one hand, his personal distance keeps him, impotent, from interacting "normally" with people. Hoffman points out that the homosexuals surrounding Brett's entrance and "the several levels of isolation" reinforce the "forms of impotence" of the novel (81-2). But on the other hand, Jake has gained an insight through his loss (in Tiresian fashion) that is not available to others who have not experienced a similar deprivation. Hoffman's theory of the "unreasonable wound" relates to both Jake and Hemingway's war injuries:

> The experience is itself almost equivalent to a death; what follows it amounts to a new and different life. The man who survives violence is often quite remarkably different from the [same] man who [had] never experienced it. (69)

In other words, a Tiresian metamorphosis may result, engendering, if not a form of enlightenment, then at least a new way of seeing. An extension of such a new way of being may even become represented in messianic dimensions, as examined by Joost and Brown in their assessment of Tiresias:

> Tiresias assumes the androgynous natures of Christ and Adam . . . his observations offer the only hope for the inhabitants of The Waste Land; and, like Adam in the traditional theological view, Tiresias possesses the features of both sexes. By virtue of

his wisdom, Tiresias is also a "new man." (444) What Jake's observations offer are not so much "hope for the inhabitants" of his novel, but a clear view for the reader of that post-war society. As Spilka notes, the injury, and thus Jake's perspective, "enables Hemingway to connect the war and the society that made it with one of its most damaging consequences: the breakdown in marital and romantic stability, the shattering of the old romantic love code" (349).

Hemingway himself noted in a letter to his mother that "the people [in The Sun Also Rises] . . . were certainly burned out, hollow and smashed" (Letters 243), and Spilka expands on that in stating, "with the exception of Pedro Romero [the heroic young bullfighter], all the men . . . like all the women--are sexual and emotional cripples like Barnes" (350-1). Spilka also points out that the problems of the people in Hemingway's novel begin "when women assume male prerogatives, when they become the wrong kind of androgynous woman, the bitch who destroys the man she loves" (347). But while characters such as Robert Cohn may illustrate the victim of the celebrated Hemingway "bitch-goddess," others such as Jake, Brett, and her friend Count Mippipopolous demonstrate movement toward an inner peace as they assume and portray androgynous characteristics.

Chapter Four begins with a symbolic announcement that the mysteries of opposites will be examined. As

Jake and Brett taxi to the night spots of Paris, they jostle together in the back seat, and he sees her intermittently in and out of the darkness. Then he kisses her; their "lips were tight together" (25). She rebukes him: "'I don't want to go through that hell again'" (26), but immediately draws back to him: "'But, darling, I have to see you'" (26). They seem to be taking turns seeing each other first one way then another, and playing different roles at different times for each other. The swift changes of mood paradoxically bind them more firmly together than had their casual interaction up to this point in the novel.

Back in his room, after leaving Brett with the Count, Jake notices his wound in a mirror as he undresses for bed, then notes that he had picked up two newspapers but, "[t]hey would both have the same news, so whichever I read first would spoil the other" (30). He does not see life, with or without sex, as holding a lot of promise. Either alternative, in the world Jake sees around him, involves emptiness and isolation.

The chapter closes with another encounter between Jake and a now-drunk Brett, who leaves again to join the Count, as a disconsolate Jake reflects, "It is awfully easy to be hard-boiled about everything in the daytime, but at night it is another thing" (34). Their alternating emotions of desire and rejection loosen them from conventional sexual roles and move them, if not into

androgynous roles, then into a position from which a balance can be struck more easily between an excess one direction or the other.

Cohen's study of Brett's Circe role highlights her independence from conventional romantic behavior, perhaps a result of the failure of her first marriage, and her function as a standard against which other female Hemingway characters would be judged. The feminist qualities she exhibits complement the perception of her as androgynous:

> What spice's Brett's charm--and makes it so dangerous--is her sexual bravado: [i]n both her dress and habits, she rejects the gestures of feminine subservience for those of masculine power. She wears her hair "brushed back like a boy's" under a man's hat associates only with men, calls herself a "chap." and outdrinks any man . . . Her sexual aggressiveness is equally unconventional: she chooses her lovers and has them on her terms. (Cohen 296)

Brett is not aggressive, though, in a threatening way but more in a celebratory, independent way. Still, Cohen notes that, in his liberal characterization of her sexual freedom, "Hemingway leaves no doubt about Brett's magical, totemic powers" (297). Not only Jake but, it would appear, any character who is "loosened" from the sexual sterility of those Waste Land-age stereotypes, has

opportunity to learn something different and valuable about living.

But such unconventionalism and freedom, for Hemingway, never includes homosexuality. Brett's companions when she first enters the novel receive proper scorn from Jake on that account. And Brett's own sense of freedom never moves her in that direction. But Brett is not fulfilled, either, due to a type of impotence she shares with Jake. Her inability to consummate their shared love, and to find love with any other partner, keeps her as unavailable as he is. She does not share all his resultant insights, but she does show an ability to sense the pure power of the bullfighter on a cruder level than Jake does, and she can identify other people like themselves, such as the Count, who she announces several times as "one of us."

In Chapter Seven, the Count accompanies Brett to Jake's apartment and espouses a Tiresian outlook on life by saying to Jake, "'You see, Mr. Barnes, it is because I have lived very much that now I can enjoy everything so well'" (61). To determine the Count's sexual proclivities, one needs to be sensitive to Hemingway's "iceberg" theory of writing--that leaving something unsaid may make it register more strongly on a subconscious level. Seltzer, though, takes the bold step of declaring that the Count is impotent. If he is, that fact would help explain his friendliness and neutrality

toward both Jake and Brett, the two models of the novel's most genuine romance.

Seltzer determines that the Count, because of his freewheeling exploits, presents an "ideal" image of impotence in the novel. "Impotence," Seltzer writes, "describes paradoxically, not man's deficiency but his amazing potentiality . . . [It] promote[s] the scrupulously measured detachment [as with Tiresias and Jake] that is itself the key to happiness" (13). Jake and Brett's celibacy, operating from a firm purpose and morality, achieves the same result as impotency, but the hurt, the loss, the wounding and confusion that Brett and Jake share are consequences of actual, historic tragedy and, although "accidental," their personal scars are neither wished for nor self-imposed. Their suffering, painful and inescapable as it is, is still more advantageous than the Count's hollow life.

For all his freedom, the Count does not measure up as a valid model for Jake. Seltzer makes the point that if Jake could pull himself together, he could make a lot of money like the Count and be happy, but the latter portion of the book does not bear this out. Jake has "received" an uncluttered attitude toward people or, lacking understanding, has at least developed a determination toward life that is not shared by the other characters in their shallowness, including, in his materialistic zeal, the Count. Jake philosophizes in

Chapter Fourteen, as he hears Brett and Mike laughing in the bedroom next to his: "Perhaps as you went along you did learn something. I did not care what it was all about. All I wanted to know was how to live in it. Maybe if you found out how to live in it you learned from that what it was all about" (148).

It is clear that by Jake's making an effort to live, Brett's life is enriched as well--if not completely, then at least more than anyone else's. In an appraisal of the "Hemingway hero," Lee places Jake in the category of "a man for all seasons . . . the exemplary 'life' figure who offered a way--a code-- by which to endure against the malaise of war and deepest sexual and existential uncertainty" (8). Throughout the book, we see vividly and painfully that these are qualities that Jake works for and suffers for, and are qualities that can enrich whatever similarly suffering people in his environment are perceptive enough to recognize them.

Jake's value is especially evident in the bullfighting portion of the book. In various descriptions of the action--"something that was done beautiful close to the bull" (168), "the holding of his purity of line through the maximum of exposure" (168), the "great attraction is [in] working close to the bull" (213), and "[in] the terrain of the bull he is in great danger" (214)--Hemingway reveals that a true appreciation of life involves a willingness to penetrate to the heart

of the matter and risk an exposure to truth.

One interpretation of Hemingway's use of the bullfight is that the conflict between man and bull is a model of "the symbolic destruction of man by woman," as the matador passively allures the bull to mounting excitement until he can finally skewer and destroy it at the height of its dangerous expression (Schwartz 66). But what Hemingway presents most plainly through the bullfighting is a more controlled and knowledgeable Jake than at any other time in the novel.

His ability to see and define heroism is at its sharpest; he "does for Romero what Nick does for Gatsby; he sees in Romero more than anyone else does and makes of that insight the definition of a hero, which entails a correlative definition of himself" (Doody 219). He also does for Romero and, to an extent, for the other characters what Tiresias does in his various encounters throughout literature for Narcissus, Ulysses, Oedipus, and Tennyson's Menoeceus.

Jake sees balances that transcend the lives of "Wastelanders" caught in the interplay of opposites, in the same way as do the private investigators and ill-fated protagonists of hard-boiled fiction who would follow him in popular fiction and movies, all figures on the outer fringe of society. At the point in the novel when he hears Brett in the next room with another man, he constructs a philosophy of economy:

> You gave up something and got something else. Or you worked for something. You paid some way for everything that was any good . . . Enjoying living was learning to get your money's worth and knowing when you had it. You could get your money's worth. The world was a good place to buy in. (148)

And in the closing of the novel, Jake reconciles himself in Spain to the losses and gains he has accrued during the story and remarks cryptically when he and Brett leave the hotel in Madrid, "The bill has been paid" (243). In the spirit of the novel's title, Jake exhibits the balance of ebb and flow perfectly in his "romance" with Brett.

His perseverance echoes what Hemingway wrote in a letter about the verse from Ecclesiastes to be used at the front of the book: "The point of the book to me was that the earth abideth forever . . . I didn't mean the book to be a hollow or bitter satire but a damn tragedy with the earth abiding for ever as the hero" (Letters 229).

Jake is attractive as a character because in the midst of his tragedy there is a nobility to his patience. Unlike other characters, he does not ask for what he cannot get. Baker describes that lack as "the sacrifice of Venus, on the altar of Mars" (Writer as Artist 92). In Jake's case and in other of Hemingway's works, "the tragic fact of war or the after-effects of

social disruption tend to inhibit and betray the normal course of love" (Baker, Writer 92).

Despite the Tiresian emptiness he is left with, Jake's example of "grace under pressure" leads us to re-examine life and question what really endures and what really matters. Just as Eliot could not have realistically ended The Waste Land on a "happy" note, this novel that grew from that poem's themes also could not end "happily." According to Baker, the novel presents a "complicated interplay between" two equally strong positions--one, "a romantic study in sexual and ultimately in spiritual frustration"; and the second, "a qualitative study of [the] varying degrees of physical and spiritual manhood, projected against a background of ennui and emotional exhaustion" (Writer 93).

While the choice between these two perspectives may seem to be between "bad" (the second) and "worse" (the first), Hemingway's stoic style underlies them, and his theme's adherence to the real world as it was then, and the characters' resolve to endure it make the writing as strong as it has remained to be, despite its depressive context. The First World War eradicated certain traditionally easy pleasures, philosophies, and guarantees. The stoicism of Hemingway's fiction in the face of the new uncertainty is one of the clearest legacies for the fiction that would follow and eventually develop into the genre of film noir.

An examination of other Hemingway works shows that the motif of injury or loss followed by isolation and insight is not the only Tiresian contribution to his work and to the trend that followed. For Hemingway, it may not even be his most frequent contribution. Although many of the later male characters exhibit shades of Jake's passivity or impotence, they lack his intensity of suffering and complementary level of insight.

Instead, the lone male figure (he appears to be alone, even if in the company of a wife or lover) and particularly that character's problems with sexual identity are examined concurrently with the females around him. Specifically, the short stories, "The Sea Change," "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber," and the posthumous novel The Garden of Eden, deal directly with the androgyny of the Tiresian model. To a lesser degree, the short stories, "The Snows of Kilimanjaro" and "Cat in the Rain," and the novels, A Farewell to Arms and To Have and Have Not, also share these elements.

Hemingway's home life, having an aggressive mother and a passive father who committed suicide, may have also contributed to the presence of the theme of androgyny in his work. Meyers points out that a reversal of traditional parental roles was the way of life in the Hemingway household. Even before they were married, Ernest's father made some unusual concessions to his bride-to-be:

> [His father] promised that she would never have to do housework . . . He bought the groceries, did most of the cooking, took care of the laundry and managed the servants--despite his [doctor's practice]. Grace--who seemed pampered, spoiled and selfish--hated dirty diapers, sick children, housecleaning, dishwashing and cooking. Though . . . she made all the furniture for her cottage in Michigan. (Meyers 7)

As the last line suggests, Grace Hemingway, when freed from maternal binds at home, led a more active and directed life than her husband or (probably) nearly any other Oak Park, Illinois, resident:

> A tall, energetic, athletic woman who could kick as high as the ceiling, Grace learned outdoor skills from [her father], learned also to make her own furniture, designed their summer cottage and second Oak Park home and the music studios and efficiency kitchens at each locale, began a new career in painting in middle age, traveled widely, wrote, lectured, sang and played the piano, taught music to all her children, learned to drive in her sixties, and kept up a vigorous correspondence all her life. (Spilka 345)

From his pre-school years onward, Ernest's dynamic mother put her impression on his behavior, dress, and appearance:

> [Ernest] wore Dutch locks and dresses [at his

> mother's direction] and . . . at two he learned to sew and loved it; at two years and eleven months he also learned to load, cock, and shoot a pistol. (Spilka 344)

In his review of Lynn's Hemingway, Crews attests to the fact that Hemingway's Oak Park years, when "he felt himself continually judged against the local standards of sobriety, chastity, decorum, refined culture, and Protestant altruism . . . [under the rule of] his puritanical and capriciously punitive father and his ambitious, domineering mother (34)," provide the source for the entire myth he would create about himself and the hidden androgynous undertones behind that myth.

If this kind of dominance had only occured in the early years, little or nothing would probably have come of it. But, as a letter Ernest received from his mother on his twenty-first birthday shows, Grace's obsession with controlling and modifying her eldest son (her second son of six children was born when Ernest was sixteen) lasted far beyond his childhood years. Grace gave him the letter herself, and he read it alone later. As Griffin presents it, the letter reads as a selfish diatribe from a frightened but bullying mother who possibly feared her son's departure into the world of women. She sees "nothing before [him] but bankruptcy" unless he amends his ways and starts renewing some

> "gratitude and appreciation. Interest in Mother's

> ideas and affairs. Little comforts provided for the home. A desire to favor any of Mother's peculiar preferences, on no account to outrage her ideal. Flowers, fruit, candy or something to wear, brought home to Mother with a kiss and a squeeze . . . A real interest in hearing her sing or play the piano, or tell the stories that she loves to tell . . . A thoughtful remembrance and celebration of her birthday and Mother's Day--the sweet letter accompanying the gift of flowers, she treasures it most of all." (Griffin 133-34)

The tone evokes sympathy but, to put things in context, the son being addressed had been nearly killed in the war two years before and now had returned, "devastated by [his nurse's] rejection [of his marriage proposal and] . . . at the crossroads of his young life" (Griffin 241).

Instead of responding to these signals, Grace seems bent on letting this man in her life know how much he has failed her, a message she may have often given her husband. In an excised paragraph from the story "Fathers and Sons" written in his early thirties, Ernest sums up his father's home life as that of being "'married to a woman with whom he had no more in common than a coyote has with a white female poodle'" and ends by wondering, "'and what about his heart and where did it beat and who beats it now and what a hollow sound it makes'" (Griffin 15). Crews allows that

> [t]he author-to-be saw his "Papa" as the cowed and castrated husband par excellence, broken in spirit by a woman who arrogated male authority and who squandered the family's resources on lavish, ego-preening projects. (34)

Meyers seems to agree by pointing out how, in both The Green Hills of Africa and For Whom the Bell Tolls, Hemingway writes explicitly of his father as a coward who "should have stood up to that woman and not let her bully him" (213-14, quoted from For Whom the Bell Tolls). More in keeping with reality, though, are Meyers's remarks concerning the father's diabetes and debts (209-211) and Hemingway's characteristic habit of assigning blame to suit his own perspective after the fact: "He . . . revised the history of his own childhood to match his retrospective view of [his father] as a castrated weakling, dominated by the monstrous Grace" (212).

The truth of father Hemingway's tragedy aside, it is Ernest's resentment of his mother, as long-lived as her own compulsive behavior toward him, that continued to haunt him well into his adult life. Meyers suggests that Ernest's acquaintance with Gertrude Stein (his reputation is permanently linked to her tutelage) was a choice made in poor judgment that Hemingway followed through with because of Stein's similarities to his mother:

> [Stein's] striking resemblance to [his] mother made the presence of Grace immediately apparent . . .

> Both, according to Hemingway, had emotional problems that were connected to their change of life and that provoked their quarrels with him . . . Both were highly talented and extremely egocentric. Both were frustrated artists who felt irritated by their thwarted careers . . . [and] competed with Hemingway (always a mistake) and were angry when he surpassed their achievement . . . Most significantly, Hemingway tried to work out with Gertrude some of the strong Oedipal feelings he had for Grace. (76-7)

Stein's own avowed lesbianism compounds the whole issue of the search for sexual identity behind Hemingway's rejection and experimentation with various mother figures. Grace herself was rumored to have kept up a lesbian affair with their live-in housekeeper (her voice pupil) for eleven years. Hemingway's father finally ejected the younger woman one summer when Grace was in Michigan; after his suicide ten years later, "the two women stirred further talk, and further resentment from Ernest, by resuming their joint residence in nearby River Forest" (Crews 34-5).

According to Meyers, Stein's betrayal of Hemingway, perhaps because she was the mother of his creative drive at that point, permanently affected his work:

> Since Stein had a strong maternal hold on Hemingway, the loss of her friendship and viciousness of her attack caused a profound . . . wound. It forced him

> to return repeatedly to that bitter quarrel in many of his writings from 1926 until the very end of his life. (81)

Spilka, too, recognizes the primacy of the "androgynous pursuit" in Hemingway's life's work:

> Heminway saw androgynous love as an edenic garden man must lose or leave . . . he returned repeatedly to the problem of its transience, and . . . he tried to explore its childhood sources and its Parisian flowering in his closing years. (341)

The popular impression of Hemingway's style as being overly masculine could be the opposite of its true, deeper intent, for, if one becomes sensitive to his fascination with androgyny,

> the familiar "bitches" and "dream girls" of his fiction become androgynous alternatives (destructive and redemptive) rather than chauvinist fantasies, and his strenuous defense of maleness becomes part of a larger struggle with his own androgynous impulse rather than a sustained form of homosexual panic. (341)

In the end, "[Grace's] androgynous ways . . . gave more substance and direction to his life and work than he was ever able to acknowledge, and not a little dignity--as his famous tagline 'grace under pressure' so resonantly suggests" (Spilka 347). As Crews notes, if "Grace . . . wanted a boy whose sexual identity would remain forever

dependent upon her dictates and whims . . . she gruesomely got her wish . . . [She] implant[ed] in his mind a permanent, debilitating confusion, anxiety, and anger" (35).

Revelations (and speculations) such as these vivify Hemingway, raising his treatment of romantic love above the usual treadmill of relationships (another reason why Brett and Jake could not be a typical romantic couple). And they also suggest why, in the principally "androgynous" works that will be discussed here, the passive man is countered by a woman who seems to be either one step ahead of him in intellectual and social development or mentally unbalanced.

Gladstein's study of Faulkner, Hemingway, and Steinbeck names this new female creature: "The male writer's inability to come to terms with the otherness of woman . . . has . . . produced an affirmative type, the indestructible woman, who, like Mother Nature, is sometimes cruel and sometimes kind but always enduring" (8). Hemingway's assertive women may not be "indestructible" in the sense of being "right," given the unhappiness and ruin they bring on their relationships (on the men, at least), but they do appear, in this light, to be clear forerunners of the femme fatale of 1930s and 1940s popular literature and film noir.

Tiresias himself, it should be noted, has also been the focus of interpretations by feminist critics.

Lefkowitz, for example, raises the questions,

> Does the [Tiresias] story imply that . . . women . . . were more eager for [sex], and [so] had to be watched more carefully? Or [does it explain] why bards . . . had to understand both male and female experience in order to . . . prophesy accurately? . . . [Tiresias's] story affirms that there were rewards and reasons to acquire female identity. (10)

Hemingway, at least, is not guilty of experimenting with Ovidian shape-changing. His sexes, for the most part, remain static. But the presence of androgyny in the writing inevitably signals an increased attention to female nature. Perhaps to avoid a consideration of homosexuality, Hemingway stayed within the realm of impotent androgyny to rely on a "safe" means of transcending the natural contention between sexual opposites.

In several of Hemingway's works, the theme of androgyny is given only a hint of expression, or a fleeting suggestion in passing behind a larger story. Such an example is his short story "Cat in the Rain." The title suggests the minimalist style of an abstract sculpture or an impressionistic painting, and that is what this brief vignette resembles, just a quick look at a couple spending a rainy afternoon in a hotel room. The story is a microcosm of their relationship, in which the smallest details are indicative of the whole.

While the short-haired woman actively looks out the window, the man unconcernedly lounges on the bed. After the woman declares many times that she "liked" the hotel proprietor, she attempts to rescue a cat she has seen hiding under a table in the rain, but it has gone. Later, in answer to her husband's objections that she change her boyish haircut, she replies, "'If I can't have long hair or any fun, I can have a cat" (Short Stories 170), and the proprietor's wife appears in their doorway holding a cat her husband asked her to take to the woman.

On the surface, the woman's short hair and the man's general ennui are familiar links to features in The Sun Also Rises. The details of the story also are similar to some of Eliot's writing: "In both ["The Fire Sermon" section of The Waste Land and this story] the modern lovers in this Waste Land of the 1920s choose boredom over love" (Joost and Brown 441). In light of Hemingway's later work The Garden of Eden, it is notable that the wife is willing and eager to act on her own initiative and the husband appears nonchalant, or at most only slightly curious, hoping that her spur-of-the-moment actions will bring some excitement into their lives.

In the short story, "The Snows of Kilimanjaro," a dying writer/hunter awaits death by gangrene while his mistress watches for a plane. On the edge of their camp prowls a hyena, symbolizing for the man his own death. But hyenas were long thought to be hermaphroditic; the

appearance of the female's genitalia is not that different from that of the male (Joost and Brown 447-8). Baker writes of a hunting experience in January 1934 when Hemingway was suffering from amoebic dysentery: "Nothing fitted his mood better than the slaughter of hyenas . . . 'mongrel-dog-smart in the face' [as Hemingway described them]" (319-20).

At least two of Hemingway's novels contain brief but significant examples of androgynous or sex-reversal episodes. In A Farewell to Arms, "[Frederick] has to lie on his back to perform [sex] properly . . . This long-hidden and well-kept secret is one Heminway returns to . . . perhaps because he saw good androgynous women like Catherine as unthreatening" (Spilka 355). In this instance, it is not some perverse experimentation that makes the scene important but the opposite--an opening or relaxation of one way of perceiving the possibilities of a more sharing relationship. Some writers suggest that Hemingway surprised himself by his own amenability to such an arrangement. Spilka also takes notice of the main couple of To Have and Have Not, calling them

> the only successfully androgynous lovers in Hemingway's fiction. She admires and emulates his masculine toughness; he admires and covets her bleached blond hair. In the novel's closing soliloquy, she describes that bleaching and their common excited response to it as the defining

episode in their marriage. (361)

Here again is the familiar attention to the woman's short hair style and blond color. Hemingway's own affection for this style in his women is superceded by the exchange of attention the couple shares, engendering, as in A Farewell To Arms, a genuine reciprocity by which both partners benefit from the opposing characteristics of the other. It is the androgynous formula Hemingway searched for in his fiction, the belief that a transcendence of sexual roles could honestly result in a double-pairing, as it were, a complete expression of support and fulfillment between two people of the opposite sex.

In a 1952 letter to Edmund Wilson, Hemingway confided that his inspiration for the story "The Sea Change" was a frank discussion he had with Gertrude Stein:

> She talked to me once for three hours telling me why she was a lesbian, the mechanics of it, why the act did not disgust those who performed it . . . and why it was not degrading to either participant. Three hours is a long time with Gertrude crowding you and . . . it was this knowledge, gained from [her] that enabled me to write A Sea Change, which is a good story, with authority. (Letters 795)

He further explains that returning to his wife that evening straightened out for him the true disposition of deviant sexuality. But thinking of Stein's experience must have gotten Heminway wondering about the effect a

homosexually adventurous woman would have on a relationship, confiscating for herself the male's initiative.

In "The Sea Change" just such a couple are discussing in a bar their mutual decision to separate because of the wife's affair with another woman. They are young, tanned, and out of place in Paris. The wife's hair is blond, cut short. The husband, by his acquiescence, appears to be a passive male, but demonstrates more of an unwillingness, rather than an inability, to act, casting him more in the image of Tiresias than Jake.

The husband states that even though his wife's sexual inconstancy bothers him to the point of considering suicide, his real pain comes from understanding her. Like the author, the husband has given thought to the matter, rather than reacting angrily, but, as Joost and Brown point out, "this transference of [sex] roles destroys any possibility of a love relationship between man and woman" (448). The story's couple becomes sexually neutralized--neither cares to renew any heterosexual love--and there may be hints that the man is now considering homosexuality. Joost and Brown see the tone of the end of the story as having a Waste Land motif:

> Like Tiresias, the protagonist proceeds to make the transition from a heterosexual to a homosexual

> role. He gazes long into the mirror behind the bar, espies his own kind, and joins them. As does Eliot, so Hemingway again exploits the rich implications of the mirror image. (446)

Is Hemingway offering, then, an example of the degradation following an androgynous blurring of the sex roles? Or do the non-motions in this story that he characterized as having everything left out add up to laying the blame, or at least greater misconduct, on one party more than the other?

Fleming believes that the husband is the true cad because, essentially, he has given the matter thought and decided to "use" his wife's bisexuality, as she accuses him of having done in the past: "'No,' she said. 'We're made up of all sorts of things. You've known that. You've used it well enough'" (Short Stories 400). Fleming suggests that the husband is a writer, "motivated . . . by a cool and detached intellectual certainty that he has more to gain if he lets his mistress go than if he convinces her to stay with him" (218). Is "The Sea Change," then, as the title indicates, a Hemingway lesson in the pain and sacrifice of turning life's "junk" into art through fiction writing? Perhaps, but it would be a mistake to overlook Hemingway's source for the story.

More than just writing about writing, he was picking up again the thread of sex, androgyny, and relationships and letting it lead him farther along than he had gone

before. In 1946, fifteen years after "The Sea Change" was published, Hemingway began what was to be a work of epic length, The Garden of Eden. That the later novel contains characters almost identical to the ones in this short story is a testament to the seriousness with which Hemingway struggled with the basic themes of "The Sea Change."

Along the way to that final novel, Hemingway's interest in androgyny expressed itself in less graphic ways than examining, like Jake and Tiresias, his characters' bedroom behavior. An outstanding example is the story, "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber." Androgyny makes its presence here within the grouping of one, or maybe two, passive men and one seemingly over-aggressive woman.

The crux of the story involves the Macomber couple's having hired a white hunting guide in Africa. The husband, though athletically built, is not the stereotypical, courageous hunter. When he runs in fear from a lion, his wife gives herself that night to the guide. On a subsequent hunt, Francis Macomber bravely faces a charging buffalo, but is shot and killed from behind by his wife just as he is about to make a killing shot.

Without question, Hemingway worked a significant amount of maleness into the Margot Macomber character. Wilson, the guide, peppers his comments about her with a

British distrust of American women:

> They are, he thought, the hardest in the world; the hardest, the cruelest, the most predatory and the most attractive and their men have softened or gone to pieces nervously as they have hardened. Or is it they pick men they can handle? (8)

Gladstein agrees with Wilson that Mrs. Macomber is the perfect Hemingway heavy: "Margot Macomber is probably the most devastating of Hemingway's 'destructive-indestructibles' . . . she demands not only self-mutilation and self-emasculation [from her men], but ultimately human sacrifice" (962). E. Ann Kaplan, author of Women in Film Noir, has also examined Mrs. Macomber in light of her contribution as a forerunner of that model femme fatale: "noir heroines [like Margot], far from being the goal of the male quest, are feared, and obstruct a quest that has nothing to do with them" (25).

There is one champion for Margot among critics, however. Beck believes that the guide Wilson, through whom we interpret many of the story's important moments, is an unreliable narrator, chauvanistically displaying a stiff, men-only, British upbringing in his idiom ("I say," "damn fine," "Women upset . . . Amounts to nothing," "I rather liked him too until today," etc.) and, needless to say, in his willingness, even preparedness (he packs a double cot in case of "windfalls"), to bed down with his client's wife.

Given such a male, the popular image of the Hemingway ideal--all bravado, drinking, killing, and comradeship on the surface and gaping moral and emotional absences on the inside--Mrs. Macomber deserves a second consideration: inside--Mrs. Macomber deserves a second consideration:

> Mrs. Macomber . . . sees . . . that in [her husband's] bravery he is about to be killed. If she wanted him dead, she could have left it to the buffalo, as it "seemed" at that moment. Certainly the passage, with what has gone before, can be read to suggest that she wanted to save him and that she, who tried so often before, might well have felt he had never been as worthy of her whole effort as he was now. (Beck 375)

In any assessment of the story's meanings, Mr. Macomber's role should not be overlooked. After all, it is his story; he is the one whose change we are asked to accept and understand.

Part of Hemingway's mastery in this story is the delicate balance that the three characters strike. None of them can act without the other two being personally affected. Compared to the two women/one man triangles of "The Sea Change" and The Garden of Eden, the different one woman/two men triangle of the Macomber story appears more equilateral. Or at least Hemingway may be suggesting that the situation of one strong woman

affecting two weak men can have more potential for balance than that of one passive man's life being determined by two women.

The controversy over Mrs. Macomber's true intent when she shot her husband parallels the slippery question of androgyny that is at work in the deep structure of this story. Each of the characters alternately experiences passivity and action. Mr. Macomber dies because he has at last become a man; Mrs. Macomber shoots him in an act of participating with him in his most glorious moment, standing tall before a charging, wounded buffalo (as the matador Romero of The Sun Also Rises would); Wilson sets the stage for and witnesses the others' theater because in the course of the story his feeling for Mrs. Macomber changes, even to the point of courtesy and sympathy ("That's better . . . Please is much better. Now I'll stop" [37]) at the end.

Pain, suffering, and tragedy exist in the world of these three people, probably unavoidably, just as such misfortunes punctuate the lives of the characters in The Sun Also Rises. The unresolved ending of this story re-states Hemingway's earlier dictum that it is sufficient, even admirable, to endure. The story's androgynous blurring of role boundaries suggests that adaptation can lead to a sort of passive endurance. As the primacy of difference fades (a process that also occurs through the story's shifting point of view) and

these characters awkwardly try to establish a relationship, they receive an existential consolation--their identities may be in shards, but their lives do go on.

In 1946, ten years after the appearance of the Macomber story, Hemingway started work on The Garden of Eden, work that he would never finish to his satisfaction. But the novel finally made a public appearance forty years later, considerably trimmed from its unfinished length by Scribners editor Tom Jenks. Even in this version, though, the novel exhibits Hemingway's most straightforward presentation of the two women/one man arrangement.

As with much of Hemingway's work, the story has its share of similarities to actual incidents from his life. Particularly, in the summer of 1926, as Carlos Baker writes, Ernest, his first wife, and a friend of hers who was enamored of Ernest and destined to be his second wife

> rented two rooms . . . After lunch in the garden and a long siesta, they took long bicycle rides . . . at the hotel there were three of everything: breakfast trays, bicycles, bathing suits drying on the line--and worst of all two women in love with the same man. (Life Story 171)

As The Garden of Eden begins, a young couple, David and Catherine, are living in the south of France, at a place where Ernest and Pauline had honeymooned in 1927.

The book begins with a tight focus, centering exclusively on these two people and their activities. Their days are filled with leisure in the forms of much lovemaking, eating and drinking, and enjoying the scenery. But soon there is an intimation of the trouble that lies ahead. Their first conversation of the book follows, and is about, their lovemaking.

At one point Catherine reveals, "'I'm the destructive type . . . And I'm going to destroy you . . . I'm going to wake up in the night and do something to you that you've never even heard of or imagined'" (5). Although it is said partially in fun, a dark and sexual undertone and David's complacency are established.

A short while later, Hemingway gives the reader another look at the relationship through a fishing experience David has from a nearby jetty. The scene proves to be, as is comnmon for Hemingway, symbolic of David's whole character (Wedin 66). As a gathering crowd notices the size and strength of the fish bend the rod into the water, people begin to advise and encourage him. "'Soft with him,' a waiter counsels, 'Softly. Softly.'" And Hemingway notes, "There was no way the young man could be softer with him except to get into the water with the fish and that did not make sense as the canal was deep" (8). Symbolically, David works the big fish like he "works" Catherine--softly, passively. He could only be more in harmony with her if he joined her

in her deviancy, but he senses that that way holds, for him, a loss of self.

The serious degree of the girl's disturbing drive for a sexual change is made clearer after their afternoon lovemaking that same day:

> "You love me just the way I am? . . . because I'm going to be changed."
>
> "No," he said, "No. Not changed."
>
> "I'm going to," she said. "It's for you. It's for me, too. I won't pretend it's not. But it will do something to you. I'm sure but I shouldn't say it." (12)

Later she returns from her surprise:

> Her hair was cropped short as a boy's. It was cut with no compromises . . .
>
> "You see," she said. "That's the surprise. I'm a girl. But now I'm a boy too and I can do anything and anything and anything." (14-15)

David begins calling her, "Brother." At their next liaison, she begins by asking, "'Dave, you don't mind if we've gone to the devil, do you?'" (17), and takes their lovemaking a step farther:

> He lay there and felt something and then her hand holding him and searching lower and he helped with his hands and then lay back in the dark and did not think at all and only felt the weight and the strangeness inside and she said, "Now you can't tell

> who is who, can you?"
>
> "No."
>
> "You are changing," she said. "Oh you are. You are. Yes you are and you're my girl Catherine. Will you change and be my girl and let me take you?" (17)

And so her transformation is complete, having passed from being the opposite sex to being the same sex as her partner, then altering his sex so that they are opposite again, only reversed from their natural state.

It is an ingenious fictionalization of Tiresias's original metamorphoses. After this interlude, Catherine raises the "devil" theme again: "'You don't think I'm wicked?'" (17). This is a tantalizingly open question, since she is not sure herself what she wants David to think at this point, eager to try out any and all alternatives. They end their talking on roughly even ground, but David's soliloquizing leaves the reader with no doubts that Catherine is mentally unstable: "his heart said goodbye Catherine goodbye my lovely girl goodbye and good luck and goodbye" (18).

Yet this point is reached only at the end of the (restructured) first chapter. If Hemingway did pack so much into the original first chapter and present David as being so clearly resigned to his loss of love at the end, why does so much follow (the manuscript is over one thousand pages long)? In all likelihood, this chapter of

Scribners's probably does not resemble Hemingway's first chapter. But one reason why Scribners possibly thought that it represented Hemingway's theme sufficiently must have been the elements of androgynous sex that the chapter introduces.

That the David-Catherine relationship continues, and accepts more bizarre innovations from Catherine, plays on readers' curiosity the same way the original Tiresian tale does. Symbolically, he finds out what even the gods did not know. Experimentation with changing sex roles, physically and/or mentally, suggests, at the core, a simple curiosity to know what it would be like to be that other consciousness, to see yourself as a stranger and see a stranger as he sees himself, and the willingness to bend the most basic social taboos in pursuit of that hidden, and dangerous, knowledge.

A valid argument against such experimentation would be that this type of exchange is a natural outcome of normal sex--opposites act as one, share intimacies, and separate wiser. But the "flavor of romantic impossibility" that Eliot, Fitzgerald, and Hemingway sensed around them, and from which they created literary masterpieces, explains why a more immediate kind of assurance based on experience piqued the interest of serious thinkers. Undoubtedly, this opening of sexual exploration (certainly validated by Freud's work at the time) also supported local "intellectual" acceptance of

homosexuality, as in Gertrude Stein's example, although her purpose was clearly not as universally applicable as Hemingway's.

In search of this universal mystery of experiencing one's opposite "other," or opposite sex, David is led by Catherine's machinations through the nightmare of The (Modern) Garden of Eden. Each new revelation is at first shocking to him, but then becomes less so as another soon follows. The ultimate change occurs when Catherine brings home a girl, Marita, who had been admiring them both in a bar earlier.

Hemingway precedes this change with a report of other unnatural forces at work and a description of their source. While Catherine is gone to retrieve the girl (another "surprise" she keeps from David), David makes small talk with the hotel proprietor:

> They spoke about the weather . . . the weather was insane now . . . If anyone kept track of it they would know that it had not been normal since the war . . . Not only the weather . . . everything was changed and what was not changed was changing fast. (94)

Catherine's subsequent entrance with Marita begins the rest of the Scribner version of the novel, with David's writing providing a subplot for his personal growth. Scribners ends David's and Catherine's androgynous adventure with a return to normalcy. Wholeness and

sanity return with Marita's acknowledgement--"'I'm your girl,' she said in the dark. 'Your girl. No matter what I'm always your girl. Your good girl who loves you.'" (245)--and the next day finds David once again writing clearly and powerfully.

According to Barbara Probst Solomon, "[a]fter The Garden of Eden appeared, the original Hemingway manuscripts at the Kennedy Library in Boston were made available to scholars" (31). Her ensuing research and report provide important information about this Hemingway novel that is not apparent from the commercialized Scribners edition. For example, she notes that the latter part of the manuscript is heavily autobiographical, concerned with Hemingway's "anxieties about his deteriorating physical and mental powers" (31). That, in itself, is sufficient cause to warrant attention.

But what Solomon concludes about the power of the unreleased manuscript's content versus the simplicity of the public version is most revealing:

> Hemingway was writing about immortality, not hair color [Catherine continually bleaches her hair to contrast with her dark tan]. In the very first chapter of his Eden, he makes it clear that his theme is metamorphosis, which includes androgyny . . . transformation and transcendence . . . (Obviously "Bourne," David's surname, is intended as

a pun--born and reborn, as in metamorphosis.) (32) She further notes that in the long manuscript metamorphosis matures in epic style through three levels of being, reflecting a painting of Hieronymus Bosch's, a "triptych at the Prado [visited by David and Catherine in the Scribner edition] representing the Garden of Eden, the Garden of Earthly Delights, and a musical Hell" (32).

Until Hemingway's original manuscript is presented to the public in its entirety, single details such as this triptych hint at his effort to compile in one work Tiresian themes that he had addressed throughout his career. The Scribners version, Solomon seems to suggest, only presents a Hemingway-like "iceberg" view of the total depth of the novel's themes. Perhaps it is enough to know that Hemingway did devote his last writing energies to a "final summation on art and literature, on the nature of love and the body, on the possibilities of human life" (Solomon 34). Because his final legacy exists, even in an imperfect form, his earlier works become even more deserving of praise as their role in foreshadowing Hemingway's ultimate vision becomes clearer in light of his lifelong interest in the Tiresian themes of androgyny, identity, and metamorphosis.

Throughout the body of Hemingway's work, the Tiresian characteristics he specifically used can be categorized under the following rough headings (since Jake was Hemingway's first Tiresian protagonist, his name

can be used as illustration and other Hemingway characters can be compared in whole or in part to Jake): (1) Tiresias/Jake as "modern man--the victim," whose current state of being is a result of unfortunate consequence, bad luck, some negative element of blind fate; (2) Tiresias/Jake as "new man" or priest of the modern dilemma who restores a balance (although flawed by impotence) between feelings and intellect among his acquaintances; (3) Tiresias/Jake as investigator and puzzle solver, example of "man transformed" who, having seen two sides of life, is compelled and able to resolve those opposites into some kind of workable whole; (4) Tiresias/Jake as the social misfit, torn between his own helplessness and a presentiment of some worth to life; (5) Tiresias/Jake as dispassionate narrator, commentator, and observer of life whose objectivity is the reader's window into Hemingway's ambition of telling "the way it was"; and (6) Tiresias/Jake as an androgynous solution, by way of his attitude and behavior, to the problem of how to cope with imbalance from a limited (single) perspective.

As indicated, Jake exhibits each of these Tiresian characteristics to a greater or lesser degree. The passive aspect of his nature is reproduced as the most telling attribute of the men in relationships with aggressive women in The Garden of Eden, "Cat in the Rain," "The Sea Change," and "The Short Happy Life of

Francis Macomber." Jake's role as observer, problem solver, and reporter is reflected in the guide of the Macomber story and the dying man of "The Snows of Kilimanjaro." Each of these works featured a flawed woman of direct and influential manner over her male companion. And the ultimately dissatisfying, fatalistic balance that Jake strikes with Brett is replayed in a more harmonious way in the novels To Have and Have Not and A Farewell to Arms.

This list is not meant to be complete but only indicative of the frequency with which Hemingway returned to some central themes behind Jake's character, themes that were drawn from the examples of Eliot and Fitzgerald. Hemingway undoubtedly improved on his model over time, venturing into its different facets and returning finally, in The Garden of Eden, to the central mystery of androgyny, its expression, meaning, and promise in life and art.

## CHAPTER THREE

## TIRESIAS MYTH IN HARD-BOILED FICTION

Two attributes that describe Tiresias most generally are his special knowledge and a unique license to communicate that knowledge. When Tiresias speaks, the truth of his words passes a judgement on the hearer, who either heeds the message and is successful (Moeneceus, Odysseus) or does not and meets with personal ruin (Narcissus, Oedipus). Jake Barnes' similarity to Tiresias with respect to these two attributes, a sense of authority and permission to express his judgements, helps to isolate Jake and, in the process, secure his position as a model "hard-boiled" hero.

Jake (and, to a degree, even Tiresias) embodies all the qualities of that World War I term. "Hard-boiled" was first used in reference to unsympathetic army drill sergeants, and then came to mean any person unsentimental toward others (Westlake 5). Similarly, both The Waste Land's Tiresias and Jake (and other Hemingway heroes) exhibit an intrinsic distancing from their fellow man, an alienation that, although it is generational, they express in a completely personal and solitary manner.

As a major component of their individual toughness, Jake and Tiresias' use of language (knowing and speaking truth to or about others, who heed or do not heed their words) helps to set the mold for "hard-boiled" writing in the 1920s and the few following decades. In his book The Twenties, Hoffman writes that "what was left [after WWI] was the isolated person . . . No one could tell him about death or advise him . . . He was forced into himself" (55), and "at a time when meaning was being nullified" (54). The hard-boiled cast that grew out of the aloneness of Tiresias and Jake became representative of every person's relation to the rapidly changing world, and the most useful vehicle for expressing the new reality became a style of speech that was as unpretentious, as direct, and as capable of being as widely experienced as possible.

Some critics considered Hemingway himself to be the written voice for the population: "Hemingway's prose captured the imagination of journalists, literary critics, composition teachers, and the general public. It was American, it was terse, cool, verb-oriented, Masculine" (Kaplan 23). And Hemingway's depiction of the average man reinforced the dual qualities of disengagement and a minimalist language as the most reliable means at hand for dealing with an unrecognizable present and an uncertain future: "For all Hemingway's major characters, history is the arena of defeat and the

architecture of despair, and their styles of being and articulating themselves are ways of escaping its central horror" (McConnell 207). Not only did Hemingway's colloquial dialogue and narration appeal to the writers who would develop his tradition, in many ways he helped redefine the American experience and psyche for this century:

> Hemingway's life and work, which taught a generation of men to speak in stoical accents, had a profound influence on a school of hard-boiled writers--Chandler, Hammett, Cain . . . who were affected not only by his style and technique, but also by his violent content and heroic code, which seemed to represent the essence of American values. (Meyers 570)

The hard-boiled approach to life that is reflected in the attitude and language of these writers has fictional roots in Huckleberry Finn. Because of Huck's solitary and independent position vis a vis his world, the character acted for Twain through his attitude and by his speech in a way that prefigured Tiresias and Jake in the narrative function they perform for their worlds. Huck's attention to the oddities of life around him is

> of unremitting interest. His quiet concentration upon all that surrounds him invests the commonplace world with dignity, seriousness, and an unforseen beauty that radiates through the very words he

uses. (Bridgman 9)

Huck's speaking style would have as great an impact on the writing that would follow as any innovation involving the novel's plot or characters. Twain legitimatized a colloquial style of writing that would well serve writers in the twentieth century who felt compelled to reduce their words to the barest and cleanest possible prose.

Twain's colloquial style departed from the usual prose style in a way that mirrored the simultaneous change in attitude that was taking place in the narrative. In colloquial style, the reader finds three elements: "(a) stress on the individual verbal unit, (b) a resulting fragmentation of syntax, and (c) the use of repetition to bind and unify" (Bridgman 12). Bridgman also points out that, in this style of writing, "[f]ewer details are provided, and those offered are precise and concrete. References to a cultural and historical past are stripped away, and the haze of emotive words is dispelled" (12), thus creating and reinforcing an atmosphere of starkness, of living moment to moment, of grasping for a reliable continuity from life that will reassure and provide new meaning. Again, the pace of the colloquial style supports such a reduced field of consciousness and singleness of vision. The colloquial style tends to automatically produce compound sentences, presenting events one after another in as true a

representation of a natural, objective consciousness as possible (Bridgman 32).

In his solitary philosophizing, then, Huck prefigures the narrative conceit that Eliot and Hemingway would recognize as most descriptive of and useful for the conditions they perceived around them. And, as Hemingway developed his style in Europe, the same cultural conditions he was reacting to affected a writer a world away. Dashiell Hammett, who would become linked to Hemingway because of their common use of a colloquial style, began writing and publishing in San Francisco a bit earlier than Hemingway's Three Stories and Ten Poems (1923) appeared, but the wave of popularity that would transform his work into a cultural statement grew from the popular recognition of the other man's.

As geographically separate as the two were, Hammett and Hemingway had to have been total strangers to each other at the beginnings of their careers. But similarities in tone and characterizations have elicited inevitable speculation about mutual or one-sided influence once their respective works became well known and they began to mature simultaneously. When a case is made for influence, it is usually couched in terms that refer to the common cultural milieu in which the two were working.

For example, E. Ann Kaplan notes that "the mood of disappointment with American values [that] was dominant

in the forties and is reflected in the hard-boiled fiction of writers like Dashiell Hammett . . . influenced Hemingway's literary style and attitudes" (23). The expression of such "disappointment" in the 1940s particularly took form in the film noir genre.

But other critics agree that even "in the middle 'twenties . . . a new kind of story [was] being formed, spontaneously generated by several different writers out of their common experiences of the last decade" (Westlake 7), and that Hammett and Hemingway came to be the literary voices of such "new" writing.

In the Chicago Daily News, June 18, 1966, reviewer Joseph Haas characterized Hammett and Hemingway as "two similar minds affected by comparable influences" (Blair 299n). Walter Blair, of the University of Chicago, surmises that "Resemblances [between the two] arose more probably because of similarities in temperament, in experiences, and in background [than because one's early writing influenced the other's]" (299). He suggests that these two men shared more common experience than simply being of the same generation:

> wounded by the war and unhappy in the postwar world, both were battered by disillusionment and cynicism, and both created worlds and characters justifying their attitude . . . Both men were accused from time to time of having no standards--probably because they were both contemptuous of many pre-World War I

> standards and because they both admiringly portrayed heroes who were. (300)

An air of persecution, of being an outsider or misfit, and a sense of toughness, of living and writing about the role of the hard-boiled anti-hero, combine to create an image the two writers will always share:

> Writers as disparate as Hammett and Hemingway shared the desire to start over, to communicate only what was known, felt, or seen, stripped of the "lies," the illusions or the self-deceptions of the past. Their terse, tense style (short sentences, short paragraphs, earthy simple concrete Anglo-Saxon words and an absence of abstract and judgemental adjectives) bespeaks a cautious outlook as much as anything they say. The tough noncommittal pose of their heroes tells us that they may have been hurt once, believed once, but no more--that they cannot, will not, be taken in again. Of one thing they were certain--that life was violent . . . Both responded to their times. Between the two, they produced a kind of prose that would influence another generation of writers. (Margolies 4)

Both writers were products of and had a definite affect on the literature of their time: "Both were children of the same post-war disillusionment and, through a unique chemistry of temperament and talent, were led to develop an approach to prose, character and action, that most

perfectly realized the alienated mood of the age in which they found themselves" (Dooley 41). Like Hemingway, though, even Hammett is thought to have found himself in "the alienated mood of the age" with the help of T. S. Eliot: "The Glass Key [Hammett's fourth of five novels] is better described as Hammett's The Waste Land. He had been reading Eliot at about the time he wrote the novel . . . and he has named one of the streets in his fictional city 'upper Thames Street' (cf. The Waste Land, line 260)" (Naremore 67).

But whatever indirect connections Hammett and Hemingway may have shared as they began their work, the interesting point remains that a common urge motivated both, and though it was manifested personally, it was that universal social dread of which Eliot was the harbinger. William Nolan points out that critic Edmund Wilson's recollection of the 1920s and 1930s was that society was "'ridden by an all-pervasive feeling of guilt and by a feeling of impending disaster which it seemed hopeless to try to avert.' In Wilson's view, nobody was guiltless, nobody safe" (6). It is the degree of Hammett's and Hemingway's individual responses to social ruin and the bleak outlook for the future that ultimately separates the two.

From his environment in the San Francisco of the 1910s, Hammett drew a style of toughness different from Hemingway's. Often, the Hemingway response to a corrupt

and weakening society is a romanticized return to nature played out by fishing, hunting, bullfighting, or even by writing about such adventures. But Hammett's city heroes do not have that option. His characters' response to their world set the standard for the term "hard-boiled" in readers' minds. Hammett's characters seem to move more actively beyond their problems than Hemingway's do, or at least do not indulge in romanticizing their fate:

> For Jake Barnes, integrity and a relative degree of serenity also mean impotence and despair . . . To these [Hemingway] heroes comes an inescapable realization of the tragic limitations of human life. [But] the hard-boiled story moves in just the opposite direction. When its detective-hero is hit on the head, the wound doesn't face him with death; it symbolizes his toughness and ability to survive. . . . In the end, the hard-boiled story represents an escape from the naturalistic unconsciousness of determinism and meaningless death. (Cawelti 161)

In his effort to portray honestly what he felt as a dweller in San Francisco, as an agent for the Pinkertons, and as a man in 1920s America not sure of where his livelihood would come from, Hammett unknowingly took steps beyond the honesty that Hemingway was exploring and opened the way to revealing an even uglier underside to the society's state of confusion, perhaps because his work was so uniquely American in its cultural focus and,

especially, language.

Hammett's attempt to make his writing palatable to his reader translates on the page into an adventurous, even violent, realism. At the end, there is no time, no concern, for the type of philosophical reflection Hemingway's supporters find in the best of his work. The difference between the two writers, whose writings otherwise share much in their initial development, arises from this important point of making the hero either passive and accepting or watchful but with a readiness to engage in conflict with his fate and take the consequences. Hammett chose the latter in his attempt

> to reconcile the tradition of heroic American individualism with a realistic representation of the seedy circumstances of a private detective's actual life . . . In the twentieth century, "Grace under pressure" may still ring true beneath an African sky, in a Spanish arena, or even in upstate Michigan, but it hardly fits the circumstances of a small-time operator in a sordid business in the urban wilderness. (Porter, D. 172)

This distinction between the two is important because not only does it reflect both sides of the various historical representations of Tiresias, as a watcher who either does or does not influence those fated to hear his message, but Hammett's decision to opt for action also establishes a clear link between the detective hero and an earlier

hero, the frontiersman. This connection reinforces the archetypal pattern of the loner-in-society, an "American" character that Tiresias resembles as much as the Western hero does, someone who has rejected civilization but cannot fulfill his destiny apart from it.

In his examination of the development of the American detective, William Kittredge points out that Hammett's private detective is "the analog to the classical western hero . . . he poses as a loner while subconsciously desiring entrance into the society he appears to reject" (326). Although Tiresias does not exhibit the persecution that Hemingway and Hammett imagined for their characters, his being sexually unique disallowed him from ever being considered a member of the ranks of humanity. Again, it is his knowledge that sets him apart and gives him his special power over language.

Perhaps the laconic style of speech of the Western hero came automatically with isolation. Whatever the style's appeal, Hammett adapted it to his own time and setting. Not only did the pulp writers of the late 1800s create a Western legacy that would evolve into the detective genre, but literary figures such as Cooper, Melville, and London also used the tough guy/loner hero formula to great advantage (Grebstein 18). Following in their example, Hammett relied on and used the characteristics that had become accepted for and expected of heroes of Americana. In his introduction to Nolan's

biography of Hammett, Philip Durham, a chronicler of Raymond Chandler's career, discusses the literary roots of Hammett's creation:

> [This hero] began on the frontier in the early part of the nineteenth century. [From] Washington Irving [on, he] appeared constantly in the dime novels . . . and was ready-made for such "Western" writers . . . as Owen Wister [The Virginian] and Zane Grey. By the time Hammett picked him up . . . his heroic characteristics were clearly established: courage, physical strength, indestructibility, indifference to danger and death, a knightly attitude, celibacy, a measure of violence, and a sense of justice. (Nolan xiii, iv)

Actually, this formula sounds a bit too romantic for Jake Barnes, and a bit too philanthropic for Tiresias. And Hammett himself would put some realistic dents in the "knightly" armor to make the character more identifiable. Most important, Hammett revealed the familiar environs of the modern metropolis to be not so different from the threatening, overpowering wastelands of the frontier West. He revealed everyman in his supposedly secure position in that model city of the future as being not so far removed from an isolated, confused, and seemingly unimportant figure (like his pioneer ancestor) in a runaway world of which he was not a part.

In light of this maturation factor that Hammett's work provided for the public--weaning them from the romanticism of American Western ideals--his writing carries more social relevance than simply providing a new avenue of entertainment. The depth of his quality, like the best writing of Ovid, Eliot, and Hemingway, is drawn from an archetypal, mythic level. Hammett not only confirms his readers' apprehensions about their frightening present, he undermines their presumptions about their fantasized past.

Specifically, Hammett's novels reiterate a concern and suspicion about the nature of civilization, the effect of its encroachment upon freedoms of choice and expression. Their central theme places the hard-boiled dick in conflict with the expansive philosophy behind the development of the old West. The vast space that had originally encouraged freedom has been reduced in Hammett's novels to the crowded, suffocating metropolis (Porter, J. 411-13). But the Hammett hero, in his isolated search for the values of that idyllic past, is an extension of the American spirit. Just as the earliest American settlers found themselves struggling against ostracism, brutal treatment from the elements and "savages," and working toward some kind of final redemption, the private detective replays the same three-part cycle every time he faces a new case (Margolies 15-16).

Hammett's depiction of people as victims of the huge force of centralized civilization (the big city) particularly distinguished his aim from Hemingway's. Hammett's transposed western hero struggles to survive in the city; Hemingway's hero, behind his international venue, draws philosophical conclusions from his encounters with people recovering from war and the feelings that engenders (MacDonald 110).

Examining the depiction of women is crucial to a thorough inspection and understanding of Hammett's impact. The treatment of women in detective fiction, particularly in the 1920s through 1940s, is not as stereotypical as it is, according to Gladstein's model of "the indestructible woman," in the fiction of popular writers such as Hemingway, Faulkner, and Steinbeck. The impact of woman's role in detective fiction reaches its fruition in _film noir_ in the personae of _femme fatales_.

Somewhere short of these extremes lies the area of detective fiction females, a troubled, uncertain, and dangerous area that is an outgrowth of both frontier idealism and a modern resentment of that idealism. This tugging sometimes leaves women as undeveloped characters, necessary but serving an indistinct purpose. Again, the influence of the frontier stereotype seems to be related to the detective's lack of romantic attachments. Western women, like many female characters in hard-boiled fiction, were identified by their social usefulness; that

their company could be personally rewarding was left open for speculation. Or worse, hard-boiled fiction identified women as part of man's problem. In the detective fiction of the 1920s, violent acts toward women were common fare (Margolies 6). Often the best compliment a woman receives in the genre is that her ability is equal to that of a man, and she helps him adhere to his code: "One of the measures of the tough guy's toughness is his ability to cope with women as handiliy as he copes with men" (Margolies 6).

The word "handily" indicates the attitude that women are not worthy of the male's consideration as equals. It also highlights the importance of style in the detective's dealings with the world. The only thing of substance he can be sure of is himself; everything and everyone else are suspected of intending to either harm or fool him. Lacking a substantial dimension of development, the female is relegated to the role of a symbol, often an androgynous role or characterization (Telotte 10), and nearly always associated with betrayal and threat to the detective's physical and mental health (Cawelti 147, 154).

In a larger sense, the pernicious female is an embodiment of all the vague horrors of the large city. Unlike the typical romanticism behind the female role in nineteenth-century folklore, now "the figure whose honor is at stake in the hard-boiled story is not some

palpitating female but the detective himself, and the character who threatens that honor by distracting the detective's attention from the quest for justice . . . is the woman" (Cawelti 156). This shift in perspective on women probably owes some debt to the rise of Freud's work at the time. Certainly, Freud's influence seems to have been even stronger when some of the private detective novels were later adapted as films noir.

In detective fiction, a Tiresian undercurrent of searching out and discovering secrets and dark truths seems to encourage male-female encounters that are seamy and suspicious, like that between the typist and her "young man carbuncular" whom Tiresias watches. This dark and depressing mood that inhibits any hope of romantic love results from such twentieth-century writers as Hammett's and Chandler's turning the puzzle game of detection away from drawing-room speculations about the criminal mind (as in Poe and Conan Doyle) and examining instead the "normal" mind and its problems. Definitions and causes of crime then become a much more uncomfortable subject, threatening the exposure of innate human doubts and fears.

The classical Tiresian question of how completely one entity or one sex can know another lurks just under this surface; instead of looking for more knowledge (clues), the tack of the true hard-boiled novel is to retreat from contact with the world because its material

nature cannot be understood or mastered in the twentieth century. An untainted truth, artificially removed from the shadiness and untrustworthiness of the world (as the detective perceives it) is the goal. This Tiresian truth does not result from victory over one's opposite, but is the result of surmounting opposition. It is a truth that somehow supercedes both subjectivity and objectivity because it uses both to create a balanced, androgynous perspective.

An example of how the male-female relationship is used as a step toward this kind of detached truth is played out in an encounter from a Hammett short story in which the detective sets the story's female straight by pointing out, "'You think I'm a man and you're a woman. That's wrong. I'm a manhunter and you're something that has been running in front of me!'" (Porter, D. 187). The woman here is on the "wrong side" of the law, so the tone is justified, yet the remark suggests a definite imbalance, maybe even a perversion, of sexual energy. The action of detecting a sensitive secret has become sexual, and perverts normal male-female contact. For the hero of this story, "the excitement of the manhunt [is] a superior alternative to sex" (Porter, D. 188).

If the aim and the appeal of Hammett's 1920s detective fiction speak to some deep, unfulfilled desire to tackle a mystery or a problem, capture it and examine it objectively at arm's length, and then to know, without

a doubt, the difference between its nature and the searcher's nature, then the genre's wide popularity reveals a little more about the dark underside of the psychological effects of World War I. The wide popularity of this genre of fiction affected cultural perceptions and standards for the next few decades.

The population's general acceptance of the new, hard-boiled perspectives indicates that Eliot's early choice of Tiresias as narrator for the age's problems tapped into a wellspring of unconscious need. Indirectly, the development of that character through different writers' permutations evolved into a figure, the private detective, who embodied the public's psychological starvation for meaning and its cultural embattlements with different governmental philosophies (Marxism) and even its own government's aberrent Prohibition laws.

Any discussion of the after-effects of the war in America cannot overlook the tremendous upheaval introduced a bare four months after the war by the passage of the Prohibition Amendment. As Westlake points out, the amendment indirectly introduced the "dick" of the newly-coined and eventually-cliched phrase "hard-boiled dick." The phrase combines the war adjective with a French-Canadian shortening of "detective," Canadian because many bootleggers soon moved their business north of the border (Westlake 5-6). So

the phrase "hard-boiled dick" gives the private detective twin roots in the event that wiped away a generation's security and in the decision that turned the average man into a lawbreaker overnight. In such a social milieu, the genre's preoccupation with darkness, secrets, distrust, and the truth, all amid physical and emotional turmoil and violence, is not surprising. The fact that Hammett left a legacy of only five novels, but countless offspring in fiction and film, even sixty years later, attests to his uncovering and tapping into an important part of the twentieth-century American mind and experience.

The hero/reader, through an act of narrative self-consciousness and imitating the Tiresian detachment of the Waste Land speaker, reaches that hidden and untapped consciousness as he turns inward to evaluate his own mysteries, in his own language and by his own standards. From the experience of his Pinkerton job, Hammett, like Hemingway, developed the journalistic skills that would lead him to his writing style (Nolan, Life 33), a style that "attack[ed] bourgeois values from below rather than from above" (Naremore 53). That style struck a familiar chord because his audience was no longer bourgeois itself: "[Hammett] wrote . . . for people with a sharp, aggressive attitude to life. They were not afraid of the seamy side of things; they lived there. Violence did not dismay them; it was right down

their street" (Chandler 234). And he definitely spoke their language: "[the new detective hero] talks as the man of his age talks, that is, with rude wit, a lively sense of the grotesque, a disgust for sham, and a contempt for pettiness" (Chandler 237).

As Hammett's successor Raymond Chandler indicates by these remarks, Hammett's conception of character added greatly to the unique appeal of his fiction. Part of the attraction must have stemmed from the character's open self-consciousness and independence. Hammett's heroes each hold to their own personal code of ethics. It may wander on either side of the law occasionally, but its strength is that it is personal, hard-fought, and the product of an uncommon self-discipline (Haycraft 171-2). There is also an unabashed acceptance and respect for the work ethic that further helped bring the world of Hammett's detective closer to the reader's own.

Given that "the core of Hammett's art is his version of the masculine figure in American society" (Bazelon 183), what the average man is faced with in his daily trials, basically, coping with and advancing in his job, becomes primary to Hammett's fiction (Bazelon 181). Similar to the celebrated Hemingway ethic of being devoted to the improvement of one's craft, a Hammett character's competence on the case has more value than whether he follows a stern moral code or not (Bazelon 183). This new standard dictates the hero's independent

approach to what he sees as unconventional situations, and in the end how clever he is carries more importance than his strength or invulnerability (Bazelon 189). Knowing when a certain amount of pain is to be expected and that the pain may not matter much in the long run characterizes both the hard-boiled dick and the general social state of affairs in which most readers found themselves.

That ability to shift directions given the conditions of the moment keeps the detective poised between commitments, straddling, again, in Tiresian fashion, a narrow boundary between the freedom of yielding to anti-social behavior in himself or the constriction of following standards imposed from outside himself. His inability to totally adhere to either of these extremes heightens his isolation. Everyone else appears to be on one side or the other from his position, creating a vague, neutral area in which the detective operates and strengthening the underlying ambiguity of the writing. In the 1920s' world of indeterminate values, holding on to his ambiguity becomes a matter of survival for the detective.

Sam Spade's ambiguity in Hammett's The Maltese Falcon is established in his opening description. As the first paragraph of the novel details Spade's features, it concludes with the oxymoronic observation, "He looked rather pleasantly like a blond satan" (Novels 295). His

secretary also exhibits a dichotomy of appearance through her slightly androgynous description: "She was a lanky sunburned girl . . . [with brown eyes] playful in a shiny boyish face" (295). If nothing else, these introductions at least set the tone and suggest to the reader that the main characters are complex, capable of speaking or acting differently than surface impressions would at first indicate. The ambiguity, the lack of straightforward (and traditional) certainty in Hammett's descriptions, may be unsettling but also signals that these characters react immediately to whatever type of situation presents itself.

This kind of quick reflex action is basic for Hammett, for whom the world had completely lost its claim to purpose and order after the chaos of the war (Phelps 942). His efforts to probe that sad state compelled him to include a metaphysical sub-theme in The Maltese Falcon concerning human endeavor and ability:

> Despite everything we have learned and . . . know, men will persist in behaving . . . sanely, rationally, sensibly, and responsibly . . . even when we know that there is no logical . . . reason for doing so. It is this sense of sustained contradiction that is close to the center--or to one of the centers--of Hammett's work. The contradiction is not ethical alone; it is metaphysical as well . . . For Hammett and [Sam]

> Spade and the Op, the sustainment in consciousness of such contradictions is an indispensible part of their existence and of their pleasure in that existence. (Marcus xviii)

The balancing of contradictions manifests itself in a belief system that lies behind Hammett's writing. Basically, that belief is that the past no longer can provide a realistic promise for the reality of the present (Cawelti 173). The devastation World War I wrought on both physical and emotional levels also acted as a release for twentieth-century man. Wounded as he was like Tiresias, with his whole concept of self swept away from him, he also had received a Tiresian license to re-create his own existence, to re-assign meaning to his life. This existential view mirrors that of Hemingway and Eliot, yet Hammett's hero, particularly as portrayed by Sam Spade in The Maltese Falcon, is neither an existentialist nor a fatalist. Spade perceives his detective work as what he must do to make sense of his world, which means doing better than breaking even with an impersonal universe. Spade survives by staying ahead of the game, which he does because of his special knowledge and insight:

> He is, and he regards himself as, "the hired man" of official and respectable society . . . Yet what he--and the reader--just as perpetually learn is that the respectable society that employs him is

> itself inveterably vicious, deceitful, culpable, crooked, and degraded. (Marcus xxv)

The darker side of society is embodied in The Maltese Falconthrough the police detectives Spade interacts with and the District Attorney's office. At one point, Spade is called into the D. A.'s office for some routine questioning that borders on accusations. His parting speech to the D. A. gives Hammett an opportunity to showcase both Spade's dedication to his own work ethics and his distrust of the questionable tactics of the city government:

> "'Maybe I can be made to talk to a Grand Jury or even a Coroner's Jury, but I haven't been called before either yet, and it's a cinch I'm not going to advertise my client's business until I have to. Then again, you and the police have both accused me of being mixed up in the other night's murders. I've had trouble with both of you before . . . my only chance of ever catching [the murderers] and tying them up and bringing them in is by keeping away from you and the police, because neither of you shows any signs of knowing what in hell it's all about . . . And I don't want any more of these informal talks. I've got nothing to tell you or the police and I'm God-damned tired of being called things by every crackpot on the city payroll.'" (394)

Spade automatically distances himself from the

ways of the forces of the law because "his entire existence is bound up in and expressed by his work, his vocation . . . it is an end in itself and is therefore something more than work alone . . . Being a detective is the realization of an identity" (Marcus xxv-xxvi). Like Tiresias and Jake Barnes, his modus operandi in life is to construct and actualize, through advising others, a para-social identity.

His job, which determines his attitude toward himself, keeps the detective free from the taint of mystery that has infected the world around him. His hard-boiled "shell" is the distance and objectivity his job affords him, even though his tough veneer interferes with his romantic contacts with women:

> Spade always chooses to be faithful to his job--because this means being faithful to his own individuality, his masculine self. The point of the character is clear: to be manly is to love and distrust a woman at the same time. To one woman, Spade says, "You're so beautiful you make me sick!" (Bazelon 186)

Remarks such as this illustrate even more plainly than Spade's bravado with the District Attorney how the hard-boiled stance incorporates isolation, sexism, a barely subdued brutality, and even a sense of fear should forces from without attempt to cross those psychological borders. The gamble of assuming the hard-boiled stance,

whether by Eliot, a Hemingway hero, or the private detective, is risking that his internal vulnerability of not knowing, of non-identity, will be unmasked amid his external, objective examination of his world and his apparent non-participation in it.

In detective fiction, there is something genuine to "discover," and that job can only be done from outside the accepted norm. But the surface mystery and search are popular fictional substitutes for the genuine Tiresian pursuit and create a cover behind which the deeper, unconscious, trail can be undertaken.

Most critics agree that The Maltese Falcon, Hammett's third novel, best reflects the major themes of his development of the hard-boiled dick. But these themes puncture more than propagate the traditional hard-boiled ethos. In one sense, the novel's overall pattern reproduces the familiar Jake Barnes scenario: "The story is one of losses, among which the greatest are Spade's own, and what is significant about Spade's code is not that he follows it but that it is insufficient" (Ruehlmann 73). The sense of ultimate lack with which Spade and the reader are finally left is a glimpse of the vulnerability behind the hard-boiled stance.

The story entails a search for the object of the title, a statuette encrusted with priceless jewels. Seemingly, both evil people and virtuous people are following its trail. One of the latter, Brigid

O'Shaughnessy, is the client who approaches Spade and becomes a love-interest for him. When the final secrets are revealed, though, both Brigid and the falcon are seen as counterfeit. Brigid, in fact, murdered Spade's partner, for which Spade must turn her over to the police.

As in Jake Barnes's case, there is something unlikely about Spade actually being able to settle into a romantic long-term relationship. Each man, in the end, finds that he pursues a woman he cannot have, due to some personal fault. For Jake, not only does his wound separate him from Brett, but her independence and romanticism (her "pretty" fantasies) keep them apart as well. For Sam Spade, his job (his suspicious approach to life) has kept him single, but his attraction to Brigid shows that his taste in women leans toward the dangerous. As with Jake, Sam would have to throw over his deepest convictions about himself and his life in order to continue with the woman of his choice. The two men are archetypes of the failure of romantic love in early twentieth-century American fiction.

The Maltese Falcon is Sam Spade's story, as Ruehlmann indicates, but it is how he comes by and endures his losses that solidifies his character in the Tiresias-Jake line of the hard-boiled anti-hero who so set the stage for others to follow. Like Tiresias, the hard-boiled detective is characterized as "a congenital onlooker, a professional voyeur" (Maine 107) and even as

"an almost archetypal searcher [who] . . . follows certain clues . . . toward a truth or into the underworld--in fact, the two seem nearly identical in most detective narratives--which ultimately defines his purpose" (Telotte 4). That purpose, like Elioit's/Tiresias's, is to reconstruct the pieces of a puzzle into a comprehensive whole, delineating what is important, discarding the irrelevant (Resnicow 186). He accomplishes this by maintaining a stance that is removed from the embroilment of opposites, by positioning himself above the ambiguities that surround him. He "encounter[s] ambiguity in its fullness rather than wresting an intelligibility from the world" (Telotte 15, n3). The issue of ambiguity, suggested in Tiresias' tales and developed a bit more strongly in Hemingway, becomes a maelstrom in Hammett, battering his hero from all sides:

> [The hard-boiled detective] becomes emotionally involved in a complex process of changing implications. Everything changes its meaning: the initial mission turns out to be a smoke screen for another, more devious plot; the supposed victim turns out to be a villain; the lover ends up as the murderess and the faithful friend as a rotten betrayer; the police and the district attorney and often even the client keep trying to halt the investigation; and all the seemingly respectable and

> successful people turn out to be members of the gang. (Cawelti 146)

From his detached perspective, though, the detective "succeeds precisely because he is able to see both the significance of the most trivial details and . . . allow his mind to wander past the boundaries of natural thought . . . he is able to adopt the perspective of others and thus use their subjective experience" (Hutter 199).

One scene from The Maltese Falcon that illustrates Spade's balancing between his thoughts and others', between what appears real and what may be only appearance, and between the sides of knowing and not knowing (although those sides become reversed) occurs in Spade's apartment. He has asked two of the searchers for the falcon, Brigid and Joel Cairo, to join in a brainstorming session. Soon a lieutenant and a detective-sergeant ring the doorbell. Spade delays them at the door, but sounds of a scuffle and a cry bring them inside.

During the confrontation that follows, Spade maneuvers his first two visitors into making explanations to the police, explanations he knows are lies but that he hopes may reveal information they hadn't told him before. When their stories wear thin, their arrest seems imminent, and real details that Spade wants kept hidden from the police seem on the verge of coming out, he takes over and concocts another tale that clears the two and

suggests that a game is being played on the police. After all, the two detectives are harrassing Spade, though gently, at his residence, and he uses his protection of whatever secrets Cairo and Brigid have not told him to release his hostility toward the police.

What is curious is that Spade plays a referee, of sorts, between the two camps. By his passive stance, Spade informs the reader through a series of contradictions: Brigid and Cairo, who should be arrested, are not; the two police who profess to know the "story," do not, and the other two, who actually know, only make up stories; and Spade, who appears to be adept at only creating false situations himself (he outsmarts the lieutenant by angering him and taking a punch on the chin), orchestrates the scene so that it ends exactly how and when he wants it to end.

With his detached style of control over characters and events in his own world/apartment, Spade operates, Tiresias-like, simultaneously from two opposite ways of seeing, subjectively and objectively. And, although it is not primarily a self-definition he is seeking, the detective's main work is still to uncover and clarify <u>identity</u> (of Brigid, of Cairo, of the falcon), and this process moves his activity from that of nineteenth-century "classical ratiocination to [a twentieth-century] self-protection against the various threats, temptations, and betrayals posed by the criminal

[force of evil]" (Cawelti 148). The necessity of the scene is not only to present Spade's ability to come by information subtly and indirectly, but also to point out how equally corrupt all around him are, whether they say they trust him but are suspicious (the police), want his help but not his interference (Cairo), or even say they love him after killing his partner (Brigid).

The violence in the Hammett novels, which would establish a standard for the genre and for film noir, is more direct, even vicious, than anything in Hemingway, as it reflects a more gritty and dangerous world. So the detective has to rise (or lower himself) to the challenges, becoming, stereotypically, a "tough guy" who is "interested in a very rough kind of immediate justice having to do with this particular case at this particular moment because there are no reliable long-term social truths or social contracts" (Westlake 6). Such "long-term truths" as scientific standards and social standards were being challenged and changed in both the real and fictional worlds in the 1920s.

For example, not only was Freud making his impact on long-held perceptions, but Einstein was becoming a public figure with his ideas, as well. As the fabric of knowledge seemed to shift and change, the detective's world became an accurate mirror for what many people saw and felt in a non-fiction world that was "dangerously open and dynamic . . . charged with fear and change . . .

a world within whose unhappy boundaries infallibility and total success [were] so implausible as to be ridiculous" (Paterson 8). Naturally, this setting reinforces the detective's solitary duty. Forced to exist "on the outside looking in . . . his nemesis is emotional involvement" (Maine 108). And thrown into such isolation, the private eye "offered a unique perspective on loneliness as a central condition of modern urban existence" (Schickel 159). As an apostle of that loneliness, he "is an exile. He speaks for men who have lost faith in the values of their society" (Paterson 8).

Sam Spade's struggles with faith are of both a personal and a metaphysical nature. He faces the double failure of people and dreams. The Maltese Falcon, beyond being entertaining at the level of a good traditional murder mystery, forces the reader to confront on a deeper level the validity of his own beliefs and trusts. The novel places the sense and adventure of mystery at the core of the human experience. Fittingly, the solution of the Maltese Falcon mystery eludes both the detective and the reader. Instead of solutions, there is ambiguity. Every relationship in the novel hinges on how little the two people can trust each other. Conflicting stories are fabricated so quickly that the truth is almost impossible to discern (Nevins 88, 176-7).

By challenging the detective's (and the reader's) ability to truly know what is fact and what is not, the

novel becomes an existential statement about the natural chaos of life and the individual's need to rely only upon himself to create order (Pattow 171). But any individual's idea of order need not extend to anyone else's. Even Spade's love for Brigid cannot build a believable bridge of trust between them:

> The [trust] issue especially plagues the painful relationship of Spade and Brigid. When he kisses her, it is with his eyes open. And when, in the last moments of the story, he is listing the reasons why he cannot let her go, the fifth one he gives her is that "I've no reason in God's world to think I can trust you and if I did this and got away with it you'd have something on me that you could use whenever you happened to want to." (Dooley 106)

As a reflection of the inability to know where to place one's trust, the statue of the falcon at the end of the novel is a haunting reminder of unattained and misdirected dreams: "The worthless falcon may symbolize a lost tradition, the great cultures of the Mediterranean past which have become inaccessible to Spade and his generation. Perhaps the bird stands for the Holy Ghost itself, or for its absence" (MacDonald 117). MacDonald's words suggest Eliot's and Pound's same fascination with being able to reconnect with the great cultures of the past, the dire necessity of that effort, and yet the unlikelihood of a lost generation arousing the energy

needed to accomplish it.

Whether perceived abstractly or not, the closing scene of this novel leaves Spade, like Jake Barnes, "thinly disguis[ing] his own disappointment, his shattered dream of Brigid O'Shaughnessy and the love she seemed to offer" (Telotte 4). Hammett is not specific about Spade's reactions to the case when the detective sees his secretary in the office the following Monday morning at the end of the novel. Obviously he has thought through the whole affair, indoors and alone, over the weekend: "His face was pasty in color, but its lines were strong and cheerful and his eyes, though still somewhat red-veined, were clear" (Novels 440). He no longer is emotionally attached to the case, but his secretary, the most sympathetic woman he knows, is repelled by the way he treated Brigid. He explains that Brigid did kill his partner, their friend, cold-bloodedly, but when he puts his arm around her waist she rejects his closeness:

> She escaped from his arm as if it had hurt her. "Don't, please, don't touch me," she said brokenly. "I know--I know you're right. You're right. But don't touch me now--not now."
>
> Spade's face became pale as his collar. (Novels 440)

The loss of his secretary's close friendship is Spade's final disappointment. He can have neither the exciting

but dangerous Brigid nor his safe and warm secretary, and his continued lukewarm isolation between those two is the last image Hammett gives us. Spade's murdered partner's wife, whom Spade romanced but then tried to stop seeing, appears at the outer office (no doubt because she has discerned from the papers that the Sam-Brigid liaison did not work out, so she is eager to put herself back in Sam's picture). Spade, hurting from his secretary's rebuff, recognizes this appearance as an omen of his fate and, "looking down at his desk, nodded almost imperceptibly. 'Yes,' he said, and shivered. 'Well, send her in'" (Novels 440). Of all his losses, losing the chance to find love hits Spade the hardest. It is the loss that he does not bounce back from, the loss that defines him, and the mystery that keeps on eluding him.

After Hammett's Sam Spade, the private detective in fiction took his next evolutionary step in the hands of Raymond Chandler, following Hammett's work by about ten years. Writing from the Los Angeles area in the 1930s and 1940s, Chandler had a strong sense of the corruption, greed, falsehood, and manipulation behind the explosive growth of the area, especially the Hollywood empire, and "in his fashion . . . declared Southern California to be as much a spiritual wasteland as Eliot's London" (Margolies 45). Chandler began writing when he was in his forties, and there are in his work thematic connections with other literature of the time, such as

"Fitzgerald's tone of disenchantment and cynicism, Nathaniel West's exaggerated humor and rueful tenderness, Hemingway's melacholy and brooding, and Faulkner's decadence and stubborn endurance" (Beekman 168). Chandler and Hemingway also shared a common Midwestern background that may have contributed a number of similarities between the two: "Of these two Illinois-born writers even some of their shortcomings match: sentimentality, a certain woodenness in romantic confrontations, plus an over-reliance on death and violence and manly adventure" (Andem 95).

Perhaps Chandler's strongest link to Hemingway is the everyday common style of speaking he incorporates into his work. His writing first appeared in one of the dime pulp magazines called Black Mask, which also printed Hammett's stories and developed a reputation for the hard-boiled style, for a "strong colloquial vein [that] reaffirms the fact that the Black Mask revolution was a revolution in language as well as subject matter" (MacDonald 118). As is the case with Hammett's writing, though, the colloquial style contributes to a content that is more personal and more violent than that of earlier detective writing.

Chandler dedicated an early collection of his stories to his Black Mask editor and addressed the focus for which writers on that magazine strove: "'In memory of the time when we were trying to get murder away from

the upper classes, the week-end house party and the vicar's rose garden, and back to the people who are really good at it'" (MacDonald 116). His tongue-in-cheek approach to their subject belies a seriousness on Chandler's part, a man who was obsessed with his writing, working long continuous hours on stories, and who would eventually succumb to despair and burn-out in his later years when he sold his services as a quick hand on Hollywood screenplays.

And Chandler's initial mark on the genre was also a serious attempt to redefine the character of the private detective as Hammett had created it:

> Chandler was unable to accept Hammett's bleak pessimism. He saw the corruption and violence of the modern city, not as an inescapable human condition, but as the result of American materialism and greed. He sought a hero who could encounter this pervasive corruption, protect the innocent, and maintain his honor. (Cawelti 176)

This hero became Philip Marlowe, a hard-boiled dick who "would prove to be a character of more depth than any Hammett ever created" (Schickel 160) because the reader is allowed to see a slightly more personal, and so more vulnerable, character tackling the same ugly world that Sam Spade faced. Like Spade, though, Marlowe "is quite subtle and ambiguous. In this character there is a fierce grief which has little opportunity to be

assuaged--a grief for a loss . . . a bitter frustration about the fact that things are as they are though they shouldn't be that way" (Beekman 167).

In the introduction to his collection, Trouble Is My Business, Chandler depicts Marlowe's world as not unlike Eliot's London or Hemingway's Europe of two decades before, a place "gone wrong, a world in which, long before the atom bomb, civilization had created the machinery for its own destruction and was learning to use it with all the moronic delight of a gangster trying out his first machine gun . . . The streets were dark with something more than night" (Beekman 152). As his first and most well-known adventure The Big Sleep opens, Marlowe finds himself immediately moving in such an atmosphere of impending trouble. Unlike Hammett's narrative style in The Maltese Falcon, opening as it does with the mystery coming into Spade's world, his office, Chandler's opening reverses the process and, through Marlowe's first-person narrative, projects his hero into the world and his mystery.

And so it is appropriate that The Big Sleep opens with an assessment of the environmental (weather) conditions of Marlowe's immediate world as he sees it: "It was about eleven o'clock in the morning, mid-October, with the sun not shining and a look of hard wet rain in the clearness of the foothills" (Sleep 1). The threatening mood extends to the features of the mansion

he has been called to by his client, General Sternwood. An air of decadence lingers behind Chandler/Marlowe's making notice of the house's "decorative trees trimmed as carefully as poodle dogs . . . a large green house [sic] with a domed roof . . . a free staircase, tile-paved . . . [l]arge hard chairs with rounded red plush seats [that] . . . didn't look as if anybody had ever sat in them" and the obligatory "big empty fireplace with a brass screen in four hinged panels, and . . . a marble mantel with cupids at the corners" (2). From this mausoleum of sorts the butler leads him to the greenhouse, where he finds an even more oppressive atmosphere: "The air was thick, wet, steamy and larded with the cloying smell of tropical orchids in bloom" (5). The overpowering air and plants are kept by the General who (he himself suggests), is a man without blood in his veins (6). The orchids even grotesquely resemble their owner, "with nasty meaty leaves and stalks like the newly washed fingers of dead men" (5).

The scene is strongly reminiscent of the opening setting of The Waste Land's second section, "A Game of Chess." Eliot describes a lonely woman waiting for her companion/lover to take initiative in their relationship. The details of her room and the aura of decadence they present are almost identical to what confronts Marlowe in the Sternwood mansion. Traversi notes that the mood is "of boredom and vacancy, mainly

related to sexual desire" (31):

> The Chair she sat in, like a burnished throne,
> Glowed on the marble, where the glass
> Held up by standards wrought with fruited vines
> From which a golden Cupidon peeped out
> (Another hid his eyes behind his wing) . . .
> In vials of ivory and coloured glass
> Unstoppered, lurked her strange sythetic perfumes,
> Unguent, powdered, or liquid--troubled, confused
> And drowned the sense in odours . . . (Eliot 39-40)

And there is a mural on display in Eliot's scene, too:

> Above the antique mantel was displayed
> As though a window gave upon the sylvan scene
> The change of Philomel, by the barbarous king
> So rudely forced . . . (40)

Whereas in Marlowe's case, the scene is of a knight attempting to be heroic, the Waste Land image presents a picture of "what life has become in a world where 'desire,' or lust, operates with no relation to any saving concept of love or personal relationship" (Traversi 31). Marlowe does not suspect, as he takes in the excess of the Sternwood mansion, that his own world will soon be reduced to fit this description. Chandler, as much as Eliot, "contrives to convey beneath the surface of rich sensual variety an impression of artificiality and sterile pointlessness" (Traversi 32), and in regard to those themes, The Big Sleep creates

a duplicate, Los Angeles Waste Land, even in the sense of narcosis implied in its title.

The rich but objective description of Chandler's introduction characterizes Marlowe as a man who, like Tiresias, moves among decadence and disease but who is not affected by either. Throughout the book, these images, "cumulatively, become metaphoric substitutions, suggesting the opacity, pervasiveness, and intractibility" that Marlowe will find all around him, as in this early greenhouse scene (Fontana 180). The natural decadence of the images does carry the same sense of cultural claustrophobia that Hemingway portrays in the night life Jake Barnes cannot become a part of at the beginning of The Sun Also Rises or the social insights implied in Tiresias's viewing of the typist and her "lover" in The Waste Land.

The problems of Marlowe's clients, the Sternwood family, particularly in their sexual nature, reflect the same larger social malaise of the time. The family head is a barely alive, wheelchair-bound, former General, whose oil wells, like his past military glories in the Mexican War and his influence over his society and his family, have all but a few long since dried up. The General's two daughters, his only family, have reputations for deceit and ruthlessness. The younger, Carmen, appears to suffer from nymphomania and epilepsy. These hidden, socially embarrassing problems are further

exacerbated by "the decadent pleasures of pornography, drugs, and gambling [that the daughters contact outside their mansion, and] which, in turn, generate the collective entropy that envelops the world of the novel" (Fontana 183).

Chandler's presentation of sources and evidence of that entropy in twentieth-century Los Angeles includes not only Carmen's medical problems, but also her drug use, her father's paralysis, a few characters' homosexuality, and one case of alcoholism (although Marlowe does his share of leaning on liquor in the novel, too) (Fontana 182). All of these problems are portrayed as being directly derivative from the back-sliding and corruption that has occurred over the years due to "[t]he penalty of growth" (Sleep 67). Chief among the problems in importance from a critical perspective is Chandler's relatively new, open handling of homosexuality both overtly and symbolically. He never treats homosexuality with approval. Marlowe does not hide his disgust for "fags," and the ones he encounters end up being targets of violence.

A key scene occurs when Marlowe struggles with a young killer, the homosexual partner of another murder victim earlier in the novel:

> He . . . got his feet under him enough to use his hands on me where it hurt. I twisted him around and heaved him a little higher. I . . . turned my right

> hipbone into him and for a moment it was a balance of weights. We seemed to hang there in the misty moonlight, two grotesque creatures whose feet scraped on the road and whose breath panted with effort. (93)

Not unlike the two mating snakes that Tiresias separated, Marlowe and his enemy also become a merging of opposites, crime and justice, perversion and normality, in an outward expression of Marlowe's inner struggles.

If a psychological approach to hard-boiled fiction has merit, then the problems/evils that Marlowe contends with and overcomes are extensions of the same evils within himself (and possibly the reader). The unique description of this fight, as the two men become one in their struggle, suggests that Marlowe may indeed be struggling, symbolically, with homosexual worries of his own.

Fontana develops this reasoning as he assesses the knighthood analogy throughout the story, comparing the three pairs of Geiger and Lundgren (homosexual partners), a gangster boss (Mars) and his hired gun (Canino), and Marlowe and General Sternwood to the model of a "chivalric [knight's] loyalty [to] . . . a vital and authentic lord" (184). This relationship Fontana sees as an "unarticulated, repressed homoerotic fantasy" (184), one that Marlowe discovers throughout this adventure to be "no longer relevant to the exigencies of personal

survival in a world in which knighthood has been appropriated and abased by 'fags' . . . and hoods" (185).

As central as this concept is to an understanding of Marlowe's sense of identity and purpose, once again, sexual identity or a struggle with sexual confusion act as a strong focal point in the Tiresias myth. Even though its surface characteristics have been redesigned in the hard-boiled genre, its keynote feature does not change: the protagonist, often a first-person narrator, receives sobering revelations about his own and others' sexual behavior, and that information increases the difference he feels between himself and "ordinary" people. But a code and rules come with his new "sight," and he accepts his thankless work because it is all that he has faith in.

Chandler's groundbreaking treatment of the subject of homosexuality did not hinder him from presenting an equally tough treatment of male-female relationships--The Big Sleep follows The Maltese Falcon and The Sun Also Rises in not presenting any successful romantic (heterosexual) couples--but his exposure of the homosexual theme in particular led the way for "the first wave of writers [after Hammett, whose] belief in social disconnectedness, of general untrustworthiness relieved by isolated examples of comradeship . . . become both more mysterious and more poignant when given a homosexual coloring" (Westlake 4). This hard-boiled feature of

taking an open look at sexual perversion, harkening directly back to the Tiresian perspective, is also evident in Chandler's contributions to screenplays (The Blue Dahlia, Strangers On A Train), and became, in time, a cliched problem of film noir characters.

One other noticeable feature of The Big Sleep, which is also reflected in its film noir adaptation, is that the narrative includes so many layers of mystery and shady interrelations between characters that exactly what solution Marlowe is after and whether he finally reaches it are sometimes difficult points to assess. Even today, the novel is characterized as "a story thoroughly lacking in satisfying explanations for why things happened as they did. But that is not necessarily a criticism of Chandler's plotting; it is perhaps instead an articulation of his basic point" (Speir 32).

The issue of clarity actually revolves only around the unanswered questions: who killed the Sternwood's chauffeur and why? These missing details, the fast pace of the novel, and the intricate and somewhat deflating nature of the novel's resolution combine to create perhaps a sense of dissatisfaction in the reader. But that feeling would only echo the narrator's. The Big Sleep neither uncovers and dispatches a villain nor completely dispels the sickness that started the mess Marlowe unravels. For Chandler's new version of the private detective, such feats are beyond his powers. As

Fontana notes, "[i]n this subversion of romance, the knight's only unequivocal victory is textual" (185). That is, The Big Sleepcan best be appreciated as a narrative record that is a chronicle of a confusing time relayed through the perception of a battered and limited consciousness.

Marlowe's narrative, like those of Jake Barnes and Tiresias, attempts to fit pieces from different puzzles into a coherent picture that explains the seemingly degenerating state of man. As Chandler's prophet of post-Depression America, Marlowe, more than Sam Spade, resembles the average reader in his questioning of the state of society, his discomfort with the apparent blurring of values, and his limited ability to achieve any consummate victories from his struggles. The reader's acceptance of and attraction to Marlowe center on two Tiresian characteristics, his "language of authority . . . the language of an acute, informed observer" (Stowe 379) and his "appealing voice. Part of that appeal, no doubt, [lies] in his audience's identification with his tough, unswerving idealism . . . in that sense . . . he is . . . a commentary on his age" (Speir 116). His activity as a private detective is of secondary importance compared to the type of character he portrays for the reader and the style with which he approaches his problems. Through Marlowe, Chandler opened his readers to an honest and often blunt study of

the same problems of human nature that they faced at the time.

Chandler's example of facing society's ills head-on and exploring the individual's responsibility for causing or perpetuating them was paralleled by James M. Cain, who took a different tack than the private detective novel, but yet who is known primarily as a hard-boiled writer, and especially as one who practically set the standard for the necessary ingredients of film noir. Cain came upon the writing scene in 1927 and proceeded to move in a direction similar to that of the other hard-boiled stylists, but on a path that was completely his own:

> Unlike two other influential innovators, Hammett and Chandler, Cain was little interested in writing detective fiction or in creating a character whose "toughness" is measured by the way he controls his emotions, preferring instead a protagonist whose emotions might lead him to crime. Cain's fiction is more psychological in tone than either Hammett's or Chandler's. (Porfirio 105)

Cain's strongest point is his beginning point, his characters. They not only live in the same world as his reading public, as do Hammett's and Chandler's heroes, but they are the common man in every way, and sometimes they are even from the lower classes of society: "Cain . . . [writes] not only about but mainly tothe

masses, giving violent impetus to their forbidden dreams, dramatizing their darkest temptations and their basic physical drives" (Madden, Cain 19). Cain's characters could have populated the crowd that Eliot describes crossing London Bridge (Waste Land 11.62-5).

Along with Cain's brutal honesty in subject matter comes a personal hard-boiled style that grabs the reader differently than any other writer's style did at the time:

> James M. Cain was a people's writer. He wrote muscularly and with compassion about everyday human beings trapped in that dark night of the soul . . . He wrote about all of us when we drop our cloak of respectibility to expose the venal--often amoral--predator that awaits in the cave of our skin. (Ellison vi)

In a way, Cain's writing in this genre brings a greater sense of vulnerability and terror to the reader than does the private detective novel. Without the protection of being a professional detective and being intrinsically prepared for the trouble one encounters, the Cain protagonist and reader are thrust much more nakedly into traps of greed and guilt, explosive releases of pent-up sexual passions, and the consequences of violence and tragedy that often result.

Cain felt that his attempts at writing an honest story were only something special to himself and not part of a trend in fiction: "I belong to no school,

hard-boiled or otherwise . . . [writing] is a genital process . . . it is sealed off in such fashion that outside 'influences' are almost impossible . . . I have read less than twenty pages of Mr. Dashiell Hammett in my whole life" (Cain ix). Cain just as strongly refutes any conscious link to Hemingway (x, xii), and he respectfully compares his own writing as "my small morality tale" against Hemingway's "Matterhorn of literature" (xii).

As to his interpretation of his own style and the purpose behind his novels, Cain wrote,

> I, so far as I can sense the pattern of my mind, write of the wish that comes true, for some reason a terrifying concept, at least to my imagination . . . I think my stories have some quality of the opening of a forbidden box, and that it is this, rather than violence, sex, or any of the things usually cited by way of explanation, that gives them the drive so often noted . . . The characters cannot have this particular wish and survive. (x)

For Cain's characters, the Tiresian drive to find out, to detect, is subverted into a more primal urge to challenge taboos, to break out of normal patterns of behavior just to see if it can be done and how the feeling of that new, dangerous freedom might change them. Cain's "wish that comes true" is, on the one hand, indicative of the boredom, inertia, and trapped feeling that, again, Eliot's population of <u>The Waste Land</u>, as well as

Hemingway's hedonistic homosexuals and "lost generation" of The Sun Also Rises, experience, while on the other hand, "the wish that comes true" suggests a certain desperation to act that burns inside these characters, a drive that is fueled by their frustration.

Cain's fiction does not reflect the way most Americans acted, but it does reflect a probable, tragic end to their darker fantasies. Given Cain's tragic overtones, readers were reassured of the folly of acting against the moral grain of such valued standards as marriage, fidelity, and the family. Both The Postman Always Rings Twice (1934) and Double Indemnity (1936) deal with lust and greed, but at the heart of their plots is the destruction of the marriage unit.

Both novels are also first-person narratives, heightening the Tiresian reflective and self-conscious features of the narrator. And each story, too, is told in past tense, which, as Oates suggests, contributes to the sense of uneasiness behind the power of fate in Cain's novels:

> Everything [from the opening of the novel(s)] is "past," finished, when the narrator begins . . . [and] the world extends no farther than the radius of [the characters'] desire. Within this small circle (necessarily small because his heroes are ignorant), accidental encounters have the force of destiny behind them. (111)

The combination of these two features, first-person narrative and past tense, creates a Tiresian detachment and a hard-boiled, Hemingwayesque fatalism that colors the narrator's recollection of his particular fall, whether it be his taking of another man's wife (Postman) or his watching himself slide inevitably into a murder plan (Indemnity):

> She looked at me, and got pale. She went to the swinging door, and peeped through. Then she went into the lunchroom, but in a minute she was back . . .
>
> I took her in my arms and mashed my mouth against hers . . . "Bite me! Bite me!"
>
> I bit her. I sunk my teeth into her lips so deep I could feel the blood spurt into my mouth. It was running down her neck when I carried her upstairs. (Postman 9)

> I was standing right there on the deep end, looking over the edge, and I kept telling myself to get out of there, and get quick, and never come back. But . . . there was something in me that kept edging a little closer, trying to get a better look . . .
>
> I'm an agent. I'm a croupier in that [insurance] game. I know all their tricks, I lie awake nights thinking up tricks . . . And then one

> night I . . . get to thinking I could crook the wheel myself . . . If that seems funny to you, that I would kill a man just to pick up a stack of chips, it might not seem funny if you were back of that wheel, instead of out front. (Indemnity 18, 29-30)

Each of these narrators speaks of his past as if his crime were natural, as if he were following a predetermined path that he had no choice to avoid or alter. But their resignation is a product of their final self-consciousness. At their stories' beginnings, they do not recognize the working of chance in their lives, the accident of Frank Chambers' stopping at that one "roadside sandwich joint, like a million others in California" (Postman 1) or the accident of Walter Huff one fateful afternoon meeting his client's wife instead of the client.

The "destiny of accident," to paraphrase Oates, is a particularly twentieth-century concern. When lives can be so fundamentally shaken without warning due to some national catastrophe or tragedy, when new theories of science and psychology loosen life's certainty of purpose, then death and misfortune also have a randomness to them that darkens life.

This fear of chance that plays a central role in hard-boiled fiction and especially film noir is not so far removed from Tiresias' sudden calamity brought on by separating two snakes, and is even less removed from Jake

Barnes' indiscriminate war wound, both of which produce a measure of fatalism, a surrender of some part of free will, to accept and persevere beyond. Unlike those two earlier, semi-heroic models, though, Cain's characters allow the juncture of accident in their lives to give free license to their choices and passions, leading them into ruinous contact with their own worst fate (Oates 112).

In his depiction of hard-boiled tragedy, Cain, like Hammett and Chandler, balances good and evil equally between male and female characters. Some critics even see a "feminist" stance in his treatment. Although there is plenty of traditional sexual posturing (and violence) in their respective roles, "the women are stronger than the men, who often cry with joy and despair. It is as though Cain were trying to portray the American male fully and fascinatingly by showing that he has an effeminate streak, and the American female by showing her ruthlessness and almost masculine ambition" (Madden, "'Pure Novel'" 237). This androgynous feature in Cain shows the sexes as equally damnable given their equal human desires and weaknesses. Instead of symbolizing a movement toward some possible solution or salvation (as hinted in Hemingway), or a deeper shift into moral perversion (as in Chandler), androgyny in Cain acts as a levelling device, removing any special qualities a character may have in order to allow for the inevitable

judgement of an impersonal destiny. Even though both Postman and Indemnity are narrated by men, the women the men die for are strong enough to encourage their men's lawbreaking and are weak enough to get seduced by their own greed. In each case the man and woman act in concert, first one and then the other driving the pair to their fate.

At the close of the novels, the narrators acknowledge their overpowering attraction to their women and the forces that propelled them to their fate. As he sits in jail waiting to hear whether he will die for Cora's accidental death, Frank Chambers pieces together his feelings for her:

> I'm getting uptight now, and I've been thinking about Cora. Do you think she knows I didn't do it [kill her purposely]? . . . I want her to know that it was all so [that he loved her], what we said to each other, and that I didn't do it. What did she have that makes me feel that way about her? I don't know. She wanted something, and she tried to get it. She tried all the wrong ways, but she tried. (Postman 118-19)

For Walter Huff, his attraction to Phyllis dims after he is attracted to her innocent daughter, and he finds out about Phyllis' multiple murders in her past. But he acknowledges how their two lives have joined in a single path to death when they meet on a steamer and discuss

their short future:

"We could be married, Walter."

"We could be. And then what?"

I don't know how long we sat looking out to sea after that. She started it again. "There's nothing ahead of us is there, Walter?"

"No. Nothing." . . .

". . . Walter, the time has come . . . [f]or me to meet my bridegroom. The only one I ever loved. One night I'll drop off the stern of the ship. Then, little by little I'll feel his icy fingers creeping into my heart."

" . . . I'll give you away."

"What?"

"I mean: I'll go with you."

"It's all that's left, isn't it?" (Indemnity 124)

Each of these novels suggests that, although crimes can be committed by outsmarting people, there is a second judgement of fate or destiny that Cain reserves for the criminal who, having had his dark "wish" fulfilled, will not be allowed to survive with it. The "twice" and "double" from the titles signal that man cannot really escape his role in life by cheating his way out. Giving in to that impulse only assures, in Cain's universe, drawing the harshest of judgements upon oneself. But,

tragically, Cain's characters cannot avoid the pull of their dreams, their wish-fulfillment, that leads them to cross the accepted line and take a chance on experiencing what that wish-come-true would be like.

Instead of simply giving the reader a "morality tale," though, Cain uses the first-person narrative to establish a detached, Tiresian point of view, a consciousness reflecting on being trapped by its desires and led to ruin. That perspective for the reader of being inside the criminal's mind, and Cain's "criminals" are only ordinary people who make passionate but irrational choices, was something new. As Cain wrote through the periods of Prohibition and the Depression and even through World War II, his brand of street-level realism, as much as the private detective novels of the genre, established the hard-boiled style as the voice of America.

His characters act from a point of desperation and an impatience with not having control of their lives, with not being able to bridge the gap between their American ideals and their American reality. This cultural disappointment became a second wave, in a manner of speaking, of the disillusionment that shocked Europe after World War I and originally spawned the shattered and newly-constructed self-conscious perspectives of Eliot and Hemingway. In America, the average reader responded to and shared that perspective through Cain's

"sense of confinement and doom" and lamented as "Cain's heroes fight a losing battle with the unconscious," because he knew it was his fight, as well (Oates 114).

That reflective quality of hard-boiled fiction, its reproduction in an uncomfortably realistic way of the uncertainties of the reader's world, works in tandem with a perceived loss of direction unique to the twentieth-century experience. The shift into a life of actual nightmare came suddenly and unexpectedly enough to jolt a generation's consciousness inward toward their own fears. The attention of consciousness became directed onto its own process of discerning the world rather than operating under a de facto acceptance of a past model of perception.

No person or belief could be totally relied upon; every situation had the capacity to break down or be exactly opposite of what it appeared to be. The massive social and cultural rupture in faith, the classical nineteenth-century faith in reason and systems, released a Pandora's box of human frailty. Consciousness, after expanding with the development of technology and civilization, was now forced to contract upon itself.

In 1966, a time of similar social and cultural disruption, Philip Young saw Hemingway's world as "a barren world of fragments . . . a land of bad dreams, where a few pathetic idylls and partial triumphs relieve the otherwise steady diet of nightmare" (245). Another

important critic, Malcolm Cowley, noted that Hemingway's "instinct . . . for symbols appealing to buried hopes and fears" drew his attention to Eliot's The Waste Land and, incorporating the same subtle writing, "Hemingway reminds us unconsciously of the hidden worlds in which we live" (50). Robert Penn Warren has characterized one of Hemingway's hero types as "the sleepless man--the man obsessed by death, by the meaninglessness of the world, by nothingness, by nada" (6). These repeated references to sleep, dreaming, and nightmares in conjunction with Hemingway's work in the hard-boiled genre underscore the important role of the unconscious in the genre's special character.

As it is the nature of detective fiction to probe and uncover previously hidden facts, the genre "intensifies a quality present in dreaming . . . by taking as both its form and its subject a conflict between mystery and unifying solution" (Hutter 208). This "intensification" of qualities in the reader's unconscious also explains the genre's continued attraction as the most widely-read form of popular fiction, one whose unconscious-probing images "the great audience will recognize as dreams they have already dreamed, or would if they could" (Fiedler 101).

Detective fiction fulfills another, somewhat Tiresian, role of popular fiction by presenting the culture's morals and traditions in crisis, giving the

"reader the chance to live through the confrontation of society and crime, to affirm or criticize the dynamics of that confrontation" (Stowe, "Popular Fiction" 661). The confrontation is actually a clashing and resolution of opposite values, as people test their frustrated desires against the means they can employ to fulfill them. In other words, the genre becomes a unique testing ground for determining what "crime" is (what, exactly, are the causes of disruption and evil) and, in particular, what criminal elements may be intrinsic to the human experience, i.e. hidden in the unconscious mind.

In that sense, hard-boiled fiction plays a psychological role, similar to that of Eliot's aim in The Waste Land, "involv[ing] the transformation of a fragmented and incomplete set of events into a more ordered and complete understanding . . . (it seems to bridge a private psychological experience, like dreaming, and literary experience in general) . . . [it] reorders our perception of the past" (Hutter 191). Through the reordering process, the reader vicariously experiences his unconscious fears and sees them resolved by way of his identifying with the detective on the one hand or becoming an accomplice in the releasing of unconscious urges (especially in Cain's writing) on the other.

In the latter vein, Dennis Porter has even noted that "the detective story has exploited the reader's prurience more thoroughly and consistently than almost

any other category of fiction except pornography itself" (240). Porter refers to Roland Barthes' Le Plaisir du texte for his claification of the best detective novels as textes de plaisir (107), meaning that the enjoyment adults derive from the exercise between their unconscious and conscious minds as they read this fiction is "a sublimated form of 'reliable climax' in which aggression is less a substitute than an alternative to sex" (111). His title The Pursuit of Crime and his Freudian interpretation of "crime" as meaning some early-in-life sexually related secrets--their parental denial, their guilty pursuit, and their "climactic" solution--points the art of mystery writing in one psychological direction. Valid as Porter's may be, and no other theory as carefully considers the attraction of crime, another approach worth examination sublimates the criminal aspect of the stories and arrives at a metaphysical rather than psychological basis for the genre's importance.

In his study "The Detective As Dreamer," J. P. Telotte explores the detective's function as "a mystery or enigma in the process of being [himself] revealed, unravelled or clarified--an image, therefore, of our own incompletion and yearning for identity" (7). He likens the detective's often piecemeal search to the efforts of a man who, upon awakening, reconstructs and assimilates the fragments of a dream. In this respect, the detective's efforts are a replaying of the reader's

unconscious, trying to understand itself and the world around it.

To facilitate this end, Telotte notes, two "significant elements" appear in the best detective fiction: first, a solution of the case is not the most important feature and, second, an act of self-creation or identification for the detective (or protagonist if we justly include Cain) is important. These two elements echo themes prevalent in the Tiresian myth as it is adapted by Eliot, Hemingway, and film noir. The fact that there need not be a clear "solution" to the "case" (the search for identity and meaning) produces the self-consciousness that leads to existentialism or fatalism. And the second element, an epiphany of self-discovery through the search, however unsuccessful it is, relates to the value of the first-person narrative for the narrator--that he makes sense of his life by replaying it--and for the reader's learning from its example. Telotte stresses that self-knowledge is the motivating force behind both the detective and the reader taking on the "case": "The [subjective] seeing [of the dreamer and the detective] which results is . . . a view of the self in relationship to the world and others, and thus just the sort of self-knowledge that we all most need to live in the world" (6). That self-knowledge is the product of a Tiresian point of view or consciousness.

Telotte's consideration of the important role of the

self in the genre turns detective fiction away from the pursuit and questionable enjoyment of feral secrets and toward the natural, healthful exercise of the unconscious trying to effect a change, as it does in the case of dreams, an adaptation, in the reader's conscious mind. That adaptation through the detective and hard-boiled genre does often seem to be directed toward the void of meaning that was endemic to the post-war decades, but it is the act of discerning and assembling that deserves attention rather than the problems that had to be resolved. In that act, writer, detective/protagonist, and reader all join in the experience of "the most mysterious of realms, the consciousness that watches and continually seeks to constitute meaning from all that it takes in" (Telotte 9), the Tiresian consciousness.

Through the development of the hard-boiled genre, that Tiresian consciousnes, a disengaged self-consciousness, represents an erosion of the human spirit, a contraction of human capability to think clearly and act responsibly. Other than the characteristic of passive observation, other characteristics such as reliance on a direct manner of speaking and the importance of the spoken word, a coolness toward sex that either deteriorates into perversion or minimizes sexual difference through androgyny, and an innate hunger for understanding that cannot completely be fulfilled are all effects of the

presence of the Tiresian myth behind this mid-twentieth-century genre.

Hard-boiled fiction presents a picture of the American character powerless to act but more completely dependent on its own reserves of strength, morality, and intelligence than it had been for several generations. The Tiresian quest of a culture caught in that juxtaposition is the search to know what, perhaps, cannot be known, what reassurances of hope may lie outside the boundaries of solitary human consciousness. That they would be, finally, completely dependent on only themselves for answers must have been a most sobering and terrifying thought for the generation of World War I survivors. Tiresias' quest is the quest of those people who, because their experience shattered the reality of faith, found themselves lost in a darkness in which they are a lone and meager light.

## CHAPTER FOUR

## TIRESIAS MYTH IN FILM NOIR

As popular as the works of Hammett, Chandler, and Cain were in their hard-boiled style and psychological examination of the American dream in the face of reality, they naturally represented only a small portion of the popular literature of that genre. From the example of these three, and from Hemingway's reputation behind them, the trail of the hard-boiled hero split into different directions and media.

One example of hard-boiled popular writing that differs from the Hammett style is the more graphic exploits of Mickey Spillane's Mike Hammer. Another derivation resulted in the emergence and world-wide popularity of mystery novels by Ellery Queen, Earl Stanley Gardner, and others. And a third version was created by the transference of the hard-boiled drama to film. In the 1930s, crime and gangster films came the closest to emulating the street realism of a Hammett, Chandler, or Cain novel.

The conception of the gangster film, like the hard-boiled world of Hammett, may actually have had its

roots in the American frontier mythos. Rosow's Born to Lose cites the Columbus Dispatch of April 10, 1896, as containing the first published appearance of the word "gangster" in America: "The gangster may play all sorts of pranks with the ballot box, but in its own good time the latter will get even by kicking the gangster into the gutter" (ix). Even in 1896, a picture of America's twentieth-century crime problems had taken form: the homologous danger of corruption from within the (urbanized) system--its origins and its remedies. The problem carries implications on an individual as well as social level.

With the introduction of the gangster film in 1930 ( Little Caesar, starring Edward G. Robinson), the power of film surpassed even hard-boiled fiction in telling the public that criminal behavior had become a frequent product of sidetracked American idealism:

> The gangster film . . . concentrat[ed] on the inevitability of crime in urban America, on crime as a symptom of the society's disease, on criminals who are not simply selfish and tough . . . but deranged, on policemen who are as diseased as the men they track down, on peripheral characters who are frequently physical or mental cripples, and on visual images that are consistently shadowy, dark, and dim . . . this sub-genre of films [was] about gangsters who are not tough but sick and about

> gangsterism which is incurably rooted in society itself. (Mast 332)

Europe's devastation from the First World War probably contributed to the following decade's wide-spread acknowledgement of and interest in defining criminality. But Prohibition and the stock market crash of 1929 certainly had their crushing effect on the American spirit at that time, as well. And besides these negative factors, another threat to American peace of mind may have been the positive message the mass culture wanted to believe about itself.

Underlying the upbeat dreams and promises of a new world springing back from war and swinging into greater and greater industrialization was a reverse, psychological shadow. Too much overt optimism at the cultural level may remind the individual citizen of his own inability to achieve his dreams. A general feeling of "desperation and inevitable failure" acts as a "current of opposition" against whatever optimistic picture of society the public is asked to accept (Warshow 128-9).

The gangster film ideally represented the counterculture view, depicting modern American life not as an adventure but as a tragedy. Tragic as failed dreams are, though, the public experienced a cathartic attraction to the gangster films' realistic image of the society at the time. The gangster on the screen, "[i]n ways that we do not easily or willingly define . . .

speaks for us, expressing that part of the American psyche which rejects the qualities and the demands of modern life, which rejects 'Americanism' itself" (Warshow 130).

Other critics agree that existential examination is a component of modern (post WWI) life, but not an inherently American one. Otto's 1917 Das Heilige (The Sacred) stated that "the 'living God' . . . was not an idea, an abstract notion, a mere moral allegory. It was a terrible power, manifested in the divine wrath" (Eliade 8-9). Acknowledging that "terrible power," Otto felt, lowered the "religious sense" of man so far "into the depths of the unconscious [that] it has been forgotten" (Eliade 213). Instead of allowing for the possibility of an unknowable, sacred element of reality, the new, nonreligious view (centered on the "terrible power" of the universe) produced a "completely profane world, the wholly desacralized cosmos . . . desacralization pervades the experience of the nonreligious man of modern societies" (Eliade 13).

And "desacralization" is the source of modern alienation, the origin of what Kristeva names in The Power of Horror as abjection:

> not lack of cleanliness or health . . . but what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite . . . premeditated

crime, cunning murder, hypocritical revenge. (4)

In the same way that law-abiding citizens would later become "criminals" overnight because of Prohibition, the age of an invisible, intrinsic menace had dawned, the menace released from within normalcy. Terror in the new century became less a part of the known and more an element of the unknown. Criminal behavior changed from being an attempt to achieve illegal aims to being the practice of disrupting, concealing, misrepresenting, the practice, in other words, of a sick, unsettled mind (Kristeva 4). It was, as Freud identified them, man's own monsters from the unconscious id that were manifesting themselves through the new miasma of hopelessness and desperation.

And through the film industry's power to persuade, the citizen's anxiety was focused away from himself and onto the figure of the gangster. The gangster epitomized both physically and psychologically the entrapment of the modern condition:

> For everyone else, there is at least the theoretical possibility of another world . . . but for the gangster there is only the city . . . not the real city, but that dangerous and "sad" city of the imagination which is so much more important, which is the modern world. And the gangster . . . is . . . primarily, a creature of the imagination . . . he is what we want to be and what we are afraid we

may become. (Warshow 131)

The lure of the gangster's story lies in the audience's subliminal identification with the (Tiresian) protagonist's weakness--or strength--in his inability to conform and willingness to disregard the law, the same inability exhibited by the characters in a James M. Cain novel, the same willingness to experiment with the "other" way of seeing, or thinking, or being that pervades the Tiresian motif.

The fact that this alternative desire is fueled from imagination and nightmares, the content of the unconscious, links the gangster film genre to its contemporary, the genre of 1930s horror films (Schatz 112), and establishes them both as predecessors of the 1940s film noir expression of the Tiresian themes. Just as the spirit of the American frontiersman had been transferred into the content of the private detective genre, a similar trans-genre exchange kept developing the theme of the solitary American through these films from 1930 into the mid-1950s.

The three genres, gangster films, horror films, and films noir, share similarities in both style and content. For example, the predominance of night scenes, of scenes shot at bizarre angles, and a typical descent into madness followed by the death of the protagonist form a common thread among the three genres. In the gangster film, the gangster inevitably dies, but his

failure provides the viewer with an opportunity to experience what he fears happening to himself. The gangster films allowed the public to see social values tested and, ultimately, supported behind the individual tragedy of the gangster's tragic departure from those values (Warshow 132). And, of course, the same type of psychological projection focuses on the "mad" scientist or misfit of the horror genre and, less subtly, on the noir figure in that genre.

These different film versions are essentially the same hard-boiled, desperate, fatalistic retelling of the tragedy of the modern psyche and modern existence, but they hold special significance in that their simply having been made signals the prevailing importance of this theme in the mass unconscious. The sequence of their appearance indicates how the theme evolved and was refined and redirected beyond its early literary expressions in hard-boiled fiction onto a tableau that was even more successful at evoking an ever-greater sense of identification, participation, and the pseudo-horror that implied.

The gangster, in his function as tragic hero, releases the audience through the payment of his failure and death. He releases them from their own unrealistic ideals of success, which he shows to be self-destructive, and their own dangerous drive to break into that experience of the "other," the dwelling place of

Kristeva's abjection and Otto's "terrible power" (Warshow 137). But the film genre's rehandling and remolding of the modern tragic theme suggests that, through the 1930s, tragedy had not been completely exorcised from the public mind; on the contrary, movement was in the direction of starker horrors, bleaker existences.

Film gangsters in the early 1930s served as symbols largely because of their implied existential response to the Depression. These figures, like their hard-boiled counterparts in fiction, crystalized the Depression experience in their looks, their beliefs , and in their speech: "Here, they said, face it straight and draw your own conclusions" (Starr 32).

In his straightforward approach "[the gangster] served not only as a metaphor for the breakdown of American society but as the hero who could master--even if only temporarily--an environment in which most Americans saw themselves as victims" (Fine 27). But the gangster's flamboyant example would be modified in the 1940s to be more in keeping with the ordinary viewer's personal experience:

> the gangster . . . was a figure of vitality and enterprise, a man who carved for himself a life of glamor and power that offered vicarious satisfaction to thwarted Depression audiences. The noir protagonist is . . . small-scale, unheroic, defeatist . . . a knotted, introspective character,

> cowering . . . or else hopelessly entangled in the aftermath of his ill-considered actions. (Hirsch 60)

This new image of the infection of crime diminished the Hollywood glamor of the gangster. Even though films such as Little Caesar (1930), Scarface (1931), and Public Enemy (1932) end with the gangster's failure, humiliation, and death, his struggle to maintain his powerful independence is what seems to characterize him in the public's mind. Again, in a way, the gangster fights the audience's fight for them.

But gangster "heroes" were replaced by noir non-heroes when the excitement of the gangster's independence was overshadowed by a general realization that most people were already "on the outside" as far as Prohibition, the Depression, and the modern perspective were concerned. And attention then shifted back to a solitary figure who was both less demonstrative and less destructive: "With few exceptions, such as High Sierra [1941], gangster protagonists waned in the forties as film noir thrillers, starting with The Maltese Falcon (1941), fused the gangster character with the detective" (Rosow 233). The transition was a shift "from the objective certainties of the thirties to the private ambiguities of the postwar period" (Clarens 194). Although the public flash and flair of the gangster's career appealed to the 1930s audience, in film noir's more realistic portrayal of the audience's growing

uneasiness (as the 1930s developed into World War II and the nuclear age) the focus shifted to more personal and internal concerns.

The re-emergence of Dashiell Hammett's work in film adaptations fifteen to twenty years after the novels is not surprising given the common social atmosphere that unites the two generations:

> The world of Hammett is an incomprehensible place in which no one can really know another, a place of political and social corruption and personal alienation and existential despair . . . [F]or Hammett and . . . also for the directors of _film noir_, it became the locus of a new and peculiarly American mystery tradition. (Nevins xi)

But even though they have their roots in hard-boiled fiction, _films noirs_ presented to the viewer a completely new "darkness" that was also born of the social upheavals that had occurred during the intervening years. It is generally accepted that, being more an expression of a time period than a true cinematic genre, _film noir_ uniquely reflects the full range of the society from which it developed, including the economy, technology, and psychology of the culture (Silver 1).

A close examination of the social factors behind the emergence of _film noir_ highlights the genre's role in assuaging the public's growing (even if not entirely conscious) concern that, like the generation before them,

they were losing control over their own lives and destiny. As the newest manifestation of the problem generated global, and not just cultural and national, implications, film noir drew more and more from its Tiresian roots to properly describe, define, and address the modern neurosis.

Prohibition, especially coming so soon after the end of World War I, contributed significantly to a growing sense of alienation among the American public. The Great Depression, however, separated the society not merely into different classes with different lifestyles, but into such a disproportionate imbalance of "haves" and "have nots" as to seriously alter the way the "have nots" began to perceive the American Dream.

After the Wall Street crash of 1929, American "[i]ntellectuals and Depression victims alike criticized the effects of capitalism . . . what they all had in common was a search for a life of community and sharing" (McElvaine 202). Their desire to esteem cooperation led many (including Dashiell Hammett) to consider the advantages of Marxism over capitalism. Clearly, it seemed, the capitalist spirit of the 1920s had bankrupted itself by providing prosperity for only the very elite and already powerful few.

A vast subculture of American middle class and poor found that ruin had been visited totally and without personal vendetta upon them. The credo of the

beleaguered 1930s citizen could have been, "I've been reduced to total abjection, but it's not my fault!" The feeling of individual powerlessness in the face of such impersonal behavior from the government drew many people to a reconsideration of Marxist determinism (McElvaine 205). The same feeling of impotence at the hands of a malignant fate would resurface as a major theme of film noir.

As the expression of an interest in "Americanizing" Marxism became more public and vocal among writers and among some Congress of Industrial Organizations unions, an antagonism arose, fed by a philosophical division in America, that would outlast the original problems of the Depression. This antagonism was born of the upper class's suspicion of both Marxism and the Americans who were espousing it, people whose 1930s poverty the rich perceived as a result of 1920s laziness and disinterest in working for a living.

The level of the antagonism and its underlying prejudices and suspicions compounded the Depression victim's plight; not only was he ruined through no fault of his own, but now he was also hated and mistrusted, for no viable reason. Efforts to derail cooperative movements dot the quarter-century following the Depression, and must be viewed as largely advancing, if not directly causing, the social milieu that nurtured the development of film noir:

> In 1934 publisher William Randolph Hearst launched what he hoped would be a new Red Scare . . . In 1938 the House of Representatives created a special Committee on Un-American Activities . . . In 1941 . . . [the book] The Red Decade kept alive a distorted notion of America in the Depression. In the Cold War climate of the late 1940s and 1950s, the belief that Communists were prominent in the New Deal, as well as on college campuses and in CIO unions, spread widely. As McCarthyism grew in the early fifties, views of the role of Marxism in Depression America became even more distorted. (McElvaine 203)

Film noir's emergence at the beginning of the 1940s and its real prominence after World War II coincides with an increasing uncertainty, even as the Depression ills faded into the past, about a new world that would grow from darker and more terrible regions of the human experience than had ever been imagined before. The 1940s' horrors would bring a return of the conditions that moved Eliot to write in The Waste Land, "I think we are in rats' alley/ Where the dead men lost their bones" (115-16).

Those regions began to present themselves in the rise of Naziism in late 1930s Europe and continued to fuel suspicion and fear throughout the war. American novels and films that appeared during this period indicate that a process of self-identification was

underway in the wake of the Depression. Beginning with The Good Earth (1931) and God's Little Acre(1933), and continuing with the novels Gone With The Wind (1936) and The Grapes of Wrath (1939), the decade saw efforts to reestablish Americans' link to the land and a sense of community. Seven-hundred and fifty thousand copies of Dale Carnegie's How To Win Friends and Influence People (1937), as well as an excess of other "self-help" books helped give people confidence in their innate cooperative abilities (McElvaine 220-21). From Hollywood, Frank Capra's Mr. Deeds Goes To Town (1936) and Mr. Smith Goes To Washington (1939) furthered the average man's democratic ideals, while John Ford's Stagecoach (1939) and The Grapes of Wrath (1940) attempted to rekindle the spirit of independence and perseverence that had gotten America through its difficult times.

These works presented ideals for the individual, who may have perceived himself as part of a growing national and world community, but his heroes who overcame the odds in the end still did not reflect the reality of millions of Americans. Some filmmakers sensed the general public's degree of uncertainty, born of an anxiety that increased as World War II approached, and were not afraid to address that element in both story and style. The result signaled the birth of film noir.

Two directors in particular, Orson Welles and John Huston, in Citizen Kane and The Maltese Falcon (both

1941), led this movement that has been characterized as "[t]he thematically naive, formally transparent linear narratives of the early sound era . . . steadily giving way to more complex, convoluted, and formally self-conscious films" (Schatz 115-16). Most critics agree that the appearance of these two films began the film noir era, even though the term was not used nor the style thought of as a new cinematic category during its nearly two decades of influence. Like the Middle Ages, noir is an ex post facto concept, a fact that makes it unique among genres (Kemp 270). That they were not consciously following a historical genre stereotype in their productions may have contributed to the purity of the many noir directors' efforts. Although the later noir films no doubt were made with an eye toward building on their immediate, successful predecessors, Welles and Huston incorporated noir elements that they drew from the mass psyche of the time.

As important as they are in their influence over the films of the next two decades, Citizen Kane and The Maltese Falcon are not as purely noir as some of the films that followed after the war. For example, Kane does not contain a crime theme in the usual noir sense. And in Huston's film, a straightforward plot, unaffected camera angles, and lack of highly-stylized lighting effects separate it from the richer noir style that would follow (Schatz 126). But the two films' individual

statements, the result of the two directors' not purposefully accommodating a particular style, add to their distinction.

Placing Kane's death in the opening seconds of the film allowed Welles to establish a standard noir technique--the flashback. And because this flashback is an odyssey into the mystery of the past, not a recalled narrative, it addresses the viewer's own sense of uncertainty. Paradoxically, however, the viewer is the one who attains the Tiresian perspective of synthesizing the many pieces of information into a meaningful whole; neither the four people interviewed from Kane's life nor the journalist himself finally gain any greater understanding about Kane or "Rosebud." The viewer, through the omniscient camera, sees the pertinent scenes of Kane's life and, through the details (leaving the sled in the snow and seeing the sled in the furnace, for example) and the camera techniques that enhance the narrative, the viewer discovers more than the film's characters do.

One significant example of Welles's camera work is his use of either very low or very high-angled shots, alternately dramatizing and parodying Kane's dominance of the people around him. Another example is Welles's use of deep-focus, which also guides the viewer in his perceptions. As the deep-focus shot presents

several actions--several points of

> interest--simultaneously, [it provides] . . . a greater freedom for the spectator, who may choose at any one instant in the same shot the elements that intrigue him . . . underlin[ing] how much events and characters can gain in ambiguity, because the significance of each moment of the action is not arbitrarily stressed. (Cowie 44, 46-8)

Kane represents a search for knowledge, but whether the search will be fruitful, even for the informed viewer, is not guaranteed. In its direct confrontation with the viewer's need to know, Kane emphasizes three noir--and Tiresian-- themes:

> the tension between subjective and objective impressions of reality; the limitations of any historical process, whether on film or in human memory, to reveal the truth; and ultimately the inability of anyone (including the filmmaker-narrator) to ever really "know" another human being. (Schatz 118)

Just as in the wake of World War I, now in the approaching gloom of World War II man's weak relation to certainty was once again being postulated as the source of his personal and social problems. Kane reinforces the private detectives' credo that the process of unveiling mystery, the mystery of man's nature and behavior, is the core element in learning from and surviving man's limitations, but the film does not make that learning

seem likely or even possible.

Citizen Kane was not well received in 1941, perhaps because, unlike the late 1930s film trend that tried to depict an American society that had pulled through and would continue to pull through thanks to the idealism of its citizens, Welles's film recalled the earlier 1930s gangster films in its suspicion of capitalist goals, goals that its protagonist embodied to the hilt. But the film's "detective" (here as journalist) is not able to locate the single clue that would unravel the mystery behind Kane's, and the capitalist system's, self-destructiveness. Instead, his search reveals "the emptiness at the core of the man, a spoiled, willful tyrant obsessed with his loss of innocence and the human isolation of wealth and power, [which] represents our own uneasiness with the American Dream" (Schatz 120). The unsavory fact that the re-built American society of 1941 could be as vulnerable and unsound as that of 1929 not only made the American Dream appear bankrupt, but reinforced every citizen's ultimate isolation and alienation.

Cooperation, Kane seems to say, could not succeed when corruption and materialism infected the ideal. The film suggests that neither an individual's life nor the ideal upon which that life is based can be reduced to the level of an objective report or statement. The search for the meaning of Kane's last word mirrors the society's

own dissatisfaction with pat answers and rote ideology substituting as a truth that could only be approached subjectively and not dogmatically (Schatz 120). The subjectivity of the journalist-as-detective and the subjectivity of the viewer (in their attempts to synthesize pieces into a whole picture) serve as extensions of Eliot's and Hemingway's subjective narrators. As an early, if not the first, example of film noir, Kane's central thesis announces a principal tenet of that genre. Just as a comprehensive understanding was not possible in the worlds of The Waste Land and The Sun Also Rises, neither is it possible in the world of Citizen Kane. Instead, the film's ending only provides a superficial answer to the riddle of Kane the man:

> GIRL: If you could have found out what that Rosebud meant, I bet that would've explained everything.
>
> THOMPSON: No, I don't. Not much anyway. Charles Foster Kane was a man who got everything he wanted, and then lost it. Maybe Rosebud was something he couldn't get or something he lost, but it wouldn't have explained anything. I don't think any word explains a man's life. No--I guess Rosebud is just a piece in a jigsaw puzzle--a missing piece. (Mankiewicz and Welles 294)

When the journalist presumes in these final lines that the identity of "Rosebud" may not have revealed Kane's

secret anyway, the 1941 viewer receives his first admonition to accept his life's mystery and his own, and only his own, responsibility for solving it.

The Maltese Falcon, of course, continues this mystery motif. Despite the film's lack of noir stylization, the re-introduction of Hammett's hero did bring many of the character's Tiresian qualities back into focus. He acts as liaison between two groups, in this case the lawful and the lawless, belonging completely to neither but having aspects of both. But Spade's suspended position between these poles paralyzes him to the point of not being able to affect the people around him, nor being able to respond to his own attraction to Brigid. He straddles the legitimate and illegitimate worlds with professional agility, but that ability only heightens his isolation, recalling Tiresias's usual lack of a receptive audience, and Jake Barnes's impotence.

Spade's ineffectiveness may actually be an indication of deeper problems, hiding a calculating, manipulative nature that only follows the law because it is the safest way to live, not because there is value in its morality (Selby 912). If there is a degree of menace to the character in the film, it is a result of Humphrey Bogart's impersonal objectivity in the role, which creates and perpetuates a shroud of ambiguity around Spade's dealings with other people. Bogart's

contribution to the inception of film noir with this role establishes The Maltese Falcon as a forerunner of the genre. Films would come to be identified as noir because of their Bogart-like heroes more readily than because their protagonists were similar to Kane in some way.

Hirsch calls Bogart "the quintessential noir actor" (31) and "the archetypal noir loner" (150). This "undisputed king [of the genre] . . . had the perfect face for noir, a face filled with character . . . [he] could not conceal worry or regret or the sadness that always seemed to gnaw at him" (Hirsch 149). For the film noir audience, not only was a convincing performance necessary but, in Bogart's case, the actor's genuine "tough guy" approach to life made the cinematic statement all the more powerful. Bogart's personal qualities helped the audience identify the noir dilemma as something real in their own experience.

Of course, this transposition of character continued with other noir actors such as Alan Ladd and Robert Mitchum, and may have been an extension of the public and private Hemingway mythos that had been developing for many years by the time film noir produced these actors, who could be said to constitute their own "lost generation." As Bogart "invariably invested his characters, even the most seemingly adjusted ones, with a strong neurotic potential" (151), the audience saw more and more of film noir's underlying schizophrenia: they

alternately received a shock of depressing realism not commonly found in films before then, and became attracted, even fascinated, by the contemporary actors' real-life version of the on-screen characterization.

Usually Bogart's Spade shows disinterest, as when he hears about the murder of his partner and when the viewer learns that Spade's affair with his partner's wife was never very important to Spade. He is most excited by people and events that appear legitimate but border on being "shady" or criminal, that seem to remind him of or tempt him into doing things he simply has not had the nerve to do. Spade's own flirtation with crime, a curiosity born of his instinctive feeling that the world is driven by chance and not morality, allows him to identify with the criminal's motivation. They both operate from selfishness, but Spade is neither as desperate nor as confident in taking chances as the criminal (Selby 12).

Even where love is concerned, what counts most for this hard-boiled hero is self-protection. At the end of the film, Brigid's fate concerns Spade primarily in terms of his suspicion of her, not in terms of proper justice being served (Selby 11). Spade even suggests, albeit half-seriously, that additional money in the balance might have swayed his decision. And even his impassioned speech about partner loyalty rings a bit false in light of Spade's affair with Mrs. Archer. Like Charles Foster

Kane, Spade exhibits a selfishness in his attempt to remain the master of his own limited world (Spade's office and apartment, Kane's Xanadu), a selfishness that Jake Barnes and many other Hemingway protagonists also use to protect themselves.

This selfishness is born of the characters' vulnerability, their inability to give up enough of themselves to make genuine contact with another person. Perhaps that fear is a product of Otto's "non-religious, desacralized" world and Kristeva's sense of abjection. At the end of The Maltese Falcon, as Bogart/Spade lingeringly strokes the statuette that now symbolizes only broken dreams, the audience empathizes with his experience of loss and disappointment. Since the film's release and through its periodic revivals, its reminder of the poignancy of loss (a powerful Tiresian undercurrent in much of film noir) has struck a familiar chord with world-wide audiences. On a philosophical level, the connection between that sense of loss and an equivalent existential point of view is also significant.

In his examination of existentialism as a basis of film noir, Porfirio typecasts Spade as the "Non-Heroic Hero": "Spade is by nature an existentialist, with a strong conception of the randomness of existence" (214), a "randomness [that] is central to the noir world" (217), contributes to its "underlying mood of pessimism" (213),

and re-creates the world in an entirely new (modern) moral schema. The existential nature of the twentieth-century experience, the struggle for meaning in an apparently orderless world, requires that the individual establish his own value structure and open himself to an acceptance that everything has potential for good or evil. They are terms that the individual defines for himself through a Tiresian experience of opposites and self-examination (Porfirio 213, 216). This revaluation process is also a function of the journalist's and the detective's practiced withdrawal and observation of himself and his world.

This approach to the nature of "detecting," a way, essentially, of getting behind Spade the observer and uncovering his psyche, transfers from literature to film through an emphasis on sight, on the act of seeing, and on what the viewer does or does not observe through the director's selection. In the same way that Welles's Citizen Kane camera techniques through a privileged "eye" inform the viewer of knowledge beyond the straight narrative, Huston seems to also indicate to the viewer that "seeing" has a special significance in this medium. Some examples of The Maltese Falcon's apparent attention to this theme may seem rather thin, the very nickname "private eye," for example, but Bottiggi makes a strong case for director Huston's intentional prodding of both the character and the viewer along these lines. Bottiggi

points out that Spade's secretary first introduces him to Brigid by saying, "You'll want to see her"; also,

> "[i]nside [Brigid's] hat is the name of a Hong Kong shop whose address is 'Queen's Road--C' . . . [and] when Sam first visits Gutman . . . the camera reveals for Sam and the viewer the suite number, '12-C' . . . [finally,] Sam's postal box . . . [is at] 'P. O. Station C.'" (86)

These details may not support an entire theory in and of themselves, but Bottiggi shows how Huston repeated himself by including many eye- and vision-motifs in his later film noir effort, Chinatown. A strong case can also be made that visual references add a significant sub-text to the 1982 science-fiction film noir Blade Runner.

Certainly, few if any of these allusions could be taken to have been directly derived from Tiresias's blindness, but the coincidence, at least, seems to be an important one. An emphasis on the protagonist's sight does orient the reader/viewer to the fact that new ways of seeing, thinking, and being are necessary. The emphasis demonstrates how, especially in film noir, the director's manipulation of the genre's themes takes on a distinctly visual as well as narrative power. Huston's detailed "clues" are as much an intervention in and embellishment of his storytelling as Welles's use of Citizen Kane's "baroque visual style, new psychological

dimension [with its] morally ambiguous hero, a convoluted time structure and . . . flashback and first person narration--all of which became film noir conventions" (Porfirio 213). These two directors set the tone for film noir stylists to follow. After 1941, one of the identifying marks of the noir film was that the director projected a personal vision or "look" into the film in order to enhance the story. It is also significant that Welles and Huston both wrote or co-wrote the screenplays of these two films.

Noir-like films appeared before 1941, notably Fritz Lang's M (1931), Fury (1936), and You Only Live Once (1937). These films present protagonists whose criminality is more a result of sickness or accident than some innate evil. In each case the protagonist encounters a dispassionate citizenry (like the mechanized population in Lang's earlier Metropolis [1926]) whose mob mentality condemns him, noir-like, without regard for his individuality or humanity. (The same blind--and therefore misplaced--justice theme re-surfaces throughout film noir, even into the 1950s with John Sturges's The People Against O'Hara [1951] and Hitchcock's The Wrong Man [1957]).

Lang's early work, notwithstanding, 1941 marks the actual beginning of film noir. Nearly every subsequent year until the late 1950s saw significant releases in the genre, sometimes several in the same year. In 1942 the

genre was put securely on its path by This Gun For Hire. As with Citizen Kane and The Maltese Falcon, the screenplay for the film was special, co-written by W. R. Burnett from a Graham Greene novel. Burnett himself was a successful novelist of hard-boiled fiction with such works to his credit as Little Caesar (1929), High Sierra (1940), and The Asphalt Jungle (1949), each of which he also adapted into their screen versions. In This Gun For Hire, a number of factors converge that contribute to its noir style and its position as a trend setter.

Besides Burnett's input from hard-boiled fiction, the film is also Alan Ladd's first screen appearance, and his first of three films with Veronica Lake. Their pairing conveys the same sense of romance gone awry as does that of Sam Spade and Brigid O'Shaughnessey (and Jake Barnes and Brett), but Ladd and Lake's acting style is more in line with the limitations of noir, especially in its relationship to the unconscious: "[i]f noir stories often seem like a bad dream, the acting in noir, fittingly enough, is somnambulistic" (Hirsch 146). The description also echoes Eliot's description of the Waste Land citizens who passively, "Like a taxi throbbing waiting" (217), have come to expect stimulation from outside, rather than initiating any themselves. Ladd and Lake, especially, seem to fit the description, with "[t]heir dry, tight voices, monotonous in rhythm and intonation . . . their chiseled features and Nordic

complexions" (Hirsch 147) becoming the ideal after which others, even Bogart and Bacall, were later modeled. In their passivity, Ladd and Lake exemplify noir victims who are unable to fight back against the caprice of an indeterminate fate (Hirsch 147).

In their pairing, too, lies an androgynous element that was lacking in the Spade-O'Shaughnessey relationship. Hirsch describes Ladd as having "one of the flattest voices on record, quieter and softer than Lake's, more 'feminine,' and in this way suggestive of the kind of sexual reversal which cuts across noir," and adds that Lake "is one of a series of forties leading ladies with a deep voice and an ambiguous sexuality" (147).

Other sexual uncertainties in the film include the fat, slightly effeminate Nazi agent who dresses well, has a taste for peppermints, appreciates "dainty but sculptured" women, and shrinks from the mention of violence. When Ladd's character, Phillip Raven, meets this man in a cafe after having murdered for him, the agent gestures to the newspaper headline and asks, "Raven, how do you feel when you're doing . . . this?" Ladd glances down, looks up, and smiling slightly, answers, "I feel fine." The dialogue might have been lifted directly from a Hemingway story.

But, of course, as a noir non-hero, he is definitely not "fine," not emotionally and not even physically.

Later in the film, he discloses to Lake/Ellen that in his boyhood his abusive aunt (whom he lived with after his father was hanged and his mother died) hit him "with a red-hot flat iron," permanently disfiguring his wrist; for that, he stabbed her in the throat, his first murder victim. Presumably, the incident turned him away from all contact with women. In his first scene in the film, Raven brutally slaps a maid and tears her dress because she tries to shoo away a stray kitten for whom he has put some milk out.

Ladd's Raven is played much like Bogart's Spade. Behind his good looks lurk psychological problems and self-doubt, his speech bears a staccato delivery, and he lives alone, satisfied to continue living so, if necessary (Silver 291). Raven, it is true, moves a step beyond Spade, deeper into noir, in his genuine criminality, and yet, he is a criminal who is himself a victim of some bizarre social pressures. The audience identifies with him most strongly through his choice to work against the greater evil of political subterfuge, the film's secondary theme.

He dies because, even though he was motivated by personal revenge, he agreed to fight Naziism in America, in 1942 a more feared and unexplainable evil than whatever social or personal problems had made him a criminal. Raven--his name implies a brooding, dark, and independent nature--personifies the new noiranti-hero.

Just as Tiresias, Jake Barnes, and Sam Spade handle their affairs in ways no one else can because their circumstances have released them from social conventions, only someone as ambivalent to loyalties as Raven could have succeeded as both criminal and patriot in the plot of This Gun For Hire.

Along with the uniqueness of the characters that is developed through acting and plot, the film also signals the emergence of film noir through camera and lighting techniques. The 1942 film crop was not without its stylish efforts; Casablanca and Cat People were also released that year. But This Gun For Hire develops a deliberately unsettling atmosphere where it is not particularly necessary. That is, the mood is purposely evoked almost as an extra character in the story. Like the mood that envelops The Waste Land, it is something almost tangible that plays a role in determining the characters' behavior. Director of photography John Seitz combines studio and location shooting about equally, and infuses the scenes with much use of shadow, fog (also a favorite detail of Eliot's), the appearance of insignificance or entrapment (at one point Ladd and Lake are pursued through an enormous generator plant), and rain-slicked sidewalks.

These stylistic decisions help define the noir figures' "alienation and loneliness [as their] estrangement is recapitulated in the mise en scene: bare

rooms, dimly lit bars, dark, rain-soaked streets" (Porfirio 215). The noir representation of the world parallels an imbalance inside the noir figure's mind:

> Disequilibrium [in noir] is the product of . . . unbalanced and disturbing frame compositions, strong contrasts of light and dark, the prevalence of shadows and areas of darkness within the frame, the visual tension created by curious camera angles and so forth. (Harvey 22-3)

Such effects as these suggest "the strong possibility that madness and mayhem are the natural denizens of the ordinary places of modern life" (Wood 100)--an example of the paranoia that exists when the noir figure's world becomes totally unfamiliar through some "accident." This level of projection allows for "a state of mind made visible in furniture and sidewalks" (Wood 101) and can enlarge the sensation of foreign "otherness" into frightening proportions:

> Silhouettes, shadows, mirrors and reflections . . . suggest a doppleganger, a dark ghost, alter ego or distorted side of man's personality which will emerge in the dark street at night to destroy him. (Place 41)

But the noir doubling can indicate either negative or positive alternatives, as "mirrors, puddles, windows, anything that might suggest another--distorted or truer--face of reality" (Jameson 33) are used to

establish the same kind of distancing effect that Jake Barnes's or Tiresias's androgynous past or the private detective's job had on them, separating them from society. The objective in each case seems the same--to position the protagonist, and the reader/viewer, alone, isolated from either the help or the interference of society.

The deciding factor in film noir, though, is that this kind of separation is not only not good, but it is also unavoidable; it is endemic to nearly everyone's post-World War II existence, and certainly to the characters of This Gun For Hire. The film conforms perfectly to established definitions of the genre. Often an unsettling composition and framing of shots relates for the viewer the physical and/or psychological separation of the character from his environment. The character's own disorientation, in turn, extends to the viewer's experience of his own world (Place and Peterson 333-34, 338).

All of these traits have their psychological correlation to the alienation of the Tiresian quest. In film noir, though, the intensification of despair, the threat of unknown but certain danger, and the ordinary nature of the protagonist combine to bring the Tiresian drama closer to existentialism and nihilism than it had appeared earlier in the twentieth century. Social factors that affected America during and after World War

II carried noir even farther in these new directions.

The noir film of note released the year following This Gun For Hire was Alfred Hitchcock's Shadow of a Doubt. The film uses noir techniques such as recollection of past events and the doubling of evil and good selves against each other (a murdering uncle and his namesake niece). But its strongest noir statement lies in the theme of evil hiding in plain sight, just under the surface of an apparently normal exterior, making the film "one of Hitchcock's clearest statements about the ambiguity of the human condition" (Spoto 143).

Uncle Charlie's evil is discovered only by his "twin" niece and the police, and to accept the truth, the girl must expose herself to her own inner weaknesses, even the lure of criminality. Her final maturity depends on confronting her unconscious urges, which externally manifest themselves in her uncle's behavior, and accepting them in order to hold them in check (Spoto 139). Hitchcock warns the viewer about the potential for chaos that exists even in the most familiar setting. As the detective tells Charlie at the end of the film, "Sometimes [the world] needs a lot of watching. It seems to go crazy every now and then. Like your Uncle Charlie"--and like any number of Hitchcockian and other noir figures.

Characteristically for Hitchcock, the macabre truth is made light of throughout the film by a running

discussion between the girl's father and his friend about murder techniques. The joke highlights how much the fantasy of violence and evil may intrigue most people, but it also indicates the men's arrested adolescence in their failure to confront their fascination as the signal of a darker reality inside everyone, which Charlie must confront when she kills her uncle. In typical noir and Tiresian fashion, she separates herself, through contact with some alien or forbidden knowledge or experience, and, following that contact, finds her previous faith in life hard pressed to carry her forward with hope.

Considering the timing of Shadow of a Doubt's production and release, "[p]roduced as it was in 1943--at a time when American films celebrated a naive sentimentality about the American way of life" (Spoto 143), Hitchcock must have had a sense of holding American values and naivete up for examination through the person of the niece (in the town square, when she thinks she has been fooled and betrayed by the detective, a "Bank America" neon sign glows in the background). At the time, Hitchcock was distraught over England's fate under nightly bombing raids and had lost his mother there recently due to illness. Perhaps Hitchcock saw American culture with something approaching the objectivity of the many German technicians and filmmakers who were immigrating to Hollywood at the time, and who had their own distinctive impact on the development of film noir.

These political emigres, who were also accomplished, professional filmmakers, were used to depicting psychological aspects of the story through visual artistry rather than dialogue:

> The influx of foreign directors and other craftsmen before and during World War II . . . refine[d] film noir's distinctive visual style. That was not merely low-key photography, but the full heritage of German Expressionism: moving camera; oddly angled shots; a chiaroscuro frame inscribed with wedges of light or shadowy mazes, truncated by foreground objects, or punctuated with glinting headlights bounced off mirrors, wet surfaces, or the polished steel of a gun barrel. (Silver 3)

The violence of _film noir_, too, was something they brought with them:

> [The German expatriates] had experienced the social consequences in countries taken over by groups devoted to values expressed in gangster films. Like gangster movies, _films noir_ were rooted in a pulp imagination nourished by the rise of fascism, the second World War, and the invention and use of the atomic bomb. (Rosow 298)

As the experiences of the war in Europe and in the Pacific began to affect Americans first hand, the expression of _noir_ themes shifted from the artistic or philosophical presentation of _The Maltese Falcon_ and

Citizen Kane into the more personal style of the "B" films, following the example of This Gun For Hire.

And the German Expressionistic style was well suited to a more personal focusing of the theme, an everyman perspective. A collective grasping for meaning and foundation was underway; it was the struggle of the individual citizen: "film noir . . . is a gasping for breath, a struggle to hang onto life . . . an essay in personal martyrdom . . . a depiction of the American mise-en-scene that tries to arrive at some statement of truth despite the haze of deception" (Tuska xxi). Whatever intentional deception existed (FDR's lack of a straightforward commitment to enter the war before the Pearl Harbor attack is an example), many traditional values were also being tested by the new times, as well as contradictory scientific theories and political considerations for a changed world (Schatz 113). As the country moved forward into the 1940s, these kinds of developments converged more frequently in film, producing some examples of film noir that are dense with social implications, such as several of Raymond Chandler's contributions.

In the wake of W. R. Burnett's work on This Gun For Hire, Chandler began his screenwriting career in 1943, collaborating with Billy Wilder, one of the emigrants who brought the style of German Expressionism to American film. Chandler was suggested by Joseph Sistrom, the

producer, who "knew [Chandler's] literary work and felt it had stylistic affinities with the film project" (Luhr 4), which turned out to be the adaptation of James M. Cain's Double Indemnity.

Just as Chandler's novels became the definitive example of hard-boiled fiction, so, too, did he leave his imprint on film. Before becoming degenerated by alcoholism and depression, he had "provided either script or story for [such noir standards as] Murder, My Sweet; Double Indemnity; Lady in the Lake; The Blue Dahlia; The Falcon Takes Over; The Big Sleep; [and] Strangers on a Train" (Schatz 126). Wilder's screenplay received an Academy Award nomination, and the film itself caught critics and audiences by surprise with its unapologetic treatment of murder from the murderer's perspective. Viewers are put in the unfamiliar position of identifying with the criminal, thinking his crime through with him. Double Indemnity is a milestone in the development of film noir because of the self-identification it elicits from the audience. Earlier films treated crime as something external, not as something that could be a personal possibility. (Selby 15)

In the film version of Cain's story, Walter Neff (formerly Huff) approaches his insurance job with feelings similar to Spade's view of the detective business. They are both "insiders" in the sense of knowing the rules and rule breakers well enough to be

tempted themselves to use the system to their advantage (Selby 16). And as in Cain's original version, Neff's disposition to yield to that temptation is dramatized through first-person narration, a device relatively new to film at the time.

But a significant difference in the Chandler and Wilder script's narration is the inclusion of Chandler's rich descriptive style. Narration was selected as the script's form primarily to showcase Chandler's ability (Luhr 32). Another reason for deciding to use flashback was that it had been successfully used the same year in adapting Chandler's Farewell, My Lovely into Edward Dymtryk's Murder, My Sweet (Schatz 134).

But the first-person narration also tends to encourage an ex post facto deterministic slant that fits the remorseless objectivity of the characters. In the manner of "a tabloid headline," the narrative reports the story so matter-of-factly that the only thing

> the viewer can look forward to are the specifics . . . [implying] that mankind is controlled by unknown and omnipresent forces . . . [that] the "Fates" affect not only man but the physical world as well, that everything is slowly decaying, and that the process is irreversible. (Luhr 23,25)

In his unusual (perhaps paranoic) sensitivity to these entropic forces, Neff demonstrates his Tiresian roots. He sees what others do not see; like Jake Barnes, he

comes to know people through his job in ways that they do not know themselves. And he shares with the private detective the persistence of a driven man, although his zeal causes him to overestimate his own ability to act outside the rules.

Neff exhibits the two basic drives of noir figures: alienation and obsession--with a heavier emphasis on the second quality than on the first (Silver 4). His obsession is a product of his status as a member of the class of ordinary man. As such, he is automatically alienated; his desperation is channeled into an effort to use that alienation to his advantage, and even as an excuse. His is

> the corruption and disintegration of an ordinary man who believe[s] that . . . he can master the system itself . . . freedom to be is the real prize. For Walter Neff the reward is liberation . . . stature in a debased existence, and the acknowledgement that a salesman is still a man. (Prigozy 164-65)

Death is not part of the formula at the beginning, but it is the only kind of "success" that Neff's flaunting of the law can result in. His real obsession may not be lust or money, the factors that propel the plot, but simply the desire to commit a crime--the chance to break convention and see what that forbidden knowledge will feel like.

Double Indemnity makes its mark as the first

authentic film noir as strongly as it does becauses it challenges traditional views of the American work ethic, the family, and male-female relationships, all bluntly and from the very ordinary perspective of an apparently intelligent but middle-class man.

The film stands as "the first serious wartime film to show that anyone, anywhere, even in America, can sell himself on the idea that through murder and violence he can achieve sexual, social, or moral superiority" (Prigozy 169), and in that self-righteousness, it reflects aspects of those same individual tyrannies that were being manifested on a much larger social and national scale at the time. Specifically, both patriarchal sexual mores and fascistic social views (which, it could be argued, have their similarities) can be read into the dynamics of this film.

Considering the fact that Billy Wilder lost his mother, grandmother, and stepfather to the Holocaust, it is not difficult to accept that through this film Wilder was perhaps creating his own fascist model based on American lust, greed, and naivete (Prigozy 161-62). In this way, Neff becomes "an American embodiment of Nazi ideology, the would-be Superman, and on a smaller modern scale, a version of Dostoyevsky's Raskolnikov, trying to defeat a tawdry, life-defying society through the only means available to him: murder" (Prigozy 161).

Again, the presence of and attraction to crime,

recalling Otto's "terrible power," confirms Double Indemnity's part in the evolution of the Tiresian myth. If Wilder did have in mind for his film a theme derived from Crime and Punishment, and if he was influenced by his own dark memories of murder on a national scale, then Neff's individual hell does have its archetypal resonances for 1944 America. It also functions as a window into the society's sexual as well as political values.

Barbara Stanwyck's portrayal of Phyllis, the murderous and conniving wife, however, contributes to the film's much greater impact in the area of sexual values with its establishment of the femme fatale figure. Phyllis Dietrichson offers more of everything that her predecessors provided. She is a more lustful object than Spade's secretary and more scheming than Brigid. She will not only lead men to their death (as Lake does for Ladd), but she prefers to kill them herself as well. One possible explanation for the "dangerous woman's" emergence in popular film can be found in the war-time atmosphere of the period.

For soldiers who left as teenagers and returned as men of career and family-rearing age, their re-introduction to a female population that had taken over the workplace in their absence was a shock and an invitation to self-doubt. The three basic types of women portrayed in film noir--the average girl, the temptress,

and the unbalanced nymphomaniac--indicate the stereotypes that were held and propogated in a time when the only accepted constant was that the war had changed life, and it was still changing (Cohen 28). Double Indemnity's use of stereotyping the Phyllis character perpetuates these male fears, but the stereotype also subverts the pre-war romantic tradition. Although the image of the femme fatale places women in an inhuman and unrealistic light, it also negates any delusion about sexual roles returning to their pre-war status.

The femme fatale brings the noir male's Tiresian characteristics into focus by reproducing her own version of them:

> These [noir] actresses . . . were everyman's sexual fantasies and fears personified: desirable to the point of irresistibility [obsession], erotic in an aggressive way [androgyny], ultimately perilous [the ambiguity of danger]. Surrendering oneself to this kind of women meant leaving yourself open for the double-cross [mirror/twinning]. (Cohen 29)

As Cohen suggests, these women appealed to the "everyman," not only, perhaps, the returning soldier. That is, the soldier's off-balance reaction in returning from combat to a society of female workers no doubt fueled the establishment of noir. But the strength of noir's foundation, its definite connection to the Tiresian myth, lies in its re-examination of universal

relationships and values.

The noir message's uniqueness is that it transmits a serious message for all men and all women: "Distinctions in the Western [for example] . . . were made in terms of occupation--the schoolmarm/dancehall girl syndrome. The blending in film noir meant that all women were to be mistrusted" (Cohen 28). But neither films noir nor the works from which they were being adapted were the products of women (other than the actresses), leading to the observation that the genre's characteristics represent a strictly male point-of-view, defining women by whether they are sexually active (the "dark lady") or not (the virgin) (Place 35).

Sexuality, of course, is what the Tiresian male protagonist also does not have, or is confused about expressing, and in that confused state, sexually-confident women can be perceived only as a threat:

> one of the principal factors behind [the male's] alienation is the fact that the femme fatale is in possession of her own sexuality. As a consequence, she is, or behaves as if she is, independent of the patriarchal order . . . [and] must be punished for this attempt at independence, usually by her death, thus restoring the balance of the patriarchal system. (Tuska 215)

Although Tiresian protagonists exist in this atmosphere,

they are at odds with it. They aspire to be like Tiresias himself; to be of his type is to suspend affiliation with either of two opposite qualities or ways of being, experiencing instead a middle ground or a combination of opposites.

The noir protagonist (Spade, Raven, Neff) feels automatically distanced from the "norm," but is not offered the opportunity to meld back into a "normal" lifestyle. Patriarchy is the system he has rejected because it has produced the attitudes and perspectives that caused the schisms in his life. The prevalence of the Tiresian myth in this century suggests that patriarchy's ultimate expression in world wars brought about a parallel search in the form of an examination of self-identity, with the Tiresian influence giving that search, as Ovid had centuries before, a decidedly sexual orientation.

Because definition of self also postulates definition of "other," the treatment of women in film noir, whether as femme fatale or in less threatening manifestations, lies at the heart of the noir/Tiresian connection and represents the Tiresian myth's clearest exposition:

> women are central to the intrigue of the [noir] films . . . The hero's success or not depends on the degree to which he can extricate himself from the woman's manipulations. Although the man is

> sometimes simply destroyed because he cannot resist the woman's lures (Double Indemnity is the best example), often the work of the film is the attempted restoration of order through the exposure and then destruction of the sexual, manipulating woman. (Kaplan 2-3)

In her threat to the male, the noir female symbolizes the failure and danger of the patriarchal system. As the noir darkness symbolizes subconscious fears and desires, it also is the realm of the "dangerous woman," the embodiment of male sexual doubt; the darkness indicates both his effort to suppress his fears and the fear's own unquenchable nature (Place 41).

But the Tiresian myth does not call for the dominance of one opposite over the other. As the noir males, also victims of the patriarchal system, find themselves threatened by women, they find that the only alternative they have is an androgynous one: "the noir man is humiliated, emasculated, reduced . . . because of the role reversal of the noir woman. As she [takes] on 'masculine' characteristics . . . it [leads], covertly if not overtly, to the attribution of 'feminine' characteristics to the noir male" (Tuska 231). The arrangement is much like that of Jake and Brett in The Sun Also Rises, with each partner caught in a relationship to the other that both would like to improve, were they not powerless to break out of their "reversed" roles. Double

Indemnity handles this Tiresian aspect through the relationship of Neff and his boss, Keyes, "the dominant figure . . . a man who is single, who has no sustaining relationships of any kind, who exists solely for his job and supporting the system of which he is a part" (Tuska 215-16). In his polarity to Neff, Keyes, like Phyllis, embodies the patriarchal system of which Neff simultaneously wants to become a part yet also wants to outsmart and live outside. If Freudian psychology did indeed spread throughout the post-war culture at about the same time as film noir, drawing new attention to the unconscious mind and its influence on sexual behavior (Rosow 299), then Double Indemnity represents a full flowering of repressed anxiety about sexual norms at the time.

The film's arriving at a different conclusion from that of the novel, in which Huff/Neff and Phyllis accept death in their suicide pact, illustrates its position regarding the sexes. In the film, Phyllis shoots Neff once as they stand at opposite ends of her living room, the "scene" of their crime of destroying family values, and then realizes that she cares for him and cannot shoot again. But Neff embraces her and, shooting twice, kills her:

> In what is perhaps the darkest and most intense sequence in any '40s film . . . traditional values of romantic love, monogamy, and procreative sexual

> fulfillment have been turned inside out: love has turned to greed and lust, the bond of marriage has been shattered, and the climactic "sex act" is performed with a gun. (Schatz 135)

In Neff's obsession with committing murder and fooling the system, his accompanying cold-hearted deliberateness toward matters of sex, marriage, and family is especially chilling. His lust for Phyllis is formulated in a single glance at an anklet with her name on it that she wears revealingly, brazenly, at their first meeting.

But having achieved his sexual conquest in their joint agreement to travel the forbidden, illegal path together, Neff quickly turns his attention from lust to planning the murder. He is not meant to appear impotent, but his total lack of desire after their common decision is made reduces him to a sexual disinterest that is not much different from that of other Tiresian noir protagonists. And once Neff crosses his personal boundary of criminality, climaxing his Tiresian experience of "both sides" of life and trespassing into the region of Otto's "terrible power" firsthand, his act also cancels the familial bond at the core of society.

The violence in Double Indemnity is at such a primal level that it challenges the accepted notions of marriage as being a safe haven for sexual expression. Instead, the film suggests that sexuality is a wild, dark force that cannot be tamed by cultural institutions (Harvey

29). Like criminality, sexual expression in noir becomes a manifestation of the unconscious; they both represent uncontrollable forces bursting through a thin layer of decorum to subvert man's attempts at civilized behavior.

Paradoxically, a successful family life (extended symbolically to include national and global life) becomes an androgynous image in itself in its harmonious merging of opposites, and is an impossibility under patriarchism, and a rarity in film noir, which regards the family as a modern anachronism, or even as something that no longer exists (Harvey 25). The absence of the family bond probably accounts for Keyes's dominant role in the film, one much different from his lesser, prosecutor-like role in Cain's novel.

In the novel, Keyes allows Walter and Phyllis to escape prosecution and execution, but only because of his loyalty to the company. His only compassionate act for Walter is that he allows him to choose his own method and time of punishment. In the film, Edward G. Robinson develops Keyes a bit further, playing him as a balance of animosity and grudging comraderie.

But Keyes's feelings for Walter are presented, because of the first-person narration, only from Walter's point of view. Their relationship is also established by the way Neff talks about his plan, as if it were an attempt to fool Keyes personally. After his crime, he knows that he must think like his father-image friend,

"becoming" him, if he is to succeed. When it is all too late, Keyes and Walter share one last time the ritual cigar lighting that has been a symbol of their homogeneity throughout the film and exchange a sentiment of the love that might have been if Walter had not succumbed to the snares of patriarchy.

Instead of advocating a homosexual bond between the two men, though, the film reinforces through their solidarity the dangers of lust which, as Keyes says of women in general, needs to be carefully investigated. Double Indemnity does not offer homosexuality as a palatable step toward androgyny; if anything, it suggests that in the fallout of the failed patriarchal system, any sexual expression can lead to disaster. In that respect, the film's greatest effect lies in its noir view of 1940s' American life and its uncompromising representation of the noir individual as insignificant, unimportant, and without hope (Schrader 10). If the viewer understands and identifies with Neff, then he participates in the urge to break out of the normal pattern of life, but he also accepts the punishment for that desire for freedom. In the end, he feels a Tiresian estrangement from his society and becomes disoriented in his perception of himself (Selby 16). These two elements--man's increasingly hopeless position in a society apparently losing its moral foundation--would only continue to be exacerbated as the film noir style

attempted to keep up with the changing world.

Silver and Ward note that the release of noir films increased through 1945 (Appendix B 334), but even without the increased attention to the genre, the advent of the atomic age that year would have had its own significant effect on film noir's subsequent popularity and longevity. In light of this newest cataclysm, in the wake of FDR's death that year and the end of war in Europe, film noir addressed more clearly than any other genre the audience's new experience and understanding of life as impermanent and fragile. The war generation encountered a sense of nihilism, of purposelessness, that it had not known before. Like Tiresias's shocking metamorphoses, the generation's wildly shifting experiences of late 1930s prosperity followed by rationing during the war and then the materialistic boon of peace time forced people to re-think both their social and their personal commitments (Tuska xvi). This sense of disruption and re-organization covers the total noir experience, both its twenty-year lifetime and its various appearances after that period, but the unleashing of nuclear power did have a special parallel to the noir view of the twentieth-century world.

Kiss Me Deadly did not appear until 1955, but it crystalizes the eerie similarity of the atomic threat and the noir sensibility. The plot of the film revolves around a search for a box containing some nuclear

material. The film is unique

> in its direct identification of the unstable noir underworld with the elemental instability of fissionable matter . . . but the converse is also true: the unstable universe depicted in so many noir films is a continual reflection of the tremendous cultural apprehension focused on both the "Red menace" and the chances of nuclear devastation. (Silver 2)

The reality of the atom bomb brought the morbid knowledge that uncontrollable destruction was possible and, although peace had resulted from its use, a dictatorial phantom from World War II continued to haunt the American spirit. Somehow the conclusion of the war only confirmed the seriousness of the danger no one had guessed the extent of a few years earlier. This fear, too, crept into film noir. Many of the postwar films capitalized on the fear of losing control to unconscious sexual or violent desires. Films such as Dark Passage (1947), D. O. A. (1949), and Spellbound (1951) use surrealistic camera shots to let the viewer sense the horror of losing control and not knowing whether his conception of reality will sustain him. The visual style makes the viewer that much less sure of his own interpretation of reality (Luhr 54).

In order to address the new psychological stance, referred to as "a contemporary apocalypse bounded on the

one hand by Nazi brutality and on the other by the awful knowledge of nuclear power" (Hirsch 21), film noir entered its most influential and critically acclaimed period.

In 1946 Chandler's talent again influenced the direction and development of film noir through two films, The Blue Dahlia and The Big Sleep. He wrote the screenplay for Dahlia, but could only act as consultant on Sleep due to his contract with another studio. Director Howard Hawks was attracted to The Big Sleep not so much because of the style of Chandler's novels but instead because of the Los Angeles Chandler portrayed. For him Los Angeles represented the end of the line, a place where people are apt to do anything, whether it makes sense or not (Luhr 12), a fitting model for the 1946 world at large.

Clearly, Hawks felt that audiences were ready for an even tougher and less understandable world in their films than viewers had seen before. Hawks's version of The Big Sleep was criticized for being both overly violent and overly complicated. The Blue Dahlia was also criticized for its brutality (Luhr 12). The difficulty in comprehending Hawks's Big Sleep carries over in part from Chandler's novel and its irresolvable crimes. But Hawks's film has not become a recognized classic because of the viewer's difficulties. The Big Sleep makes use of socially unredeeming pastimes such as gambling and

pornography to accurately portray the society's corruption of values (Luhr 13).

Among the elements that make up his unique structure is Hawks's incorporation of a Hemingwayesque style of dialogue between his stars, Humphrey Bogart and Lauren Bacall. Instead of concentrating on plot, Hawks correctly recognized the two actors as being more central to the film than the appeal of the story's adventure or mystery. Bogart and Bacall create a competitive but mutually admiring team in the film (Monaco 37). Their chemistry provides an approximate equality, and they benefit each other, symbolizing a relationship that borders on being a rare example of romance amid the noir nihilism of other postwar films.

Hawks, who had the year before directed the adaptation of Hemingway's To Have and Have Not, Bogart and Bacall's first film together, described his approach to dialogue as similar to Hemingway's: "'Hemingway calls it 'oblique dialogue.' I call it three-cushion. Because you hit it over here and over here and go over here to get the meaning. You don't state it right out.'" (Monaco 38). The comparison of himself to Hemingway carries double meaning. Besides sharing an appreciation of the hard-boiled style, both men preferred action to contemplation, a reflection of their personal response to an existential point of view. They saw meaning as something to strive for and create, not something one

could sit back and study (Mast 245-46). However, Hawks may have allowed for the problem of meaning in the 1946 world through his willingness to leave loose ends in the film.

To him, solutions are not as critical as the characters' view of mystery, how willing they are to accept some unexplained element in their lives, especially if the unknown is part of a person whom they love. As it is for Jake and Brett, Spade and both Brigid and his secretary, so too the element of uncertainty in one's lover is crucial to the Bogart and Bacall pairing (Mast 261). Through their shared feeling of confusion, Bogart's Marlowe and Bacall's Vivian come together as equals, and the viewer does not know whether Marlowe's sense of obligation to his work or his hope for romantic fulfillment is stronger (Schatz 137). In its characters' hopes, the 1941 film version of The Big Sleep counters the anti-family, anti-romance implications of Double Indemnity, but its romantic possibilities also compromise the novel's less sentimental handling of Marlowe and Vivian, weakening its noir status.

The Big Sleep is a prime example of a noir film defined by random threats to the protagonist (through the dark atmosphere and the criminal) instead of by a portrayal of the protagonist as being as flawed internally as his external world appeared to be. For this reason changes in the film version reflect a

box-office concern--the need to have Bogart and Bacall emerge (probably) on the road to a happy life at the end (the characters' future together is suggested but not assured). And in that regard, their characters part company with noir. But what keeps The Big Sleep in the noir genre is its uncompromising depiction of a seemingly rampant evil in the world as everyone who operates around Marlowe and Vivian traffics in immorality and nihilism (Luhr 137).

The strongest measure of The Big Sleep's and The Maltese Falcon's contribution to noir is the fiction they are derived from. The films adapted from Hammett and Chandler are respected for more than their noir qualities, and many films were more purely noir than these, but the films' associative link to hard-boiled fiction and its progenitors--Hemingway, the colloquial style, the Tiresian connection to detecting identity and meaning--bring to noir a foundation based in the twentieth-century audience's personal experience.

Stylistically, movies adapted from James M. Cain's novels may have had more to do with producing the noir tradition, but the genre is impossible to picture without its link to hard-boiled fiction through Hammett and Chandler. The hard-boiled writers certainly affected noir screenwriting as strongly as German immigrants affected noir cinematography (Schrader 10), and probably even more so.

Chandler's more direct involvement with furthering an appropriately hopeless picture of life is evident in his original screenplay for The Blue Dahlia. This story of a returning war veteran who finds that his wife killed their son in an auto accident and has been unfaithful to him projects a much stronger noir sense than the more popular The Big Sleep. The film features the noir reprise of Alan Ladd and Veronica Lake, but they are nearly overshadowed by William Bendix's role as a wounded veteran suffering from mental problems. In concentrating on the veteran's situation, the film takes advantage of service-associated mental problems and uses them to comment on the stress from which nearly everyone was suffering. Because it takes chances with uncomfortable subjects such as alcohol abuse, infidelity, and mental illness, The Blue Dahlia exemplifies the direction postwar noir films were heading (Silver 37).

Chandler's version called for the wounded soldier to be the murderer in the film's plot, driven to irrational acts by his head wound. This message was too strong for the studio, though, and a more conventional, blackmailing murderer is used in the film. But Chandler's noir instincts show through--even though sacrifices have been made, there are no heroes; if the world is better off because of the war effort, it is probably only a temporary condition, Chandler's script suggests, because whatever unnameable forces set the war--and its

solution--in motion have come right back to fester in human weakness again and strike out at random. The emotional devastation of World War I exhibited in the Europe of The Waste Land and The Sun Also Rises similarly followed the Second World War in America, although, due to the "victory" of the second war, the process of starting over was more internal than external.

Postwar "Red scares" and the advent of McCarthyism are non-fictional noir manifestations, feeding as they do on fear and planting suspicion of otherwise normal people and events. Between the revelation of nuclear force on one end and the McCarthy blacklisting on the other, film noir is an appropriately grim response to the unreasoning fear, even paranoia, that proliferated after the war (Silver 2). The audience's affinity to noir was a response to perceived external threats, but the genre's elements were also a reflection of an inner turmoil the resolution of which required a renewed examination of all values and principles:

> [1945-1955] America underwent a prolonged trauma which, in an individual, might have been diagnosed as paranoid schizophrenia. Certain subjects, certain modes of expression, came to be seen as threatening, and were declared taboo . . . Doubt, dissatisfaction, the left-wing habit of healthy scepticism were declared un-American and equated with treason . . . These repressed thoughts and

> feelings, denied overt expression, resurfaced in the California dream factory, outlet for the collective unconscious . . . a submerged socialism bubbles just below the restless, swirling surface of film noir. (Kemp 270)

Noir, and the Tiresian influence, can always be reduced to a basic consideration of consciousness and its attempt to order, explain, and incorporate the unconscious.

As a virtual flood of films noir filled the market in the years just after the war, Hollywood filmmakers redefined American values, or simply indicated the need for definition. Their efforts refined film noir, making it the premiere artistic statement of the time. Part of that refinement involved the casting off of the detective protagonist.

Parodies such as Bob Hope's My Favorite Brunette (1948) were already turning the model into a cliche, and the new political climate did not need the crime-solving motivation of the private detective when larger, social crimes were the problem. Because the detective and his personally dark and threatening world were dwarfed by such forces as the House Un-American Activities Commission and blacklisting, the character was no longer an adequate representation of the common man's struggle (Schatz 139).

The enemy, it seemed, was suspicion, as invisible as the indeterminate threat of loss for Hemingway's heroes

or the evil behind crime that the private detective feels compelled to spend his life uncovering and pursuing. But the threat of suspicion and political harrassment were much more personal and, certainly in many cases, as unexpected as a crime when they occured.

Ironically, the late 1940s produced from that climate of suspicion some of film noir's highest achievements. Besides seeing The Big Sleep and The Blue Dahlia, 1946 audiences also saw the first adaptations of Cain's The Postman Always Rings Twice and Hemingway's The Killers, and were treated to efforts from top directors with Hitchcock's Notorious and Welles's The Stranger. In 1947, Brute Force won the first Academy Award for black and white cinematography, and a visual form of first-person narration through the camera lens was attempted in Bogart's Dark Passage and the adaptation of Chandler's Lady in the Lake. The year 1947 also marked the release of at least two outstanding noir efforts, the psychologically chilling examination of the carnival underworld, Nightmare Alley, and Robert Mitchum's quintessential noir role in the visually striking Out of the Past.

All of these films and the many more released from 1946 into the late 1950s "refine" noir by subtly changing the protagonist's vulnerability and the nature of the threat, and by employing a more deliberate technical style. The period from the late 1940s to the early 1950s

produced the clearest, most unflinching films noir, a high point for "the American expressionist cinema" (Schatz 123). These factors combine to produce an increased helplessness and hopelessness in the films, a starker existential message. After 1946, "the assailant is not a person but an unseen force. The pain is more often mental than physical . . . the loss of order, the inability either to discover or to control the underlying causes of his distress . . . is mentally intolerable" (Silver 4) for the usual noir protagonist.

At times the noir film seems to only present the frustration of hope for the protagonist, how to accept determinism and failure (Silver 4). But even under the pressure of invisible forces, the noir protagonist's "greatest failure is not [in] succumbing to the inescapable [forces]. . . . The greatest failure is never attempting in some way to redeem one's self" (Silver 5), a message that not only individuals but the entire postwar generation was trying to adopt and put into practice.

As depressing as some of the noir films seem to be, the style's long popularity is a result of the viewer's interest in seeing film figures meet their odds and struggle against them, no matter what degree of failure may be the end product. The Tiresian noir anti-hero imbues

a certain conviction that, rotten at the core and

> inevitably entropic as human history may be, there is a kind of existential toughness, a bullet-biting disengagement that can survive the ravages of time with something like dignity. (McConnell 203)

The noir protagonist's "disengagement," another Tiresian characteristic, is central to his ability to discover and live out the noir message. His distance allows him a certain amount of self-esteem and independence. Those virtues are the true lesson of film noir. The genre is not so much a testament to detective work or the ultimate justice of the law as it is a tribute to individual achievement (Schatz 136). Because the noir hero, like Tiresias, has fallen and raised himself up, he symbolizes the successful battle against nihilism. Even through their darkness, the noir films convey a realism that, based on facts, serves as a powerful alternative to other Hollywood images of the time that presented an overly-optimistic outlook (Kemp 270).

But the noir response was not a defeatist response; it was a signal that the bottom had been reached, and a road back--from the moral depravity of Naziism, from the confusion wrought by the atomic bomb, even from the Depression years--had been started upon. Even if the nearest light had the impersonality of existentialism about it, there was solace in making the aesthetic statement, "This is how things are."

If the "appearance of tragedy is a sign of the

culture's faith, innocence, and idealism" (Shadoian 59), then noir's response, largely an unconscious response since the concept of a noir genre was not in anyone's mind at the time, may be viewed as more of a positive than a negative attempt at articulating the culture's condition.

Odd as it may seem, the paradoxical result of confronting such new and unmanageable problems as mass fear and confusion from an individual's perspective could have had a calmative or reassuring effect on the viewer. Three films from noir's "Postwar Realistic" period, as Schrader identifies 1945-1949, Kiss of Death(1947), Force of Evil (1948), and Gun Crazy (1949) "grope for sense, for purpose, and the only direction they find is one of faith. After noir and what noir suggests about a collective psyche, faith is the only possibility" (Shadoian 116). Since noir's focus was on "modern man as an endangered species, unable to control the forces around him" (Cohen 29), the only thing he could have faith in was himself, and noir basically presents three means by which the protagonist (and the viewer) can generate that faith. Through the experience of opposites and an analytic process, involving understanding and subsequent action, the protagonist can begin to reassess his world (Shadoian 63).

The cinematic devices that foster such experiences are narration, an examination of the past, and a

purgation through an acceptance of responsibility, maybe even guilt, for one's condition. The process mirrors Eliot's considerations, after The Waste Land, of the value of tradition, and faith in one's place in that tradition. Of course, in the films each of these different approaches to solving the basic noir/Tiresian problems of identity and meaning often appears in conjunction with one or both of the others, but they each serve a distinct purpose for the protagonist/viewer.

The emphasis and regard for the past, "that country of guilty legend which, one way or another, the best films noir describe" (Jameson 33), converts noir to mythic archetype. The point is eloquently made in the first spoken line of The Killers. From the dark, off-screen, Burt Lancaster states, "I did something wrong once." The guilt of modern man echoes in this line and throughout noir. His "original sin" is his rejection of the past, forgetting that it is his past and vital to him. Eliot writes of developing "the historical sense . . . a perception not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence" and calls on the modern reader/viewer to revitalize his present by living in "what is not merely the present, but the present moment of the past" (Prose 38, 44). In the twentieth century, ignoring the past can produce cataclysmic results, and the external evils in the world at the present are reflections of suppressed past fears or desires that are erupting. Life may have

reached its point of no control because of man's misplaced faith and a refusal of responsibility. Whatever its cause, the trauma of the present, and an accompanying despair over the future, sends man to seek his solutions in the past.

Seeing himself as central to the significance of the past, the protagonist uses narration as his primary tool in unveiling meaning. If, as Porfirio and others indicate, noir is fundamentally existential, then it follows that the world will be meaningful to the protagonist only on a personal level.

The narrative technique also creates noir's "mood of temps perdu: an irretrievable past, a predetermined fate and an all-enveloping hopelessness" (Schrader 11). With the narrator relying on flashback, the story's events are predetermined for the viewer. The process places the viewer in the same helpless position that the protagonist suffers--that nothing can be done, or could ever have been done differently, to affect the tragic outcome (Hirsch 7).

Tiresias's naming himself and addressing the reader in The Waste Land creates the model that film noir narrators would copy: "wherever a diegetic narrative voice is involved, there is an implicit acceptance of . . . fatal connotations" (Porfirio, 107). The telling of the story, first, creates in the viewer's mind an impression of fatalism. Second, the narrative allows the

protagonist to discover through his own re-creation of the past a significant identity and meaning, whether those abstract qualities are redemptive or not.

The process of recalling, re-creating, and re-examining through the narrative places the protagonist in a position to expunge a measure of his guilt. By recording misfortune, confusion, even death, the narrative process becomes a kind of retribution that he must suffer or witness in order to become purified. The noir protagonist's re-examination, a search for meaning, duplicates Eliot's quest of the consciousness in The Waste Land, searching through time and space for new hope and purpose. The protagonist's purging is, of course, also the viewer's: "whether the audience identified with or merely observed . . . a protagonist not unlike itself [being] pounded by (apparently) undeserved circumstances, a ritual purging of guilt was made possible" (Shadoian 63). And noir's style, in addition to the narration, also contributes to the viewer's empathic identification. Refusing to provide the "entertaining" or moral lessons of the gangster films, the noir style requires, even forces, the viewer's participation in the film's skewed perception of the world (Silver 2).

But even without the personal mediation of the protagonist for the viewer, the bizarre settings, situations, and events seem automatically alien and unnatural at the same time as a part of the viewer's mind

recognizes them as the archetypal shadows of everyday life (Harvey 22). Because not only personal issues but also traditional economic and social values are examined by film noir, the viewer can experience a connection to his larger self, society as a whole. Noir films' baring of negative themes signaled that, as far as these social questions were concerned, a cathartic depth had been reached. Some filmmakers were satisfied to end their films on a fatalistic note, others managed to make some kind of existential lesson of the world's apparent chaos, and some tried to suggest that faith could still move man beyond the suffering he had experienced in the twentieth century. For all these filmmakers, the noir style was "a black slate on which the culture could inscribe its ills and in the process produce a catharsis to help relieve them" (Silver 1).

Film noir is perhaps unique in its role of artistic self-examination in that the self-consciousness it models and calls for from the viewer is a forced inward reflection. Desperate external conditions--unique to this country and this century--called into question traditionally-held norms, ideologies, and beliefs and introduced a climate of nihilism, from which existentialism is the only alternative short of a blind faith.

Tiresias is the perfect model for such a mind-changing abrupt shock because he embodies opposites

such as seeing and not seeing, a totally changed perspective in his speaking or describing, and the ultimate human reversal, the switching of sex (but retention of consciousness) to become the "other" self that is seen but can never be known experientially outside the knower. The self-consciousness that Tiresias exemplifies, and that film noir brings into startling, survival-oriented relief, is the search for the truth behind the nature of human consciousness and its purpose.

# CONCLUSION

The literature of the twentieth century, complementing times of great social, economic, and intellectual change and growth, reflects the radical adaptations the population had to face. Some of the literary signals of those social adjustments included experimentation in subject, form, and style. The disruption brought about by the First World War shortly after the start of the century automatically established a powerful new subject. Change itself--total, irrevocable, a starting over from decimation and despair--not only reflected the natural state of affairs, but appeared to be mankind's only new hope.

For the creation of this modern mythology, an archetype was necessary. When Eliot turned to the original encyclopedia of transformation, Ovid's Metamorphoses, for his model, Tiresias became a modern character with modern afflictions; his character proved to be a rich storehouse of qualities that translated directly to the modern experience. Eliot's selection of Tiresias fit the pattern of the new literature--delving into the past in order to clarify present identity and

purpose.

And Tiresias embodies for Eliot the same torn consciousness shared by the generation of World War I survivors. In his original innocence, he disturbed a natural phenomenon--the mating of snakes. The revelations of Darwin and Huxley in the late 1800s, Adams's and H. G. Wells's new ideas about economics and world societies around the turn of the century, and finally the war itself all inspired different perspectives about man's interrelationship, and the dangers of his interference, with the natural world. As the publication of Otto's Das Heilige attested in 1917, twentieth-century man was beginning to realize that he was dependent only on himself for answers and solutions.

Tiresias's meddling entirely changed his own nature, until a trial-and-error repetition brought him back to "himself," a self, however, that was now not just a model of bi-sexual consciousness, but also an archetypal problem-solver; his experience alone garnered him wisdom to which even the gods were not privy.

In twentieth-century man's case, the World War provided the shock that eliminated, practically overnight, the security of one type of consciousness, one way of perceiving, and replaced it with a view of total disruption. Eliot's choice of Tiresias, including both his positive aspects and his shortcomings, signaled that a time of sudden but permanent reformation that many had

anticipated had, in fact, arrived. The devastation of his present separated man from the past (and his past view of what life ought to be) and threw his future into doubt.

Naturally, Eliot was not the only writer sensitive to these issues at the time. In an effort to revive a sense of culture in the Europe that survived the war, though, his work, generated through Ezra Pound's help and dictum to "make it new," set a standard for other writers of the 1920s such as Fitzgerald and Hemingway.

Hemingway's presence in Europe, by itself, indicated that he was eager to break new ground in his writing, eager to explore the possibilities of new culture, new perspectives, seen through the eyes of a new kind of protagonist. Hemingway's sense of loss and disorientation that guided the creation of the characters in The Sun Also Rises correlates, through Eliot, to Tiresias's loss of sexual identity and (later, from Juno) loss of vision, as well as the loss of his sense of kinship and community with the rest of humanity. As Tiresias's extra knowledge ostracizes him, so too does Hemingway's Jake Barnes suffer a similar ostracism through sexual loss and its accompanying rare (forbidden) knowledge--that sex and identity are only loosely related, and that the belief that identity is based on sexual performance is not any more reliable than other traditions on which the twentieth century had cast doubt.

Due in part to his particular past, and probably in part to the success he had with the topic, Hemingway's exploration of Tiresian androgyny (i. e. androgyny sharing Tiresian origins and results) continued throughout many of his works. The colloquial (journalistic) style and tough individuality he automatically imparted to his protagonists provided a base from which the Hemingway character could enact his struggle to come to terms with himself and his world. In that effort, he displays the same Tiresian mien that Eliot used in his representation of the modern dilemma. Hemingway's final, unfinished work, The Garden of Eden, may yet stand as his most ambitious attempt to emulate The Waste Land by creating a statement that attempts, through its own art, to balance the twentieth-century collapse of traditions and values with a re-orientation, a harmonious re-balancing, of the priorities from which man determines his identity and purpose.

As Hemingway attempted to include his protagonists in large statements about life and destiny, the same forces and events that were motivating his writing also affected Dashiell Hammett in San Francisco. Hammett wrote from his experience as a Pinkerton detective, somewhat in the straightforward, journalistic style of filling out a report. The lives of his protagonists, especially private detective Sam Spade, mirror the same isolation from society, a sense of being between

commitments, that Hemingway wrote of in Europe. The two writers' characters also share an instinct to trust only themselves, which also allows them to modify society's rules for their own benefit if necessary.

And in Hammett's world, it is necessary. His characters repeat the Tiresian pattern in their primary activity--problem solving. In their detection, they usually end with less certainty than what they started with. Finding out that some things (the Maltese falcon) or people cannot be known (i. e. that the influence or presence of crime in everyday life cannot be underestimated) turns the protagonist toward accepting existential principles in his uncertain world. Tiresian insight leads him to accept a balance in himself between order and randomness.

Hammett's work pinpointed something in the public's experience, to the extent that Hammett's new "hard-boiled" fiction became a staple of 1920s literature and an inspiration for the gangster films of the 1930s. The movement gathered additional momentum from other writers, chief among them Raymond Chandler and James M. Cain. Chandler modified Hammett's private detective, crossing new boundaries in his handling of sexual and violent sub-themes in his work. Cain reduced his hard-boiled protagonists from Hammett and Chandler's quasi-lawmen to quasi-criminals. His characters Frank Chambers and Walter Neff are ordinary men who feel

themselves drawn, due to their own lust or greed, into criminal acts. And Cain presents their attraction to such acts as a yielding to their own irresistible dark wishes, which they are by nature determined to pursue as if they had no free will.

Through the 1930s the gangster films appeased some of the public's appetite for crime, an appetite that had been whetted by hard-boiled fiction and, perhaps, the social frustrations of the period. But Welles's Citizen Kane and Huston's The Maltese Falcon in 1941 gave a truer cinematic depiction of Hammett's hard-boiled dialogue and attitude and a Hemingwayesque hopelessness. These films signaled the beginning of the film noir cycle that would dominate the Hollywood product for most of the 1940s and well into the 1950s.

Film noir adopts its Tiresian characteristics from two sources. Initially, many of the screenwriters had previous experience as hard-boiled fiction writers, and a few of the genre's key directors and many of its technicians transfered their experience with the German Expressionistic style to their American work. Film noir, then, can be considered as the product of the cultural and literary vacuum and the repressive political climate that existed in post-World War I Europe.

In 1940s America, screenwriters, directors, and film technicians expressed their art in an atmosphere of radically changing social values regarding sex, marriage,

and family, and another repressive political atmosphere fueled by suspicion and fear. In addition, the advent of the atomic age and the end of World War II at that time helped to recreate the same sense of imminent and widespread permanent change that had followed World War I. And once again, a Tiresian influence on the artistic expression of the time similar to what followed the First World War filled the resulting vortex of disruption.

The Tiresian motif has proven itself eminently well suited to express the problems, concerns, and hopes (such as they are) underlying the twentieth-century experience. Tiresias symbolized a stranded individuality to Eliot, the embodiment of a feeling that hundreds of thousands would come to know personally in their lives in the four decades after World War I. The character's sexual ambiguity represented, at first, the drain of vitality and the mechanization of life at the start of the new century and, later, spoke to a shifting of sexual values in society. The character always implied the indeterminance and unreliability of identity based solely on sexual stereotype.

Paradoxically, Tiresias's loss also allows him to symbolize a solution through his androgyny. He embodies both a harmonious blend of the sexes (although they tend to cancel each other out) and, more important, a union between one consciousness, one way of being, and

another. He becomes, for the twentieth century, an example of the hope of genuinely being able to experience an "other" self while retaining one's own identity.

Tiresias's is an existential point of view, but his androgynous character is a symbol of reaching beyond that existentialism--to prove what man formerly had faith in, that his reality is not limited to his consciousness alone, but can include at least one "other." If, as Tiresias does, he can find that other already within himself, then his humanity and consciousness ideally become unlimited by opposites of sex, belief, or experience.

As film noir resurfaces from time to time--Blade Runner (1982), Blood Simple (1984), and Blue Velvet (1986) are recent variations--the Tiresian influence survives as well. Individual protagonists are still swept out of apparently normal settings into contact with a dark underworld just beneath the surface of that normality. And they, and the viewer, emerge changed, to discover an "androgynous perspective" regarding themselves and their world. Particularly in times when the norms of language and culture appear to be in flux, the Tiresian influence on popular art through sexual motifs, a hard-boiled style of dialogue and plot, and a film noir visual style will continue to provide rich opportunity for comparative study.

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