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THE AMERICAN NOVELIST INTERPRETS THE STUDENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION

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THE AMERICAN NOVELIST INTERPRETS THE STUDENT

OF HIGHER EDUCATION

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THE AMERICAN NOVELIST INTERPRETS THE STUDENT OF HIGHER EDUCATION

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

"For a century and a half, the novel has been king of Western literature."[1] It has both mirrored and influenced popular thought as it has found readers throughout the Western world. "The drama and the poetry, but chiefly the novel, of America have risen to a position of prestige and of influence abroad seldom equaled in history."[2] Consequently, the content of the novel is of concern to educators. The present study is concerned with the interpretation of the student of higher education in the United States as found in the work of certain prominent American novelists of the twentieth century.

The procedure used in selecting the five literary writers included an examination of annotated bibliographies of the American novels published during the twentieth century. The formidable number of writers who have used student

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[1] Henri Peyre, The Contemporary French Novel (New York: Oxford University Press, 1955), 3.

[2] Ibid., 263.

characters indicated a need of delimitation. Many novels were examined, read, and evaluated. Finally, the decision was made to limit the study to only a selected few major novelists. Of the writers chosen, only their novels in which a student of higher education was cast in a major or in a significant minor role were considered. Each novel contained sufficient information about the college student in his milieu to give value to the interpretation of the novelist.

The novels of each of the five writers were examined to determine just which were pertinent to the central purpose of this research. An analysis of the content resulted in the exploration of three major areas: (1) the identification of the student of higher education, (2) the educational experience, that which was basic and that which was incidental, and (3) the evaluation of the experience of higher education.

Bibliographies examined during the process of selecting the novels for this study were compiled by the following: Crawford,[3] Dickinson,[4] Hart,[5] Hoffman,[6] Mott,[7] Spiller and

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[3] Bartholow V. Crawford, Alexander C. Kern, and Morriss H. Needleman, Outline History of American Literature (New York: Barnes & Noble, Inc., 3rd ed., 1953).

[4] Asa Don Dickinson, Best Books of Our Time, 1901-1925; Best Books of the Decade, 1926-1935; Best Books of the Decade, 1936-1945 (New York: H. W. Wilson Company, 1931-1948).

[5] James D. Hart, The Popular Book, A History of America's Literary Taste (New York: Oxford University Press, 1950).

(Footnotes continued on next page)

and others.[8]

Because the interpretation of the student in the novel reflected, at times, the experience of the writer, consideration will be given to the life span of each author. The five are listed in the order of the chapters in which they will be discussed: F. Scott Fitzgerald, 1896-1940; Willa Cather, 1876-1947; Sinclair Lewis, 1885-1951; George Santayana, 1863-1952; and Thomas Wolfe, 1900-1938. Each experienced life on the campus of a college or university, and each portrayed students in one or more novels.

Fitzgerald's This Side of Paradise "haunted the decade like a song, popular but perfect....a book which college boys really read is a rare thing, not to be dismissed idly in a moment of severe sophistication."[9] It was a "novel based upon the author's intellectual confusions and liberated sex adventures,"[10] and indicated a change in American writing. It tells "the story of the illusions and disillusions of a

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[6] Frederick J. Hoffman, The Modern American Novel, 1900-1950 (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1951).

[7] Frank Luther Mott, Golden Multitudes: The Story of Best Sellers in the United States (New York: MacMillan Company, 1947).

[8] Robert E. Spiller, Willard Thorp, Thomas Johnson, and Henry Canby, eds., Literary History of the United States, Vol. III (New York: Macmillan Company, 1948.)

[9] Glenway Wescott, "The Moral of Scott Fitzgerald," F. Scott Fitzgerald, The Man and His Work, ed. by Alfred Kazin (New York: The World Publishing Company, 1951), 119.

[10] Edgar Kemler, The Irreverent Mr. Mencken (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1950), 132.

young man in quest of himself."[11]

"Sinclair Lewis's Main Street...revealed how the intellect was tortured in a small Minnesota town."[12] In his address, "The Fear of American Literature," which Lewis delivered in Stockholm on December 12, 1930, when he became the first writer of the United States to be awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature, he characterized Thomas Wolfe's novel Look Homeward, Angel as "worthy to be compared with the best in our literary production."[13] Lewis's Main Street, when first published, "seemed to be fulfilling Henry Mencken's vision of a national literature, no longer imitative and timorous, that would represent a first hand examination of the native scene in wholly native terms."[14] Education was among the phases of American life which the novelists were free to examine.

Characters in the fiction of the five writers are involved in the educational process; they respond to it and their experiences become vivid to the reader. "One test of excellence in fiction is the creation of characters that

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[11] Heinrich Straumann, American Literature in the Twentieth Century (London: Hutchinson House, 1951), 106.

[12] Kemler, op. cit., 131-132.

[13] Harry E. Maule and Melville H. Cane, eds., The Man From Main Street, A Sinclair Lewis Reader (New York: Random House, 1953), 17.

[14] Maxwell Geismar, The Last of the Provincials: The American Novel, 1915-1925 (London: Secker and Warburg, 1947), 71.

live in the imagination and stay with the reader as permanent acquaintances,"[15] writes Joseph Warren Beach. He lists among the characters which satisfy this test Eugene Gant and George Webber as interpreted by Thomas Wolfe.

General Divisions of the Study

Each of the five writers is treated in a different chapter. The focus is on the student of higher education as portrayed by the novelist in the specific novel indicated.

Writer	Student	Novel
F. Scott Fitzgerald	Amory Blaine	This Side of Paradise
	Nick Carraway	The Great Gatsby
Willa Cather	Tom Outland	The Professor's House
Sinclair Lewis	Carol Kennicott	Main Street
	George Babbitt	Babbitt
	Martin Arrowsmith	Arrowsmith
	Sam Dodsworth	Dodsworth
	Ann Vickers	Ann Vickers
	Gideon Planish	Gideon Planish
	Neil Kingsblood	Kingsblood Royal
George Santayana	Oliver Alden	The Last Puritan
Thomas Wolfe	Eugene Gant	Look Homeward, Angel
		Of Time and the River
	George Webber	The Web and the Rock
		You Can't Go Home Again

[15] Joseph Warren Beach, American Fiction, 1920-1940 (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1941), 18-19.

The college or university student as interpreted in the novels reveals different attitudes toward education. Among the students may be found satirists, affirmers, and seekers. The satirists attempt to bring about improvement by the use of derision, ridicule, or irony. The affirmers recognize inherent weaknesses but continue to assert their faith in the educational experience. The seekers have longed for more than they have been able to discover and are unsatisfied--yet they continue to search in the belief that education has something more profound which may be revealed.

> The time has come to discover in the brain-cells all the beauty and all the potential explosions that America has been discovering in its outer atoms. Our new Columbuses will sail the seas of education, literature, and the holy spirit of man. And what they discover may be some fabulous new continent within the skull.[16]

As the "new Columbuses" sail the seas of literature they may find in their anthologies of American writers works of each of the five novelists selected for this study. Each has made for himself a prominent place among the literary writers of the United States. Most anthologies now used in college and university classes in literature include their writings. Fiction is subjected to close study, because:

> Fiction, even more than poetry, music, or painting, sets everything in motion in us: our senses...our

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[16] Peter Viereck, "The Frontier Behind the Forehead," Current Issues in Higher Education (Proceedings of the Ninth Annual National Conference on Higher Education, 1954), 22.

> sensibility, our intellect, our religious, philosophical, and social views, our aesthetic joys, our desire to know ourselves better and to penetrate into other lives and to approve of ourselves in our favorite heroes.[17]

Since fiction has these potentials, the writer of the book length novel has an opportunity to reveal the life of a character in a significant manner. His interpretation of the student of higher education has value to those who are interested in American education.

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[17] Henri Peyre, op. cit., 7.

CHAPTER II

F. SCOTT FITZGERALD

Two approaches to the interpretation of the student of higher education are represented in F. Scott Fitzgerald's novels This Side of Paradise and The Great Gatsby. Amory Blaine's educational experiences in the first novel are presented chronologically. Nick Carraway's college experiences in the second novel are revealed through his occasional references to past events. Fitzgerald makes the following divisions of This Side of Paradise: Book One: The Romantic Egotist and Book Two: The Personage. The first book identifies the student and tells just what constitutes the college experience. The second book indicates Amory's evaluation of that experience after it has been subjected to the test of off-campus life. In The Great Gatsby Fitzgerald has the story told in the first person by using the literary device of a narrator, Dick Carraway. He has Dick set the stage for the action of the plot, enter on stage and play a role with the other characters who are involved in the development of the action, then step aside and reveal just what did happen to the central characters.

This device of Fitzgerald's has something in common with that used in Melville's Moby Dick. As Ishmael, the school teacher, becomes associated with the individuals aboard the ship Pequod and yet survives, so Nick becomes involved with a group of characters who are floating about the fabulous Gatsby estate and survives to interpret their conflicts. Unlike Ishmael, Nick is not the sole survivor. Tom Buchanan, a former fullback and college friend of Nick, is also among the survivors.

Family relationships bring Nick Carraway and Tom Buchanan together again after they have left the university campus. Tom marries Daisy, a cousin of Nick.Fitzgerald introduces Nick by having him recall some advice which his father had given him earlier in life. Ideas which are passed from father to son may become influential in the education of a youth. Hereditary influences are mentioned as Amory is first introduced. "Amory Blaine inherited from his mother every trait, except the stray inexpressible few, that made him worthwhile."[1] The novelist describes the environment in which Amory's mother was educated. Nick's father, a Yale graduate, longed for his son to develop an understanding and appreciation of those with whom he came in contact. He advised his son: "Whenever you feel like criticising anyone just remember that all the people in this world haven't had

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[1] F. Scott Fitzgerald, This Side of Paradise (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1920), 3.

the advantages you've had."[2] Amory's father, "an ineffectual, inarticulate man" who had inherited wealth, seemed to have little influence on his son's education.

The Student of Higher Education

This introduction to Amory Blaine and Nick Carraway, with their respective home influences, helps in the identification of the college student. The major portion of the discussion of the Fitzgerald characters will be devoted to Amory Blaine because of the information which is given concerning his education. However, some attention will be given to the references which Nick Caraway makes to his college experiences in The Great Gatsby. The implied evaluation of the experience, as tested in off-campus life, is pertinent to the central aim of this study. Through the eyes of the narrator, Nick, the reader sees the techniques which a former campus hero, Tom Buchanan, uses in daily life, when he no longer has the exhilarating applause of spectators surrounding him. Through his story of James Gatz, Nick tells what happened to a poverty stricken, but ambitious youth, who attempted to work his way through a small college by doing janitorial work. He had the feeling that he was unnoticed; he became lonely and discouraged. After two weeks the imaginative seventeen year old boy quit college. "His parents

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[2] F. Scott Fitzgerald, The Great Gatsby (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1925) (Bantam Books, 1954), 9.

were shiftless and unsuccessful farm people -- his imagination had never really accepted them as his parents at all."[3]

The College Experience

The juxtaposition of the dream and the reality of higher education is effective in This Side of Paradise. When talking with his new acquaintances during his freshman year on the campus, Amory "spread the table of their future friendship with all his ideas of what college should and did mean."[4] He "loved Princeton."[5]

He had attended preparatory school in the East. During his first year at St. Regis, while he was experiencing the pains of social and scholastic maladjustment, he had found satisfaction in football. It was during his second year at St. Regis, in a game with Groton, that he became the hero. On a crisp October day he was playing quarterback, a blood stained bandage about his head; yet he was in the midst of the great struggle, fighting for the honor of St. Regis. Amory sensed a feeling of great courage; he had identified himself with the heroes he had read about during his years of adolescence.

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[3] F. Scott Fitzgerald, The Great Gatsby (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1925), (Bantam Books, 1954), 106.

[4] F. Scott Fitzgerald, This Side of Paradise (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1920), 48.

[5] Ibid., 47.

> And he was the eternal hero, one with the sea-rover on the prow of a Norse galley, one with Rolland and Horatius, Sir Nigel and Ted Coy...hearing from afar the thunder of cheers...finally bruised and weary, but still elusive, circling an end, twisting, changing pace, straight-arming...falling behind the Groton goal with two men on his legs, in the only touchdown of the game.[6]

Consequently, his dream of life at Princeton included the dream of making the football team.

A short preview of some of the highlights of each of the four years of Amory's college experience will be followed by a more detailed analysis. (1) Freshman year included orientation to classmates, faculty, and campus. He was the only man from his preparatory school who entered Princeton that particular year. He attempted to become acquainted with student activities, to understand class work, and to find a place in athletic, social, and other extracurricular activities. (2) Sophomore year meant a continued widening of his acquaintances. He became interested in journalism, in participation in a musical comedy, in a tour with the student company and in extending his romantic experiences. He was out on a party with several college youths when one of them was killed in a car accident. During his second year in the university his campus activities became so important in his daily life that his academic responsibilities were slighted. After the spring finals he was notified that he had been conditioned in mathematics. (3) Junior year

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[6] Ibid., 34-35.

started with an early return to the campus for special tutoring in mathematics. He failed to pass the second examination. Consequently, he was penalized by being required to resign positions of honor which might have given him a constructive outlet for his latent potentialities. His father, with whom he had spent little time, died in November. War in Europe made an impact on the campus. Amory Blaine's classmates were enlisting for military service. "I'm a cynical idealist,"[7] was his reaction to the experiences of campus life. (4) Senior year, while Amory talked and dreamed, "war rolled swiftly up the beach and washed the sands where Princeton played."[8] The theme song seemed to be "Poor Butterfly," and the students read the poet Rupert Brooke. At the close of the year Amory left the campus for a training camp.

Now, following this preview of Amory's four years at Princeton, a more complete analysis will be made of the experiences involved in his college education. Fitzgerald revealed little about the curricular activities of the freshman year.

Student housing is described. Amory, when he first arrived on the campus, discovered that he was to live in a remodeled mansion which had become quite dilapidated but had been made into living quarters for twelve freshmen. The

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[7] Ibid., 93.

[8] Ibid., 160.

Holiday brothers, Kerry and Burne, were housed in the same mansion. Burne was interested in making a place on the staff of the student paper. Kerry seemed to have no special interests. Amory expressed his ambition to make a place on the football team.

College traditions, revels of the rushees, the excitement of the throngs of prosperous looking crowds attending the football games, and the constant rivalry of various clubs during class elections appealed to Amory. He was curious about the reputations of the clubs.

Satirically, the clubs are described by Fitzgerald.

> Ivy, detached and breathlessly aristocratic; Cottage, an impressive melange of brilliant adventurers and well-dressed philanderers; Tiger Inn, broad-shouldered and athletic, vitalized by an honest elaboration of prepschool standards; Cap and Gown, anti-alcoholic, faintly religious and politically powerful; flamboyant Colonial; literary Quadrangle; and the dozen others, varying in age and position.[9]

During his sophomore year, when Amory has qualified for an invitation to become a member of a club, he makes satirical remarks about the basis of selection of the members. He mentions the envy, jealousy, and rivalry which may have caused some to fail to receive an invitation to become a member of a specific group. However, the fellowship of the clubs was something worth seeking.

Once a college student has become established with a social group there may be a lessening of tension in his life.

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[9] Ibid., 49.

He becomes less aware of snobbery and the general strain which may be associated with the desire to make a club.

> Groups on a campus have long satisfied basic personality needs of students.... The developmental, therapeutic, and diagnostic value of group activities for the individual have been rightfully recognized by personnel workers.[10]

Opportunity to share group experiences brought greater happiness to Amory. During his early months in preparatory school he had been unable to establish rapport with his classmates, but making the preparatory football team had helped him to make a better adjustment. During his years in Princeton he continued in his efforts to be on easy terms with his classmates.

The "Big Man" on the campus, to Amory, as an entering freshman, was Allenby; he was the one hundred sixty pound captain of the Princeton football team whose picture was displayed in the campus shops. The "Big Man" was more likely to be a member of the musical comedy cast than a member of a dramatic club. Instead of writing for the literary publication he would be a member of the staff of the college paper. Amory longed to develop some of the characteristics of the "Big Man" on campus, but, as he said when talking with a classmate, "I hate to get anywhere by working for it."[11]

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[10] Janet Agnes Kelley, College Life and the Mores (New York: Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1949), 173.

[11] Fitzgerald, op. cit., 50.

At the end of his first year, Fitzgerald describes Amory by commenting, "as yet he had given nothing, he had taken nothing."[12] The close of his freshman year was associated with a war in Europe but it seemed far away -- more like some distant but rather "amusing melodrama" to him.

During the sophomore year Amory's class schedule included courses in co-ordinate geometry, Corneille and Racine, and psychology. He was disappointed in his classroom experiences. He sought more adventure in the academic courses than he was able to discover, and as a result he neglected his work "not deliberately but lazily and through a multitude of other interests."[13]

Extracurricular activities included participation in the musical comedy of the year. Men impersonated women in singing, dancing, and acting. Rehearsals were hectic, hours were long, and academic work was slighted. Tryouts for the various roles had revealed much competition for this traditional production of the musical comedy. During the final week of rehearsals the cast worked "from two in the afternoon until eight in the morning, sustained by dark and powerful coffee, and sleeping in lectures through the interim."[14]

Social activities of college students, as well as those of other youths, are revealed through the techniques of

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[12] Ibid., 60.

[13] Ibid., 88.

[14] Ibid., 62.

following the musical comedy on its annual tour. The holiday tour, the year Amory was a member of the cast of "Ha-Ha-Hortense!" included Louisville, Memphis, Chicago, Baltimore, and Philadelphia. The "petting party" of the 1920's, in which the "Popular Daughter" participated, is described by Fitzgerald. The "P. D." is said to have become engaged "every six months between sixteen and twenty-two," when she finally married for financial advantages.

The evolution of this species of young womanhood was as follows:

> The 'belle' had become the 'flirt,' the 'flirt' had become the 'baby vamp.' The 'belle' had five or six callers every afternoon.... The 'belle' was surrounded by a dozen men in the intermissions between dances. Try to find the 'P. D.' between dances, just <u>try</u> to find her.[15]

The novelist describes the shifting values in the moral codes of the period revealing the young people "deep in an atmosphere of jungle music and the questioning of moral codes."[16]

Campus customs of other areas of the nation are revealed by the character Isabelle, a former school friend of Amory, when they meet in Minneapolis during the holidays. When Isabelle spoke of her dates in Baltimore she mentioned that they came to dances in "states of artificial stimulation," were "terrible speeds," and "drove alluring red Stutzes," and most of them were slightly older than Amory.

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[15] <u>Ibid</u>., 65-66.

[16] <u>Ibid</u>., 66.

The lack of scholarship seemed to have little bearing on the social standing of a student when he was off campus.

> A good half seemed to have already flunked out of various schools and colleges, but some of them bore athletic names that made him look at her admiringly.... Isabelle's closer acquaintance with the universities was just commencing.[17]

The abrupt suddenness with which the dance of life may be interrupted by death is portrayed by the car accident which takes the life of the young man Amory thought of as the true aristocrat of his college classmates. A group of students were returning from a happy-go-lucky evening of fun when the accident occurred. The usually poised Dick Humbird temporarily lost control of himself and the car he was driving. As the result of too much alcohol his intellect had become clouded, he refused to relinquish the control of the car to another, and when it failed to make a curve in the road, the car crashed. Dick was killed. His last audible words were concerned, not with religion, but with science.

As Amory looked on his friend in death, an image of biological science was associated with the experience. He had always considered Dick to be something of an ideal gentleman. But there lay "all that remained of the charm and personality of the Dick Humbird he had known -- it was all so horrible and unaristocratic and close to earth."[18]

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[17] Ibid., 74.

[18] Ibid., 96.

What was the young collegian's philosophy of death? Greek scholars recalled the therapeutic value of tragedy when they witnessed the death of a worthy character in the theater on the hillside. But when the American student gazed on his friend in death, he described tragedy in the following way:

> All tragedy has that strain of the grotesque and squalid--so useless, futile...the way animals die... Amory was reminded of a cat that had lain horribly mangled in some alley of his childhood....[19]

Mechanical devices cooperate in the destruction of humans; nature even plays macabre music on the torn remnants of metal. Dick had been taken into a nearby house, where he died. Then "Amory stepped outside the door and shivered slightly at the late night wind -- a wind that stirred a broken fender on the mass of bent metal to a plaintive, tinny sound."[20] But youth lives while there is excitement about him. The next day Amory Blaine was in the theater with Isabelle responding to a "problem play" presented on stage.

The junior year in college opened early for Amory. He reported to a tutor in mathematics several days before the regular session began. During the second semester of his sophomore year he had been "conditioned" in a mathematics course. He had to prepare to take another examination in an effort to secure a passing grade in the course, co-ordinate

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[19] Ibid., 96.

[20] Ibid., 96.

geometry. "It seemed a stupid way to commence his upper-class years, to spend four hours a morning in the stuffy room of a tutoring school, imbibing the infinite boredom of conic sections."[21] The students involved in this particular tutoring section were several men who were identified as being a pitcher, a football player "who would beat Yale this fall, if only he could master a poor fifty per cent,"[22] and a gay young man who thought he was being honored by being in this group of a dozen men, which included star athletes.

But to Amory the fun of the spring had been so significant that the "gay young man" had no remorse, or at least less than he might have had, because he made low grades. He generalized that since he had the money to pay for tutoring he was more fortunate than those who, because of their lack of money, had to concentrate on studying and miss the beauties of spring.

Fitzgerald described the teaching techniques used by the professor. Apparently the general atmosphere of the room was even more depressing than any classroom could have been. The tutor became a "panderer to the dull." He smoked and explained; he used visual methods of teaching as well as auditory methods. "He drew diagrams and worked equations from

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[21] Ibid., 104.

[22] Ibid., 105.

six in the morning until midnight."[23]

Student reaction to the attempted "learning situation" revealed them as "a study in stupidity." Some were listless and careless about asking questions. Others were so self-conscious about not being able to understand the explanations and diagrams that they were too inhibited to attempt to ask questions.

Amory "found it impossible to study conic sections; something in their calm and tantalizing respectability... distorted their equations into insoluble anagrams."[24] He failed the examination, after all his tutoring. He generalized about his causes of failure. He might blame any one of a number of individuals and circumstances for his failure, or he could be objective enough to face the facts. Maybe he had merely acquired an educational veneer. He seemed to feel that each new set of teachers had attempted to change the veneer which they discovered he had acquired from others. Suddenly, Amory seemed to realize that what he thought would bring happiness was really contrary to his nature.

Among the fundamental principles which underlie the development of a human being, Kuhlen suggests that the following should be recognized:

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[23] Ibid., 104.

[24] Ibid., 105.

> That development and behavior change is essentially gradual and continuous, that the individual grows and behaves as a total organism, and that behavior, even a single act, is quite complex and grows out of many complex causes.[25]

Amory attempted a self-inventory analysis to arrive at an understanding of the complex causes of his failure. He rationalized that he had started as the "fundamental Amory." Then his mother had influenced him. He had been influenced by schools in Minnesota. Later, at St. Regis, the faculty "had pulled him to pieces and started him over again." To previous attempts at education had been added his years at Princeton--and then had come failure in mathematics.

To what extent should an individual conform, according to ideas revealed by F. Scott Fitzgerald in This Side of Paradise? He portrays Amory as realizing that he had experienced his "nearest approach to success through conformity."

> The fundamental Amory, idle, imaginative, rebellious, had been nearly snowed under. He had conformed, he had succeeded, but as his imagination was neither satisfied nor grasped by his own success, he had listlessly, half-accidentally chucked the whole thing and become again--the fundamental Amory.[26]

Senior year revealed that Amory and his classmates were questioning more and more of the so-called established traditions on the college campus and in the classroom. They

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[25] Raymond O. Kuhlen, The Psychology of Adolescent Development (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1952), 8.

[26] Fitzgerald, op. cit., 109.

doubted the staunch ideals which had been fostered through the reading of Tennyson and Browning. All did not seem right with a world which was at war.

Lecture classes were quite large. Fitzgerald implies there was little opportunity for class discussions on the part of students. Questioning the established authorities in the field of literature, in an English class, was not to be countenanced. The student was expected to answer only when called on to recite.

> Despite the evidence concerning the complexity of each unique human organism, there is still much emphasis upon the development for handling larger and larger groups more efficiently and too little emphasis on methods of working with the individual.[27]

And one of the satirical barbs of Fitzgerald is hurled at the professor who is lecturing on the Victorians to a class of about one hundred students. "In a Lecture Room" was the title of the satire which Amory wrote on this situation. The setting was a classroom; the immediate event was the lecturer in English appearing before a large class of students, with their pencils pressed to notebooks. Three times each week this same class of students appeared in the same setting with the same attitude of copying the words spoken by the lecturer. Amory resented the helpless situation of the students.

The aim of the lecturer seemed to be to attempt to

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[27] John W. M. Rothney, and Bert A. Roens, Counseling the Individual Student (New York: William Sloan Association, Inc., 1949), 12.

tease their "thirsty souls with sleek 'yeas' of his philosophy." But there was always the eager student who stopped at the desk of the professor. The conversation might center on the value of the syllabus written and sold by the professor. The professor might make a few favorable comments on the work of the student, then the latter would hurry away to labor through some more lifeless material.

A College Student Experiences Reading

What does the creative writer indicate concerning the reading of an individual? How does he develop a desire to read? What motivates him in the selection of books when he is "reading on his own?" How does he evaluate the content?

In a longitudinal interpretation of Amory Blaine, Fitzgerald traces his reading habits from preparatory school days through his college and post-war experiences. Orientation to the period in which the youth was reading may be significant, in associating his reading with the thoughts which surrounded him in daily life, as well as with his intellectual, emotional, and physical development.

This student, born in 1896, entered Princeton about 1914. His parents were wealthy. His father had a private library; he enjoyed reading Byron and The Encyclopaedia Brittannica. His mother had been educated in expensive schools, including one in Rome. In Italy she had lived in a world of "renaissance glory," and "absorbed the sort of

education that will be quite impossible ever again."[28] She learned to be contemptuous or charming, according to the immediate social situation. She experienced a culture which was "rich in all arts and traditions, barren of all ideas, in the last of those days when the great gardener clipped the inferior roses to produce one perfect bud."[29] So Amory's parents were acquainted with books, in a desultory manner.

Included in the reading of the youth during his school days, when he was in Minnesota, were: For the Honor of the School, Little Women, The Common Law, Sapho, Dangerous Dan McGrew, The Broad Highway, The Fall of the House of Usher, Three Weeks, Mary Ware, The Little Colonel's Chum, Gunga Dhin, The Police Gazette, and Jim-Jam Jems.[30]

The omniscient narrator comments, "He had all the Henty biasses in history, and was particularly fond of the cheerful murder stories of Mary Roberts Rinehart."[31] But his classroom assignments in literature caused him to form a distaste for the "standard authors."

Every teacher of literature is challenged with the possibility of developing an insatiable desire to continue to read on the part of the students. But the opposite result

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[28] Fitzgerald, op. cit., 4.

[29] Ibid., 4.

[30] Ibid., 18.

[31] Ibid., 18.

may be the outcome of classroom assignments and discussions. However, both groups of potential readers may be developed from the same situation unless the teacher is constantly aware of the state of intellectual development and emotional maturity, as well as the immediate interests of the youth in the classroom.

Voluminous reading characterized the spring of Amory's eighteenth year, sixth-form year at St. Regis. A class assignment included the reading of "L'Allegro," which aroused his latent creative impulses and he "was inspired to lyrical outpourings on the subject of Arcady and the Pipes of Pan."[32] Reading for class inspired him to continue reading. Included in his spring reading "on his own" were the following: The Gentleman from Indiana, The New Arabian Nights, The Morals of Marcus Ordeyne, The Man Who Was Thursday, Stover at Yale, Dombey and Son, Robert Chambers, David Graham Phillips, and E. Phillips Oppenheim. He read Tennyson and Kipling at intervals. But the one book which seemed to come within his realm of experience at just this time was Stover at Yale.

Browsing in a library among stacks of books may reveal great intellectual experiences. Fitzgerald has Amory discover George Bernard Shaw by this medium. And through his discovery of Shaw's Mrs. Warren's Profession, plus his desire

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[32] Ibid., 36.

for a four o'clock lunch which might be accompanied by a friend or a book, he discovered Stephen Phillip's Marpessa. Another student seated across the table from him happened to be reading Phillips while he was reading Shaw. A conversation developed; a sharing of interests followed.

How self-conscious are students when they enjoy books, but feel that they are among others who rather scorn the idea of reading anything which isn't required for credit in a course? Before the reader of Shaw felt free to enter into a wholehearted discussion of his reading, he looked around the crowded lunchroom to determine the possibility of being overheard by his non-reading friends from his home town. He was pleased to find another book-reading freshman "who could mention Keats without stammering, yet evidently washed his hands."[33] Even being associated with a student who was known to have written poetry for the campus literary magazine might lower his social prestige with his group. He weighed all the possible hazards to his campus standing before accepting the invitation to visit Thomas Parke D'Invilliers' room to browse through his private library.

What author would not like to be recommended by youthful reader to youthful reader? Two Fitzgerald characters had this opportunity of sharing criticism of books and writers. Fitzgerald brings together two young men who have definite

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[33] Ibid., 56.

creative and literary interests and gives them a setting in a campus room where books are recognized and respected for their intrinsic worth. Thoughts and ideas are alive, vital, and essential in the daily life of the sensitive youth. In this setting Amory meets Dorian Gray, Mystic and Somber Dolores and "La Belle Dame sans Merci."

The reader may identify himself with the character portrayed by the writer and the vicarious experience tends to enrich the life of the individual. A freshman college student who meets Oscar Wilde and Swinburne may reach the place that they become so much like daily acquaintances their names will become "Fingal O'Flaherty," and "Algernon Charles" in "precious jest." Amory read Shaw, Chesterton, Barrie, Pinero, Yeats, Synge, Ernest Dowson, Arthur Symons, Keats, Sudermann, Robert Hugh Benson, the Savoy Operas -- "...just a heterogeneous mixture, for he suddenly discovered that he had read nothing for years."[34]

During his junior year in college this particular student found that his reading paled; "he delved further into the misty side streets of literature: Huysmans, Walter Pater, Theophile Gautier, and the racier sections of Rabelais, Boccaccio, Petronius, and Suetonius."[35]

Frequently college students accumulate some type of

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[34] Ibid., 57.

[35] Ibid., 116.

a library of their own. The private libraries of Amory's friends contained such books as: Kipling, O. Henry, John Fox, Jr., and Richard Harding Davis in complete sets. Among the works of the poets were The Spell of the Yukon, a special gift copy of James Whitcomb Riley, and a copy of the poems of Rubert Brooke, who was a contemporary of Amory and his college friends.

Reading may have a therapeutic value for certain sensitive intellectuals. During a time of special emotional turmoil, Amory turned to the novels of Wells. "Amory threw his coat and hat on the floor, loosened his collar, and took a Wells novel at random from the shelf. 'Wells is sane,' he thought, 'and if he won't do I'll read Rupert Brooke.'"[36] This is just one of the many portrait etchings which Fitzgerald uses to interpret the desire to communicate, through the printed word, with the creative writer who shares a particular mood which may be timely. After an unusually sinister experience, Amory and his roomate began about midnight, shivering and sleepy, to read aloud "to each other from The New Machiavelli until dawn came up."[37]

No classroom assignment in reading could have been quite so timely as the reading done that night. Reading with a purpose has real significance when an emotional, or an

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[36] Ibid., 129.

[37] Ibid., 130.

intellectual, or an aesthetic urge becomes so strong that a reader will continue throughout the night.

During his junior year the student recognized what was termed the "definite ethical force" of Walt Whitman. He reread Tolstoi's Anna Karenina and the Kreutzer Sonata, as the result of a discussion concerning economics. Amory's reading interests, which were strengthened during his four years in college continued with him after his graduation.

An older friend, a philosopher and a man of religion, Monsignor Darcy, in a letter dated January, 1918, had occasion to express the power reading may have on a mature mind. Amory was a second lieutenant, 171st Infantry, stationed at Port of Embarkation, Camp Mills,Long Island, at the time the letter was written.[38] Darcy reminded Amory of the materialistic attitude of the world, and how experiences differ from those he knew at his age. He realized the generation was "growing hard" because it was being nourished on realities of war instead of the Victorian complacencies. Then the writer continues, "I reread Aeschylus and there in the divine irony of the Agamemnon I find the only answer to this bitter age -- all the world tumbled about our ears, and the closest parallel ages back in that hopeless resignation."[39]

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[38] Ibid., 171.

[39] Ibid., 171.

After Amory's return from war, and after the loss of the woman he really loved and hoped to marry, and after the "dramatic tragedy, culminating in the arabesque nightmare of his three weeks' spree,"[40] in which he tried to forget, he returned to his apartment emotionally exhausted. At this time when he turned to his reading once again, it was to A Portrait of the Artist As A Young Man, Joan and Peter, and The Undying Fire. This seems to be the first time that he became aware of a critic named Mencken. Through this critic he discovered several American novels which excited his attention: Vandover and the Brute, The Damnation of Theron Ware, and Jennie Gerhardt.

The discovery of American novelists caused him to see some of the English writers in a new perspective. Mackenzie, Chesterton, Galsworthy, and Bennett seemed to make less appeal to him as a result of his new discovery. However, "Shaw's aloof clarity and brilliant consistency and the gloriously intoxicated efforts of H. G. Wells to fit the key of romantic symmetry into the elusive lock of truth, alone won his rapt attention."[41]

The attitude of the immediate post-war generation of college students to American writers is revealed. Fitzgerald describes a conversation between Amory and his apartment mate,

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[40] Ibid., 224.

[41] Ibid., 224.

Tom, at a time when "existence had settled back to an ambitionless normality."[42] When Tom indulged in the "slaughter of American literature" he mentioned the supposed fifty thousand dollar a year income which some of the writers were reputed to be getting. Among these writers were Edna Ferber, Gouvenor Morris, Fanny Hurst, Mary Roberts Rinehart, Harold Bell Wright, and Zane Grey.[43]

Some writers were credited with having a "comprehensive picture of American life," as did Rupert Hughes, Ernest Poole, and Dorothy Canfield. The argument finally developed a plea for sincerity on the part of the writer. "Every author ought to write every book as if he were going to be beheaded the day he finished it."[44]

Frequently a writer may underestimate the ability and interests of a reader; he may fail to give that which he is capable of giving, just because he labors under the false impression of what his readers really want. College educated minds demand more. There must "be a public for good stuff," because English writers like Wells, Conrad, Galsworthy, Shaw, Bennett, and others "depend on America for over half their sales,"[45] according to the amateur critics presented by Fitzgerald in This Side of Paradise.

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[42] Ibid., 227.

[43] Ibid., 232.

[44] Ibid., 233.

[45] Ibid., 233.

Vachel Lindsay, Booth Tarkington, and Edgar Lee Masters were included among the "conscientious" writers in the area of American literature. Amory enjoyed reading the poems of the youthful Stephen Vincent Benet. Edgar Allan Poe was another American writer he enjoyed. Amory had even gone for walks through the countryside reading aloud from his poems. While walking through the fields one day, he was caught in the midst of a very heavy rainstorm and found shelter in a large haystack. Much to his surprise, a very attractive young woman, whose face he first saw by a weird flash of lightning, remarked, "I know who you are -- you're the blond boy that likes 'Ulalume' -- I recognize your voice."[46] Once again Fitzgerald had given literature a true setting to provide depth for its implications.

The college experience may assist the individual to read sensitively and intelligently. At each crisis in the life of a college bred individual, he may find understanding, enlightenment, and solace in literature. After the death of his fatherly friend, Monsignor Darcy, Amory once again turned to the creative writer for an interpretation of his experience; he saw life as a great labyrinth, and he was alone. "He had escaped from a small enclosure into a great labyrinth. He was where Goethe was when he began Faust; he was where Conrad was when he wrote Almayer's Folly."[47]

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[46] Ibid., 241.

[47] Ibid., 284.

An ability to evaluate ideas and philosophies may be a part of the college experience. Amory thought of Wells and Plato as being romantic in their approach to life. But, to him, Samuel Butler, Renan, Voltaire -- all seemed to be "concerned in the eternal attempt to attach a positive value to life..."[48] The evaluative judgment of the college student in comparison with the non-college student is significant. Much may be gained in the ability to "winnow the chaff from the wheat." What has the student learned which will help him to identify the source of ideas which are used as a barrage to gain his attention?

Fitzgerald depicts a young college man who develops a suspicion of "all generalities and epigrams," because he realized the aspirin-like quality to soothe such as those of "clever paradoxes and didactic epigrams." Evil or dangerous thoughts may be channeled through an apparently innocent form. One may serve to popularize the ideas of several others, and the consumer of the ideas may be naive about their acceptance, as well as indifferent to their source. Education may develop a greater critical ability. Amory theorized that men learn to dispense little known philosophies of greater men. "Benson and Chesterton had popularized Huysmans and Newman; Shaw had sugar-coated Nietzsche and Ibsen and Schopenhauer."[49] The man in the street needs

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[48] Ibid., 285.

[49] Ibid., 285.

to be able to recognize the "clever paradoxes and didactic epigrams" for what they really are. But the educated man should be alert to original sources, if he is to be an intelligent consumer of ideas, if he is to be an individual with an awareness of the history of mankind, and its implications.

Through reading an individual may come in closer contact with original sources of information. There is a close relationship between ability to read and ability to reason and understand. "Most teachers report that successful students are usually good readers and are able to study different content fields with reasonable ease and understanding."[50]

A Student Discusses American Writers

Amory Blaine and his former college classmate, Tom D'Invilliers, discussed writing and its relation to life at a time when "existence had settled back to an ambitionless normality."[51] Amory was concerned because the war had "certainly ruined the old backgrounds, sort of killed individualism out of our generation."[52] He remarked to Tom, who was writing for the press:

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[50] Paul A. Witty, "Current Role and Effectiveness of Reading Among Youth," Reading in the High School and College, Yearbook, XLVII, Part II, National Society for the Study of Education (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948), 9.

[51] Fitzgerald, op. cit., 227.

[52] Ibid., 228.

> What's your business? Why, to be as clever, as interesting, and as brilliantly cynical as possible about every man, doctrine, book, or policy that is assigned you to deal with. The more strong lights, the more spiritual scandal you can throw on the matter, the more money they pay you, the more the people buy the issue. You, Tom d'Invilliers, a blighted Shelley, changing, shifting, clever, unscrupulous, represent the critical consciousness of the race -- Oh, don't protest, I know the stuff. I used to write book reviews in college; I considered it rare sport to refer to the latest honest, conscientious effort to propound a theory or a remedy as a 'welcome addition to our light summer reading.' Come on now, admit it.[53]

Criticism surrounded the youths of the period while they were searching for something in which to believe. Amory insisted:

> We want to believe. Young students try to believe in older authors, constituents try to believe in their congressmen, countries try to believe in their statesmen, but they can't. Too many voices, too much scattered, illogical, ill-considered criticism.[54]

Amory could not believe in the interpretation which the older American authors had given in the fiction they had written. "According to the American novels we are led to believe that the 'healthy American boy' from nineteen to twenty-five is an entirely sexless animal."[55] Amory insisted that the literary writer should recognize the truths of life. He disliked "dangerous, shallow epigrams."

When Tom d'Invilliers indulged in the "slaughter of American literature" he denounced the writer who tried to be

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[53] Ibid., 230.

[54] Ibid., 230.

[55] Ibid., 231.

"clever or amusing" or who was "groggy with advertising." He admits that some of the novelists "can write, but they won't sit down and do one honest novel."[56] They spend too much time "trying to make business romantically interesting."[57] Persistent cheerfulness did not jibe with the realities of life as Tom understood life. He denounced the stories "about little girls who break their spines and get adopted by grouchy old men because they smile so much."[58] Approval was given to the writers who were sincere.

Reading and the ability to evaluate what is read are among the intangibles which should result from the experience of higher education. An acquaintance with the literature of the United States as well as familiarity with the literature of other nations is significant. A desire to see greater honesty among American writers was expressed by these two young men, Amory Blaine and Tom d'Invilliers.

The dilemma of the writer, as some writers understood it, was to write honestly but yet be able to sell what was written. Some compromised by giving the readers what they were willing to buy. Tom commented:

> Now, there's a few of 'em that seem to have some cultural background, some intelligence and a good deal of literary felicity but they just simply won't write

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[56] Ibid., 232.

[57] Ibid., 234.

[58] Ibid., 234.

> honestly; they'd all claim there was no public for good stuff.[59]

A Student Interprets Others

"Do you notice what he's got about improving his mind? He was always great for that."[60] These remarks were made about James Gatsby by his father, after Gatsby's death. On the fly leaf of an old copy book, dated September 12, 1906, the father had found his son's schedule of work and also his general resolutions which were planned to help him "get ahead" in the world. His resolutions included the reading of "one improving book or magazine per week."

Nick Carraway based his interpretation of Gatsby on the information which he learned from the man himself, from his association with him and his acquaintances, and from the stories told by Gatsby's father.

The lack of money had been a factor in the failure to adjust to the college experience as known by James Gatz of Dakota. As an ambitious seventeen year old youth, he had matriculated at St. Olaf College in Minnesota.

> He stayed there two weeks, dismayed at its ferocious indifference to the drums of his destiny, to destiny itself, and despising the janitor's work with which he was to pay his way through. Then he drifted back to Lake Superior, and he was still searching for something to do on the day that Dan

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[59] Ibid., 233.

[60] F. Scott Fitzgerald, The Great Gatsby (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1925) (Bantam Books, 1954), 184.

Cody's yacht dropped anchor in the shallows alongshore.[61]

Cody, a fifty year old man who had made money from the metal mines, had become a multi-millionaire from Montana copper. The professors at the Minnesota college failed to recognize the mental potentialities of young Gatz, but Cody realized that he could teach the youth to be of value to him. He undertook his orientation to a world where fabulous dreams may come true. Instead of listening to lectures in a classroom, and spending hours reading books in a library, James Gatz, who changed his name to Gatsby, learned the ways of life as enjoyed by the wealthy. Cody took him "three times around the continent" and when he died, five years later, Cody left a legacy of twenty-five thousand dollars to Gatsby. But through legal technicalities young Gatsby was deprived of the inheritance. He got no money "but he was left with his singularly appropriate education."[62]

James Gatsby, like Amory Blaine, experienced military service during World War I. He, too, failed to marry the woman he loved. While stationed at Camp Taylor, Lieutenant Gatsby met and loved Daisy Faye. After the war ended he was sent to Oxford. This is the story Gatsby told:

> It was in nineteen-nineteen, I only stayed five months. That's why I can't really call myself an Oxford man.... It was an opportunity they gave to some of the officers after the armistice. We could go to any of the universities in England and France.[63]

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[61] Ibid., 107.

[62] Ibid., 108.

[63] Ibid., 137.

Daisy married Tom Buchanan, the former Yale athlete, before Gatsby returned to the United States. Buchanan was quite wealthy. Only a short time after his return from England, Gatsby had no money left. When he was hungry and had no job, a racketeer offered him some work. Within three years Gatsby had made a fortune in the underworld. He bought a colossal mansion which was an imitation of a Hotel de Villa which might be found in Normandy. It was surrounded by forty acres of land located on West Egg, Long Island. Gatsby bought the estate because he discovered that Daisy lived across the bay on the projection of land known as East Egg.

Gatsby's dream had three phases: during youth he dreamed of getting a college education; during his time in military service he met and loved Daisy F ye and wished to marry her; after leaving the service he dreamed of making a fortune in the belief that money would cause Daisy to return to him. Only one of his dreams materialized; he did make much money, through questionable post-war means. The story of Gatsby's experiences are interpreted by Nick Carraway, the Yale classmate of Daisy's husband, Tom Buchanan.

> The truth was that Jay Gatsby of West Egg, Long Island sprang from his Platonic conception of himself.... So he invented just the sort of Jay Gatsby that a seventeen-year-old boy would be likely to invent and to this conception he was faithful to the end.[64]

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[64] Ibid., 106.

Through the recklessness of Daisy and Tom, the dreamer Gatsby was murdered for a highway accident for which Daisy was directly responsible. "They were careless people, Tom and Daisy -- they smashed up things and creatures and...let other people clean up the mess they had made."[65] Tom had been clever at playing an aggressive game of football when in the university; he knew how "to fight off interference."[66]

Gatsby had been a student in a small Minnesota college for a very short time and he had been in Oxford for a few months. He wished to give the impression that he was a college man, but his advisers in life had not been professors. They had been unscrupulous men of the world who had found an adept student in Jay Gatsby.

The Evaluation of the Educational Experience

How does the college student in the American novel evaluate his educational experience? Several pertinent comments have been presented in the earlier part of this study. Fitzgerald has Amory Blaine, who left the campus for a military camp and who returned after the war closed, give the following interpretation of his college experience.

Education is associated with the theory that people are fit to govern themselves. Logical reasoning is a basic

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[65] Ibid., 189.

[66] Ibid., 188.

factor in life; it should be stimulated through education. The man who is qualified to govern himself is one who can "be educated to think clearly, concisely, and logically, freed of his habit of taking refuge in platitudes and prejudices and sentimentalism...."[67]

Opposition is expressed toward any system which tends to create a standardized mold by which human beings are accepted or rejected. Amory cites an example of his experience in a required subject in the college curriculum. He remembers that he failed a course in mathematics; the real cause may have been deeper than a mere lack of concentrated study over a prolonged period of time. This scholastic failure was associated with the discrimination and disqualification which followed as a result. He was no longer permitted participation in extracurricular activities in which his aptitudes brought him the satisfaction of achievement. He challenges the moral and educational validity of a set of standardized rules and regulations which may deprive a college student of an opportunity to develop his latent potentialities just because he fails to prove his proficiency in a subject for which he may have little mental ability. Yet, Amory considers himself as being "probably one of the two dozen men in my class at college who got a decent education."[68] When

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[67] Fitzgerald, This Side of Paradise (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1920), 298.

[68] Ibid., 299.

the issue arises concerning the true meaning of the word "intellectual" as applied to people, he defines the word as always meaning "brainy and well-educated." He continues by insisting that an intellectual person has "an active knowledge of the race's experience."[70] This information of the experience of the race is among man's most valuable assets; one who possesses this is far less likely to be either "corrupted or made timid by contemporary experience."

Higher education should afford a student a better understanding of the history of mankind and its implications for the contemporary world. Amory contended that his education included this orientation, "for in spite of going to college I've managed to pick up a good education." The phrase "in spite of going to college" implies that this particular student recognizes weaknesses in the educational system to which he was exposed.

Before assessing undue cause for his disillusionment to the college, an examination of other comments made by this same student may be pertinent. He realized that his had been a war generation. (It was later known as "the lost generation.") Amory had been in the army, and some of his friends had been killed in battle. He had seen a great fluctuation of values, including values in bonds and in his Lake Geneva, Wisconsin real estate, as well as in values in morals.

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[70] Ibid., 290.

That which constitutes the college experience has been criticized and satirized by F. Scott Fitzgerald in his novel This Side of Paradise. However, he admits that college is but one of many facets of life's experience. Fitzgerald realizes that during a period of rapid growth an adolescent makes many awkward mistakes, unintentionally; just so does the college which may be constantly seeking to improve the educational opportunities for larger and larger numbers of students. When in the throes of rapid growth many painful experiences may result. And just as an individual has to make adjustments because of size so does an educational system. Adjustments which are made hurriedly, and under crowded conditions, may be far from satisfactory.

> Amory, even had he not been a selfish man, would have started all inquiries with himself...a human creature of sex and pride, foiled by chance and his own temperament of the balm of love and children, preserved to help in building up the living consciousness of the race.[70]

At this time Amory, the young man who as a freshman had been quite conscious of his appearance as he first walked across the college campus, was indulging in "self-reproach and loneliness and disillusion...."[71]

Higher education has a responsibility to the individual student in assisting him to become a poised, self-disciplined, matured, more logical human being, aware of the history of

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[70] Ibid., 285.

[71] Ibid., 285.

mankind, and better able to cope with the period in which he lives. Nevertheless, Amory recognized the need for restrictions until the "great mobs could be educated into a moral sense."[72]

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[72] Ibid., 303.

CHAPTER III

WILLA CATHER

In The Professor's House, Willa Cather described two professors, St. Peter and Langtry, who were definitely disturbed by the effort to make the education of the student more pragmatic. They opposed the "new commercialism, the aim to 'show results' that was undermining and vulgarizing education. The State Legislature and the board of regents seemed determined to make a trade school of the university."[1]

Course requirements in science and the humanities were giving way before the insistence of supplanting them with commercial studies, bookkeeping, experimental farming, domestic science, dressmaking, and other trade courses. Salary increases, promotions, and special recognition appeared to go to those professors who seemed to be assisting the regents to eliminate "the purely cultural studies."

Scholarship was taken less seriously than formerly. Out of Hamilton University faculty not more than one-third

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[1] Willa Cather, The Professor's House (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1925), 140.

seemed to be truly concerned with scholarly attainments. Of the sixty members of the faculty, only two were engaged in scholarly research of a non-commercial nature. Professor St. Peter was writing in the field of history. Dr. Crane was engaged in research in physics.

> He had lost the Deanship of the College of Science because of his uncompromising opposition to the degrading influence of politicians in university affairs. The honour went, instead, to a much younger man, head of the department of chemistry, who was willing "to give the taxpayers what they wanted."[2]

The struggle against permitting a shift in the university curriculum from the classical to the more commercial served as a magnet to bring together two professors who otherwise had little in common.

The Student and His Professors

What happened when a brilliant and receptive young mind came in contact with the teaching of two research scholars was told by Willa Cather in The Professor's House. The opening incidents of the novel occurred after Tom had completed his degree, worked for several years in the laboratory of Crane, joined the Foreign Legion, and met death in war. As a result of his sustained research he had made a scientific discovery which proved to be commercially valuable. He had left the formula, his notes and records in the possession of his colleague and former teacher, Dr. Crane. The young

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[2] Ibid., 140.

scientist, Tom Outland, made but few definite arrangements to protect his legal rights to the financial returns from the product which had resulted from his college education and post-graduate experiences. He was in love with Rosamond, the daughter of Professor St. Peter; consequently, he made a will leaving to her all rights to the discovery.

Symbolizing the "new commercialization" is Louie Marsellus, who happened to arrive in the university town at the opportune time to learn of the valuable formula. Louie had been working with the Edison Electric Company. Word of Tom Outland's death in battle reached the town about the same time that Louie did. He was an alert and aggressive promoter who recognized the value of exploitation and marketing. His personality and practical business ability helped him to accomplish what he undertook. Within a fairly reasonable time he married Rosamond, the girl Tom had intended to marry when he returned from war, and acquired, through her lawyer, the formula left by Tom.

Louie located the right men to market the product. He was so confident of the value that he used what money he had and borrowed all he could and invested in the undertaking. His daring venture won. Rosamond and Louie were suddenly wealthy, as a result of the patient and laborious research which had been accomplished by Tom Outland.

The Student Challenges the Professor

The intellectually brilliant youth who went from the cattle range country of New Mexico to the home of Professor St. Peter near Lake Michigan was an orphan named Tom Outland. The incentive which caused him to make the long journey came from an article by Professor St. Peter which he read concerning a phase of life in the Spanish Southwest. The author of the research article was the educator to whose home Tom went, because he wished to attend Hamilton College and study with the man who could write so honestly and knowingly about the part of the United States which he knew and loved.

Before discussing the background of the student, a study of the educational preparation of the professor may be of value. That particular article which Tom read was one of many articles which St. Peter had written during his years as a college teacher and research scholar; it just happened to be brought to the attention of a mind receptive to learning. And when, years later, the professor told the story of Tom's life he remarked that he had been the most outstanding student he had known in his classroom during his long years of teaching.

The background of the professor who could give such mental stimulation to a student is important. As a child he had lived with his family on a farm near Lake Michigan. When he was eight years old his parents sold the lake view farm

and moved to central Kansas. When young St. Peter looked from the train window, "the innocent blue across the sand dunes was dying forever from his sight. It was like sinking for the third time." The child knew great anguish when the "island sea" he loved was no longer visible. Even when he was a student in France, living with the Thierault family, "that blue stretch of water was the one thing he was homesick for." He had the feeling of being indigenous to an area.

Later, when he had completed his college courses and was ready to teach, he wanted to find a job right away because he was much in love and wished to marry. From among the jobs offered to him he selected the one at Hamilton College, not because it was any better than some of the others, but because it was in view of Lake Michigan. "The sight of it from his study window these many years had been of more assistance than all the convenient things he had done without would have been."[3]

Much of his research writing throughout the years had been done in his study, on the third floor of the rented house in which he lived. He had made research excursions to Spain to gather original material for his study on Spanish history. It had been a long, tedious, lonely, unappreciated study for quite some time. The first three volumes of his

[3] Ibid., 31.

history were scarcely noticed. They did get an occasional timid review from some other history teacher. Apparently he was just a scholar who was writing for other scholars in the same field. Later volumes gained more attention; even some of the younger research students were becoming interested in the new ways of doing historical research. They were pleased with the originality of the St. Peter approach to the materials.

For fifteen years he had been gathering data and writing on his Spanish Adventures in North America. During the time he had spent two Sabbatical years in Spain getting original source materials, he had spent two summers in the southwestern part of the United States, going along the trail of his adventurers. He had also been in Old Mexico and in France. "But the notes and the records and the ideas always came back to this room. It was here they were digested and sorted, and woven into their proper place in his history."[4] This attic room was his scholarly workshop.

His family had always shared in his time: two evenings a week he spent at home with his wife and their two daughters, and another evening he went to a concert, play, or social event with his wife. But the remaining evenings he was in his third floor study writing and doing research.

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[4] Ibid., 25.

Throughout the years, he had been conscientious in his preparation for class lecturing. Students always came before writing in his educational world. From the eyes of an attentive student he took inspiration and sought to pass on thoughtful results from his great store of learning. Just as long as there was one inquisitive mind, one curious mind, one challenging mind in a whole room full of students he had a great desire to do his best teaching. Something from youth kindled the flame of his intellectual being.

In his lecturing as in his writing there was an eagerness to find newer ways of interpreting information. Sometimes his independence of mind would be disturbing to others, just as it was when his books were first released. Readers had expected a formalized interpretation and had not found it; they thought that St. Peter had attempted something which had not quite come off. Later the critics realized what he was doing and they enjoyed his approach, which they found to be refreshing.

And much of the inspiration for the simpleness and the inevitability might be attributed to the appearance of the youth from the Southwest. St. Peter, in his writing of Southwestern history, realized that he was handicapped because he had not spent his youth in that area; he did not have the childhood associations with it, and the freshness of youthful emotional responses, as he had to the lake country. And his explorers' adventures were in this

> ...dazzling Southwest country.... By the time he got as far as the third volume, into his house walked a boy who had grown up there, a boy with imagination, with the training and insight resulting from a very curious experience; who had in his pocket the secrets which old trails and stone and water-courses tell only to adolescence....[5]

The Student and His Associates

The story of Tom Outland is told in the second of the three books of the novel. Willa Cather's arrangement is as follows: Book I, The Family; Book II, Tom Outland's Story; and Book III, The Professor.

> The obviously surprising element in the structure of The Professor's House is its second part, a long story inserted after the fashion of Cervantes or Smollett, and giving, as Willa Cather has said, an effect similar to those Dutch pictures of an interior where a square window offers a contrasting vista of a gray sea or the masts of ships.[6]

An autobiographical interpretation of Tom is refracted through the thinking of his friend and teacher, Professor St. Peter. In this section of her novel, Willa Cather depicts one of the most encouraging aspects of the teacher-student relationship. Both the professor and the student were intellectually alert, industrious, able to concentrate over long and sustained periods of time, sensed a common bond and experienced the joy of learning. Both made great contributions to scholarship. The author implied that neither man could

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[5] Ibid., 258-259.

[6] E. K. Brown and Leon Edel, Willa Cather, A Critical Biography (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1953), 240.

have been so effective without the mental stimulation of the other. Their research was cooperative at times, yet each made his unique contribution.

Mutual benefit resulted from their scholarly association. Spanish Adventures in North America gained immensely from the freshness of Tom's interpretation of the "dazzling Southwest." And Tom was encouraged to continue his research in the physics laboratory, where he had the help of Professor Crane.

The pre-college education of Tom had been somewhat unique. His father had been a school teacher in Missouri, and was taking his wife west for her health. Tom was probably about eighteen months old at the time. As the family was crossing the plains of Kansas, the father was accidentally drowned while swimming; the mother and Tom were left alone in the prairie schooner. Soon the O'Brien family came and took the mother to a doctor, but she died a short time later from an earlier illness and shock at the loss of her husband. Since there were several children in the O'Brien family, they just took Tom along with them; he made his home with them until he was old enough to care for himself. That is how he happened to grow up in Pardee, New Mexico, the place where he became a call boy for the crew members of the Santa Fe Railway.

Father DuChene, a French educated Belgian priest,

took a special interest in the education of Tom. The youth seemed to have a great interest in history and Latin. Tom had no formal high school education when he reached Hamilton College; however he did have a background of valuable experience and an understanding of Latin, coupled with an insatiable interest in learning.

Money is required to make the transition from a small town in the Southwest to a college campus near Lake Michigan. Willa Cather seems to give the impression that if one really wants an education, one will find the way. And Tom Outland found a way, with the help of his friends. Tom was about twenty years old when he entered the yard of the Professor's home. Not until after he had completed his college course did he explain just why his education had been delayed. He said that "the thing that side-tracked me and made me so late coming to college was a somewhat unusual accident, or string of accidents. It began with a poker game, when I was a call boy in Pardee, New Mexico."[7]

This pre-college student learned more about human nature while working among the men of the freight crews of the Santa Fe. A freight crew had to be called on a fall night shortly after payday. Tom was told that the crew members might be found in a game behind the Ruby Light Saloon. The poker game had reached a high point of emotional tension.

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[7]Cather, The Professor's House (New York: Grosset and Dudley, 1925), 179.

One man, a stranger, seemed to be winning frequently. Tom dared not interrupt until just the opportune time; then he might call the crew members from the game. The adobe hut was crowded, smoky, and tense. But the beautiful cadences of a canary in a covered cage filled the room with harmonious sounds. "He was a beautiful singer -- an old Mexican had trained him -- and he was one of the attractions of the place." And the workers who were caught in the larger cage of gambling risked every cent they possessed in a game of chance. If the cards were against them, they did not wish to face their families. No man in the game had any respect left for the one man who was lucky enough to win the jackpot. Tom Outland observed the reactions of men as they won or lost. One of the winners became his friend.

Tom's opportunity to attend college resulted from a chain of circumstances which started in this room. It was here that he watched Blake, a new man on the crew, under the spell of a mind excited by alcohol and an uncanny skill at gambling, win about $1,600. Something about the essential goodness of the man, in spite of his general appearance, prompted Tom to protect him through the night as he lay in a sleeping stupor with his winnings unprotected. The next day the money was placed by Blake in a bank not to be touched for one year. Formerly, to Blake money was something to win one night and lose the next. "Easy come, easy go."

The mind of a potential scholar may be discovered in the most unlikely places. Willa Cather finds an intelligent youth in a precarious position, gives him an opportunity to reveal his understanding of men in relation to their motives and environment, shows just how money passes by chance from man to man, and how it may bring good, or greed, or jealousy, or help to make an education possible.

When Tom Outland became ill, Blake and an old Mexican patiently nursed him back to health. Blake, when the doctor recommended an outdoor life for Tom, gave up his job with the Santa Fe Railway and found work with a rancher, where he and Tom might work together. Tom's association with the former gambler caused him to be in an area where he might explore the ruins of an ancient Indian village. The findings of these explorations were of special value to Professor St. Peter when Tom Outland shared them with him. While they were working on the cattle ranch, near the Blue Mesa, Blake encouraged the youth to continue with his studies. Together they read Robinson Crusoe and Gulliver's Travels. Blake knew that Father DuChene had asked Tom to read one hundred lines of Caesar every day. Tom later told Professor St. Peter, "He said if I once knew Latin, I wouldn't have to work with my back all my life like a burro. He had great respect for education, but he believed it was some kind of hocus-pocus that enabled a man to live without work."[8] When Tom finally

[8] Ibid., 188.

reached the home of Professor St. Peter, he gave Mrs. St. Peter "an earthen water jar, shaped like those common in Greek sculpture, and ornamented with a geometrical pattern in black and white." He talked about the Indian ruins in which he had discovered the treasures. Tom was questioned by the professor who was greatly interested in the objects which the prospective student had brought from the great Southwest.

But Tom had other gifts to bestow on the family.

> Taking a buckskin bag from his pocket, he walked over to the window-seat where the children were, and held out his hand to them, saying: "These I would like to give to the little girls." In his palm lay two lumps of soft blue stone, the colour of robins' eggs, or of the sea on halcyon days of summer.
>
> The children marvelled. "Oh, what are they?"
>
> 'Turquoises, just the way they come out of the mine, before the jewelers have tampered with them and made them look green. The Indians like them this way.'[9]

When Tom discussed his education with the Professor he was asked about his high school courses; Tom had never attended high school, he said. But he could read Caesar and Virgil. Parts of the Aeneid he quoted from memory. He was congratulated on his "good pronunciation and good intonation."

And Tom had a fresh mind for education. He was mentally alert. "With a good tutor, young Outland had no difficulty in making up three years' mathematics in four months."[10]

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[9] Ibid., 120.

[10] Ibid., 120.

And this orphaned son of a schoolteacher had brought to college with him a background of experience which was valuable. He had been associated with Santa Fe crewmen, the cattle ranchers, and the ruins of an earlier civilization. Of this ruined civilization a scholar remarked that apparently the peoples had become too civilized; they had failed to protect their rights and other more aggressive peoples had destroyed them.

During his years on the college campus and in the laboratory, the young genius worked with two professors who prided themselves on their struggle to carry on purely non-commercial research. Those who were interested in business and commerce were their academic rivals and to be outwitted in every way possible. Rather than make an effort to understand more about the basic value of commercialization as related to their laboratory findings and interests, they ignored it.

Even though, for several years, this brilliant student of theirs had been involved in a series of laboratory experiments which had a great commercial potential, as well as an intrinsic value to society, they made no effort to help him discover markets. Seemingly, they did little, in a legal manner, to help him protect his discoveries. Before he went to war he did take out a patent and make a will, leaving the young woman to whom he was engaged to be married, the daughter of Professor St. Peter, as his sole beneficiary. Tom was

killed on the front lines of battle in World War I.

After Tom's death, a man experienced in the commercial world, one who realized the relationship between the academic laboratory and industry, learned of the formula which had been left neglected in the laboratory of Tom's professor and colleague. Through a series of well manipulated, tactful interviews with Dr. Crane, the professor of physics, the representative of commercialization learned the details of the research. He took legal steps to procure all the documents relative to the scientific discovery. His knowledge of financing and marketing made possible the utilization of the new information in the commercial world. The result was a financial return which amounted to a fortune to the beneficiary of Tom's will and her new husband, the representative of commercialization and industry, the exploiter. All this had resulted from the correct and ultimate development of the laboratory findings. Neither professor of pure research recognized the possibilities.

Marsellus and his wife established scholarships at Tom's university in the name of Outland. They built a large and imposing house which they named Outland; they wished to honor his memory by placing all his scientific instruments and papers where they would be available to other scholars.

Discontent, envy, and jealousy destroyed the happiness which the professor had formerly known in his home

when his daughters were small, when Tom was a beginning student, and before he had completed his historical research. Money could not replace all this happiness which had vanished.

When his daughter offered to share the fortune with her father in order that he might give up teaching and devote his full time to research, he refused to accept her offer. He wanted her to understand that Tom owed him nothing, because he had known much scholarly pleasure in teaching him.

The great scholar at the small university remarked:

> 'In a lifetime of teaching, I've encountered just one remarkable mind; but for that, I'd consider my good years largely wasted. And there can be no question of money between me and Tom Outland. I can't explain just how I feel about it, but it would somehow damage my recollections of him, would make that episode in my life commonplace like everything else. And that would be a great loss to me. I'm purely selfish in refusing your offer; my friendship with Outland is the one thing I will not have translated into the vulgar tongue.'[11]

And Tom had also sensed a feeling of responsibility to possessions inherited from those who had lived in the earlier time. When, before coming to college, he had discovered that his friend Blake had sold relics of the Indian city on the Mesa to a foreign agent he was outraged; he looked upon the findings as a heritage which belonged to all Americans. St. Peter seemed to overlook the contribution which Tom's research had made to the field of aviation; he thought

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[11] Ibid., 62.

of it only in relation to himself. Tom had shared his knowledge of the Mesa with his professor. Other scholars had gained new ideas through this interchange of ideas.

Rosamond reminds her father that "it was only Louie's energy and technical knowledge that ever made Tom's discovery succeed commercially."[12]

The Tension Among Scholars

Willa Cather reveals many of the problems which a student encounters in his efforts to get an education. A research article published by a professor had been read by an interested person in a remote section of the nation. But the article aroused the interests of a potential scholar. An embryo student told the professor: "I read an article by you in a magazine, about Fray Marcos. Father DuChene said it was the only thing with any truth in it he'd read about our country down there."[13]

Pressure was brought against this same professor because he was accused of publishing books "that weren't strictly text-books."[14]

There are times when students suffer in their studies because of faculty tensions. Willa Cather tells of a professor of European history and one of American history, who

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[12] Ibid., 60.

[13] Ibid., 114.

[14] Ibid., 56.

even though they had been members of the same faculty, and in the same department, had scarcely spoken to one another for nearly twenty years. They were both young men when they came to Hamilton College twenty years earlier. The rivalry is viewed from the angle of Professor St. Peter; the report may be biased.

According to his account, Horace Lantry became a member of the faculty while his uncle was president of the board of regents. During the year that St. Peter was taking his second Sabbatical, spending the time in Spain doing research for a book of history, Lantry tried to wrest his department from him. Had not some of St. Peter's friends discovered what was happening and gone to the state capitol about the movement, the Lantry group would have been victorious. His uncle was "very influential" in state politics. The university had to depend largely upon his influence to get appropriations passed.

Enrollment in Lantry's classes was small because his lectures were dull and students seemed to care very little for him as a person. Here are cited two characteristics which a college student expects in a teacher. Lectures should be scholarly but somewhat attention-holding, and the professor needs to be approachable and sociable. Many valuable ideas are exchanged outside of the classroom. Lantry's standards of scholarship seemed questionable. The novelist gives

a satirical interpretation of the collateral reading for which a Lantry student might be given credit in a course in history. According to campus rumors,

> A student could read almost anything that had ever been written in the United States and get credit for it in American history. He could charge up the time spent in perusing The Scarlet Letter to Colonial history, and Tom Sawyer to the Missouri Compromise.[15]

Political pressure exerted by the Lantry academic clique caused St. Peter to take an extended summer vacation rather than risk leaving the campus for his regular Sabbatical leave. Because of his interest in research and the amount of time he devoted to research, the charge was brought against him that he was spending too much time doing something other than preparing his lectures and teaching the students. In order to satisfy Lantry, the board of regents introduced a chair in Renaissance history for him, because he insisted that the students did not care for the subject which he was scheduled to teach. To improve his status with the students, he sponsored a fraternity. He also took students on tours to Europe to "brush up on their manners."

The Cooperation Among Scholars and Others

Just as there are areas of tension among scholars, there are areas of cooperation. Both are revealed in Willa Cather's interpretation of the student of education in his milieu.

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[15] Ibid., 55.

> Tom Outland and the professor are linked to each other by a sensitivity to history -- not academic history (which does not admit of this kind of sensitivity), but history conceived as a series of past human adventures whose implications reverberate excitingly into the present. Tom's joy in discovering and investigating Cliff City is the same kind of joy that the professor found in writing his Spanish Adventures in North America. Indeed, he had gone with Tom on a journey of discovery in the Southwest using Tom's experiences as a guide in identifying places referred to in the journals of old Spanish explorers.[16]

And the young man who had spent his boyhood in the very area which had become the subject of the Professor's writing was willing to share his experiences with the great teacher. This permitted the historian to give "the glory and freshness of a dream"[17] to a portion of his writing.

Through the assistance of another professor, this same college student became a great physicist and "invented the Outland vaccum, which 'revolutionized aviation,'" and made a fortune for Louie Marsellus, who married Rosamond, the professor's daughter.

Tom Outland became a research scholar who contributed to the welfare of humanity. His inquisitive mind continued to seek for the answers to questions which aroused his interest. But all his questioning ceased before his thirtieth birthday. He died in a war. The fruits of his

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[16] David Daiches, Willa Cather, A Critical Introduction (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1951), 92-93.

[17] Ibid., 97.

research had tangible results in a vacuum which "revolutionized aviation." But his professor of physics was too interested in theoretical research to explore the possibilities of the results of the findings of Tom Outland. Willa Cather stresses the value of a closer association between those who direct the academic laboratories and those who serve in making the discoveries of scientists functional in the life of the people.

> There is a growing recognition on the part of institutions of higher education that greater efforts must be made to establish better relations with nonschool agencies in the community. Many government and business agencies have resources for research which are being made available to students for the purpose of investigations. This is being achieved through the development of mutual understanding and good will between higher institutions and these agencies.[18]

Tom's professors Crane and St. Peter had rather resented the commercialization which was finding its way into the college curriculum. But Marcellus, the promoter who married the daughter of the professor, even proposed the erection of a building to house the scientific equipment used by Tom Outland. At least he wished to place Tom's material where it might be used by other students who were interested in research.

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[18] A. E. Manley, "Interinstitutional Cooperation and Coordination," Current Issues in Higher Education, Ralph W. McDonald, ed. (Washington, D.C.: Department of Higher Education, National Education Association of the United States, 1951), 188.

Tom Outland, the orphan child who was reared by the O'Brien family, became an educated man because of his mental ability, his concentrated efforts, and the assistance of many people. Some of his friends were uneducated, but some were great scholars. Each, in his way, contributed toward making higher education possible for Tom Outland, the son of a former school teacher.

But there is another interpretation of the results of higher education:

> Like the cliff-dweller relics he discovered, Tom Outland's invention is exploited to the profit of a stranger who, completing the conquest, marries Rosamond, Tom's fiancee, and replaces him in the bosom of the family. The success of the Professor's "Spanish Adventurers in North America," on which he lavished his best years, makes necessary giving up the ugly old house, rich in the associations of good living and the scene of his creativity, for the cheerless comfort of the new. At the university sound scholarship is discounted and cultural studies are deemphasized.[19]

The association between the academic mind of the scholar and the thinking of the people may extend into the area of the humanities as well as into the areas of science, invention, and commercial studies.

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[19] John Hinz, "A Lost Lady and 'The Professor's House,'" The Virginia Quarterly Review, Vol. XXIX (Winter, 1953), 76.

CHAPTER IV

SINCLAIR LEWIS

When Sinclair Lewis was writing Main Street he was "a youthful reformer with the illusion that a lot of men and women would be bettered if their faults could be pointed out to them."[1] Many of these weaknesses, or faults, are revealed among the college students who appear in Lewis' novels which form the basis of discussion in this chapter.

Student	Novel	Date
Carl Kennicott	Main Street	1920
George Babbitt	Babbitt	1922
Martin Arrowsmith	Arrowsmith	1925
Samuel Dodsworth	Dodsworth	1929
Anne Vickers	Ann Vickers	1933
Gideon Planish	Gideon Planish	1943
Neil Kingsblood	Kingsblood Royal	1947

[1] Harrison Smith (ed.), From Main Street to Stockholm, Letters of Sinclair Lewis, 1919-1930 (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1952), x.

Lewis was aware of the characteristics of the college student and his relationship to the institution of higher education which he attended. The number of students attending a college or a university might vary from a few hundred to several thousand, yet he discovered certain weaknesses which they seemed to have in common. He was aware of the special problems which were more directly related to the size of a given institution which might be attended by a particular individual.

He was cognizant of the interrelationships of the graduates of the smaller and the larger educational institutions. Carol, a graduate of a small college, married Dr. Will Kennicott, a graduate of a large state university. Martin Arrowsmith, a graduate of a state university medical school, found his work in public health affected by the man to whom he was responsible, a man who was a graduate of a small college.

As a satirist Lewis exposes the weaknesses of the students and the institutions which they attend. And he seems to have the ability to focus his satire on the vulnerable areas. Humor is involved in satire, and the American sense of humor is highly publicized. A good laugh relieves tension and creates empathy between speaker and listener, between writer and reader.

> Satire blends a critical attitude with humor and wit to the end that human institutions may be improved. The true satirist is conscious of the frailty of institutions of man's devising and attempts through laughter not so much to tear them down as to inspire a remodeling.[2]

Before the completion of Babbitt, Sinclair Lewis, while in Italy, wrote his publishers: "It is satiric, rather more than Main Street; and for that reason -- I think -- I hope -- that the novel after Babbitt will be definitely non-satiric -- except, of course, for occasional passages."[3]

Pre-college reading interests are significant in the life of any individual. F. Scott Fitzgerald reveals the importance of reading in the life of Amory Blaine. The Nobel Award winner, Sinclair Lewis, reveals the significance of reading in the life of youthful "Red" Lewis. He found inspiration in the realistic stories of Hamlin Garland, a Wisconsin writer. Garland's stories excited his young mind because Lewis' country had much in common with that described in Main Travelled Roads. He knew people like those he met in Garland's writing. For the first time Lewis became aware of the possibility of writing about the people he really knew. Since several characters in his novels are readers, the comments concerning his own discoveries in reading are pertinent.

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[2] William Glint Thrall and Addison Hibbard, A Handbook to Literature (New York: The Odyssey Press, 1946), 386.

[3] Smith, op. cit., 87.

> I had realized in reading Balzac and Dickens that it was possible to describe French and English common people as one actually saw them. But it had never occurred to me that one might, without indecency write of the people of Sauk Centre, Minnesota, as one felt about them.
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> . . . . . .
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> But in Mr. Garland's Main-Travelled Roads I discovered that there was one man who believed that Midwestern peasants were sometimes bewildered and hungry and vile--and heroic. And, given this vision, I was released; I could write of life as living life.[4]

In writing of "life as living life" Lewis was determined to hold a mirror up for the individual to see himself in relation to his group, to his friends and acquaintances, and to himself--his motives, prejudices, hypocrisies, and ideals.

Roll Call

Each of the seven students to be used in this Lewis study will be given a brief introduction. The more detailed analysis which will follow will depend on the amount of information which the novelist gives which is pertinent to the central purpose of this study.

(1) Carol Kennicott attended Blodgett College which had an enrollment of 300 students. (Another Lewis character, The Great Scholar, a minor character in Babbitt, attended Blodgett, completed a Bachelor of Arts degree there, and later completed a Doctor of Philosophy in Economics at Yale.)

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[4] Harry E. Maule and Melville H. Cane (eds.), Sinclair Lewis Reader: The Man from Main Street, Selected Essays and Other Writings, 1904-1950 (New York: Random House, 1953), 15-16.

Carol, after her graduation from Blodgett, attended a library school in Chicago, served as librarian in the St. Paul City Library, and then married Dr. Will Kennicott of Gopher Prairie.

In Main Street Lewis reveals the general feeling of uneasiness and fear which people may associate with the unknown. The uneducated, or partially educated, may be skeptical of the content of books, of the contact of the immature mind with the more highly educated and worldly mind, of the discoveries which may come to light during extended research, and of the experiments performed in a science laboratory. Parents sent their children to Blodgett because the small college would "protect them from the wickedness of the universities."

During the college days of Carol Kennicott pious families of Minnesota, Iowa, Wisconsin, and the Dakotas were concerned about the "heresies of Voltaire, Darwin, and Robert Ingersoll."[5] Some parents wished to shield their sons and daughters from these unconventional philosophies just as long as possible. They reasoned that the larger the institution of higher education the more freedom of thought might be prevalent on the campus. Consequently, they preferred to send their sons and daughters to the smaller colleges of the middlewest.

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[5] Sinclair Lewis, Main Street (New York: Harcourt Brace and Company, Inc., 1920), 15.

(2). George Babbitt worked his way through the state university; he sold real estate to help pay his expenses because his father believed in the philosophy of making a young man work. Speech and speech activities appealed to Babbitt. He completed a major in sociology and after graduation he returned to his home town, Zenith. Like Carol Kennicott, George Babbitt was interested in city planning; however, unlike Carol, whose interest was in improving the quality of life, he was more interested in the houses which had the latest gadgets. He was interested in gadgets which would help to sell property more readily. Sales meant money to Babbitt.

His loyalty to his former university teachers was questionable. He seemed to have little understanding or appreciation of this "minority group," the faculty members. But as a speaker, before a group of business men, he attempted to gain a popular response from his listeners by criticizing educators. Sinclair Lewis quotes some of George Babbitt's speeches at length. Through his speech organization, content, and delivery, many of Babbitt's qualities were revealed to the reader. When speaking before a dinner club he referred to the former college professors and to the present educators as "these blab-mouth, fault finding, pessimistic, cynical University teachers."[6]

(3). Ann Vickers attended Point Royal College for Women. It was located above the Housatonic River in Connecticut

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[6] Sinclair Lewis, Babbitt (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1922), 188.

To supplement the small inheritance from her father, she waited on tables in the college dining room in order to defray part of her expenses. Ann also corrected papers in sociology. An occasional lecture given in the "pre-Mencken day" would cause her classmates "to gasp."

Lewis located the history room in Susan B. Anthony Hall. While listening to lectures, the students had an opportunity to enjoy the picture of Harriet Beecher Stowe, which was on the wall of the room. Education took place in drab surroundings. The general appearance of the classroom was one of "traditional and sanctified dreariness characteristic of all classrooms, marriage-license bureaus, hospitals, doctor's waiting-rooms, and Southern Methodist Churches."[7]

Ann attended college during the era of "windy optimism of a pre-war idealism which was satisfied with faith in the place of statistics." Her freshman adviser, Dr. Hargis, had an office in a dungeon-like room to which students ordinarily went to discuss enrollment, "cuts, marks, flunks, themes, and required reading." General counseling seemed to have little place in the hurried schedule of student and faculty.

During her early days in college, Ann discovered her special interests in the areas of speech, extracurricular activities, and social welfare. She wasn't interested in living the usual conventional life of a woman. She caused

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[7] Sinclair Lewis, Ann Vickers (New York: Doubleday, Doran & Company, Inc., 1933), 61.

her college friend, Mildred, to comment to the other students who were gathered about for a 'gab-fest': "She's crazy! She doesn't want to get married. She wants to be a doctor or a lawyer or something."[8]

Years later, after Ann had been a social welfare worker and had experienced much of life, she wondered. She saw Mildred married to a conventionally good provider. Mildred was riding in a Buick while Ann was driving a jerky, dented Ford. And Dr. Ann Vickers mused: "Good Mildred, wise Mildred, you never tackled the world, which will always throw you."[9]

(4). Martin Arrowsmith attended the State University of the mythological state of Winnemac, "bounded by Michigan, Ohio, Illinois, and Indiana, and like them, it is half Eastern, half Midwestern."[10] In 1925 there were some 12,000 students enrolled in the university. The novelist reports: "Hourly the University of Winnemac grows in numbers and influence, and by 1950 one may expect it to have created an entirely new world-civilization, a civilization larger and brisker and purer."[11]

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[8] Ibid., 35.

[9] Ibid., 35-36.

[10] Sinclair Lewis, Arrowsmith (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1925), 9.

[11] Ibid., 10.

Martin Arrowsmith was an Arts and Science junior, taking a pre-medical course in 1904. At that time he was twenty-one years old, and "the purpose of his life was chemistry and physics and the prospect of biology next year."[12]

(5). Dodsworth was a senior at Yale in 1896. Later he did post-graduate work at Massachusetts Institute of Technology. At the age of twenty-eight he was assistant superintendent of the Zenith Locomotive Works. His particular education had fitted him for the mechanized life he lived. "He was extremely well trained, from his first days in Zenith High School, in not letting himself do anything so destructive as abstract thinking."[13]

During the 1920's, when he attended the reunion of the class of 1896, he was still the Yale hero of his classmates. They realized that they still thought of him as being "Sambo Dodsworth, great tackle, Skull and Bones, creative engineer, president of a corporation, and 'prince of good fellows.'"[14]

(6). Gideon Planish attended Adelbert College, Presbyterian, between 1910 and 1914. When he first entered the office of the dean as a freshman, he attempted to make an impression by continuing with his delivery of the "Cross of

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[12] Ibid., 10.

[13] Sinclair Lewis, Dodsworth (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1929) (Modern Library, Inc., 1947), 12.

[14] Ibid., 182.

Gold" speech of William Jennings Bryan. He made a slight error in memorization and the dean supplied the correct word immediately. Gideon had set up his own try-out situation to qualify for courses in forensics. He assured the dean that he had come to Adelbert to take forensics and extempore speaking, but the restrictions limited the course to upper classmen only. Gideon insisted that he be permitted to take the course; he felt that he should be considered an exception because he had been a member of a debating team which had ranked high in the state. The topic for the debate had been: "Resolved: Flying Machines Will Never Be Useful in War," and his team had won![15]

Lewis characterizes the youth as a natural public leader, who never wasted any information he possessed. He would "roar on" if anyone happened to be within hearing distance. And Gideon Planish roared his way through discussion and debate in Adelbert College, earned a Ph.D., became a college professor, a dean, a promoter of various doubtful organizations off-campus, and later returned to the small Kinnikinick College in which he did his first teaching. However, he was invited to return as president of the college in the early 1940's.

(7). Neil Kingsblood, as a young man, attended the

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[15] Sinclair Lewis, Gideon Planish, (New York: The World Publishing Company, 1943), 5.

University of Minnesota; he later married a young woman who had been graduated from Sweet Briar College, Virginia.

As a university student, Neil had given little attention to techniques of research. Later he became interested in a research project which revealed information which caused his friends, colleagues, and neighbors to be unable to tolerate him. The revelations of his research served as a boomerang to himself and his family. Scholarly research has potentials for good or evil, according to the intellectual and emotional maturity of the individuals who become aware of the findings. Even though his earlier interest in research had been small, when he began an individualized study of family geneology he became a "dedicated scholar." He in some way coupled his lack of interest with his attitude toward his college professors. Neil had "singular respect for professors; they had seemed to him oppressive and full of tricks to catch a fellow who had been out on a bock-beer party last evening."[16] Kingsblood decided that the professors probably didn't have a very easy life either.

Special Attention

Carol Kennicott

"Expectant youth" characterized Carol. She had a "rebellious spirit" as she approached life with many questions

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[16] Sinclair Lewis, Kingsblood Royal (New York: Random House, 1947), 44.

in her mind. She questioned the value of customs which she thought had outlived their usefulness. Carol was an experimenter, and participated in several extracurricular activities because she was eager to find a place for herself in the life around her.

When Lewis introduces her there is a quality of "suspended freedom" about her. "She is 'a girl on a hilltop; credulous, plastic, young; drinking the air as she longed to drink life. The eternal aching comedy of expectant youth."[17] An opportunity to explore her potentialities in music, drama, athletics, dancing, writing, and speech has been discovered on the college campus. Playing the violin for chapels and programs gives her pleasure. Painting scenery and experimenting with the lighting of plays gives release to her creative interests. She becomes advertising manager of the student paper through her interest in journalism. While giving small parties in her room she is learning to become a future hostess. But her versatility seemed to "ensnare her."

During senior year in college Carol was concerned with deciding just what to do after graduation. Sociology was the one subject in her schedule which seemed to make the greatest appeal during her senior year. Through supplementary reading she discovered the possibilities of city-planning,

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[17] Lewis, Main Street (New York: Harcourt Brace and Company, Inc., 1920), 15.

and decided that she would like to have an opportunity to improve some of the prairie towns in the midwest. She longed to get her hands on just one unsightly town and bring about needed improvements.

Faculty members are described by Lewis. A young instructor in chemistry had an appreciative eye for the hair styling of the coeds because Carol was conscious of his curiosity and attention. More impressions are made in the classroom situation than merely those directly related to the assignments in the textbooks. Students enjoy being recognized in ways other than for their ability to retain subject matter.

Enthusiasm is contagious; if a teacher is happy and really enjoys the subject matter which is being presented, the students may learn with greater ease. Carol's college had a teacher of English who taught Milton and Carlyle with an awareness of their interest and significance.

But the professor of sociology was on the campus for his first year. Students were curious about the man because he had actually lived in the University Settlement in New York City. He had come from Boston. The Blodgett College community served as his classroom. Field trips were an integral part of his teaching. Such an excursion project has educational value. It "purposes to find out something -- to explore, to investigate, to discover. It is both individual

and group."[18] The professor of sociology took his "giggling class" to observe the work in charity bureaus, to tour prisons, and to visit the employment agencies of Minneapolis. They even explored the living conditions in the meat packing section of South St. Paul.

By using the community agencies and industries as a part of his class procedures he helped make the students more aware of life as it was actually being lived by many people of the college neighborhood. Learning was humanized, made practical, and integrated with daily life.

Teaching techniques were satirized by Lewis in his characterization of the professor of English history. This educator used his position of authority to make life and learning uncomfortable for many of his students. The course seemed to be a requirement. The professor had not originally intended to be a teacher; he had been following another profession. His class was "a typical Blodgett contest between a dreary teacher and unwilling children of twenty, won by the teacher because his opponents had to answer his questions."[19] Of course, if the student asked a question to challenge the teacher, he might recommend the use of the library and avoid making an immediate reply if he did not know the correct answer.

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[18] Ellsworth Collings, Project Teaching in Elementary Schools (New York: The Century Company, 1928), 166.

[19] Lewis, op. cit., 19.

Testing the amount of information a student has acquired in a course is something of a science. But the sarcastic professor of English history was not concerned with the scientific approach. His questions were often ambiguous and confusing to the one being questioned. The man seemed to wish to project himself as a witty and clever teacher. He attempted to appear scholarly by asking questions which were beyond the ability of the students in the classroom. Not only did this teacher try to embarrass the first student called on, but seemingly he cast about the class to find someone to answer the question. It took him just "three delightful minutes" to determine that no one in the class knew the correct answer of the question which he asked concerning the Magna Charta.

The college classroom situation, as described by Sinclair Lewis in Main Street, would give little encouragement to a youth who was considering the desirability of taking certain courses. He would be stimulated to select his professors with care. So long as students are treated as "children of twenty" they will scarcely find their real intellectual challenge in a college classroom, as they have every right to expect.

> The role of the professor is not simply that of a learned man. He is a learned man who can transmit his learning. Beyond that he is a learned man who must do more than transmit; he must stimulate, inspire, and

instill values.[20]

Teaching as a profession was evaluated by the students who were classmates of Carol Kennicott. Because of the college student's experience with teachers, and because of what was known about their ways of life, the coeds who were wondering just which profession to enter after they left college were quite skeptical about choosing teaching. Near the close of the senior year in college there seemed to be two major groups of coeds: those who were anticipating marriage in the immediate future and those who intended to teach "while they waited for the right man." Lewis implies that the attractive and desirable young ladies were in the first group. In the second group there were two classifications. First, there were those who had hopes of marriage before too long. This would make it possible to leave the "beastly classroom and grubby children." In the second group were the more studious but less attractive coeds who wanted to be guided along the "path of greatest usefulness."

Carol was not attracted by the second group; however, she did consider teaching. She felt that many of the girls were insincere about their desire to teach. There was much more to teaching than merely having faith "in the value of parsing Caesar."[21]

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[20] John W. Riley, Jr., Bryce F. Ryan, and Marcia Lifshitz, The Student Looks at His Teacher (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1950), 11.

[21] Lewis, op. cit., 17.

When a college student is considering future vocations, several different requirements of the future profession may be considered. Teaching requires a daily routine which necessitates good health. Carol, when she considered teaching as a possibility, was uncertain about having the physical stamina to withstand the rigors of classroom work; her health might give way under the constant strain of the exacting daytime hours and the necessity of occasional evening committee meetings. And, too, she didn't have quite enough imagination to visualize herself "standing before grinning children and pretending to be wise."[22]

What does a mid-twentieth century coed think about teaching as a profession?

> Somewhere, somehow I hope through teaching to give someone that little extra push which will make him a finer person.... I have a great deal of faith in the students of tomorrow.[23]

During the present decade a young college woman does not have to choose between being a wife or a teacher; she may combine homemaking and teaching. Readers of Sinclair Lewis may have aided in making life more reasonable for the woman teacher. Lewis has given a generally unbiased conception of the questions which arise in the mind of many attractive and intelligent young women when they consider

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[22] Ibid., 21.

[23] Janice Shulka "Why I Chose Teaching," Wisconsin Journal of Education, Vol. 85, No. 8 (April, 1953) (Madison, Wisc.), 15.

teaching as a profession. During the first quarter of the century the combination of marriage and teaching was not widely accepted in many areas of the United States. Because the ultimate plans of Carol's generation of college women usually included marriage and a family they were reluctant to enter a profession which was not conducive to their ultimate goal.

George Babbitt

The curriculum of institutions of higher education is criticized by George F. Babbitt in Lewis' novel. When discussing educational requirements with his son, he admitted that although he was a graduate of the state university and wanted to be loyal to his Alma Mater, he could not approve of some of the requirements. He thinks of the dollar value of an education and remarks, "'Smatter of fact there's a whole lot of valuable time lost even at the U., studying poetry and French and subjects that never brought in anybody a cent."[24]

Babbitt recognized the pressures exerted by the colleges and universities; he knew how the high school curriculum was affected by the entrance requirements of the higher institutions. That is why, when his son questioned the value of certain subjects, Babbitt explained the logic behind the requirement. Shakespeare was required in the high school

[24] Sinclair Lewis, Babbitt (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1922), 85.

when business English might have seemed more practical to a business man. The youthful Babbitt, who is preparing to enter college to satisfy the whims of his father, feels that the only practical subjects taught in the school are "manual training and typewriting and basketball and dancing..."[25]

George Babbitt explains the value of a college education to his son in terms of the social and business prestige which it carries.

> I've found out it's a mighty nice thing to be able to say you're a B.A. Some client that doesn't know what you are and thinks you're just a plug business man, he gets to shooting off his mouth about economics or literature or foreign trade conditions, and you just ease in something like, 'When I was in college-course I got my B.A.'.... Oh, it puts an awful crimp in their style![26]

Babbitt was a self-supporting student during his college days. He earned his way because his father seemed to have little understanding of the value of an education for his son. However, he speaks of his father as having been "a pretty good old coot." As a result of his college degree, Babbitt had felt that he was privileged to associate with the "finest gentlemen in Zenith, at the clubs and so on." He advises his own son to attend the university; his pride prompts him to comment,"I wouldn't want you to drop out of the gentleman class-the class that are just as red-blooded as the Common People but still have power and personality."[27]

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[25] Ibid., 80.

[26] Ibid., 86.

[27] Ibid., 87.

He tells his son that he would be hurt if he did not attend college.

An impression of the college student in this novel is revealed through the analysis of what Babbitt's daughter has gained, or failed to gain, from her university education, and through the anticipation of his son's possible success at college. Babbitt longs to have Ted major in law.

Babbitt's daughter, Verona, has been restless ever since she finished college. "She's been too rambunctious to live with--doesn't know what she wants!--all she wants is to marry a millionaire, and live in Europe."[28]

Three attitudes toward a college education are revealed in the three generations of Babbits. The grandfather of Ted was indifferent; he had no college education. If his son wanted to go to the university he had to earn his way; the second generation, George, worked to earn the money to finance an education; the third generation was indifferent to the value of an education, even though his father was willing to finance a university education for him.

During his short university career, before his early marriage, Ted studied engineering, but was very indifferent. He did enjoy tinkering with a wireless set. Even after his unannounced plans, which resulted in a surprise marriage, Ted expressed an unwillingness to return to the university. When

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[28] Ibid., 12.

his father offers to continue to finance his education, Ted responds, "Dad, I can't stand it any more. Maybe it's all right for some fellows. Maybe I'll want to go back some day. But me, I want to go into mechanics."[29]

By having Ted express these ideas, Lewis implies that the college experience is not of equal value to all.

The speeches of the university educated Babbitt reveal his attitude toward life and literature. He remarked that the ideal citizen would be "busier than a bird dog." He would be a family man who would help at home, tell stories to his children, and always read the daily paper and "a chapter or two of some good lively western novel if he had a taste for literature."[30]

Our ideal citizen, according to Babbitt, has the natural ability to recognize the best in art, without the need of an education. In the United States, according to his conception, the value of the contribution of the artist is measured by the money he can make from the sale of his pictures. If his art is good it will sell. Those who buy paintings for homes are the lovers of the standardized Old World masters. Young men and young women from such homes enter the college classrooms with a preconceived idea that American art must conform to classical art. They have not learned to look at their own area with the freshness of approach of a Hamlin

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[29] Ibid., 401.

[30] Ibid., 181.

Garland or a Sinclair Lewis.

In the day of statistics and adding machines, the man whose ideas differ from those of the standardized citizen may be suspected of disloyalty. Babbitt condemns the educators; he finds many listeners in his audience who approve of his action.

Since the works of this Nobel prize winner have been read in far flung parts of the world, an examination of a lengthy excerpt from one of his speeches is enlightening. This one was delivered at the dinner meeting of the Zenith Real Estate Board. Because of his reputation as an after-dinner speaker, Babbitt had been selected to deliver the annual address.

He makes a direct attack on educators, praises the business man, and delivers a directive to teachers.

> A lot of cowards who work under cover--the long-haired gentry who call themselves 'liberals' and 'radicals' and 'non-partisan' and 'intelligentsia' and...other trick names! Irresponsible teachers and professors constitute the worst of this whole gang, and I am ashamed to say that several of them are on the faculty of our great State University!
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> . . . . . .
>
> These profs are the snakes to be scotched--They and all their milk-and-water ilk! The American business man is generous to a fault, but one thing he does demand of all teachers and lecturers and journalists: if we're going to pay them our good money, they've got to help us by selling efficiency and whooping it up for national prosperity! And when it comes to these blab-mouth, fault finding, pessimistic, cynical University teachers, let me tell you that during this golden coming year it's just as much our duty to bring influence to have those cusses fired as it is to sell the real estate and gather in all the good shekels we can.

> Not till that is done will our sons and daughters see that the ideal of American manhood and culture isn't a lot of cranks sitting around chewing the rag about their Rights and their Wrongs.[31]

This attack of Babbitt on the intelligentsia of the thriving community of the state reveals his desire to restrict education. Ironically, the satire embodied in the speech has much to reveal about the ethics of this university educated man. The extrovert is praised above the introvert. The ideal citizen must be a "hustling, successful, two-fisted Regular Guy." The thinker, the philosopher, the man of scholarly attainments seems to have little place in his community. Because of his great oratorical power and his growing reputation as an after-dinner speaker, the ideas of George Babbitt have significance in the great city of Zenith in the state of Winnemac.

A backward glance at George Babbitt as a college student is revealed during the conversation at the reunion dinner of the class of 1896. He was in a jolly mood, theoretically, he was a friend of all the men with whom he had attended the university. However, the guests were divided into at least two groups: those who wore dress suits and those who did not wear dress suits. Babbitt did not wear a dress suit. However, chuckles were shared as foolish pranks of college days were recalled. Under the spell of nostalgia, when all were good fellows for a few fleeting minutes,

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[31] Ibid., 187-188.

Babbitt remarked: "It isn't the books you study in college but the friendships you make that counts."[32] Curricular experiences meant less to him than did the extracurricular experiences.

Martin Arrowsmith

Research was significant in the life of the scientist Martin Arrowsmith. To him his first original research became "his first lyric, his first ascent of unexplored mountains."[33]

How did Martin become interested in science? As a fourteen year old youth he was an unofficial office boy for the country doctor in his village. This Old Doc Vickers encouraged him to become a scientific doctor, but reminded him there were three basic books for his library: Gray's Anatomy, The Bible, and Shakespeare. Science, religion, and an understanding of man and the stage on which he plays his many roles may contribute to the education of a doctor. The Old Doc even suggested the curriculum which the youth should follow. "Get training. Go to college before you go to medical school. Study. Chemistry. Latin. Knowledge!"[34] This advice was given to the adolescent in 1897, in the novel which Sinclair Lewis published in 1925.

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[32] Ibid., 194.

[33] Sinclair Lewis, Arrowsmith (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1925), 55.

[34] Ibid., 6.

Lewis brings a group of professors and students together for an evening in the home of Professor "Encore" Edward, chairman of the department of chemistry. The guests include several "fanatical young chemists" and the Wild Man of the campus, Norman Brumfit, who is considered to be a "literary playboy." He describes Max Gottlieb, his colleague, as contending that "knowledge is worthless unless it is proven by rows of figures." But Brumfit, professor of English, remarks:

> When one of you scientific sharks can take the genius of a Ben Jonson and measure it with a yardstick, then I'll admit that we literary chaps, with our doubtless absurd belief in beauty and loyalty and the world o' dreams, are off on the wrong track![35]

The evening's conversation aroused a "reasonless excitement" on the part of Martin in his desire to see this Professor Gottlieb, whose accomplishments were known and respected in the eastern part of the United States and in Europe. On his way home from this discussion, Martin passed by the anatomy building, and caught his first glimpse of the celebrated Dr. Gottlieb as the man came from working in his laboratory, late at night. The impression which the first year medic had was of a "tall figure, ascetic, self-contained, apart," who was "unconscious of the world."

What did this professor say to the ambitious young medic who wished to take his course in bacteriology a year

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[35] Ibid., 11.

before the regularly scheduled time? "Come back next year." He made this remark because he knew the value of preparation for a course. He had a tendency to classify the students who came into his classroom in the two groups: "One kind they dump on me like a bushel of potatoes," and Gottlieb did not care for potatoes any more than the potatoes cared for him. The second group included those who really wished "to become scientists, to work with bugs and make mistakes." These were the students of whom he demanded everything; to these, Gottlieb taught "the ultimate lesson of science, which is to wait and doubt."

Martin Arrowsmith longed to have recognition from Professor Gottlieb, to become his assistant, to take physical chemistry as the man suggested. When Martin, during the following summer, worked as lineman for a telephone company in Montana, he carried with him a copy of Gottlieb's book, Immunology.

Arrowsmith's first original research, after he was accepted for study with Professor Gottlieb, resulted in findings which surprised him; they did not jibe with the accepted theories. As a careful scientist he rechecked as he had been taught. Then he confidently announced to his professor, Max Gottlieb, that the theories were wrong. The professor questioned him, challenged him, and then he encouraged Martin Arrowsmith by saying "Observe what you observe, and if it

does violence to all the nice, correct views of science--out they go!"[36]

This professor did respect individual differences among people and their philosophies. "This difference in philosophy is what makes life interesting,"[37] he commented during a lecture. He had worked in the laboratories of Koch and Pasteur. He had taught at Queen City College and found in his classes many students who "had longed to know."[38]

Martin Arrowsmith and Angus Duer were among those who were potential scientists. Each made a contribution to the field of science: Martin as a man of the laboratory and Angus as administrator of a medical clinic. When Duer watched the first laboratory demonstration of Professor Gottlieb he immediately estimated the professor's possible income as a private surgeon. Probably he could make as much as fifty thousand dollars a year, as contrasted with the possible four thousand as a teacher of students who were involved in the procedures of higher education.

Two professors of differing opinions and philosophies influenced Martin Arrowsmith's education as a scientist. Dean Silva was one who continued his interest in a student even after the student had left his courses. He would talk

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[36] Ibid., 55.

[37] Ibid., 37.

[38] Ibid., 36.

with the advanced student as two scientists talking together, rather than as student and professor. He felt that Max Gottlieb was too greatly influenced by the cynics Diderot, Voltaire and Elser, "great men, wonder-workers, yet men that had more fun destroying other people's theories than creating their own."[39] Gottlieb was a pure scientist. To Leora, Martin's wife, he was "like a walking brain."[40] Dean Silva contended that Martin Arrowsmith must become "an Artist Healer, not a picker of trifles like these laboratory men."[41]

Because Professor Gottlieb had great faith in the potentials of a medical school that might be "precise and cautious," he suggested that he be made dean. This brought about false charges against him; he was dismissed from the faculty. Suddenly he was no longer looked upon as a "genius, impatient of interrupted creation but a shabby schoolmaster in disgrace."[42]

Shortly before his marriage to Leora, Arrowsmith had a misunderstanding with Gottlieb which sent him on a restless, whisky-drinking voyage of discovering himself. After his return to the Medical School at the University of Winnemac, he did not realize that Gottlieb was longing to work with him once again. Their respect was mutual.

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[39] Ibid., 124.

[40] Ibid., 125.

[41] Ibid., 124.

[42] Ibid., 134.

Arrowsmith, also, thought of Truth as a "skeptical attitude toward life."[43] While doing scientific research Martin was concerned with arriving at a better understanding of himself. He and Leora would discuss the question: "What is this Martin Arrowsmith and whither is he going?"[44]

They had married before he had completed his internship. She had been studying to become a nurse when they first met; however, after their marriage she gave up her study and became a typist to help pay their living expenses until Arrowsmith could finish his medical course. Leora gave him a feeling of security, a sense of being understood, and she inspired him to develop a more humanitarian approach to his study.

Arrowsmith's interest in medicine led him into several different fields. He became a village doctor in Wheatsylvania, the home town of his wife, Leora. Their only child was born dead, and they realized that they could never have another child. His interest in research was renewed when he heard a lecture by Gustave Sondelius, a Swedish scientist, in Minneapolis. Arrowsmith was appointed to a directorship of public health in Wheatsylvania, discovered a typhoid carrier, and aroused a feeling of opposition. Later, he went to Nautilus, Iowa to assist in public health work. His work

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[43] Ibid., 282.

[44] Ibid., 283.

was controlled by a politician who was working on his congressional campaign. A local dairy was discovered to be a disease spreader; Arrowsmith caused the dairy, a source of contamination, to be closed. Later he became Director of Public Health but his research revealed a series of tenant houses were infested with tuberculosis. Once again he was asked to resign, when he insisted on improving housing.

At the Rouncefield Clinic in Chicago his work gave him some time for writing. He reported one bit of research which, when published, gained the attention of his old professor, Gottlieb, who was working in a New York institute. The possibilities of research in Chicago seemed ideal for Arrowsmith until the pressure put upon him by the Clinic for premature publication of his findings became so great he began to consider resignation. At the invitation of Max Gottlieb, Arrowsmith submitted his resignation to Rouncefield Clinic and beame a member of the institution in New York.

Gottlieb was still the exacting scientist. He reminded Arrowsmith that he needed to know mathematics. He needed to know physical chemistry because "all living things are physico-chemical machines,"[45] but in order to know physical chemistry he must know mathematics. It was at this time that he became a friend of Terry Wickett.

Martin labored long hours to "grind over matters which

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[45] Ibid., 309.

everyone is assumed to know, and almost everyone does not know."[46] He employed a tutor from Columbia University and worked trigonometry and analytic geometry and differential calculus. He was reviewing mathematics at the time the United States entered World War I.

Martin Arrowsmith made a discovery which was used to fight a plague on St. Hubert. Max Gottlieb insisted that controls be used to determine the value of the phage (the name given to the discovery) because he thought that science must add to the general store of man's knowledge. If the race is to be saved "there must be knowledge. So many men, Martin, are kind and neighborly; so few have added to knowledge."[47] He warns Arrowsmith not to let his pity and sympathy for the suffering obscure his obligation to add to the knowledge concerning pure science.

Martin Arrowsmith, his wife Leora, and Gustaf Sondelius made the journey to the plague stricken islands. Gottlieb had a special interest in seeing them off. They were representatives of the McGurk Institute.

Before the plague was brought under greater control, both Leora and Sondelius had died as its victims. Leora was taking the phage, which was being given to the natives. However, she happened to take a few puffs from a cigarette which

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[46] Ibid., 310.

[47] Ibid., 367.

her husband had left in his laboratory. She did not know that a maid had accidentally knocked over a tube and plague germs had trickled onto the cigarette. She had a small crack in her lip; within a few hours she was dead.

When Martin Arrowsmith stoutly insisted that he would carry out the testing of the value of the phage by the use of controls as suggested by Gottlieb, he discovered that Sondelius did not agree with him. Sondelius refused to take the phage injections himself unless all the islanders might have the injections. The germ reached Leora through the cigarette which became a carrier; the germ reached Sondelius through the bite of a flea; he considered the invention of the flea as the nastiest trick "ever played on man."[48] Both Leora and Sondelius died.

Lewis portrays the scientist fighting a germ which has no respect for individuals. He describes the "emergency crematory where Gustaf Sondelius and his curly gray mop had been shoveled into the fires along with a crippled Negro boy and a Hindu beggar."[49]

But Arrowsmith longed to go back to his laboratory and "start all over again." When he went to report his research findings to his old professor, Max Gottlieb, he found him suffering from "senile Dementia;" his memory was gone.

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[48] Ibid., 394.

[49] Ibid., 395.

A number of experiences later, Martin Arrowsmith and his friend Terry Wickett found a rural cottage in an isolated area in Vermont; this would be their laboratory and in this laboratory they would continue their scientific research.

Their feeling as scientists was expressed in the comment: "We'll plug along on it for two or three years, and maybe we'll get something permanent-- and probably we'll fail!"[50]

Gideon Planish

Even when he heard a train whistle, as a ten year old son of a taxidermist, Gideon Planish sensed that his accomplishments would take him to distant places. Traveling seemed to be an inevitable part of his life. His interest in oratory continued from high school on through college and into the post college experiences.

Major events in the novel Gideon Planish describe him as a four year college student, a man in uniform during World War I, the possessor of a Ph.D. which was completed at the University of Ohio, and as a Professor of Rhetoric and Speech in Kinnikinick College, Iowa. Research became a habit with him. His summer vacation in 1921 was spent doing research on a selected group of orators in the library of Yale University.

Academic snobbery is satirized by Lewis; he reveals the snobbery sensed among graduate students and professors

[50] Ibid., 464.

who are sensitive about the size or standing of the institution with which they are associated. Gideon, while at Yale, was "being snubbed by such professors as were not up in Vermont being snubbed by the farmers or over in England being snubbed by the professors at Oxford."[51]

Some scholars are sensitive about the standings of the institutions in which they study or teach. The eastern part of the United States has a reputation for harboring great scholars; however, eastern scholars tended to look longingly across the Atlantic in the early 1920's, according to Lewis's satirical portrait of the graduate scholar and professor. The man close to the soil was suspicious and disdainful of those who shared a vicarious experience of life as readers of books -- and professors were readers of books. Lewis is concerned about the false facade of higher education when he feels that honest integrity of research has been abused.

Dr. Gideon Planish gathered material to be used in writing a history of The Genius of American Orators. He was including Webster, Lincoln, Calhoun, Bryan, Ignatius Donnellys, and all the individuals whose name was Roosevelt. He finished two chapters of the proposed book. What happened to his research notes? Years later they were discovered in an old trunk and turned into a propaganda pamphlet.

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[51] Lewis, Gideon Planish (New York: The World Publishing Company, 1943), 33.

When Gideon felt that he was qualified to take his place among the great professors at an eastern college "those damned snobs of Columbia and Harvard and Princeton and Yale, those high-voiced academic Pharisees, did not encourage him."[52]

He returned to Kinnikinick College in Iowa. His students were sons and daughters of professional parents of Iowa, Minnesota, and the Dakotas. The general atmosphere of the campus was "esthetic but responsible -- a pleasant feeling that scholarship and piety were good old historical principles but shouldn't be overdone."[53]

Later, he counsels with incoming freshmen and students in upper classes. Dr. Planish reminds these youths that they are "the Lost Generation jazz-babies." But he reveals his concern when he comments that "I have the faith to believe that by the end of these barbaric 1920's, you will all have come to your senses. That is, if -- if, I say, -- you retain your essential philosophy."[54]

Ann Vickers was a college graduate, B.A., M.A., Ph.D., who was interested in humanity and special reforms in the penal system. She was a speaker and debater; her ability had been tested and developed during her college days.

Winifred Marduc Homeward, editor of a paper owned by

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[52] Ibid., 34.

[53] Ibid., 32.

[54] Ibid., 83.

her father and actually published by her husband, was described as believing in "every Cause that any active women's-college graduate possibly could believe in, during the years 1930-1950."[55]

The Lewis college women Carol Kennicott and Ann Vickers were both involved in a rapid shifting of attitudes toward women in the field of education and business. Lewis releases his vitriolic denunciations of "the woman, the American woman careerist, and it is a reasonable bet that in 1955 she will be dictator of the United States and China."[56]

In trying to trace her biological background he wonders from which of these women she might have descended: Queen Catherine, Florence Nightingale, Lucrezia Borgia, Frances Willard, Victoria Woodhull, Nancy Astor, Carrie Nation, or Aimee Semple McPherson.

In fact, Gideon Planish has difficulty in understanding the new women; he had difficulty in understanding his own daughter who is a junior in Hunter College. She even studies "physics, mechanical drawing, and ethnology." She seemed to have little romantic interest in the young men who called at the Gideon home. She looked upon her parents as being "old-fashioned survivals of a Flaming Youth era that was as antiquated and ridiculous" as several other discarded

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[55] Ibid., 223.

[56] Ibid., 222.

ideas. Carrie Planish and her friends often used these names in their conversation: Orson Welles, Bartok, Hindemith, George Groz, Erskine Caldwell, Shostakovich.[57]

The college men of 1941 took going to war for granted; they didn't like Hitlerism, so that meant fighting. Machinery was an integral part of their lives. Ann Vickers had associated Adolph Klebs with belonging to "a restless new age of machinery," but Carrie's friends spoke of Spitfires and Stukas in an expert, but casual, manner.

During these restless times Dr. Planish almost wished he might be back on the college campus as a professor once again; life would be more restful. He had to use the subway to go from Greenwich Village, on Charles Street, to the New York office in which he was working as a dispenser of "Ideas" for the gullible. Throughout his college days and on into his post-college days, Gideon Planish had been concerned about seeing the right people. As an entering freshman he had wanted the dean to hear his oratorical presentation. Later, he wanted to make early calls on the most influential people in his community. He knew how to make the right contacts. Consequently, when the president of the Kinnikinick College died very suddenly, Dr. Planish was extended a long distance invitation to accept the presidency of the college. He accepted.

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[57] Ibid., 244.

One night, before starting west, he heard a sound which reminded him of one he had heard before he began his college career; it was a whistle. But this whistle was that of a New York ferry and it caused him to feel "so lost and lonely that Dr. Planish fell back into his habitual doubt of himself, and his face tightened with anxiety and compromise."[58] And compromise had been a characteristic of the eighteen year old Gideon when he enrolled as a freshman in the small midwestern Adelbert College. He had proposed naming a radical student club the Walt Whitman League, because Whitman didn't even go to college, and he felt that would be a radical gesture, but still within reason.

There were obvious disadvantages of being president of a small college as compared with the advantages which he had known as a commercial promoter of "Ideas." His salary would be smaller, he would travel less, and at a cheaper rate, and he would have to live in a small midwestern town. He had worked with "hot oratory" so long that he had forgotten the value of factual material, as statistics and accurate historical references, or the use of quotations from literature. He had not been making his appeal to the most scholarly minds, but to the general mass mind which might be much more gullible, at times. But ever since the day Gideon and Hatch had visited the state legislature, Gideon had an idea that he might become college president some day, because, as he

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[58] Ibid., 304.

remarked, he could "get the alumni really lined up on contributions, and double the college attendance."[59]

So, when bothered about not knowing too much about current happenings in education, and having forgotten what he had known about scholarly material, he rationalized that the duty of the president was to leave those details of subject matter to the deans and faculty members. Yet, he was disturbed about the possibility of being confronted with the questions of the undergraduates.

But Dr. Gideon Planish could still accept a challenge. He decided that "he'd read a book again. He'd look up his old text-books, and read them. He was only fifty. By the time he was fifty-five, he could again be as well-read as any of the undergraduates -- almost."[60]

Unlike Amory Blaine, who was a reader, and George Webber, who was a writer, Gideon Planish was a speaker. And Lewis satirizes the speaker when he infers that reference material isn't necessarily needed. Words may just spring from the speaker's mouth, without too much thought.

A College Student Experiences Speaking

Speaking was to Ann Vickers and Gideon Planish as reading was to Amory Blaine. Both Ann and Gideon experienced frustration when they were blocked in their first attempts

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[59] Ibid., 31.

[60] Ibid., 292.

to participate in collegiate speech activities. Ann was disappointed because she had not been nominated as class president during her junior year. Campus rumors of some of her indiscretions had created an atmosphere of unfriendliness on the part of certain of the "high-minded young ladies" of the college.

During try-out for the debating team, in her senior year, Ann had an opportunity to make the most of her ability. By taking a course in public speaking she had learned the tricks of bodily control, gesture, and voice. She was selected as a member of the college team. A debate with a rival college, some distance away, was the high point of the season. Ann was at her best the night she participated in the debate against the rival of her college. Although she was basically opposed to the philosophy advocated by the affirmative side of the question, that was the side she had to defend. Honesty of opinion and expression faded into the background because of her love of casting a spell of ideas through spoken words.

Ann could project her speaking personality in an effective manner. The other women debaters presented their ideas as "pansies and dewy rosebuds of thought," but "Ann tore loose, forgot nice ladyness and quite convincing herself for five minutes, savagely trumpeted"[61] the pseudologic of the issues she was advocating. Her speech was sentimental,

[61]Sinclair Lewis, Ann Vickers (New York: Doubleday, Doran & Company, Inc., 1933), 97.

evocative, and persuasive.

Gideon Planish was frustrated when he was not permitted to enroll in forensics during his freshman year; a college rule stated that the course was reserved for upperclassmen only. Individual aptitudes of students seemed to mean less to the advisers than did traditional regulations. Even though he had been a member of a winning debate team during high school, no exception was made to the rule. Later he had an opportunity, through some campus political bargaining with the officers of the debate club, to become a member of that extra-curricular organization when the curricular course was not open to him.

By being a member of the debate club, he was given the opportunity to represent Adelbert in a debate with Erasmus, a college several hundred miles distant. His experience in debating the question caused him to argue against his own personal beliefs, but he was eloquent for the sake of winning a decision and impressing his listeners with his oratorical ability. He and Ann had much in common in their speech interests. There was a moment during the debate when Gideon recognized the incongruity of arguing against his own personal convictions but it was transitory. When he began to speak before the audience he decided that what he was saying was "the truth, and the only truth, and that he had invented it.... He played figures as on cello strings, and wound up

his Message like a Beethoven finale."[62] He appealed to their love of home, their fervent sense of patriotism, and to their religious devotion. He and his colleague won the debate.

When Ann Vickers finished her speech at Southern New Hampshire Christian College for Women, "The applause was like a cloudburst," the unbeatable rivals had been beaten. A party followed. Ann had established a reputation as an eloquent speaker; invitations to speak for various organizations were extended to her. Naturally, one of the first invitations came from a group known as the Woman Suffrage Association.

During his debate speech, at Erasmus College in eastern Ohio, to Gideon, his listeners in the auditorium "seemed to stretch out endless, and they were all his, all looking at him, all listening to him, and his power was on them."[63] Hours later he still seemed to be hearing the applause of his listeners; ambition was awakened anew.

"Now, nothing can stop me! United States Senator -- why, I have it cinched."[64]

Experimenting with techniques of organization on a small campus, which served as a sociological and political laboratory for students, gave Ann a sense of accomplishment; it gave Gideon a feeling of the thrill of leadership. Both

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[62] Sinclair Lewis, Gideon Planish (New York: The World Publishing Company, 1943), 21.

[63] Ibid., 21.

[64] Ibid., 22.

students were aggressive enough to secure what was desired. Each learned the value of pressure groups, and how to use them most effectively.

Listening, as a learning technique, is widely used. Lewis was writing novels during the era of the rapidly spreading development of the radio industry; television was a reality at the time his last novels were published. He realized the effect which a persuasive voice and a cleverly phrased idea may have on a listener, as contrasted with the less persuasive voice and a less effective speaker, even though the logical thinking of the second speaker is superior. Listening must be made pleasant and as effortless as possible. The less concentration required on the part of the listener, the more popular the appeal, according to some individuals. Lewis implies that the human voice may stir the emotions without requiring too much concentration on the part of the listener.

> Sinclair Lewis leans heavily upon public speaking situations to disclose Ann's motives and character.... Public speaking offers the prolific satirist of the American scene repeated opportunities for telling thrusts. Public speaking is a peculiarly American interest.[65]

The response of youth to the college speaking situation has been presented by Sinclair Lewis. For both Ann and

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[65] Lionel Crocker, "Sinclair Lewis On Public Speaking," Quarterly Journal of Speech, Vol. XXI (April, 1935), 232.

Gideon their college speech experiences were most useful to them in their post-college life.

Being allergic to book reading, even of assigned books, seems almost epidemic on some campuses, even in mid-twentieth century. Lewis sensed this tendency on the part of youth. He realized how few students read books which are not definitely required for a course. Consequently, among non-readers listening is extremely important. Lewis, who could use his speaking ability to advantage, reveals evils which may accrue when ideas are disseminated by speakers whose sense of ethics is questionable. He reveals his characters through their speeches as another writer might reveal characters through the use of interior monologue.

What is the relationship of college activities to those which are experienced later in life? Does college prepare the individual for the life he is to live? Lewis comments: "Heaven knows what effect, good or evil, this senior year of dictatorship had on Ann's later venture into more masculine politics." During "buzz-session" in dormitory rooms, the college students exchanged ideas on world peace, wages, and women's rights.

The word "dictatorship" is opposed to "democracy." Which should govern college extracurricular activities? The answer is obvious. Then why did Ann assume a role of dictatorship in her activities?

> Almost any problem, whether it be in the area of academic or personal adjustment, has a great many ramifications and can usually be best understood if various facets of the individual's present environment, background factors, and personal reaction are understood.[66]

These various facets are explored as the novelist continues with the events in the life of Ann. Sometimes student criticism will do more to alert an individual to an awareness of just what is happening than any other experience. A junior coed evaluated Ann. Unexpectedly she gave Ann a character analysis; probably the immediate cause of the evaluation stemmed from the fact that the critical student, a logical thinker, who was handicapped by not having a vigorous voice, failed in the debate try-outs. Ann was a successful debater. This student caused Ann to doubt herself and her true motives. Consequently, she disliked the girl heartily. But she could tell Ann why she had not been elected president of the class. Ann was too sensitive to appreciate honest criticism.

Gideon Planish had been successful in his race for class president in the Iowa college. He was definitely interested in the possibility of making politics his major profession. During his senior year he, with Hatch Hewitt, his friend who was interested in journalism, made a visit to

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[66] Raymond G. Kuhlen, The Psychology of Adolescent Development (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1952), 603.

the state legislature. They wanted to observe law in action. While there they met an experienced senator, who had formerly been a law professor, who gave them some advice.

"We're not a bunch of actors playing Julius Caesar. We're business men, and badly paid ones, trying to carry out what the citizens want, or think they want."[67] He suggested that anyone who had a real interest in wanting to help people through politics should begin with his local committee. The local people would be pleased, the senator suggested, in having a college student interested in good government.

Just how eager is the college senior to face up to the realities of the world of business and politics? Lewis casts a barbed thrust at Gideon when he has him remark, on the way home, that maybe he'd better give up his idea of getting into the political world. Maybe he should just do as his speech professor had suggested. "I guess I better just get into the teaching game and hand out the correct-speech guff, like my professor thinks I had ought to."[68]

Then Gideon, in considering his future profession, evaluates his qualifications which might qualify him to become president of a college. Surely he could raise large sums of money from the alumni and encourage more students to attend college.

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[67] Lewis, Gideon Planish (New York: The World Publishing Company, 1943), 30.

[68] Ibid., 31.

During which year of college may a student know the satisfaction of participation in the extracurricular activity of his choice? Success as a collegiate speaker and debater came to Ann during her senior year; it came to Gideon during his freshman year. Ann had taken a course in speech; Gideon had been denied this opportunity during his freshman year. There is an implied irony in the relative values of academic courses and their benefits. Ann had needed to learn more about the tricks of speech; Gideon had a magnetic personality; he had native ability, and an intense desire to project his ideas through oral expression.

Discussion appealed to both students. Out of the classroom students feel free to exchange ideas with one another; in the classroom the teacher tends to dominate the presentation of material. Both experiences have particular values to the individual student. Ideas dispensed in the lecture room may be questioned outside the room. They may be evaluated and weighed against ideas from other lecturers in other classrooms; or they may be contrasted with ideas from classmates.

Education may have some of the characteristics of a twirling prism which flashes many colors and combinations of colors and what is sensed depends in part on the perspective of the onlooker, as well as on his sensitivity to the gradations of lights and shadows. So the student is subjected to

the twirling ideas of humanity. Certain basic ideas have cast their hues throughout the ages, but no one individual has been able to become the sole possessor of the lights cast. Many people see different facets; an educator catches certain glimpses, a student may sense other flashes. Discussion will reveal these different aspects and tend to clarify thinking.

Sinclair Lewis places Ann and Gideon in an intimate group of students who are interested in ideas, in conversation, discussion, speaking, and making a place for themselves on the campus and in later life. Ann's group is in a small college, Point Royal, Connecticut. Gideon's group is in a small college, Adelbert, Iowa. Both students are bent on questioning traditions and customs. Why not? But isn't there a better way? Why not test your own ability? But does that necessarily mean that tradition is sacred? These may be some of the questions which are asked in the after-class sessions wherever students congregate.

Both Ann and Gideon seemed to be more concerned about the showmanship of debating than they were about the integrity they displayed. What place has ethics in education when lip service is of more importance in the life of the speaker than the desire to express an honest conviction? When college and university students are so eager to win the approval of their peers that they will take any side which is timely and popular, if it will further their selfish personal interest, wherein lies intellectual integrity?

When Martin Arrowsmith imitates the bombastic speech-making of Dr. Pickerbaugh, he wins the immediate approval of his listeners, the Tredgolds. Lewis has the scientist remark, "I must say I'm not very fond of oratory that's so full of energy it hasn't any room for facts."[69] As a laboratory man, Arrowsmith was interested in finding and reporting the exact figures.

The responsibility of glib speaking, and general disregard for accurate statistical information in the content of the speech, is partially the responsibility of those citizens who "encourage them to rant," according to Arrowsmith.

But the speaking experiences of Carol Kennicott, Gideon Planish, and Ann Vickers had a therapeutic value in helping them to project their ideas, to release their inner tensions, and to cause them to feel that they were having an influence on their fellow men.

An evaluation of the university experience is implied by Sinclair Lewis when he describes the influence which the dissemination of ideas may have as more and more students seek an education. The student of higher education, as interpreted by Lewis, questions established customs, experiments with life, may become confused when his religious beliefs are

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[69] Lewis, Arrowsmith (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1925), 252.

confronted with scientific findings, and has difficulty in determining the value in life. A student of science may become an Arrowsmith and use his education, intelligence and valor to fight a plague in an effort to save many lives, or, ironically, the student may become a Dr. Wormser and use learning and scientific skill to destroy potential life through abortion.

The student may become a Carol Kennicott, decide that "she has kept the faith," plan to send her children to college, and dream of the possibilities of life. As she and her husband look down at their baby she may say, "Think what that baby will see and meddle with before she dies in the year 2000!"[70]

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[70] Sinclair Lewis, Main Street (New York: Harcourt Brace and Company, Inc., 1920), 479.

CHAPTER V

GEORGE SANTAYANA

The Last Puritan is a memoir in the form of a novel, according to Santayana. "In this novel...the argument is dramatized, the views become human persuasions, and the presentation is all the truer for not professing to be true."[1] Imagery of drama and the theater is found throughout the novel. The form is that of a five act drama having a prologue and an epilogue. The divisions are:

Prologue

Setting: Paris.
Time: Shortly after the close of World War I.
Characters: The narrator, Santayana.
The cousin, Mario Van de Weyer.

Santayana and Mario discuss the possibility of writing a memoir of Oliver Alden, who lost his life while in service. Oliver had been a student of philosophy of Santayana; Mario insists the professor should write the memoir.

Divisions of the Memoir

Part I. Ancestry

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[1] George Santayana, The Last Puritan (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936), 602.

Part II. Boyhood
Part III. First Pilgrimage
Part IV. In The Home Orbit
Part V. Last Pilgrimage

Epilogue

Setting: Rome.
Time: Fifteen years after the Prologue.
Characters: As in the Prologue.

Santayana and Mario meet again after fifteen years, to discuss the memoir which has been written. The author remarks: "I recast, I re-live, I entirely transform the characters."[2]

Pre-College Education

In his novel The Last Puritan Santayana reveals many of his ideas concerning education as he describes the schooling of Oliver Alden. Oliver attended River Falls High School, Connecticut, Williams College, and Harvard University. Shortly after graduation he made a journey around the world, and then lived in England. The educational background of this student when he entered Williams College will be given. During his early childhood his parents had secured a private tutor for him. His education began under the direction of Fraulein Irma Schlote, a twenty-year-old German woman whose father was a clergyman. She had formerly been a teaching pupil in an English school in Suffolk, and was a student of

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[2] Ibid., 601.

several languages, music, history, and science. Her teaching techniques had been most effective, and when Oliver entered high school at fifteen years of age he was well prepared to meet any scholastic competition.

The Aldens thought that he should continue his education among students his own age. The school near the home was selected instead of a boarding school, because "Mrs. Alden disapproved of all boarding-schools on principle: they removed boys at the most critical age from the sacred influences of home and mother, and they were hot-beds of snobbery, rowdiness, cruelty, and immorality,"[3] according to her interpretation.

Mr. Alden was somewhat reluctant to send his intelligent young son to a provincial school, to be educated "among common boys, and under mediocre teachers." But, since his wife preferred River Falls High School, he rationalized that there was always the possibility of finding an exceptional teacher in any school, so why not in this school?

It is here in the novel that Santayana expresses his philosophy of the secondary schools. The purpose of the schools is to help the individual "learn to live among strangers, to play games, to have comrades, and to find his own level in a nondescript world."[4] Oliver could learn more

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[3] Ibid., 122.

[4] Ibid., 122-123.

about men and boys "and test and develop his character."

The construction work seemed to surpass the use of educational psychology in the ultra-modern school buildings. Ventilation and heating were automatically controlled, the designs of the furniture were the latest, the location and architecture were generally acceptable. Nevertheless, the administration and faculty adhered to the practice of segregating the boys and girls in the classrooms and on the playgrounds. To make certain that no association was possible between the boys and girls "a severe brick wall, running like a vast bulk-head through the whole height and breadth of it separated the two sexes; nor was it rumoured that any Pyramus and Thisbe had ever pierced a hole in it for exchanging kisses."[5]

The course of study consisted of two divisions: one for those who were preparing for college entrance examinations and the other for non-college preparation students. Oliver was in the first division and had all men teachers. Previously, with the exception of Mr. Dennis Murphy, his athletic director, his education had been supervised by women.

The demand for "school spirit" was criticized by Santayana because it required that the individual must "swim with the stream" or "go with the herd" if he was to be

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[5] Ibid., 123.

accepted by his classmates and teachers. The demand did not necessarily mean "living for others" or "doing good." Rather,

> It was living with others, letting others live in you, being carried along by their impulse, adopting their interests; and all this not because you found their ways right or reasonable or beautiful or congenial, but just because those ways, here and now, were the ways of life and the action afoot; and there was no real choice open to you to live otherwise or to live better.[6]

Education thus became mere conformity to the accepted mores -- right or wrong. It was all in harmony with sitting in one of many chairs formally arranged in rows, each chair securely screwed to the floor, thus making individual adjustments impossible. It was all like making your mind conform to the accepted spirit just as the body had to conform to the "yellow wooden chair...scientifically hollowed out to fit one's standardized person." It was like checking the spontaneous flow of sincere thoughts until they were phrased in the confining language which ought to be used in speaking and writing.

The summer before his last year at the high school Oliver's father invited him to spend the year on the yacht sailing about the world. He promised to arrange for a tutor to be with them in order that Oliver might continue his preparation to enter Williams. The offer both interested and disturbed Oliver. He would have to overcome the objections of his mother to the trip, since she had told him he could

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[6] Ibid., 126-127.

not return home to her if he made this trip with his father. In addition to the family, Oliver had to consider his responsibility to the high school. He had been selected as captain of the football team and, consequently, was expected to develop a winning team. He was not sure that it was right to walk out and leave the school in the lurch when it had given him such an honor. Then, too, he wondered about the identity and characteristics of the tutor who might be selected. "He might be...fussing over details, and not letting me study my own way." Oliver would miss his sports, his exercise, and his "old books" while floating about in foreign ports. Fraulein Irma reminded him of the opportunity for exercise at various ports: Nice, Cannes, Greece, and Egypt, but he wasn't interested.

> It was useless for me to remind him that he would be making excursions ashore too--seeing Athens and Rome and Baalbek and the Pyramids: all this left him cold. It was only mentioning natural beauties--the Bay of Naples, the blue grotto at Capri, the Greek islands, the Dolomites, Mount Rosa and the Jungfrau, that I could arouse any semblance of interest. My dear pupil after all is an American; to him the past is foreign and dead. He is a boy, and the football matches at school seem more vital to him than the history of mankind.[7]

Even though Oliver disliked football, he played because the school spirit demanded it of him. A class team had to be selected from a group of forty boys, and every healthy lad was expected to be loyal to his class. Oliver's pride

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[7] Ibid., 220.

took him through scrimmage and games when he was "hustled, crushed and sworn at."[8] He was tall and strong and quick; he became a good player, but he never learned the "art -- impossible to Oliver -- of opportunely breaking as well as invoking the rules." When he was finally taken from the line and shifted from quarterback to fullback he enjoyed finding himself alone with a clear vision ahead of him. During his freshman year he was removed from the class squad and advanced to the school team. He found that the students admired him and respected his athletic ability, because it helped to bring victory and honor to his high school at Great Falls.

His physical health had been watched over carefully while he was growing. He was a good walker as a child. He had been given a small pony that he might learn to ride well, and share a sense of responsibility in taking care of him. Later his father had arranged for Mr. Dennis Murphy, who, a few years earlier, had been "sculling champion of the world" to teach Oliver to swim and to row. Oliver had enjoyed being "classed by his performance at swimming and rowing."

Williams College

"Systematic reading, unremitting physical exercise, and social duties" claimed much of Oliver's time, even during

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[8] Ibid., 127.

vacation, after his two years at Williams College. To outward appearances he had become a "conventional model young man." His work in college had been satisfactory, he had been a member of the football team, and consequently, he had become known and respected on the campus. Yet, beneath the mask of the exterior, a secret drama was being played in his mind, and this drama seemed far more important to him than the daily routine. "At a certain depth he continued to live always in the light of another world, where only such things moved as had touched his heart."[9]

The Williams-Harvard football game was the outstanding athletic event of Oliver's last year at Williams. He intended to complete one year at Harvard and take his degree at Williams with his classmates. That would cause them to know that he had not entirely deserted them. And he did want a year of concentrated study away from all athletics before completing his four year college course. So this big game of the year had a special significance for him.

Something happened just after the first touchdown which Williams made in the game. Oliver had carried the ball quickly, cleverly, deliberately running "through the whole Harvard team, dodging a man here, knocking down another there, shaking off a third who had actually tackled" him until he had a clear field, when he wheeled around and planted

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[9] Ibid., 379.

the ball in just the right spot behind the goal posts.

Shortly after this touchdown, the only one made by either team, Oliver was injured, carried from the field, and placed in a hospital after the doctor discovered that his left leg had been broken. Was his injury merely an accident of the game, or had some member of the rival team succeeded in doing a little unnoticed byplay to prevent this star player from making another score? Santayana has Edith, who with Oliver's cousin, Mario, is visiting him in the hospital, make a comment. She thought that the Harvard people pounced upon him and deliberately broke his leg, because they recognized his scoring potential. She compared the game of football to the game of politics when rowdies seem to gain control at times.

However, Oliver recognized the injury as just a part of playing the game. He described the many things which were involved in making such a play as he had made. Could it be repeated by him? Why not? "The thing is too complicated. I might be just as ready, but you could never repeat just that combination of circumstances. That's why I say it was partly a fluke."[10]

When Edith realized that Oliver played football out of a sense of duty, that he recognized something vicious in

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[10] Ibid., 396.

the game, that at times it seemed to him like a "horrid tyranny" she wondered why he was not brave enough to call his soul his own.

But the game of football provoked a certain sense of loyalty and responsibility in the mind of Oliver. He experienced a feeling of unselfishness in playing for his school; they needed him. Not to have played would have "seemed selfish and effeminate." So, he had asserted his unselfishness and masculinity by playing football.

Before Edith and Mario left the hospital room, where Oliver was suffering pain in his left leg which had been in a plaster cast for twenty-four hours, she took some crimson roses from her muff and placed them in a glass of water by Oliver's bedside. Then he noticed that some of them were getting a little purple around the edges of the petals. They were roses Mario had given her just before the football game -- the one in which he wanted Edith to see his cousin Oliver as a hero.

> I defeated Harvard, something of no consequence to them, an accident, merely a practice game. Now their emblem, a bit wilted, has been brought round to me as an offering, as a prize.[11]

Much of Oliver's life had seemed somewhat like crimson roses which were becoming slightly purple, because he was unable to feel that he belonged. Always his true place seemed to be somewhere else.

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[11] Ibid., 399.

But to Oliver it was the spirit within which was significant. He mused:

> What endures is only this spirit, this perpetual witness, wondering at those apparitions, enjoying one, suffering at another, and questioning them all. If I keep this spirit free, if I keep it pure, let roses be red or white as they will, let there be no end of wars of the roses; let me wear the rose of Lancaster or the rose of York; neither will taint my soul or dye it of a party colour. Did I turn purple because I wore purple in the football field, or should I turn crimson if I wore crimson on some other day? Let them dress me up in whatever gaudy blazers they choose, let them nickname me as they like: I can always strip my spirit naked in the night, and my true self will be always nameless.[12]

Mario and Oliver spent a short time visiting Groton because some of Mario's friends wanted him to compare it to Eton. But Mario was impressed with the constant "boasting and apologizing" which the Americans at Groton did. Why should they not be willing to accept their school for what it was? Naturally, since the boarding school had been founded on the English model those at Groton felt that they had "kept all the good points and corrected all the bad." They seemed to insist that everything about Groton was superior.

> 'Except the result,' Oliver added, who didn't like Groton boys. 'Tap an Eton mind, and you find the Odes of Horace; tap a Groton mind, and you find the last number of an illustrated magazine.'[13]

During his time of convalescence from his football injury, Oliver and Mario visited Concord just to "feed Oliver's idealism." They wandered about the mouldering Old

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[12] Ibid., 400-401.

[13] Ibid., 404.

Manse; the poverty of the material surroundings contrasted strangely with the thoughts of the man who had lived there. To Oliver it seemed

> ...as if the spirit that had blown here had disdained to stop and to become material, and had spread and transformed itself to infinity into unexpected things. He liked Concord in its external humility and inward pride, so much like his own.[14]

Just how does Santayana evaluate the experiences of a college athlete who returns to his campus after recuperating in the infirmary of the rival college? The evaluation is pertinent because Oliver had been responsible for the scoring which had won the game from Harvard for Williams. Yet his leg had been broken later in the same game. The donor of a new hospital for Harvard happened to be on the side lines when the accident occurred; he insisted that Oliver be taken to that hospital. Consequently, there wasn't too much his own college could do for him.

When he returned to the Lambda Pi Fraternity house, his campus home, his reception was somewhat cool. Even the college in general seemed to give the impression that the victory had been too much of a personal one, "allowing himself to be hurt in a skirmish, leaving them without their best player in the final battles with their proper rivals."[15]

This "moral vacuum" which Oliver sensed was forming

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[14] Ibid., 404.

[15] Ibid., 405.

about him gave him an opportunity to concentrate on his books and to enjoy intellectual fellowship at a Coffee Club. The spirit of wit and freedom appealed to him.

> There were two or three young instructors in the company; they were harmless; they were not geniuses; but each of them had some special knowledge or some intellectual hobby; and in that academic Noah's Ark each had his head out of some window, sniffing at the weather outside.[16]

A satirical thrust at the inanity of much research required for a Ph.D. is dramatized in the character of Mario, who cares little for the intellectual discussions of the Coffee Club but thrives on the facetious remarks and frivolity of the Lambda Pi's. Mario was selected to assist the improvised theatrical show which the fraternity was giving. "Mario arranged the fable and played the principal part of Pierrot, introducing his little repertory of songs, some English, some French, some Italian." He made popular remarks about current campus happenings in a way which brought much amusement to his listeners.

He described the appearance of his cousin Oliver as having much in common with that of the distraught Hamlet. However, he explained that Oliver's abstraction was not caused by love; it was just the result of a secret project in which he was currently involved--the composition of a thesis for a Ph.D. The subject dealt with a study of Longfellow's poetry; Mario was reconstructing "the lost document

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[16] Ibid., 405.

Q from which that rogue Longfellow drew his best-sellers." It would be a thorough debunking of the popular American poet's source material. In fact, Alden's contribution to scholarship would be so widely recognized that after his research had been completed "People will say Before Alden and After Alden as we say B.C. and A.D."[17]

Harvard University

The educational philosophy of Oliver was affected by his football injury. He would continue with exercise, a healthy exercise, but "he would turn his back on all competitive, official, organized athletics." He was eager to complete his requirements for a degree. He wanted to go to Harvard as an unknown, poor student, to live apart from the restless, garrulous students.

He went to Cambridge early enough to avoid the inrush of students, and was fortunate in locating a room on the ground floor of Divinity Hall. The one redeeming feature of the room was the iron grate in the fireplace which caused him to recall the homey joy of those he had seen at Eton. He could arrange the room to be more comfortable, and he would be away from intrusions. The new library was nearby and in it he could find many helpful books of German philosophy, "learned reviews, dictionaries, and an atmosphere of wholesouled, devoted study."

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[17] Ibid., 406.

The janitor inferred that Emerson had lived in the room but had not scratched his name any place as evidence. What did the apparent "meanness and discomfort" of the room mean if that great man had lived there? "What was good enough for Emerson is good enough for me," the student thought.

A college curriculum may offer a wealth of educational material, but just how does the beginning student discover which courses he will take? Santayana gives the reader a glimpse of Oliver and Mario as they discuss courses during their meal. Mario had lost his copy of the Elective Pamphlet which listed 286 courses to choose from. He borrowed Oliver's copy; it showed much use. He had turned down the corners of pages, had written marginal notes, and made various checks by course numbers. He had previewed courses and professors before enrolling. His remarks included these criticisms: "Prof talks through his nose in a see-saw...Instructor very young and easy-going. Sits on the desk and lets the class do the talking...This lad tries to be funny...Lectures like a gramophone and quotes statistics." Several other comments had been made. Oliver had truly been shopping about to discover which courses offered him the most for his time and energy.

Included in the courses he had selected were: Indian Philosophy, with Professor Woods; Metaphysics, with Professor

Royce; Plato in English; Republic, Phaedrus, and Symposium, with Santayana; and a course in Ethics.

However, Mario, the aesthete, had been unable to decide just which courses he wished to take. He suggested that since Oliver had decided on his courses he might just as well take the same ones. After all, they could divide the work. "You can go to the lectures and tell me what the professor says, and I will tell you what to think of it."[18]

When Mario finally settled down to concentrate on the selection of his courses for the semester he searched about for the "advanced courses. . .primarily for graduates," Mario liked to trail along these "narrow mountain paths up which learning might be traced to its sources, always in the green earth; because at its spring science becomes again as fresh and humorous as sensation, and history as exciting as sightseeing and gossip." He selected the following courses: Villon and the troubadours, Saracen art in Spain, and military history of Europe in the seventeenth century.[19]

These were small classes of "three or four members and would meet in a room in the library, or in the professor's study." Mario was a "connoisseur by temperament, already at home among rare things." He seemed to the professors who had him in class more like a "glow worm" among the more

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[18] Ibid., 429.

[19] Ibid., 436.

"opaque worms." It was to Mario the professor confided the little rarely known details included in "the ramifications of some historic scandal." This Harvard youth carried his books and notebooks to class in an old heirloom leather pouch "still decorated with a magnificent silver monogram and crest, which served as a clasp." This had served his father as a portfolio for the paintings he had done when he was still an "embryo Turner." This old leather pouch seemed to link his father's interests with his own and "the old associations seemed to make the new studies more entertaining and less pretentious."[20]

Student and Teacher

The creative writer reveals many things concerning the individuals who are supposedly responsible for teaching the youth of the nation. At times the teacher is inhibited in an effort to teach the facts as they appear to him.

Santayana describes the individual attention which Fraulein gave her one pupil, Oliver Alden, until he was ready for high school at the age of fifteen years. Her interest in the intellectual and emotional development of her young student is revealed in general descriptions, conversations, and the letters which the Fraulein wrote to various people, especially to her relatives in Germany. The family

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[20] Ibid., 437.

wished to refrain from sending him to the school with other adolescents as long as possible, for "the sake of his studies . . .Irma, all love and zeal, had no difficulty in emptying into him her store of knowledge in German and English literature, in history and even in the classics."[21] Later in mathematics and science young Oliver pushed ahead of his teacher, she dropped all pretenses of knowing more than he did, and merely "became a pace-maker and sympathetic comrade in his career of discovery."

Education was a voyage of discoveries for Oliver, but Cyrus Paul Whittle, a teacher of American history and literature in Great Falls High School, Connecticut, had little respect for the student who attempted to chart his own course. He was just another of the teachers who the "school mind" regarded as something of a policeman to be circumvented whenever possible. He was a "sarcastic wizened little man."

His voice was high and quavering "with a bitter incisive emphasis on one or two words in every sentence as if he were driving a long hard nail into the coffin of some detested fallacy."[22] He had a few characteristics which might have helped him to qualify as a minister or even a man of politics in his native state of Vermont, if he had cared to cater to popular opinion in all his ideas. His lectures were made more exciting by "peppering" his comments

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[21] Ibid., 113.

[22] Ibid., 125.

with trenchant asides, which might have made his position as a teacher somewhat insecure had they been heard by the "headmaster and the City Council." Cyrus Paul Whittle found great joy in going just as far as he dared in his efforts to "vilify all distinguished men. Franklin had written indecent verses; Washington--who had enormous hands and feet-had married Dame Martha for her money; Emerson served up Goethe's philosophy in ice-water."[23]

He saw a thin line of demarkation between the man who became a hero and the man who was condemned as a failure. But shining through all his theories was the philosophy of the Calvinistic flame--never give way to discouragement. "Providence did wonderful things through unworthy instruments."[24]

Charley Copeland, Barrett Wendell, and William James had been among the great teachers at Harvard, according to Oliver's Uncle Caleb who lived in Boston. The aged uncle had warned him that even Harvard was beginning to be like much of the rest of the country to be "choked with big business, forced fads, and merely useful knowledge. Our fearless souls of other days have left no heirs."[25] The old man shudders at what he terms "intellectual professionalism, the slough of wholesale standardized opinion," and the general

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[23] Ibid., 126.

[24] Ibid., 126.

[25] Ibid., 187.

"sheepish, ignorant, monotonous, epidemic mind of our political rulers, well-meaning and decent as a whole, but oh, how helpless!"[26] But if an individual has a willingness to learn and a mind capable of being taught, the old gentleman assures Oliver that Boston is the place to study. And Harvard has known great teachers in the past and will continue to know great teachers in the future.

Several bright, curiously alert young instructors were known by Oliver in the Coffee Club at Williams. These young intellectuals on the faculty stimulated the thinking of the students.

> Pat Milligan is the most distinguished person in Cambridge--really the only distinguished person. He's a poet, a pauper, and a saint. But if you wish to know what people <u>think</u> he is, he's merely an instructor in English and <u>proctor</u> here in Claverley.[27]

That was the description which Mario gave Oliver of one of his friends at Harvard. The young professor is described in the terms of a Shelley, "pale, with a lot of red hair, cerulean eyes, and a mouth that can breathe hot anger." This instructor was also known as Patrick Ignatius Milligan, Ph.D.

Royce and James were Santayana's teachers at Harvard; later, he joined them as a member of the faculty. He continued to teach philosophy at Harvard until he was nearly fifty

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[26] <u>Ibid</u>., 187.

[27] <u>Ibid</u>., 427.

years old; at that time he inherited enough money to live a life free from financial concerns. As a result he resigned his position. In his belief that "everything is material in its basis and ideal in its possible career," Aristotle was his teacher. "As a philosopher Santayana surveyed with sympathy and detachment man the animal and mortal creature with his precarious glimpses of eternity."[28] And in this, Plato was his teacher.

When Oliver and Mario were discussing their schedule at Harvard, Santayana had Oliver remark that he was taking a course in "Plato in English: Republic, Phaedrus, and Symposium." Oliver told Mario that the course was taught by Santayana. Mario replied that he was well acquainted with the philosopher. "I'll take you to tea in his room...he has expressly warned me off his own lectures; he says it would be highly dangerous for me to become more civilized than I am."[29]

But the course in Plato inspired Oliver to write the thesis on Plato which aroused such a great interest in his professor of philosophy that the result was the memoir titled The Last Puritan. Santayana had been a student at

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[28] Irwin Edman, "Santayana's Philosophy," The Saturday Review of Literature, XXXVII (May 15, 1954), 8.

[29] Santayana, op. cit., 431.

Harvard, also. Among his former professors were Royce and James, both writers. And writing became an art with Santayana.

> Unless one assumes, as too many of our modern studies seem to do, that whatever a man studies in college courses straightway flies out of his nostrils, considerable weight should be given to the studies which American authors undertook in their youth under qualified instructors.[30]

The intellectual stimulation of the teacher-student relationship is vividly expressed by Santayana in telling of this experience when the assignment called for "personal comments" in the paper which followed the reading of Plato's Phaedrus and Symposium.

> It was during these days, in a moment of intellectual euphoria, that he composed the 'thesis' on Plato which was the occasion of my great interest in him, and indirectly the first cause of this book...personal comments were asked for; and it was here that, for once, he let himself go. It was not the spirit of Plato, nor of Emerson, his predecessor in that student's chamber, that now descended on Oliver: it was his own spirit that inspired him.[31]

Ironically, this discussion of Plato was interrupted by Mario, who had suddenly found that the best solution to an unfortunate incident in which he had become involved with an attractive young actress was to leave Harvard immediately. At an inopportune time a cablegram had been brought to his

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[30] John Paul Pritchard, Return to the Fountains, Some Classical Sources of American Criticism (Durham: Duke University Press, 1942), 4.

[31] Santayana, op. cit., 438.

room, and thus the exposure was made. When the message of the cablegram was read, Mario had a second reason for leaving immediately; his mother was dying, and he hoped to reach her while she was still living.

Many unexpected frustrations, sorrows, and tragedies surround the student at all times. And there seems to be no one best philosophy for a student to follow. Oliver, the conscientious, intelligent, dependable one helped Mario, the experimenter with life, to leave the campus; he even provided him with the necessary money for future needs.

Among the educational experiences of a youth, orientation to life as lived seems necessary. Ideals are needed, they need to be related to daily living. "Among the American thinkers who led the revolt against nineteenth century idealism, none have ranked with Santayana in literary stature or with Dewey in originality."[32]

According to Dewey in his discussion of "Experience and Education" he explains the need of education.

> What we want and need is education pure and simple, and we shall make surer and faster progress when we devote ourselves to finding out just what education is and what conditions have to be satisfied in order that education may be a reality and not a name or a slogan. It is for this reason alone that I have emphasized the need for a sound philosophy of experience.[33]

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[32] Brand Blanshard, "Speculative Thinkers," Literary History of the United States, Spiller et al, (eds.) One volume edition. (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1953), 1289.

[33] John Dewey, Intelligence in the Modern World, Edited by Joseph Ratner (New York: Modern Library, 1939),682.

The philosophy of experience found a place in the daily living of Oliver and of Mario. Later, both of the young men were involved in service during World War I. However, Mario was the one who survived. Oliver lost his life in a motor accident just after the Armistice. It was Mario who encouraged Santayana to write the memoir of their friend and former student, Oliver Alden.

When the memoir had been completed and Santayana and Mario were discussing it in Rome, the philosopher-teacher congratulated Mario Van de Weyer: "With the beautiful Donna Laura and your charming children, you will hand on the torch of true civilization. . . . You have blood within and sunlight above, and are true enough to the past in being true to yourselves."[34]

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[34] Santayana, op. cit., 600.

CHAPTER VI

THOMAS WOLFE

Amory Blaine and Nick Carraway, as portrayed by F. Scott Fitzgerald, were the first to appear in this study of the student of higher education.

At this time, two students, as portrayed by Thomas Wolfe, are introduced. Eugene Gant appears in Look Homeward, Angel and in Of Time and the River. George Webber appears in The Web and the Rock and You Can't Go Home Again.

In a note addressed to his reader, Wolfe explains his main concern in writing the novel Look Homeward, Angel.

> This is a first book, and in it the author has written of experience which is now far and lost, but which was once part of the fabric of his life. If any reader, therefore, should say that the book is 'autobiographical' the writer has no answer for him! It seems to him that all serious work in fiction is autobiographical.
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> . . . . . .
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> The writer's main concern was to give fulness, life, and intensity to the actions and people in the book he was creating. Now that it is to be published, he would insist that this book is a fiction, and that he meditated no man's portrait here.[1]

Part of Eugene's fabric of life is associated with his educational experiences. From the age of twelve to

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[1] Thomas Wolfe, Look Homeward, Angel (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1929), i.

sixteen he attended the Leonards' private school; then he matriculated as a freshman at Pulpit Hill, North Carolina. Inadequate orientation to the freshman year caused him to feel ill at ease. His physical appearance--he was about six feet three inches tall and weighed one hundred and thirty pounds--added to his sense of awkwardness. During his sophomore year he had an opportunity to become active in extra-curricular activities.

War in Europe was making an impact on the life of the college and university men. Many were leaving the campus for military duty. Because fewer men were on the campus, Eugene had opportunities for the development of even greater abilities as a campus leader during his junior year. During this year his brother, Ben, died.

Commencement was a time of pride for Oliver and Eliza Gant.[2] They were pleased that Eugene was honored by being invited to write and to read the class poem. Of course, they attended the graduation of their youngest child, who was the only member of the family ever to be awarded a university degree.

This short summary of important events in the life of Eugene Gant will be followed by a more detailed account of experiences at the Leonards' private school, Pulpit Hill, and Harvard University. Eugene Gant was the youngest of

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[2] Ibid., 600.

eleven children, six of whom were living at the time of his birth. His father, who had listened to great actors when he was young, quoted and read Shakespeare and oratory to his son. The father had memorized long passages from the poets; these Eugene heard frequently.

The public library, with its collection of books, was a place of miracles; he read widely there and at home. He was excited by the printed word and the pictures which the books contained. For him "the lost angels of the Dore 'Milton' swooped into cavernous Hell beyond this upper earth of soaring or toppling spires, machine wonder, maced and mailed romance."[3] He read the five cent novels on his brother Luke's shelf; he worked out an exchange system of books with his companions, and he found among his father's books copies of the Iliad and the Odyssey.

The Leonards' Private School

An essay, describing his impressions of the thoughts of the young girl in the picture "The Song of the Lark," which was written in school, won a prize and the opportunity for Eugene to study in the Leonards' school.

Wolfe's description of Eugene's first meeting with Margaret Leonard reveals what is experienced when a receptive young mind comes in contact with an understanding teacher. He was nearly twelve years old, and he had read through the

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[3] Ibid., 84.

"waste land of printery"[4] which he had been able to discover. He was eager to learn. She questioned him about his reading; he responded readily. She listened attentively:

> She was excited and eager--she saw at once how abundantly she could feed this ravenous hunger for knowledge, experience, wisdom. And he knew suddenly the joy of obedience; the wild ignorant groping, the blind hunt, the desperate baffled desire was now to be ruddered, guided, controlled. The way through the passage to India, that he had never been able to find, would now be charted for him.[5]

When he left the Leonard home, after his first trip there, he took with him a copy of a novel which Mrs. Leonard thought he would find to his liking and "Eugene thought The Cloister and the Hearth the best story he had ever read."[6]

At the Lecnards' school he studied Latin: Caesar, Virgil, and Horace, as well as two years of Greek. When the other boys questioned Mr. Leonard about the worth of reading the classics they found a ready reply. "It teaches a man to appreciate the Finer Things. It gives him the foundations of a liberal education."[7] However, one of the boys asked if knowing the classics would teach one how to grow better corn. Eugene also studied mathematics and history.

The teaching techniques used by Margaret Leonard were effective. "She saw the flame that burns in each of them,

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[4] Ibid., 215.

[5] Ibid., 215.

[6] Ibid., 216.

[7] Ibid., 221.

and she guarded it."[8] She was concerned about the health and emotional welfare of each student; she knew that the reader needed exercise and proper food. She understood the value of encouragement and inspiration.

This was his introduction to The Altamont Fitting School. Margaret Leonard thought of teaching as bringing its own reward, and to her that reward was a great one. To her teaching was "lyric music, her life, the world in which plastically she built to beauty what was good."[9]

Mr. Leonard was more interested in farming than in teaching. The appeal of the soil was greater than that of the "things of the mind." When outwitted in an intellectual skirmish with one of his students, he would frequently resort to some form of physical punishment. He was uncertain of his information in some areas, because he had done little studying since his college days. However, he did have the courage to express his frank opinion of Darwin's theory, and had to withdraw from the deaconship in the local church as a result.[10]

But Margaret Leonard encouraged Eugene to read intelligently. He read Burns, Wordsworth, Ben Jonson, Herrick, Blake, Donne, Crashaw, Carew, Suckling, Campion, Lovelace,

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[8] Ibid., 307.

[9] Ibid., 216.

[10] Ibid., 232-233.

and Dekker and a number of Shakespeare's plays and sonnets. He memorized whole poems and many passages from plays.

> He read shelves of novels: all of Thackeray, all the stories of Poe and Hawthorne, and Herman Melville's Omoo and Typee, which he found at Gant's. Of Moby Dick, he had never heard. He read a half-dozen Coopers, all of Mark Twain, but failed to finish a single book of Howells or James.[11]

Eugene was particularly interested in the descriptive passages of Sir Walter Scott, especially those describing food.

Who determines which college or university a youth will attend? Thomas Wolfe answers the question for Eugene. When discussing the education of their sixteen year old son, the father becomes very emphatic about sending him to the state university, because "he will make friends there who will stand by him the rest of his life."[12] Gant had discussed the boy's education with his friend Preston Carr, a local lawyer who was expected to be the next governor of the state. Carr suggested that the law school at the university would help to prepare Eugene for a future career in politics. There he would meet young people from throughout the state; these acquaintances would have future value for him, when Gant's son entered politics. Gant longed for his son to win the laurels which he had missed, and he had great faith in the potential value of an education. So he was determined

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[11] Ibid., 315.

[12] Ibid., 388.

that Eugene should attend the university; he was even willing to finance his education.

Gant's educational plans for his son differed from those of the Leonards, whose school Eugene had been attending for four years. Margaret Leonard considered the age of the youth. She suggested that Vanderbilt, or possibly Virginia would be advisable for Eugene's first two years of college. By that time he would be eighteen and might go on to Harvard for two more years and his degree. When she considered higher education for Eugene, she was concerned with the fullest development of his intellectual capacities, regardless of material returns. Consequently, she thought that even a year or two at Oxford would be advisable. And John Dorsey Leonard approved of such an education because then "a man may begin to say he's really 'cultsherd.'"[13] He suggested the possibility of travel as a part of Eugene's educational future.

Pulpit Hill University

Wolfe describes Eugene as a "fantasist of the Ideal"[14] at the time he entered the university; he probably belonged with the "Mythmakers." He had much of the innocence of childhood, although he had known pain, ugliness, and tragedy. He was very tall and slender and weighed about one hundred and

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[13] Ibid., 388.

[14] Ibid., 391.

thirty pounds. He was conscious of his "young wild child's face," and his "great raw length of body." He felt so awkward and ill at ease that he developed "an insane fury" against all those who were poised. He longed to be one with the crowd. He suffered from the "swollen egotism of the introvert,"[15] and frequently imagined that the laughter of others was directed against him. Many times he was right.

When he entered the university "he was the greenest of all green freshmen."[16] He became the object for the classic pranks of the upper classmen. Eugene listened to a bewhiskered sophomore, thinking he was listening to a chapel speaker; he prepared to take an examination on the contents of the college catalog; he made a speech of acceptance when, with fifty others, he was elected to a literary club. Eugene even saluted the upper classmen. His romantic ideas of college life, gleaned from 'Stover at Yale', were soon shattered.

Eugene's freshman English teacher was pleased to know that the student had read the works of James M. Barrie. But Mr. Torrington, the old Rhodes Scholar, Pulpit Hill and Merton, 1914, was unimpressed when the name of George Bernard Shaw was mentioned. According to his critical appraisal "the appeal of a man like that was mainly to the unformed

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[15] Ibid., 395.

[16] Ibid., 394.

taste, the uncritical judgment."[17]

The professor referred to Carlyle's comment that a true university was a collection of books, and he wished Eugene to realize the value of reading widely. When speaking of writing, he revealed his appreciation of exactness of wording; to him there was a close association between looseness of thinking and inaccuracy of phrasing ideas. This Pulpit Hill professor seemed lacking in the technique necessary for discovering what the student actually knew. Eugene was assigned a certain paper to write. He left in a rebellious mood, willing to accept and perform the assignment, but determined to read as he wished.

Eugene managed to change English teachers. His excuse, given when questioned by a classmate, was the simple reason, "I wasn't English enough. Young and crude. I changed."[18] His next English teacher, a man named Sanford, discovered the student's possibilities as a writer.

Courses in chemistry, mathematics, Greek, and Latin were on Eugene's schedule, also. Latin challenged his interest and he worked industriously on his translations. However, the Latin professor was a man with a "satanic smile." His hair, parted in the middle and arched to each side, reminded Eugene of horns. The man seemed possessed with a

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[17] Ibid., 399.

[18] Ibid., 406.

sense of malicious humor. This professor characterized the translation which Eugene made as "polished and scholarly," but his comment was sardonic. He derided the freshman for resorting, as he thought, to the use of a pony when "he was capable of doing first-rate work."[19] According to Eugene's report, the teacher was unable to detect that he was the only member of the class who was not using a previously prepared translation. After this rebuke, even Eugene resorted to the use of a pony. But he was clever enough to camouflage his understanding of Latin by translating his work slowly and laboriously.

The Greek professor, Mr. Edward Pettigrew ("Buck") Benson, introduced him to Homer in the original. In this course Eugene did have to labor industriously, but he still annoyed the professor with his poor translation. However, before the spring session closed, the student was reading Euripides, although the written translations were superior to his oral translations. Eugene's grades were satisfactory.

"Buck" Benson read Greek with such beauty of tone and rhythm that the "vast sea-surge of Homer" was felt in Eugene's brain, blood, and pulses. He was reminded of the sounds which were heard by placing the sea shell in Gant's parlor to his ear when a lad. The reading of Homer by this professor impressed Eugene because,

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[19] Ibid., 400.

> His voice was low, lazy, pleasant, with an indolent drawl, but without changing its pace or its inflection he could flay a victim with as cruel a tongue as ever wagged, and in the next moment wipe out hostility, restore affection, heal all wounds by the same agency.[20]

The classmates of Eugene Gant at Pulpit Hill were described. The sophomore son of Mrs. Bradley, the boarding house keeper, caused Eugene much discomfort. G. T. longed to make a fraternity, but was unsuccessful. This nineteen year old student sought to gain attention by becoming something of a slave driver of freshmen. He attempted to "thwart and ruin" Eugene's first year on the campus by tricking, humbling, and deriding him. As soon as possible, Eugene found another place to live. When G. T. realized that this freshman was escaping his grasp, he asked to shake hands and forget the unpleasantness. At last Eugene did. "He forgave because it was necessary to forget."[21]

Housing was so unsatisfactory that during Eugene's first year he changed his lodgings "four or five times."[22] He preferred a boarding house to the commons for his meals. "The food was abundant, coarse, greasily and badly cooked. It was very cheap: at the college commons, twelve dollars a month; at the boarding houses, fifteen."[23]

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[20] Ibid., 401.

[21] Ibid., 404.

[22] Ibid., 403.

[23] Ibid., 419.

In April of his freshman year, war was declared on Germany. Many college and university students were enlisting, if they were twenty-one. Eugene wanted to enlist, too, but he was only sixteen.

His interests in reading at random and for pleasure continued. He read Defoe, Smollett, Fielding, Boccaccio, Murray's Euripides, Prometheus, and Oedipus Rex. The tragedy, Oedipus, "perfect, inevitable, and fabulous--wreaked upon him the nightmare coincidence of Destiny." He was entranced by the fabulous; he "liked all weird fable and wild invention, in prose or verse, from the Golden Ass to Samuel Taylor Coleridge."

> The best fabulists have often been the greatest satirists: satire (as with Aristophanes, Voltaire, and Swift) is a high and subtle art, quite beyond the barnyard snipings and wholesale geese-slaughterings of the present degenerate age. Swift's power of invention is incomparable: there's no better fabulist in the world.[24]

Poe, Lord Dunsany, and Frankenstein were included in Eugene's reading.

When he returned home to the mountains in the spring, he was sixteen. And he "was a College Man." He was congratulated on his accomplishments.

> After all, Eugene thought, he had not done so badly. He had felt his first wounds. He had not been broken. He had seen love's bitter mystery. He had lived alone.[25]

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[24] Ibid., 422.

[25] Ibid., 426.

Eugene's family life drew him to the circle, while at the same time it seemed to repel him. Each member seemed to be a stranger to the other.

Encouragement to continue with his college education came from Ben. He was concerned about Eugene's first year. Eugene said he had made fair grades, the Spring semester was easier than the Fall, because, "It was hard getting started--at the beginning." He explained that the boys thought he looked funny. Ben was frank enough to give him a lecture on the value of personal appearance, neatness, grooming. It was a "success-sermon."

> 'This is an age of specialization. They're looking for college-trained men. . . . So get your education,' said Ben, scowling vaguely. 'All the Big Men--Ford, Edison, Rockefeller--whether they had it or not, say it's a good thing.'
> 'Why didn't you go yourself?' said Eugene curiously.
> 'I didn't have anyone to tell me,' said Ben.[26]

Bob Stearling was Eugene's roommate at the beginning of his sophomore year. His mother was a widow. Bob knew how to budget his time; he studied each assignment over three times, and even mumbled it aloud to himself. Wolfe describes Bob's abilities. "He had a good mind--bright, attentive, studious, unmarked by originality of inventiveness."[27]

Eugene Gant, in the loss of his roommate Bob, had something in common with Amory Blaine in the loss of his

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[26] Ibid.,447.

[27] Ibid.,480.

friend,Dick. Each revealed the effect of death on a youth closely associated with a college student. Bob was interpreted as having the characteristics of a student who was serious about his work; Dick was interpreted as having the characteristics which Amory associated with an aristocrat.

The need of a new environment was felt by Eugene, after the death of his roommate. He found a new lodging where he roomed with Elk Duncan and Harold Gay. One room was designated as a study, and the three students shared the same bedroom. Harold, twenty-two years old, the son of a minister, seemed bewildered, shy, and confused by life. Elk Duncan, the law student, was twenty-four, and a teller of "fables." A poser, with some of the characteristics of a "barker of a carnival side-show: loquacious, patronizing, and cynical,"[28] he enjoyed having an audience of listeners. Several rough words of the world were added to the vocabulary of those who listened and repeated what was heard. Elk could evoke roars, howls, and "ironical cheers." This future lawyer-politician was testing his abilities; the campus was his laboratory.

During his sophomore year Eugene met Jim Trivitt, the profane twenty-year old son of a wealthy tobacco farmer. Jim was a corruptor of the morals of the less worldly men. It was through him that Eugene was introduced to the Exeter

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[28] Ibid., 482.

brothel. Wolfe comments, "Eugene was haunted by his own lost ghost: he knew it to be irrecoverable."[29]

Student groups are described by Wolfe as they joke on the Pullman on the return trip from Altamont after the holidays. Eugene becomes the object of the rough joking of Tom French whose appearance reveals the "hard insolence of money." He is encouraged and entertained by Roy Duncan "his court jester."[30] "The cluster of grinning students, the young impartial brutes"[31] respond raucously to the brutal jesting in the swaying Pullman, as the young men return to the campus.

An athlete, Zeno Cochran, twenty years old, is respected by Eugene. Zeno made an eighty yard punt against the wind when Pulpit Hill played Yale. He "was handsome, soft-spoken, kindly--with the fearless gentleness of the athlete."[32] Zeno is presented in a more favorable light by Wolfe than is the football player, Tom, as interpreted by Fitzgerald in The Great Gatsby. Tom was an aggressive football player who tolerated little right of interference when he entered post-college life. "An offensively worthy student," Jimmy Revel, the son of a carpenter, was working his way

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[29] Ibid., 412.

[30] Ibid., 417.

[31] Ibid., 418.

[32] Ibid., 418.

through college by using various devices for earning money.

His vulgarity and malice sought release in "a false and loud good-humor."[33] He was an "egger-on" in mischief.

Among the members of the Saturday literary society was a student who liked to smoke cheap cigars. His father was the son of a foreman of a cotton mill. He was characterized as having a "bitter, common face" and he spoke with a "monotonous, painful drawl."[34]

Campus politics aroused the interest of Eugene during his sophomore year. Brilliancy was likely to be associated with the undesirable. Even on the university campus anti-intellectuals were influential.

> The place was a democratic microcosmos--seething with political interests: national, regional, collegiate.
>
> The campus had its candidates, its managers, its bosses, its machines, as had the State. A youngster developed in college the political craft he was later to exert in Party affairs. The son of a politician was schooled by his crafty sire before the down was off his cheeks: at sixteen, his life had been plotted ahead to the governship, or to the proud dignities of a Congressman. The boy came deliberately to the university to bait and set his first traps; deliberately he made those friendships that were most likely to benefit him later. By his junior year, if he was successful, he had a political manager, who engineered his campus ambitions; he moved with circumspection, and spoke with a trace of pomp nicely weighed with cordiality. . . .[35]

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[33] Ibid., 418.

[34] Ibid., 421.

[35] Ibid., 486.

Thomas Wolfe was contemptuous of the "satisfactory mediocrity" which pervaded the campus in the form of the "all-round man" who "was safe, sound, and reliable. He would never get notions."

Eugene became active in extracurricular activities. He accepted the soreness which resulted from the initiation ceremonies. He had the primitive pleasure of a child or of a savage as he went about "with colored ribbons in his coat lapel; and a waistcoat plastered with pins, badges, symbols, and Greek letterings."[36]

The adolescent who must depend on his family to support him while he is attending the university has yearnings for financial independence. In order to have an education, Eugene had to take the money which his family gave to him. When they criticized him he was truly adolescent in his behavior. He reminded the family they sent him to the university because they couldn't do anything else after "the Leonards had cried me up for three years, and then you sent me a year too soon--before I was sixteen--with a box of sandwiches, two suits of clothes, and instructions to be a good boy."[37] Of course, the other members of the Gant family taunt him with suggestions that he was having opportunities which they missed. However, some members of the Gant family did wish to encourage Eugene to carry the family

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[36] Ibid., 488.

[37] Ibid., 504.

name to fame, but they found occasion to be unkind to him. So, when his name began to appear in the papers, as a result of his extracurricular activities, he saw that clippings were sent home for his family and the neighbors to read.

When the war stopped "the students cursed and took off their uniforms.. But they rang the great bronze bell, and built a bonfire on the campus, leaping around it like dervisnes."[38]

Eugene grieved over the death of his brother Ben, who seemed to understand him as no one else did. Throughout his lifetime Eugene recalled the helpfulness of this older brother who had contributed to his early information concerning the ways of life in Altamont.

Oliver Gant is slowly dying of cancer, yet he and Eliza attend the graduation of their son and are very proud as they listen to Eugene's reading of the class poem.

After his parents left for home, Eugene wandered about on the campus. He talked with Vergil Weldon. They had discussion beneath great trees in the yard as they drank iced tea, and talked of future plans of Eugene. He was thinking of California, Peru, Asia, Alaska, Europe, Africa, China.

But he mentioned Harvard. For him, it was not the name of a university--it was rich magic, wealth, elegance,

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[38] Ibid., 584.

> joy, proud loneliness, rich books and golden browsing; it was an enchanted name like Cairo and Damascus. And he felt somehow that it gave a reason, a goal, a profit, to his wild ecstasy.[39]

During the discussion the professor remarked, "A mind like yours must not be pulled green. You must give it a chance to ripen. There you will find yourself."[40] Eugene Gant continued to be a Seeker as he left the campus of Pulpit Hill. He returned for a visit at home before continuing his study. But before he left home to do graduate work at Harvard, he experienced a vision in the form of a night time visit from his lost brother, Ben. And Eugene vowed that "I will plumb seas stranger than those haunted by the Albatross." He was continuing the search to discover himself; this search continued through myriads books and among strange lands and peoples.

Thomas Wolfe continued the story of the search of Eugene Gant in Of Time and the River.

Classroom Experiences

After Eugene Gant had completed a Master of Arts in literature at Harvard University, he accepted a position as teacher of English in the School for Utility Culture in New York City.

Eugene had evaluated his own teachers while he was a student in Pulpit Hill and in Harvard. Now, from the

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[39] Ibid., 602.

[40] Ibid., 602.

other side of the teacher's desk, he realized just how critical a student may become. Sinclair Lewis had George Babbitt denounce the professor long after he had left the classroom in the University of Winnemac. However, Wolfe has described what may happen when a student becomes critical while in the classroom.

Through the portrait of Abe Jones he reveals areas of tension which may appear in the evaluation of the college experience. These criticisms are refracted through the questioning and responding of Abe. The student is dissatisfied because he feels individual counseling has been neglected; the teacher has failed to have what he considers a reasonable number of individual conferences. Eugene indicates that he has had so many conferences with the large number of students in his class that "his brain and heart" are "sick and weary."

Abe charges that theme topics assigned for class writing are uninteresting and lacking in stimulation. Why not assign better topics? Since he selected the volume of essays which constitute the required reading, why did he select this particular one? Abe disliked the selections. Discrimination was evident in the exclusion of the works of certain authors. Abe wondered why the names of "Jewish writers such as Lewishon and Sholem Asch" had not been included. The types of literature studied were poems, plays,

biographies, and novels. Forms of prose writing were exposition, description, narration, and argumentation. But Abe questioned the emphasis placed on one form over that of another. He was never satisfied with any particular assignment. He was longing for greater satisfaction from his educational experience. Even though Abe had much conversation with the young professor, he continued with "one long surly indictment of his class, his teaching, and his competence."

Wolfe interprets the reaction of a university teacher to such a student as Abe Jones, and reveals how student pressures and dissatisfactions may affect a teacher. When the student continued to insist that something was wrong with the teaching methods, he became almost unbearable. A special tension was created.

> The indictment, merciless, insistent, unrelenting, piled up day by day and meanwhile resentment, anger, resolution began to blaze and burn in Eugene, a conviction grew that this could no longer be endured, that no life, no wage, no position was worth this thankless toil and trouble, and that he must make an end of a situation which had become intolerable.[41]

The anger burst forth in words of denunciation of the classroom experience. Young Abe Jones spoke of the cost of class attendance to him--he had paid his hard earned dollars for tuition. George Babbitt complained about the cost of education which was paid for in another way--it was

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[41] Thomas Wolfe, Of Time and the River, A Legend of Man's Hunger in His Youth (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1935)(Garden City Books Reprint Edition), 444.

the more indirect way of taxation. Babbitt was concerned about the type of ideas which the professors were passing on to the students. However, he did take pride in having worked to pay his college expenses, also. But Abe Jones just wanted the best that the professor was capable of delivering.

Who pays for classroom instruction? What is the obligation of the educator to the one who pays for and seeks an education? Abe insists:

> We've got a right to expect the best we can get . . . That's what we're there for. That's what we're paying out our dough for. You know, the fellows down there are not rich guys like the fellows at Yale and Harvard. A dollar means something to them. . . . Most of us have got to work for everything we get, and if some guy who's teaching us is not giving us the best he's got we got a right to kick about it. . . . That's the way I feel about it.[42]

After this frank challenge from his student, Eugene Gant, whose father had sent him to a state university when he was sixteen, hoping he would become a lawyer and an influential citizen, responded with an equal frankness. "I've been giving you the best I've got, but you don't think it's good enough. Well, it's all I've got and it's all you're going to get from me."[43]

When Abe was threatened with removal from the class, he suddenly realized something of the problems of the teacher.

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[42] Ibid., 445.

[43] Ibid., 445.

Then he asked to be retained in the section because he thought it to be the best class he had. "Honest it is! No kiddin'! ...All the fellows feel the same way about it."

In this conference between student and teacher, Wolfe reveals much of the agony which may be experienced by two conscientious seekers who meet in a college classroom. Even though each is giving of his best, the other may be agonizing because more cannot be realized from the educational experience. The mental hunger to learn all, as contrasted with the great desire to teach even the unteachable, may cause a great agony of spirit, or of intellect, on the part of both educator and educand. As a result of their conference both arrived at a greater understanding of and appreciation for one another. Rapport nad been established for the first time, and the counseling situation tended to remove an emotional block which had been obstructing learning. As a result of this discussion with the sincere and intelligent youth, the teacher "went up to his room with a feeling of such relief, ease, and happiness as he had not known for months."

Cognizance is taken in a recent study[44] of the autobiographical aspects of the teaching experience of Tom Wolfe at Washington Square, New York University and that portrayed

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[44] Thomas Clark Pollock and Oscar Cargill, Thomas Wolfe at Washington Square (New York: New York University Press, 1954), 32-33.

by Eugene Gant at the School for Utility Cultures, New York City. An enlightening comment is made concerning the questions which Abe Jones asked of Eugene Gant.

> Did Tom /Eugene/ but know it, Abe asked questions that were being asked instructors in every section of English Composition, where they were not suppressed by a torrent of Southern rhetoric and the awesome masculine force of the instructor. Abe merely penetrated by indomitable persistence his instructor's almost invulnerable defenses.[45]

Eugene Gant was facing a classroom situation which has disturbed English teachers, as well as other educators, for years. He wished to be an effective teacher, just as Thomas Wolfe[46] wished to be an effective teacher. Why was the young college educator unable to secure better results in his university class? A partial answer may be found in the report of Professor Ricardo Quintana, of the Department of English at the University of Wisconsin.

> We know as well as anyone--and better than some--that if we were dealing with restricted numbers of students we should be much more effective as educators. Our courses are enormous; enrollments these days vary so greatly from year to year and from semester to semester that rational planning in regard to size of classes, staff, and even in some cases to the content of our courses, is impossible. It is often, of necessity, a catch-as-catch-can process, and such it bids fair to remain for a long time in our large state universities.[47]

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[45] Ibid., 27.

[46] Ibid., 22.

[47] Ricardo Quintana, "Circular Patterns and Offerings in Higher Education." Part I; "The Case for Subject-Field Organization," Higher Education for American Society, Edited by John Guy Fowlkes (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1949), 133.

The above statement was reporting the educational situation near the middle of the twentieth century. Another report reveals the educational situation which Thomas Wolfe (Eugene Gant) experienced during the second decade of the twentieth century. Statistical evidence is given.

> A private school, subsisting chiefly on student fees, New York University had expanded from 4,300 students in 1912 to 16,000 in 1923, the year before Wolfe began his teaching there; it was to have an enrollment of over 30,000 in 1931, the year after Wolfe left, and to reach over 65,000 before 1950.[48]

Consequently, throughout the years the individual has a tendency to become lost in what Wolfe terms "the man-swarm." Through the throngs on the street, Eugene, while teaching at the School for Utility Culture, made his way through the throngs on his way to the classroom. He also reported the living conditions of the teacher, as he knew those conditions. He mentions his "bed in his little cell at the cheap little hotel" which was near the building in which his classes met. He describes his journey as leading

> . . .from cell to elevator, from the tiled sterility of the hotel lobby to the dusty beaten light and violence of the street outside, thence to the brawling and ugly corridors of the university, which drowned one, body and soul, with their swarming, shrieking, shouting tides. . . and thence into the comparative sanctuary of the classroom with its smaller horde. . . .[49]

The experience of Eugene Gant and Abe Jones may be duplicated in the classrooms of many colleges and universities

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[48] Pollock and Cargill, op. cit., 11.

[49] Wolfe, op. cit., 419.

wherever learning takes place. Amory Blaine was disturbed because the English professor who taught Victorian literature lectured before a class estimated to contain nearly one hundred students, who were expected to take notes day after day. Amory, too, was dissatisfied with his educational experience, even though he realized that he gained much. Professor Gottlieb said of the class in which Martin Arrowsmith was a member that students came to him in large numbers, just as if they were potatoes.

Eugene Gant completed a Master's degree at Harvard; however, his major interest had been in playwriting--not in preparing to become a teacher in a university class. He decided to teach while earning enough money to live, in order that he might, sometime, write the play which he longed to have produced. However, he was a conscientious teacher.

> Never before had Eugene been driven through desperation to such exhausting intensities of work: night by night he sweated blood over great stacks and shelves of their dull, careless, trivial papers--he read, re-read, and triple-read them, putting in all commas, colons, periods, correcting all faults of spelling, grammar, punctuation that he knew, writing long, laborious comments and criticisms on the back and rising suddenly out of a haunted, tortured sleep to change a grade.[50]

Abe Jones wrote the best papers of the entire group of students. He was the first of the students Eugene really came to know. "The first manswarm atom he had come to know

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[50] Ibid., 441.

in all the desolation of the million-footed city." This same restless, disgruntled student became his friend. During all his undergraduate days at Pulpit Hill, Eugene had always thought of the city as a distant dream, to be realized in the future. However,

> Abe was made of better stuff than most dreams are made of. His spirit was as steady as a rock, as enduring as the earth, and like the flash of a light, the sight of his good, gray ugly face could always evoke for Eugene the whole wrought fabric of his life in the city, the whole design of wandering and return, with a thousand memories of youth and hunger, of loneliness, fear, despair, of glory, love, exultancy and joy.[51]

And Eugene had come to see this student at this time as an "obscure and dreary chrysalis, and yet a dogged, loyal, and faithful friend, the salt of the earth, a wonderfully good, rare, and high person."

An educational case study of Abe, using the data provided by this literary writer of the American novel, Thomas Wolfe, would reveal the following: He was the son of an "apparently improvident and thriftless" father who was unable to earn a living for his family. His trade was that of a shoemaker. The members of the family spoke bitterly of him. But the mother was loved and respected. The children in the family had to begin work at an early age. "Abe's child-

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[51] Ibid., 447.

hood had been scarred by memories of privation, tyranny and poverty. . . . Abe had worked since his eighth year at a variety of hard, gray, shabby and joyless employments."[52] These employments included: newsboy, grocer's delivery boy, office boy, typist, wheelbarrow boy for a "novelties" merchant, and truck driver. He attended Eugene's night class at the School of Utility Culture. Abe's family of poor East Side Jews had experienced "lives of combat, toil and struggle in the city street, and yet, although indelibly marked, scarred and hardened by this life, none of them had been brutalized by it."[53]

Even years later Eugene recalled how these people were naturally interested in and respected the arts and scholarly intellectual attainments. Among the members of the family was to be found a blending of the "combination of the manual, the commercial, the artistic and the scholarly," even in spite of the poverty. These were latent potentials which might be developed through education.

In a different setting, and sometime later, Eugene Gant met several Rhodes scholars at Oxford. He mentioned John Park, whose life furnished a contrast with that of Abe Jones. Abe had known the uncertainty and struggle of the teeming streets of New York City. The Rhodes scholar, John

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[52] Ibid., 494.

[53] Ibid., 496-497.

Park, had "brilliantly succeeded" in that "well-ordered plan of life which he had followed since his childhood." However, when he reached Oxford, and a different environment, he was ill at ease. He was from a small college in the southern part of the United States; he had not experienced life in a big city. In England he discovered that "something had gone wrong." His was an impossible situation, a tragic ordeal of loneliness, strangeness, and bewilderment among all the complex and alien forms of a new life for which nothing in the old had prepared him."

Eugene mentions several other Rhodes scholars, from the United States, who were lacking in intellectual poise; they were "afraid to talk their natural speech in their own manner lest they seem too crudely, raucously and offensively American. . . ."[54] They seemed to be caught between two cultures and unable to harmonize, or to understand, their own identity. "Trying to be everything, they succeeded finally in being nothing."[55]

As yet, not one of them seemed to be able to say, as did Amory Blaine, "I know myself!"

But the student in his composition class at the School for Utility Culture, Abe Jones, was struggling to find something which would satisfy his seeking for knowledge.

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[54] Ibid., 628.

[55] Ibid., 632.

Had Eugene's education helped him to recognize the symptoms of another Seeker? Did he see something in the face of the learner, Abe, which reminded him of the expression on the face of the French peasant girl in Breton's painting, "Song of the Lark"? In his childhood essay about that picture, he had written at the age of twelve, "The girl had a hard time. Her people do not understand her. . . . You can tell by looking at her that' she's intelligent."[56]

This essay won the school prize for Eugene and the opportunity to enter the Leonards' private school. Margaret Leonard knew the educational and inspirational value of the individual conference with a student. Her first conference with twelve-year old Eugene had taken place in the Leonards' school which included a "living-room and library." Margaret Leonard had "watched his face light with eagerness as he saw the fifteen hundred or two thousand books shelved away in various places."[57]

Classroom experiences of Eugene Gant, the college and university student portrayed by Thomas Wolfe, appear in his two novels Look Homeward, Angel and Of Time and the River.

This American writer explains the central legend of his books.

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[56] Wolfe, Look Homeward, Angel (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1929), 208.

[57] Ibid., 215.

> From the beginning--and this was one fact that in all my times of hopelessness returned to fortify my faith in my conviction--the idea, the central legend that I wished my book to express had not changed. And this central idea was this: the deepest search in life, it seemed to me, the thing that in one way or another was central to all living was man's search to find a father, not merely the father of his flesh, not merely the lost father of his youth, but the image of a strength and wisdom external to his need and superior to his hunger, to which the belief and power of his own life could be united.[58]

Experiences which come through higher education were helpful to Eugene Gant in his search for "the image of strength and wisdom," and many of these experiences came through the regularly scheduled associations in the classroom.

When Wolfe decided to use the search for a father as the central legend in his books, he was confronted with the need for a unifying character. In two of the four books the name of the character is Eugene Gant; in the other two books the name used is George Webber. But as the two faces of one coin are an imprint of the same material, so the two characters in Wolfe's books are of the material of the life of one Thomas Wolfe.

When George and Randy are discussing the reception of George's first book in his home town, Libya Hill, George remarks, "A man must use what he knows--he can't use what

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[58] Thomas Wolfe, The Story of a Novel (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936), 39.

he doesn't know."[59] Then he expresses concern because the critics have called his book too autobiographical. He does not agree with the critics. Of course, everyone knew that the book was autobiographical, contended Randy. George insisted:

> But not 'too autobiographical.' If the critics had just crossed those words out and written in their place 'not autobiographical enough,' they'd have hit it squarely. That's where I failed. That's where the real fault was.[60]

Then George explained why the book wasn't true autobiography, because the elements of fiction, of imagination, and distortion were present. The book was fiction.

"A Legend of Man's Hunger in His Youth," is the subtitle of Wolfe's second book, Of Time and the River. The eight divisions of the material in the book are arranged around the titles: Orestes: Flight Before Fury, Young Faustus, Telemachus; Proteus: The City, Jason's Voyage, Antaeus: Earth Again, Kronos and Rhea, The Dream of Time, and Faust and Helen.

At the opening of the book, Of Time and the River, several members of the Gant family are at the station with Eugene Gant as he is waiting for the train which will take him to Harvard and graduate study. On his way to the uni-

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[59] Thomas Wolfe, You Can't Go Home Again (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1940), 384.

[60] Ibid., 384.

versity he stopped in Baltimore to have a last visit with his father.

At Harvard he was aware of the mad fury which had gripped his life. How may the desire to know be described? To Eugene it seemed a part of a great longing,

> To prowl the stacks of an enormous library at night, to tear the books out of a thousand shelves, to read in them with the mad hunger of the youth of man.
> . . . . . .
> It is to have the old unquiet mind, the famished heart, the restless soul.[61]

Eugene had an insatiable desire to know about everything on earth, about all human experience, and life. Time was too short for him.

Not only did Young Faustus read, but he wrote pages and pages of items he had read, things he had done, seen, heard, thought, sensed, smelled, touched, or things he hoped to do, to see, to hear--these were all written in a catalog-like book.

Identification

Thomas Wolfe was born in 1900. He uses that year as the birth date of both of his fictional characters, Eugene Gant and George Webber. Eugene has the same number of brothers and sisters as did Wolfe; however, George Webber is an only child.

Both of Wolfe's parents lived to attend his graduation

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[61] Wolfe, Of Time and the River, A Legend of Man's Hunger in His Youth (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1935) Garden City Books Reprint Edition), 90.

from the state university. Both of Eugene's parents lived to attend his graduation from the state university. The death of the fathers was caused by cancer. George's father died when George was sixteen years old; his mother died when he was about eight years old. His parents were divorced. George was reared by his maternal relatives, the Joyners.

Both Thomas Wolfe and Eugene Gant had a brother named Ben who understood and was helpful and who later died of pneumonia. Wolfe and Eugene attended the Leonards' private school and found help and inspiration. George seems to have attended a public school. Wolfe, Eugene, and George entered college at sixteen years of age and were graduated when twenty years of age. Each of the three taught English in New York City. Wolfe taught at Washington Square University and Eugene and George at the School for Utility Cultures. All made trips to Europe for research, writing, and pleasure. The creative impulses of a literary writer are evident in the Thomas-Eugene-George student of higher education.

George (Monk) Webber attended small, denominational Pine Rock College. His father had left enough money to finance his education and help him some in becoming established in life. About two-thirds of the students worked to earn a large share of their expenses. The average cost for each student was approximately $500 a year. The students came from small villages and from the rural areas, for the most

part. Even though the college was impoverished, the students enjoyed a fine life. They had a sense of school loyalty and pride; they boasted that their college surpassed Harvard, Princeton, Yale, and even Cambridge and Oxford. Provincialism, smugness, and a feeling of general self-satisfaction pervaded the campus. "It was a spare life. . . an impoverished kind of life, in many ways a narrow and provincial kind of life, but it was a wonderfully true and good life, too."[62]

These college students were close to the soil of their origins, they were an integral part of the area, and they were not snobs. They knew how they had worked to earn the money to pay for their higher education. They knew their neighbors and what was happening in their section of the state.

George's father had died when George was only sixteen, and he had not seen his father for eight years. Somehow there had been some consolation in just knowing that his father was not too far away; he was living.

> Now, more strongly than before, he felt himself caught fast in all that web of lives and times long past but ever present in which his Joyner blood and kind enmeshed him, and some escape from it became the first necessity of his life.[63]

His escape began during his college experiences. One

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[62] Thomas Wolfe, The Web and the Rock (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1939), 179.

[63] Ibid., 172.

of the first men he met on the campus was the great athlete, James Heyward Randolph, who was a "classic young American. He was perhaps a fraction under six feet and three inches tall, and he weighed 192 pounds." He was an older man on the campus, twenty-two or twenty-three years old. Most of the students were much younger. This man had taught in rural schools, shipped on a freighter, had made trips to Africa, and on to Mediterranean ports. He had sold books, and even played professional baseball, under another name. He was the football hero of the campus during his college days.

Jim is the college student used to project the tragic impact of war on the youth of a nation. He fought in the battles around Chateau-Thierry and the Argonne Wood. He came back a Captain, but with a spinal injury which left him but a shadow of the great athlete which he had been. "Jim was probably a member of what the intellectuals since have called 'the lost generation.'"[64] But Wolfe terms the generation to which Tom belonged not "lost" but "belated." The war served as a dividing line in time which cut across history. "It was all so strange, so sad, and so confusing."[65]

Another student who became part of the "copy" of George's books was known on campus as the "Mother Machree," or the confessor to the students of a certain type. This

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[64] Ibid., 186.

[65] Ibid., 186.

description reveals the campus need of an educated counselor, but there seemed to be none available, other than the classroom teachers. "Alsop was a voracious reader of novels, and his bookshelves even at that Baptist college showed selective power, and an eager curiosity into the best of the new work that was being produced."[66]

Experiencing Writing

Eugene Gant and George Webber

While doing graduate study at Harvard, Eugene became a member of the celebrated class of playwriting which was directed by Professor Hatcher. This was a limited class of serious students who wrote manuscripts, read manuscripts, listened and criticized. Values from free discussion and immediate criticism of the scripts of fellow classmates were stressed. Professor Hatcher was a man who reflected the culture of the world, "And one reason that he so impressed his students may have been that he made some of the most painful and difficult labors in the world seem delightfully easy."[67]

The spirit of urbanity and sophisticated ease seemed to be shared by the young men in the class. He helped the youths become more sure of themselves. He suggested plays

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[66] Ibid., 194.

[67] Wolfe, Of Time and the River, A Legend of Man's Hunger in His Youth (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1935) (Garden City Books Reprint Edition), 132.

which they might see, and tossed off bits of criticism. He flavored his conversation with references to personal associations and anecdotes with people of the theatre. Consequently, the young men in the class were eager to know more of the art world and the theatre. They were looking forward to discovering a place for themselves in the world they had glimpsed.

The course in playwriting, at this time, had become for Eugene Gant "the rock to which his life was anchored, the rudder of his destiny, the sole and all-sufficient reason for his being here."[68] At this stage in his development in becoming a writer, the character in the Wolfe "legend" felt that life would not be worth living unless he could succeed as a playwright and become a part of the theatre.

Professor Hatcher's personal associations with Pinero and Henry Arthur Jones, with Barrie and 'Gene O'Neill were mentioned in his comments, in a casual manner. All these class experiences became a part of the inspiration of the students.

> It gave them, first of all, a delightful sense of being in the know about rare and precious things, of rubbing shoulders with great actors and actresses and other celebrated people, of being expert in all the subtlest processes of the theatre, of being travelled, urbane, sophisticated and assured.[69]

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[68] Ibid., 130.

[69] Ibid., 133.

But Wolfe, also, describes the artificiality which he attributed to a David Belasco, or the utter sophistication of an actress. Such terminology as rhythm, tempo, pause, timing, lighting, setting, and design were useful, but the terms were used glibly by those who knew little of the true substance of the theatre. Eugene listened to a "sort of jargonese of art" which he compared with the "jargonese of science" in the field of psychology, which included the words "complexes," "fixations," "repressions," and "inhibitions."

Students, in some instances, were looking at the mask of life and mistaking it for life itself. Vicarious experiences were substituted for "knowledge, the experience of hard work and patient living." A formula could result in lifeless drama.

The self-appointed critics in the playwriting class were generous with their destructive criticism of the "Mid-Victorians." Eugene was hearing this term used in a derisive manner for the first time. In this awareness of a search for a standard of taste, each young student was eager to be considered among the "moderns." Eugene had not realized that the places of security of such men as Browning, Barrie, Galsworthy, and Shaw should be questioned. But not many words were needed to dispose of these writers; their names were replaced with others which seemed quite obscure to Eugene; however, he was assured they would be "the important people of the future."

Not all the students in the playwriting class were young. There was Old Seth who had been a news reporter for years, but who had always dreamed of writing plays. Finally his opportunity to become a member of Professor Hatcher's class became a reality. Old Seth knew life, he had been in the midst of it, nad suffered from it, and all these experiences he put in his plays. He wrote the plays which he had dreamed about in his youth. They were according to the formula of the "well-made play," but ironically the formula was no longer "modern." People just did not care for his type of play. "So here he was, a live man, writing, with amazing skill, dead plays for a theatre that was dead, and for a public that did not exist."[70]

And the falseness of the members of the drama class was revealed in their attitude toward the character--they felt superior to Old Seth, who might have become a central character of a play, if only they could have realized the human interest possibilities.

By the end of his second year at Harvard, Eugene had completed work for a Master's degree. But just before commencement date he received a telegram telling him that his father was dying. His father was dead when he reached home.

When Eugene was a small boy his father had taken him on a trip to Augusta. He took him to the theatre to see one

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[70] Ibid., 172.

of the first plays which the lad had ever seen. He was familiar with the story of the play.

> The play was a biblical one, founded on the story of Saul and Jonathan, and he had whispered to Gant from scene to scene the trend of coming events--a precocity which pleased his father mightily, and to which he referred for months.[71]

Now, his father was dead, and he was awaiting a report on the reception of a manuscript for a play when he had submitted to a producer. Daily he waited for a letter which might bring an acceptance and a royalty check. When he had been home four months his sister, Helen, asked her mother just how Eugene expected to earn a living. Eliza still had confidence that the play might succeed. She knew he wanted to become a writer, but that didn't seem a very wise decision for one who had to earn money. In all their hard working family there had never been a writer. They compared him to Bascom Pentland. This is the way Eugene was described:

> Well, this fellow is one of the same kind--a great book reader but with no practical business sense--and it seems to us he ought to get a job somewhere teaching school, or maybe some newspaper work--which he could do--or, perhaps, he should have studied law.[72]

In October, after the death of his father, who had encouraged his son to study law, the letter from the producer came. It began "We regret. . .," and Eugene's life was as gray ashes. He felt that his family had been right; that he had been the foolish one. He was unable to face the realities;

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[71] Wolfe, Look Homeward, Angel (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1929), 153.

[72] Wolfe, Of Time and the River (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1935) (Garden City Books Reprint Edition), 358-359.

he thought he could be a writer. He had studied and tried hard enough. "His sense of ruin and failure was abysmal, crushing, and complete."[73]

Nevertheless, he was determined that he could become a writer. Because he needed to earn his living while he concentrated on writing his first book, he accepted a position as a teacher of English in the School for Utility Cultures, New York City, at a salary of $150 per month, for nine months.

George was interested in becoming a writer. At Pine Rock, writing was effectively taught by Professor Randolph Ware, who had studied at the University of Chicago. He was described as being a"scientific utilitarian" who considered Francis Bacon to be the first American. He encouraged the students to do creative writing. When he asked the class to write a novel, "George rushed into class breathlessly three times a week with a new chapter written out on the backs of paper bags, envelopes, stray bits of paper."[74]

Randolph Ware was a man who had a rapier-like sense of wit. He enjoyed parrying with his students to catch their immediate response. He insisted that his students get the facts. He believed in the value and discipline which may result from formal research. To George, this educator seemed to have something rather glorious about him. But instead of

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[73] Ibid., 361.

[74] Wolfe, The Web and the Rock (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1939), 217.

doing creative writing himself, "He seemed with deliberate fatalism to have trapped himself among petty things. Despite his great powers, he wasted himself compiling anthologies for use in colleges."[75]

Later, George was struggling to find some way to give form to his experiences in an effort to write. He had recognized the beauty in the freight cars of grain which moved along the tracks which wound among the clay hills near his home. To him they were beautiful. He was searching for a language to express his feelings. That was where his "Education" came in.

> It wasn't really that his teacher had told him that a freight car was not beautiful. They had told him that Keats, Shelley, The Taj Mahal, the Acropolis, Westminister Abbey, The Louvre, the Isles of Greece, were beautiful. And they had told it to him so often and in such a way that he not only thought it true--which it was--but that these things were everything that beauty is.[76]

This was the time that pseudo-intellectuals sneered at Dreiser, O'Neill, Sinclair Lewis, and Edwin Arlington Robinson. The writer to be accepted, according to the ideas of Tom Wolfe, was a poet, or a novelist, or a critic, or a member of Professor George Pierce Baker's playwriting class at Harvard or at Yale, and nothing that he did came off.[77]

But back of all the sneering there was a reality that

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[75] Ibid., 218.

[76] Ibid., 260.

[77] Ibid., 261.

was tinged with beauty. There were those times when George recalled his childhood experiences in the small southern town. When George recalled his childhood days he saw much that was beautiful: there were days when he liked school, which began in September and lasted until June, there were times when the new book lists gave him a feeling of excitement.

> And then the feel and look and smell of the new geography, the reader and the composition books, the history, and the smells of pencils, wooden rulers, and paper in the bookstore, and the solid, wealthy feel of the books and bookstrap, and taking the books home and devouring them. . . .[78]

There were the days when the sound of the school bell caused him to think that this year the classroom might not be so unpleasant after all. And there were the times he attended the graduation exercises and as he listened to the speaker his eyes wandered about the room; he saw the busts of Minerva, Diana, Socrates, Demosthenes, and Caesar.

Then there came the year when

> . . .you smelled the chalk, the ink, the schoolroom smells, with ecstasy, and were sorry you were leaving them. . .and those who were saying these had been the happiest days of their lives. . . .[79]

And during this early period of attempting to grasp a small fraction of his experience, to give it form, and meaning, and project it through the medium of language, George

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[78] Ibid., 104.

[79] Ibid., 104-105.

was in anguish. At last he decided to choose a subject which was modest and limited.

> The subject he chose for his first effort was a boy's vision of life over a ten month period between his twelfth and thirteenth year, and the title was 'The End of the Golden Weather.'
>
> By this title he meant to describe that change in the color of life which every child has known--the change from the enchanted light and weather of his soul, the full golden light, the magic green and gold in which he sees the earth in childhood, and, far away, the fabulous vision of the golden city, blazing forever in his vision and at the end of all his dreams, in whose enchanted street she thinks that she shall someday walk a conqueror, a proud and honored future in a life more glorious, fortunate, and happy than any he has ever known.[80]

Then George had intended to tell how the child became aware of the deeper and darker side of life. He would show how ". . .for the first time, some of the troubling weathers of a man's soul are revealed to him. . . ."[81]

George continued to write about the life he knew, the experiences he had had, the people he had known. He even called his first novel, Home to Our Mountains, and it was a fertile product of his life in his "home town in Old Catawba and the people there."

> He had distilled every line of it out of his own experience of life.
> . . . . . .
> Of course it was fiction, but it was made as all honest fiction must be, from the stuff of human life.[82]

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[80] Ibid., 263.

[81] Ibid., 263.

[82] Wolfe, You Can't Go Home Again (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1940), 19-20.

People criticized his book, but it found many readers. At last the Webber family realized that George might become a writer, because he had written one book which brought in real cash. His first book also brought him many letters; some were irate, some threatening, and a few were written by those who knew what he was trying to do. He felt that he had been influenced by James Joyce's Ulysses, but of course the Libya Hill readers had not read Ulysses. And George decided that he had "not read people," even though he had been under the impression that he really knew the people of his home town. However, "He hadn't learned what a difference there is between living with them and writing about them. A man learns a great deal about life from writing and publishing a book."[83]

In the wounded faun section of You Can't Go Home Again, George Webber discusses the reception of his first book on the natives of Libya Hill. Their reaction had caused George much pain. The critics had called his work "too autobiographical."[84] He felt that one of the weaknesses of the book was that it was "not autobiographical enough." He was searching for a legend which would give him an opportunity to give artistic form to "all the knowledge I have, of all the living I've seen."[85]

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[83] Ibid., 326-327.

[84] Ibid., 384.

[85] Ibid., 386-387.

As he continues this effort to become articulate about his great desire to find a frame, a pattern, and a way to make his thoughts and materials fuse and find a channel, he relates the materials of fiction to the facts of life.

Since George Webber has decided to use himself as a character in his writing he wishes to write about that which is more significant than the actual facts of his daily living. A form which will have a universal appeal is what he desires. He wants to write "the best fiction."[86]

George indicates the superabundance of his available material by banging the ledger in which he had been cataloging sights, sounds, smells, colors, tastes, emotions, etc.

He senses that he has an abundance of material for another book; indeed, that is the difficulty. He has too much material but he does need to find a way to make use of it. He must search until he can "find a frame for it, a pattern, a channel, a way to make it flow!"[87]

His search to "find a way" occupies much of his time.

> I think it may be something like what people vaguely mean when they speak of fiction. A kind of legend, perhaps. Something--a story--composed of all knowledge I have, of all the living I've seen. Not the facts, you understand--not just the record of my life--but something truer than the facts--something distilled out of my experience and transmitted into a form of universal application. That's what the best fiction is, isn't it?[88]

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[86] Ibid., 387.

[87] Ibid., 386.

[88] Ibid., 386-387.

Evaluation of Higher Education

When George Webber went to the home of his great professor, Randolph Ware, one time, he was more conscious than ever of that which had caused the students to find inspiration from the man. George sensed the "tenderness and beauty below his stolid and ironic mask," when he saw Ware at the piano playing Beethoven "with passion and wisdom." George recalled the comment which Alcibiades had made to Socrates: "You are like the god Silenus--outwardly a paunched and ugly man, but concealing inwardly the figure of a young and beautiful divinity."[89]

What did college and university experiences mean to Eugene Gant, who had lost both his mother and his father before his college enrollment at sixteen years of age?

> In spite of the twaddle that the prominent educators of the time were always talking about 'democracy and leadership,' 'ideals of service,' 'the place of the college in modern life,' and so on, there wasn't much reality about the direction of such 'education' as George had had. And that's not to say there had been no reality in his education. There was, of course--only because he had come in contact with art, with letters, and with a few fine people. Maybe that's about as much as you can expect.
>
> It would also be unfair to say that the real value of this, the beautiful and enduring thing, he had had to 'dig out' for himself. This wasn't true. He had met a lot of other young people, like himself, and this fact was 'beautiful'--a lot of young fellows all together, not sure where they were going, but sure that they were going somewhere.

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[89] Wolfe, The Web and the Rock (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1939), 218.

So he had this, and this was a lot.[90]

Thomas-Eugene-George, the somewhat "autobiographical" character in the four books of Thomas Wolfe, gives an affirmative evaluation of higher education.

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[90] Ibid., 218.

CHAPTER VII

FINDINGS

The purpose of this study has been to explore the interpretation of the student of higher education in the fiction of F. Scott Fitzgerald, Willa Cather, Sinclair Lewis, George Santayana, and Thomas Wolfe. Emphasis has been placed upon their interpretation of the individual student in his milieu: his relationship to his professors and to his classmates; his extracurricular activities and his attitude toward his studies.

All five of the creative writers included in this study experienced higher education; three of them were teachers. Willa Cather taught in high school at Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; Thomas Wolfe was an English instructor at New York University; and George Santayana was a professor of philosophy at Harvard. Consequently, their interpretations were based upon their two-fold educational experiences as students and as teachers. Willa Cather revealed the life, both home and academic, of Professor St. Peter, Santayana gave an autobiographical report of the life of a professor of philosophy, and Thomas Wolfe portrayed the teacher of English who struggled to cope with large numbers of students who came from crowded sections of New York City.

A longitudinal study of the individual from early childhood, through adolescence, and into adulthood is presented by Willa Cather in her interpretation of Tom Outland. His life cycle is presented in its entirety. The same is true of the character Oliver Alden as interpreted by George Santayana. Thomas Wolfe tells of the ancestry of Eugene Gant and George Webber. Consequently, the reader is able to have a better understanding of the characters than is usually possible in daily life. The extension of life through the years gives a greater perspective of the individual and his relation to time. The reader learns how

> ...George Webber and Eugene Gant have been preoccupied with change, fighting to hold on to what is slipping by as the clock ticks on, striving to accomplish something in the brief span of mortality.[1]

Education assists the individual in accomplishing more in the limited time.

The fictional students, Amory Blaine, Oliver Alden, Eugene Gant, and George Webber reveal their individual dreams of college, their frustration and adjustment in college and their reactions to the relationship of college to the post-college experiences. Evaluations are made as the writer develops the novel. And "A novel. . . normally reveals a created world of values and attitudes,"[2] remarks Friedman from

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[1] Louis D. Rubin, Jr., Thomas Wolfe, The Weather of His Youth (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1955), 24.

[2] Norman Friedman, "Point of View in Fiction: The Development of a Critical Concept," Publications of the Modern Language Association of America, Vol. LXX (1955), 1167.

Schorer. "Values and attitudes" toward higher education, as revealed in the college students interpreted by the American novelist, have significance for the American educator.

This study opens and closes with the interpretation of students who live in a restless world of international tensions.

> The most intelligent and the most sensible attitude we can have toward the 1920's, as well as toward our time, is to accept the saving grace of an irony directed at both. They are, both of them, times of war and of the effects of war. In neither time is it possible unqualifiedly to admire or simply to repudiate man's responsibility for what has happened.[3]

Identification of the Student of Higher Education

The student's relationship to his family is carefully examined in the novels of George Santayana and Thomas Wolfe. As John Peale Bishop points out in his study of Thomas Wolfe,

> The only human relationship which endures is that of the child to his family. And that is inescapable: once having been, it cannot cease to be. His father is still his father, though dying; and his brother Ben, though dead, remains his brother.[4]

From the home the child goes to school and on to a college or university, but the family influence lingers.

Some of these students of higher education were found in the rural area and others in the teeming city. In either

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[3] Frederick J. Hoffman, The Twenties, American Writing in the Postwar Decade (New York: The Viking Press, 1955), 385.

[4] John Peale Bishop, "The Sorrows of Thomas Wolfe," Critiques and Essays in Modern Fiction, 1920-1951 (New York: The Ronald Press, 1952), 367.

case the quest of discovery was significant. "As a symbol, the city has an organic place in the pattern of quest that underlies Wolfe's life and work." Thomas Wolfe's search was for a father, for orientation and wisdom. And this was true of the search of Eugene Gant and George Webber.

> For all three, the two protagonists and Wolfe, the pattern of quest is basically the same: there is the cycle of desire and frustration, of hope and disillusionment, that initiates them into manhood and the world of art.[5]

An unhappy home environment was revealed in the life of Amory Blaine, George Babbitt, Oliver Alden, Eugene Gant, and George Webber. Amory's parents were estranged. George Webber's were divorced, and Oliver Alden's parents knew so much tension that his father took his own life in order to release the son from divided loyalties. Eugene Gant's mother seemed to be more interested in making profits from the sale of real estate than in retaining the loyalty of her family. His father, who was frustrated in his desire to become a sculptor, caused friction because of his frequent drunken sprees. George Babbitt was unable to understand his wife and children. And even though Professor St. Peter and his wife and two daughters knew much family happiness before wealth came from the results of his research in history and Tom Outland's research in science, money brought the destruction of family harmony. Martin Arrowsmith and his wife Leora

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[5] Blanche Housman Gelfant, The American City Novel (Norman: The University of Oklahoma Press, 1954), 121.

truly loved one another but were unable to have children. Martin, ironically, did have a child by his second wife, to whom he was married after Leora's death. But he did not love this wife who failed to understand his attitude toward science.

Tom Outland and Oliver Alden, both brilliant students, died in war before they were married. They were members of the generation which was really lost during war. A pessimistic attitude seemed to be taken toward the opportunity which the intellectually gifted had of contributing to the propagation of the race. Amory Blaine was unable to win the love of the woman he loved and wished to marry. Ann Vickers suffered an abortion and a guilt complex which would follow her throughout life, even though she did marry sometime later and give birth to a child. Home making came only after she had asserted herself as a social worker, a "feminist," and a reformer of penal institutions.

The Experience of Higher Education

Oliver Alden's father was reluctant to send his son to a school in a small town because he was concerned about the quality of the instruction which he might receive. Finally he rationalized that some remarkable teachers have been found in small schools, and perhaps Oliver would be fortunate enough to come in contact with a scholarly teacher.

When George Webber is about twenty-seven years old, he looks back on his college days at Pine Rock, a small

college in a remote section of his home state, and recalls his interest in philosophy and its value to him. During his student days the course in philosophy was taken seriously. The campus had its own "philosopher." He was a great teacher, a noble hearted man, who knew how to encourage others. "For half a century he had been a dominant figure in the life of the entire state." He was a Greek scholar whose theories of philosophy had descended from the ancient Greeks on through the various "developments" down to Hegel. The students thought of him as their "Old Man." But after all it wasn't so much the content of the course as it was the professor himself. Randolph Ware was the teacher.

> He was a great teacher, and what he did for us, and for others before us for fifty years, was not to give us his 'philosophy'--but to communicate to us his own alertness, his originality, his power to think. He was a vital force because he supplied to many of us, for the first time in our lives, the inspiration of a questioning intelligence. He taught us not to be afraid to think, to question; he taught us to examine critically the most sacrosanct of our native prejudices and superstitions.[6]

Willa Cather had Professor St. Peter tell of his student, Tom Outland, and George Santayana has a professor of philosophy interpret his student, Oliver Alden. The student character in each novel had experienced a college education and within a comparatively few years after graduation had changed civilian clothing for a military uniform. Each was involved in World War I; each lost his life. Tom Outland,

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[6] Thomas Wolfe, You Can't Go Home Again (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1940), 710.

in The Professor's House, became a casualty of a mechanical accident shortly after the Armistice.

Both novels open the narrative after the leading character has lost his life. In both, the reader sees the student as refracted through the thinking of a former professor, who saw the individual student as being outstanding in his intellectual potentialities and achievements. Tom was considered by Professor St. Peter to be the most brilliant student he had found during his long career as a teacher in a midwestern college. Oliver was considered to be the most promising student the philosopher had found during his last years as a professor of philosophy at Harvard. An omniscient narrator is used by Willa Cather, but she permits Tom's story to be told in the first person. Oliver's former professor of philosophy uses the first person in the prologue and epilogue of The Last Puritan. The novel proper has the omniscient interpreter. These two novels afford an opportunity to compare and contrast two students in an effort to arrive at a clearer conception of the individual differences of college students. A longitudinal study of each student is possible because both Cather and Santayana tell of the early experiences of the individual. Pre-college environmental influences may be studied as a part of the continuum of life which included college and post-college experiences.

The complete life story is told to the very end of

life's experiences for both Tom and Oliver. The age of mechanization makes an impact on each; Tom invents a formula for a valve to be used in airplanes; Oliver is crushed in the collision of his machine and a motorcycle. His car crashes against the age-old symbol of measurement--a milestone.

Neither man was married, but each left his fortune to the young woman he loved. Had Tom lived he might have married Kathleen; had Oliver lived he might have married Rose.

The experience of higher education afforded the student an opportunity to meet other students of approximately his own age, to study and associate with them, and to make the transition from adolescence to adulthood in a more satisfactory manner. He had an opportunity to become better acquainted with himself, to discover his strengths and his weaknesses. While maturing intellectually and socially he was learning the fundamentals of a vocation or of a profession, as a usual thing. The authors interpret the frustrations and difficulties which an individual undergoes in an effort to find his place among his fellow men. One student succeeded in campus politics but failed in a course in mathematics. He later became a bond salesman, after his military service had ended. Amory Blaine was the student.

Browsing among books in the college library led to an acquaintance with writers who held great interest for the student. Conversations and discussion with those of like

reading interests enriched the campus experience. This was an experience of Eugene Gant.

Speaking, forensics, and play production held interest for Babbitt, Carol Kennicott, and Gideon Planish. Playwriting served as a challenge to Eugene Gant, as well as for several other students who were introduced by the five novelists. Journalism, writing, and sports were challenging phases of life on the college or university campus.

The Evaluation of the Experience of Higher Education

Higher education is but one of the areas of life; its influence may be great in the future years of the student. Martin Arrowsmith used his scientific knowledge and his philosophy to help check a devastating plague.

Amory Blaine associated education with a need to know the history of the experience of the race in order to have a better understanding of the age in which he lived. As a result of his experiences on and off the campus, he was able to arrive at a feeling of orientation to life which caused him to exclaim, "I know myself."

Even though the life span may be short, education has value. Tom Outland died in war when he was a comparatively young man. But he had, through higher education, made a contribution to science which had been of benefit to aviation. He had met a professor who interpreted his life in a way that caused his thoughts to live for readers throughout many years.

War may destroy the body of the student but his ideas may live on. This was also true of Oliver Alden as it was true of Tom Outland.

A greater ability to understand not only himself but others was revealed by Fitzgerald's character Nick Carraway, who was a university man. He had known the athlete, Tom Buchanan, at Harvard. Nick observed the impingement of the lives of Tom and Daisy on that of Gatsby, who had been a "drop out" in a small Minnesota college. Nick became the Ishmael to interpret the experiences of these people after Gatsby's romantic dream had been destroyed.

The educational experience was evaluated over a period of time as the five writers, in the characters portrayed, revealed campus life from the late 1890's to 1940's. Dodsworth was graduated from Yale in the class of 1896, while Gideon Planish's daughter gave a glimpse of her life on a campus in the 1940's. Gideon Planish began his service as president of a college during the war period of the 1940's.

Dodsworth's class reunion reveals the nostalgia which clings about the educational experience. His classmates met for a reunion when they were about fifty years old, and "they came back wistfully, longing to recapture their credulous golden days."[7] Idealism had characterized their college days in 1896, but during the intervening years something had been

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[7] Sinclair Lewis, Dodsworth (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1929) (Modern Library, Inc., 1947), 182.

lost. They drifted back to a reunion because one of the few ways they had left to "impress the world" was to remind others that they were graduates of Yale. These former college students longed to recapture the "simple-hearted idealism of college days."[8]

From the period of "Idealism" Lewis moved forward to the time when values had shifted. He told of a college student who came under the influence of a young professor, who in his skeptical manner, shattered the religious faith of an adolescent girl. Ann Vickers had entered college as a freshman in 1907. In 1928 she was awarded an honorary doctorate for her work in improving conditions in penal institutions. Lewis described the period between 1910 and 1929 as that in which the "wrecked Odysseusses of the Great War" had piped, among other things, ". . .after us there will never again be youth and springtime and hope."[9]

Another evaluation of the use made of the results of higher education is interpreted in the character Gideon Planish. Near the outbreak of World War II, Sinclair Lewis has this former college debater, who had dreamed of becoming president of a college some day, invited to leave his doubtful promotional scheme and return as president of the college

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[8] Ibid., 182.

[9] Sinclair Lewis, Ann Vickers (New York: Doubleday Doran and Company, Inc., 1933), 60.

in which he did his first teaching, when he was a young Ph.D. veteran of World War I. But several years had passed since this user of "hot rhetoric" had read a significant book. He thought of the frustration he might experience if an undergraduate asked him about recent literature. However, he decided that a college administrator might leave such responsibilities to deans and faculty members.

In this evaluation of the college experience, an opportunity was afforded for a glimpse of a second generation of students. Shortly after December 7, 1941, Gideon Planish's daughter, Carrie, a junior in Hunter College, who had been studying physics, mechanical drawing and ethnology, got a job as draftsman in an airplane factory in Hartford.

Carrie Planish was a student product of the "new theory of education."

> The new theory of education believes that it should teach pupils to do better the desirable things that they will do anyway and to reveal to them higher activities, at the same time making them desired and maximally possible.[10]

This study of the interpretation of the student of higher education as revealed by Fitzgerald, Cather, Lewis, Santayana, and Wolfe indicates a close relationship between the student and his heredity and environment, as well as a close relationship with the time in which he lives. Always

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[10] Thomas H. Briggs, Improving Instruction (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1938), 270-271.

present is the relationship of the individual to other individuals. Then there are the many problems which must be met realistically in the life which is experienced beyond the classroom, and in the long years ahead.

Students, parents, and teachers do have ideals for which they are willing to live and which, if need be, they will defend with their lives.

Institutions of higher education continue to search to find ways of making possible a more effective method of meeting the ever new problems of the family, the state, the nation, and other countries.

> It may be hoped that these problems will be faced in the light of the best in our experience and tradition, including the concept of equality of educational opportunity, the development of the best potentialities of all individuals, freedom of teaching and research, and intelligent responsibility for improving man's lot and guiding him toward better goals.[11]

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[11] Merle Curti, "The First Hundred Years of Higher Education in Wisconsin," Higher Education for American Society, Edited by Guy Fowlkes (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1949), 15.

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